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# Hood River News

Official Newspaper, City of Hood River and Hood River County



**Gorge Weather**

September 26, 2004

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**Photographs from around the Valley**

## High stakes proposals

Meadows looks for more real estate — on Mount Adams

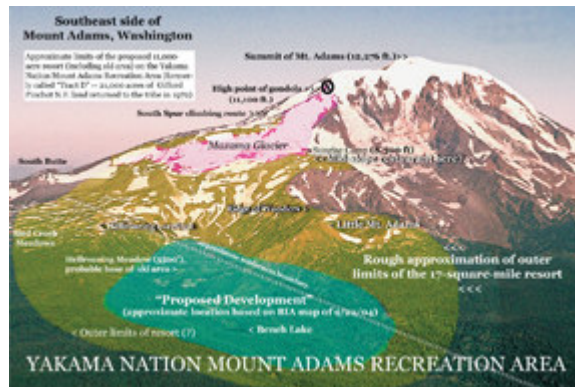


Photo and graphics by Darryl Lloyd

Without seeing the master plan, but after studying the boundaries of the proposed eco-resort on Mount Adams, Darryl Lloyd produced this map of what and where development might occur on Mount Adams.

### By CHRISTIAN KNIGHT

News staff writer  
 September 24

Its top chairlift would unload skiers at 11,100 feet, making it the highest ski area in North or South America.

Its 2,500-units of housing, including condominiums, houses and a hotel, would slate it the first international destination ski resort in Washington or Oregon.

Its casino, three 18-hole golf courses, interpretive center and village would qualify it as a year-round, eco-resort.

What the Yakama Nation is trying to figure out right now, however, is whether all of this, the eight chairlifts, gondola, tram and spa, would decimate one of its most powerful spiritual symbols – Mount Adams, or Pah-to. This June, Mount Hood Meadows officials approached the Yakama Nation with a master plan to develop a mega

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international destination resort on the southeast side of Mount Adams.

That area is the western-most boundary of the Yakama's 1.4 million-acre reservation, which stretches from Mabton to Yakima. The National Forest Service manages the western slope.

For skiers, the resort would offer the most vertical terrain in the country, 5,700 feet.

And the drive from Hood River wouldn't be too bad – 45 minutes along improved roads, says Mount Hood Meadows General Manager Dave Riley.

"It's a logical extension of where Hood River is going," Riley said. "At the end of the day, however, it's the Yakama Nation's decision. What's good for the members of the Yakama Indian Nation is what's most important."

To facilitate the Yakama, Meadows has included in its master plan a Yakama Indian Nation Learning Institute, a facility that would house classrooms, interpretive centers and summer camps for tribal youth.

"What we envision is a resort that reflects and interprets the culture of the Yakama Indian Nation," Riley said.

The resort would also offer the Yakama a significant boost to its economy, which currently relies heavily on timber, agriculture and a casino in Toppenish, Wash. But at what price?

Ernie James Teeias is a Yakama Nation tribe member from White Swan, near Toppenish. Carpal Tunnel surgery has kept him out of work at Wapato for the last month, so he's been helping his son and grandson sell salmon at the parking lot near Char Burger, beneath the Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks.

He heard about the proposal about a month ago. It scares him.

"That's our wilderness up there," he says. "It has a lot of religious meaning for a lot of people. I would be completely against it. Everybody (tribe members) I've talked to has been against it."

Unlike municipal city council meetings, in which elected councilors vote and ultimately decide on issues, the Yakama decide on its issues through a direct democracy: each tribal member has one vote and the majority wins. To open a meeting, however, at least 250 tribal members must be present.

"I would go back," Teeias says. "Just to vote. But I don't think my vote would make any difference. Cause everybody I talked to would vote against it."

Teeias' stance doesn't necessarily represent that of the entire 10,000-member Yakama Nation. Soon after the General Council heard the proposal, it delegated a committee, which oversees Mount Adams affairs, to evaluate the proposal.

"The Yakama Nation doesn't just jump into anything," said the chairman of the Yakama Nation, Jerry Meninick. "We study all the what-ifs. We have to be sure."

Before it can move on anything, Meninick said, the tribe has to explore the environmental, cultural, economic impacts, as well as the solution of a 49-year land battle between the federal government and the tribe. In 1855, a survey incorrectly omitted 21,000 acres from the Yakama's reservation.

Not until 1972 did President Richard Nixon return those 21,000 acres to the Yakama through an executive order. By then, however, Congress had passed the Wilderness Act of 1964, which had protected millions of acres of forest throughout the nation from development, including 10,000 of the most pristine acreage Nixon was returning to the Yakama.

The Yakama accepted the returned land with a pledge, according to Yakima Tribal Council Resolution T-13-71: "(The Tribe)... will continue to recognize the dedication of that portion included in the Mt. Adams wilderness use ...". Simply put: Are the Yakama obligated to manage those 10,000 acres of previously classified wilderness, as wilderness?

"In order for the tribe to even initiate those types of plans (development on Mount Adams) we have the responsibility of seeking approval (from federal and state governments)," Meninick said. "We face an almost unsurmountable amount of red tape."

Mostly, however, tribal leaders are trying to figure out where a modern proposal such as this fits into a culture, which people recognize more by its tradition than its business practices.

"That mountain represents a very significant spiritual side of us as a people," Meninick said. "That right now is butting heads with the contemporary valuation of economics. The question that is directly facing the tribal council and our people, is at what cost of our traditional values do we approve such a venture?"

Already, a conservation group is forming under the urgency of Darryl Lloyd a photographer and climber who has spent much of his professional and recreational life on Mount Adams.

Lloyd formed "Friends of Pah-to" in the 1970s to discourage sloppy recreational use on Mount Adams. Now, with e-mails, maps and arrows on photos, he's resurrecting the old coalition to prevent what he might

call the sloppiest recreational use of all on Adams: development.

"It's an outrage," he said. "An absolute outrage. But it's a delicate thing because it's the Yakama Nation's. We might influence them in some way by massive public outcry ... This will be the mother of all wilderness battles."

Meadows' Riley says he's prepared for the same fight that has followed him through his efforts to develop Cooper Spur and Government Camp.

"I'm expecting the usual opposition from the usual sources to any kind of resort development," he said. "The greater point here: there's a tribe of 10,000 people who are exploring opportunities to improve their prosperity."

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