

SADDLE BACK

MAINE

After years of negotiation this resort is ready for some striking development

By Richard Butler

My family vacationed in the Rangeley Lakes Region in the Western Mountains of Maine 30 years ago. At that time we placed our five-year-old son in Saddleback's Ski School for his first exposure to real skiing, in real ski country. We had snow and more snow during our stay. We sighted our first moose, a frequent event to this day in the picturesque Longfellow Mountain region of Maine. And, yes, my son had the time of his life.

We had not heard much of Saddleback since that time, but according to John Cannizarro, Saddleback's Director of Planning and Development, we can expect that to change. And for good reason.

Saddleback Resort receives 200 annual inches of natural snowfall, has 440 acres of terrain, 54 trails and five lifts and 8,087 acres of land under current ownership. It is one of only 7 areas in New England with peaks over 4,000 feet in elevation.

Until recent times, Saddleback's acreage included land on its north side with the Appalachian Trail bisecting the two mountain faces. For over ten years, a stalemate ensued between the owners, the National Park Service, the Land-use Regulatory Commission (LURC) of the State of Maine, and other parties, over the use of the trail and development of the re-

sort, including its attractive and steep north side.

The debate should be resolved. New ownership, coupled with the skillful efforts of an attorney with strong Maine and Washington DC links, has gotten things accomplished. The more sympathetic attitude of government towards development with a watchful environmental eye has changed everything.

Part of the mountaintop and a 1500 acre parcel on the north were sold to the National Park Service to allow for a trail corridor. This land transfer is meant to protect the back (north) side of the mountain. Recent resort improvements have been implemented via several amendments granted under the previous owner's development plan.

The Berry family are the new owners. Saddleback has submitted a new ten-year plan to LURC for steady growth and improvement of the area. The plan includes 2 to 4 new trails, 20-24 condos/timeshares, 10-15 house lots, all per year, and a new lift every two years. There is to be a hotel, a tubing park, an inn and an Amenities Center. All totaled, there are approximately \$150,000,000 in projects planned.

At 2,460 feet above sea level, Saddleback already

has a new base lodge set at the highest elevation of any in New England. This 27,000 square foot addition to a 9,000 square foot existing building is a spectacular heavy timber lodge with all-inclusive services, including a dance floor and children's center. It was constructed in 2004-05 at a cost of 4-1/2 million dollars.

Designed by Banwell Architects of Lebanon, New Hampshire, regionally famous for their energy conserving "green" designs, this new facility adds a welcome level of care and craft to a building type frequently neglected throughout eastern ski country. Its features include a southern exposure, the use of native stone and timber, natural ventilation, enhanced lighting control, extensive use of recycled rubber flooring, an exceptionally well sealed building envelope, and many features to ensure good indoor air quality. Overhangs are designed to limit summer sun penetration.

"Skiing is about enjoying the remote outdoor setting, and the lodge is intended to enhance the experience, not get in the way of it", quotes Stu White of Banwell Architects. The facility's success has already been proven by its popularity as a wedding site.

In addition to the new base lodge, there have been numerous essential improvements so necessary for continuing development. These include a new beginner's area, a new top terminal lift drive, a huge new leach field, power line, miles of piping including a connection to

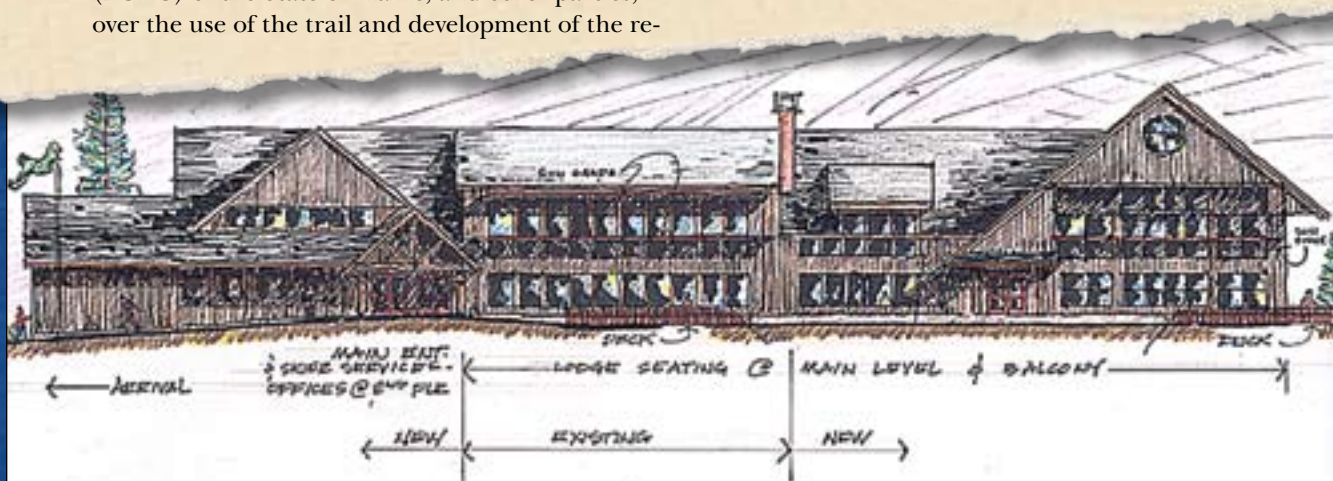


Saddleback Lake, fixed snowmaking fans on the Grey Ghost trail, and a new maintenance garage. Much needed improvements to its 4-1/2 mile long access road were completed in the summer of 2004.

Spring, summer and fall offer many additional outdoor recreational opportunities including world class fly fishing, motor coach programs, canoeing, kayaking, tennis, golf, mountain biking, and of course moose watching.

Saddleback shares the same winter weather with nearby Sugarloaf, ten miles to its east, including those notorious "Gulf of Maine storms". These storms can linger for days dumping huge amounts of snow here but frequently miss much of central and southern New England.

Be sure to put Saddleback on your "must visit list" for this season. The new owners are very serious about making your vacation well worth the trip. *



Elevation plans show just how extensive Saddleback's development will be

