



An opportunity for summer revenue at the Camden Snow Bowl

By: The Mountain Bike Subgroup of the Snow Bowl Four Season Committee

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Summer Snow Bowl Lift Served Mountain Biking, Version 2

Introduction:

In the past several years, The Ragged Mountain Recreation Area has undergone extensive winter season facility improvements. These improvements were funded through philanthropic efforts and a municipal bond. While the improvements have made the area more attractive to skiers, nearly all revenue is generated from ski operations which can be inconsistent with weather challenges. The improvement or replacement of the current lodge will help but additional revenue sources are necessary for future sustainability.

After considerable research and examination of non-skiing revenue generators, it was determined that mountain biking offered significant potential to generate additional revenue during the warmer seasons. Mountain biking is growing in popularity in Maine and worldwide, and Ragged Mountain is well suited to capitalize on the trend. Lift served mountain biking is seeing large growth at several ski areas throughout the United States. According to the 2017 Outdoor Industry Participation Report, about 8.6 million Americans age six and older participated in mountain biking in 2016, which is a 26 percent growth within ten years. Mountain biking is an easily accessible, rapidly growing sport with a low cost of entry. Ski areas like the concept because weather volatility such as fog, rain, and warm temperatures don't adversely affect riding conditions. Many significant costs like electricity and snow making costs do not come into play.

Thirteen months ago, Mark Hayes from Highland Mountain Bike Park in New Hampshire presented the Snow Bowl Four Season Committee with a plan on how to implement lift served mountain biking at the Camden Snow Bowl. The plan was comprehensive but expensive. From the Highland Plan, the committee has come up with a more scalable version that is practical for the Snow Bowl facility and maintains compatibility with other users of the Snow Bowl as well as surrounding residents.



(Above, a double chair lift: one with riders, another with a bike hook)

The implementation of lift served mountain biking will require some capital expenditures to facilitate bike and rider loading/off-loading as well as trail work. Snow Bowl management will need to draw on volunteers for labor and talent, seek contributions from private donors, and apply for grants that may be available. The specific improvements envisioned include:

The Unloading Ramp

Stevens Engineering, the firm that consults the Snow Bowl feels that the current ramp at the top of the double chair lift is sufficient for unloading summer riders and bikes. A temporary structure may need to be built to help decrease the steepness of the unloading area. The unloading process will require the rider to walk off of the chair lift and down a ramp. The ramp will need to be large enough to allow a loader to unload bicycles that will be on hooks installed on the chair lift.

Trails

Initially, there will be purpose built downhill trails which include sections of the Kuller Trail and legacy single track that currently exists from mid mountain down. Work will need to be done on some of the corners and side slopes to make the trails environmentally sustainable and bike friendly. The downhill section of the Kuller trail will be beginner friendly. The uphill section of the Kuller trail will be an access point for users approaching the Round the Mountain trail.

Other downhill single track sections are already in place and will need to be worked on to allow for downhill use. There is also discussion about constructing another beginner trail in the low Spinnaker section of the Snow Bowl. This area contains good soils to work with and can be constructed with a combination of Snow Bowl resources as well as volunteers.

The chair lift will also provide an avenue to venture into the Coastal Mountain Land Trust Ragged Mountain Preserve, descend into the Rollins Road Trails, and allow riders to return to the Snow Bowl.



Lift Served Comparative Analysis

Bike Park	Distance from Camden	Total Trails	Beginner Trails	Adult Ticket Price	Kids Ticket Price
Attitash Ski Area	137 mi	32	0	\$35.00	\$25.00
Okemo	260 mi	6	3	\$50.00	\$30.00
Highland Mountain Bike Park	207 mi	23	5	\$44.00	\$21.00
Sunday River	112 mi	25	5	\$29.00	\$18.00
Burke Mountain	178 mi	8	2	\$40.00	\$30.00
Thunder Mountain Bike Park	274 mi	13	2	\$44.00	\$29.00
Killington Mountain Bike Park	280 mi	34	7	\$55.00	\$42.00

Camden Snow Bowl		6	2	\$25.00	\$20.00
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Pro forma for Camden Snow Bowl Summer Mountain Bike Operations

Expenses		Revenues
A. Daily Labor Hours	hours/	
Assumptions	day	Fixed Revenue
2 lift operators at the top		15 A. Season Passes
2 lift operators at the bottom		15 B. Junior Passes 50
at \$100.00 \$ 5,000.00		
1 mechanic	8	C. Adult passes 75 at \$150.00
\$11,250.00		
1 trail builder	8	D. Kitchen Rental Revenue
	\$2,000.00	
1 patroller	4	E. Summer Bike Shop Rental Revenue
\$3,000.00		
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Total Daily Labor hours:	7.5 fte	50 Total Fixed Revenue
	\$21,250.00	

B. Labor Cost		Break Even Point
	Assumptions	40 days of operations
in the months of		
Assumptions	\$20/hr including wages,	
June, July, Aug, Sept., and Oct.	taxes, benefits	Saturdays and
Sundays only		

Daily Labor Expense (50 hours per day at \$20.00/hr) \$1,000.00
 A. 40 Days at 1540 a day equals total expense of
 \$61,600.00

C. Electricity			
Assumptions	\$55.00 per hour	\$61,600	total
expense			
to run the double lift	\$21,250	fixed revenue	

Total Daily Electric Expense (\$55.00/hr at 8 hours) \$440.00
 \$40,350 In Ticket Sale revenue to break even

D. Lift Maintenance		B. Total Lift Sales required for
Break Even		
Assumptions: \$100 per day		\$40,350 revenue
needed to break even		
	25	daily lift ticket
Total Daily Lift Maintenance Expense	\$100	
	1614	total lift tickets (break even rev
divided by \$25.00)		

C. Daily Ticket Sales required for Break Even

	1614	total lift tickets	
E. Total Expenses Per Day		\$1,540.00	40
days of operation	40.35	41 lift tickets sold per day	

Summary:

Enhancing the mountain biking offerings at Ragged Mountain is not only feasible but it offers the potential to improve the sustainability of this unique municipal recreation facility. We believe the improvements can be accomplished at a reasonable cost and when completed will enable the area to remain a featured asset of the Town of Camden for many years to come.



Summary

It is not new news that the Camden Snow Bowl needs to generate more non skier revenue in order to be a viable operation. The challenge is executing a plan. The Highland Plan was comprehensive and provided a foundation to help guide stakeholders toward tailoring a scalable path toward lift served mountain biking.

Version 2 allows the Snow Bowl team to explore lift served mountain bike activities. The initial stage is a Saturday-Sunday operation in the summer months. The intent is to progress in an incremental fashion that allows the Snow Bowl to pursue this endeavor in a responsible manner. Additionally, version 2 requires minimal Snow Bowl investment. If it's decided that lift served mountain biking does not cash flow, the Snow Bowl is not at a substantial loss.

We live in a community where mountain biking continues to grow. The local chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association has nearly 100 members, there is an active Monday night Youth Series in the summer, and there is a very successful mountain bike team at the local high school. There is strong local interest in the sport and with strong effort put forth by the Snow Bowl management team this could be a great opportunity. Additionally there is a large group on Snow Bowl ski pass holders who understand the significance of community skiing. This group of pass holders will understand the importance of helping to support a summer operation. A successful summer operation will help make a successful winter operation.

