

PRESS RELEASE
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**Local Residents Group, Hood River County Officials and Mt. Hood Meadows
Reach Significant Settlement Agreement Plan for Mt. Hood's North Side**

Contacts: Mike McCarthy, (541) 806-6476 or Ralph Bloemers, 503.504.2432
Dave Riley, Mt. Hood Meadows (503) 337-2222 ext. 259
David Meriwether, Hood River County 541 387-6827

Mt. Hood, Oregon, The Hood River Valley Residents Committee (HRVRC), Hood River County, and the Mt. Hood Meadows companies announced a plan that may settle a long-standing dispute over Mt. Hood Meadows' plans to expand the Cooper Spur Ski Area and the Inn at Cooper Spur on the North side of Mt. Hood. On August 1 2005, after over a year of mediation, the parties executed a significant settlement agreement laying out the proposal.

The proposed solution seeks to permanently protect the North side of Mt. Hood through wilderness designation and a watershed protection zone designation while allowing Meadows to acquire land zoned for development on the South side of the mountain through a land exchange with the United States Forest Service. Completion of the exchange requires Meadows and HRVRC to commission full and fair appraisals of the properties, and the exchange of those properties must be for equal value. Prior to completion of the proposed solution, any of the parties may opt out if the transaction does not accomplish their objectives. For example, the parties may opt out if the independent appraisal does not result in an equal value exchange.

David Meriwether, county administrator for Hood River County, is encouraged by what the parties have achieved. In the spring of 2004, the parties entered into a voluntary collaborative dispute resolution process. With the encouragement and support of the Hood River County Board of Commissioners and the help of a professional mediator, the parties reached an agreement. "We are very pleased with this proposed solution and remain fully committed to seeing the process through," said Meriwether.

Rodger Schock, Chair of the County Commission, is also very pleased with the outcome. Commissioner Schock stated, "Hood River County is excited by the prospect of resolving the dispute on the basis of mutual gains and common ground. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with citizens around the mountain and our congressional members to facilitate the completion of this important agreement."

The Hood River Valley Residents Committee is a local citizen group made up of over 160 families, in the communities of Hood River, Dee, Parkdale, Odell and Mt. Hood. HRVRC has worked in the Hood River Valley for over 30 years to advocate for sensible growth and protect the most productive pear farming valley in the entire United States. The Hood River Valley Residents Committee aims to achieve permanent protection for the North side of Mt. Hood through this transaction.

Scott Franke, HRVRC Board President, participated in the discussions that led to this important agreement. He stated: “The Hood River Valley Residents Committee mission is to advocate for sensible and sustainable growth in Hood River County. We are thrilled to propose a way to protect the historic backcountry on the North side of Mt. Hood and permanently ensuring that these lands are protected for future Oregonians to enjoy for their wilderness and watershed values. We look forward to getting community and congressional support for this solution.”

Mike McCarthy, an orchard owner in Hood River County, participated in the mediation. Mr. McCarthy is a volunteer with the Hood River Valley Residents Committee and committed countless hours working for the protection of the North side of Mt. Hood. Mike owns and manages approximately 40,000 pear trees in the Upper Hood River Valley and is very familiar with the valuable resources that are high on Mt. Hood’s flanks. “This agreement shows you what can happen when local citizens get organized and take action to promote a positive vision for the watersheds and forests on our treasured Mt. Hood,” said Mr. McCarthy. “The community’s support gave us the strength to develop a vision in tune with local values and negotiate for the permanent protection of the north side of Mt. Hood. I look forward to working with the community to achieve our vision. We expect that our elected officials will recognize the value of Mount Hood’s remaining wild places and move to protect these wild places in response to this historic opportunity.”

Dave Riley, Mt. Hood Meadows Vice President and General Manager commented, “This plan is certainly not what we originally envisioned when we acquired Cooper Spur but if the appraised values are acceptable to us and we receive enough developable property in Government Camp to equal the value of our investment in Cooper Spur then we’ll likely go for it as a compromise solution.” Meadows has long advocated for a resort development on Mt. Hood. “As the local population expands, we clearly see a growing demand for overnight accommodations and the mountain resort living experience,” said Riley. After years of planning and citizen input, in 2000, Clackamas County adjusted zones for development by amending its comprehensive land use plan in Government Camp. Certain zones overlapped with Federal land in anticipation that a future land exchange might convert land that was being managed by the Forest Service for public use into private hands as part of the Government Camp Revitalization Plan. “This agreement allows these concepts to be put into motion. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the local people in Government Camp and Clackamas County to achieve the revitalization plan which they have worked on so hard for so many years.”

Going forward, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee and Meadows will jointly retain an independent appraiser that the parties mutually select to value the properties on the north and south side of the mountain. The final appraised value for the combined Cooper Spur properties and the 120 acres of public land Government Camp will drive the equal exchange. In the event of a value difference, the parties have committed to work to bridge the gap to ensure that the terms of the agreement are met.

A key part of the plan calls for congressionally designating the undeveloped Cooper Spur lands on the North side of the mountain as wilderness, protecting the watershed and preserving the small family ski area for community use. In 2004, the land in the Cooper Spur area on the North side was proposed for federal Wilderness

designation by Senator Ron Wyden as but one small part of the 177,000 acre Lewis and Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Act. Senator Wyden's bill sought to protect additional wilderness lands throughout the Mt. Hood National Forest and in the Columbia Gorge

The parties will be seeking legislation and an open public process to complete the proposed exchange. If the proposed solution is not completed, Meadows will withdraw its support for the North side wilderness expansion and continue pursuing its original plans to expand the ski area and private land resort facilities at Cooper Spur. If the proposal in this agreement is not realized, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee will continue to pursue the permanent protection of the North side of Mt. Hood.

Now, however, the parties have formally agreed to focus their energy on working together to make this proposal a reality through working with the local community, the Congressional delegation and the Forest Service.