

Keep Winter Cool Campaign

A Partnership With Ski and Snowboard Industry to Fight Global Warming

2004 marks the second year of the Natural Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) partnership with America's ski and snowboard industry in a groundbreaking campaign to fight global warming. Called Keep Winter Cool, the project is designed to raise visibility and public understanding of the climate challenge directly in the environment where its consequences are most immediate: on the slopes. The tone and message of the campaign is upbeat, focused on solutions and preserving the ski and snowboard season and winter recreation more broadly.

Efforts include skier education at the mountains, online and in the media, as well as direct outreach to elected officials by local ski areas and their parent companies. Many ski companies are also cutting emissions by using clean energy in parts of their operations, and retrofitting buildings and equipment for increased energy efficiency. Skiers and boarders can also participate directly in campaign actions via the KeepWinterCool.org website.

NRDC's alliance with the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) has generated important press coverage, especially in outdoor and enthusiast media. And it is drawing serious notice in important political battles.

2004 Kick-Off on Sustainable Slopes Day

This year's keystone events take place Saturday, February 21, 'Sustainable Slopes Day,' which includes special outreach at 170 resorts across the country, along with an aggressive media push to spotlight the effects of global warming from both a business, recreational and environmental angle. NRDC is working especially hard in key states including New England, Colorado, California and West Virginia.

NRDC has created a variety of fun and attractive campaign materials for the events, including beer coasters being used in resort bars and a variety of stickers, posters and banners displayed and given out at ski destinations. Resorts including Aspen and Angelfire have installed a Burma Shave-style series of Keep Winter Cool signs on lift towers, accompanied by spots on chairlift safety bar ads. All the materials are designed to elevate the issue and to encourage the skiers and boarders to learn more and take action through the KeepWinterCool.org website.

A Potent Political Force

Bringing ski companies to the global warming issue illustrates the vital business and economic dimension of the global warming problem. With NRDC's help they're letting elected officials know that climate is a bottom line issue.

Forty ski areas signed a letter to U.S. Senators urging their support for bi-partisan legislation by Republican John McCain (AZ) and Democrat Joe Lieberman (CT) to cut heat-trapping pollution. (It came within seven votes of passing last November; sponsors promised a quick rematch.) NRDC also featured ski area concerns in global warming radio advertising during the New Hampshire primary campaign season.

NRDC policy and communications experts are also meeting regularly with resorts owners to new advocacy opportunities. Key possibilities for the coming year include the increasingly important state battles over renewable energy standards, especially in the Western states.