

Aspen Daily News

Printed From: http://www.aspendailynews.com/article_11435

Powder hounds bark; BOCC listens

Thomas Watkins - Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

08/25/2005 00:16

Send To Printer »

Concerned that the public is being deprived from using 400 acres of "primo ski terrain" on the back of Aspen Mountain, a local activist on Wednesday appealed to the Pitkin Board of County Commissioners to look into the situation.

Michael Sladdin, founder and spokesman of a collective of skiers called Powder to the People, told commissioners that he and fellow powder riders are appalled about the U.S. Forest Service's recent decision to enforce an earlier prohibition on motorized traffic on Aspen Mountain's Richmond Ridge.

"It's primo ski terrain," said Sladdin after the meeting. "Locals have been enjoying that area for 40 years."

Sladdin said a Forest Service rule bars snowmobiles from entering the terrain, effectively precluding powder hounds from getting easy access to fresh lines. Aspen Skiing Co., however, is still allowed to take paying skiers into the area because it has a special permit from the Forest Service to run Aspen Mountain Powder Tours.

Last ski season, the Forest Service posted a ranger on Richmond Ridge four days a week. His job was to tell snowmobile drivers about the prohibition.

"They just tell you that you are not allowed to be back here, that this is Forest Service land and you need a special permit," said Sladdin, a local of 16 years who has been skiing Richmond Ridge for the last decade or so.

He added that he doesn't want to create hostility between his 20-member organization and either the Forest Service or SkiCo, but wants to work toward a solution that will enable everyone to enjoy the area.

"We just want to coexist out there," he said.

The BOCC appeared interested in the issue and agreed to put it on the agenda of its next meeting with the Forest Service's district ranger. That meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 13 in the Plaza Meeting Room.

"This is really a privatization of public lands," said Commissioner Jack Hatfield.

thomas@aspendailynews.com

© 2006 Aspen Daily News
All Rights Reserved
Site Design by ProjectWest