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Eagle Point: Utah's Newest Resort

[October 7, 2010 - 3:03pm]

by Brigid Mander

Dormant for eight years, now, the former sleepy Elk Meadows Ski Resort in southern Utah is prepping to get back in the game, as Eagle Point. As Utah's 14th ski resort, the ski hill has a new name, a new plan, new ownership and, most importantly, still gets plenty of snow.



Tucked into the Tushar Mountains, the third highest range in Utah, the resort is slated to open on December 15th, weather permitting.

With a base at 9,100', it offers 1,300' of vertical, 400" of annual snowfall, and six fixed-grip chairlifts. The new owners intend to expand the ski hill without allowing it to lose the hidden gem reputation it had. Snowmaking is in the future to extend the season, as well as a focus on guided backcountry trips, and additions to the base area and lodging.

It is about equidistant from Salt Lake and Las Vegas (a 3- hour drive), and one hour from the Cedar City airport. The original ski area was the result of two neighboring ski resorts, Elk Meadows and Mount Holly, founded in the 1970's and 1980's, which joined together and catered to skiers from southern Utah, Las Vegas, Phoenix, and southern California, until it shut down in 2002.

In the late 1990's, new owners bought it with the intention of creating a high-end, private ski resort, but a declining real estate market and several other factors forced them to close the area in 2002 in financial straits. Last December, a trio of investors forming XE Capital bought the property at auction.

"We're just selling the skiing experience," said NYC-based CEO Shane Gadbaw. "This year is all about a place where people can ski and have fun...getting back with the locals, reestablishing a connection to skiers from Las Vegas, southern Utah, and southern California." One of the ski area's previous selling points previously was as a family friendly escape from the crowds, lines, glitz and hype found many other places, with lots of powder and backcountry access. The new owners say they are intent on keeping that feel, of Eagle Point as a hidden gem and an escape in the mountains.

While the resort plans on staying smaller than Utah's more famous ski resorts, they are also 'bringing a little of New York', said Gadbaw, in the service, the creativity, and the food. Cuisine is one spot where they have a definite leg up; Gadbaw's brother is chef at NYC hotspot Marea and is serving as a consultant for their restaurants.

The resort will approach expansion slowly, as the new owners say the current character of the hill is something they want to preserve. In addition to snowmaking, guiding, there will be increased lodging at the base in addition to the 120 units already there and the 350 beds in nearby Beaver. Planned lodging will range from the family friendly to higher priced, more deluxe options.

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