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Rib Mountain Ski Club Essay

Berg Memorial Scholarship

How Granite Peak's Past and Present Expansions Are Affecting Surrounding Areas

For the people of Central Wisconsin, the location of Granite Peak has been a fixed staple for residents' entire lives. At a whopping 1,950 feet tall it towers over the flat landscape of the surrounding area of Wausau and other nearby towns. As a result of the hill's recreational activities becoming dominant in the culture of the area, skiing has become a staple for visitors passing through to experience. But, how is it that this area expanded to its current area of 400 acres and 74 trails (*Granite Peak Ski Area Ski Resort Area Overview*)? How does Rib Mountain State Park handle this shifting boundary, and what are the possible effects on the natural resources in the area?

Granite Peak's long and unique history began with the local Kiwanis club dedicating a few acres to spark the land acquisition process in 1924, the state followed it up with 160 acres over the next decade. When the hill opened in the winter of 1938, it was one of the first ski areas in North America, and was first named Rib Mountain Winter Sports Area. After opening, the hill only consisted of six runs and a lift that was a half-mile long run by an 85 horsepower Ford V-8 motor with a standard truck transmission (*History of Granite Peak*). In the years to come, Granite Peak has been completely transformed in the 85 years since its first inception. Not only does the Granite Peak hold outdoor enthusiasts' attention in the winter, but also spring, summer, and fall months when Rib Mountain State Park is open for the activities of hiking, biking, and other pastimes.

Rib Mountain State Park and Granite Peak Ski Hill have had a close relationship throughout the years, but there have been concerns voiced about the effects that this addition proposed in 2015 will bring. Rib Mountain State Park's Property Supervisor Bayli Christorf weighs in on this stating that "Implications are expansions to the east and the west, hiking trails could be affected by ski runs, and natural resources will still be impacted...Where the ski runs will be placed will be considered to reduce some impacts." It is a fine line that must be balanced to allow for the maximum amount of recreation in the area, while still allowing the ecology to remain as untouched as possible. In this case, this line is a real boundary, which the expansion borders, along the Rib Mountain Talus Forest State Natural Area. For those who argue that this most recent expansion is not needed due to the large number of runs at Granite Peak currently, Christorf also mentions that in regards to approval of both the DNR and The Natural Resources Board "Part of it comes down to the demand and recreational need, there would need to be a legitimate need for a ski expansion." Which there is, as Granite Peak is looking to include more introductory level areas, therefore allowing both entities to approve the proposal. Though this expansion proposal has had its ups and downs, all of the past expansions to Granite Peak have made it the state renowned ski hill that it is today, with sustainable management practices being used to allow for more public outdoor recreation.

Works Cited

“History of Granite Peak.” *Granite Peak*, 2 Nov. 2022,
<https://www.skigranitepeak.com/history-of-granite-peak/>.

“Granite Peak Ski Area Ski Resort Area Overview.” *OnTheSnow*,
<https://www.onthesnow.com/wisconsin/granite-peak-ski-area/ski-resort>.