

# Ski resorts need to limit the number of visitors

With this season coming to an end, post a few long overdue powder days, it is time for reflection. We can all agree that it has been another disappointing year in terms of snowfall and the impact on our reservoirs and water supply is concerning in light of the ongoing drought. Besides the often less-than-optimal snow conditions, our local resorts struggled with COVID and related staffing challenges.

That said, it was great to see the majority of these resorts, both those owned by multi-resort operators and the independents, pull off the season in relative style by continuing to provide a great guest experience in terms of lift operation, snow grooming and making, ski school, food and beverage service, parking and traffic management and general customer service.

Sadly, it has been well documented in both traditional and social media that Vail Resorts did the opposite by falling down on all these fronts at Park City Mountain Resort (PCMR) and across their roster

of North American resorts.

Great guest experience starts with controlling guest visits. While several members of the community were concerned when Alta implemented a weekend and holiday parking reservation system this season, I believe most people would agree that it proved to be manageable, not that much of an inconvenience, and did not impact its old school guest experience and corresponding cult status as one of the nation's most iconic resorts.

Similarly, Jackson Hole's recently implemented mountain access reservation system has been deemed an overwhelming success at controlling crowds and maximizing guest experience, even on the biggest powder days. This system was a byproduct of collaboration between the town's citizens and businesses and the mountain company, and is now being emulated by several other large national resorts, including Aspen, Big Sky, Brighton and Taos, who are requiring reservations for national pass

holders starting next year.

Alterra also made it clear that they are focused on perpetuating Deer Valley's renowned premium guest experience by not including the resort in their Base Ikon Pass, thus limiting day visitors. Several non Alterra owned Ikon resorts, including Alta, Aspen, Jackson Hole and now Snowbasin and Sun Valley (post defecting from Vail's Epic Pass), are limiting guests by requiring Ikon Base Pass holders to pay a premium fee for access that almost equates to the cost of Alterra's full Ikon Pass.

Contrarily, Vail's recent investor communications and Epic Pass structure and pricing for next year signal they have no intentions of limiting guest visits and instead believe their resorts have the capacity to support significantly more visitors. Unfortunately, Vail also confirmed that they consider PCMR to be one of their second tier resorts, despite its rich legacy, by continuing to not limit access to the resort in their Local Epic Pass as they do

with Beaver Creek, Vail and Whistler, where you get 10 days combined access across all three resorts.

At this juncture in the ski industry's evolution, it is important to note that most events, activities and attractions (e.g. concerts, sporting events, golf courses, state and national parks, etc.) limit the number of guests and tickets sold for reasons that are rather obvious. Why should ski resorts be any different?

Yes, skiable terrain and lift capacity at some resorts can be expanded. However, many resort host communities do not have the infrastructure, physical space and resources to handle an ever increasing number of visitors.

Clearly, nobody likes higher prices and not being able to do what you want when you want. However, when faced with the prospects of potentially ever shorter seasons, Utahns and the broader skier and snowboarder community must decide now more than ever what resort operators and pass companies (Epic, Ikon, Mountain Collective,



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etc.) we want to support with our dollars. Those focused on maximizing daily guest visits for the benefit of their investors or those focused on guest experience?

Our beloved mountain towns and culture are facing an existential threat. While the industry's progressive operators should be commended, the most surefire way to bring about change is for companies to see the consequences of their actions reflected in their financial performance and stock price, if publicly traded. Promises are easy to make, execution is hard.

*Eric Moxham is a Park City resident, outdoor sports enthusiast and entrepreneur.*

# IOC and local committees must confront their mistakes

It took bombing a maternity ward, photos of horrific mass graves and cities reduced to rubble in an unprovoked war against Ukraine to finally get Russia banned from the Paralympics by the International Olympic Committee and from world soccer, ongoing skating championships and most other sports.

The Olympics have now asked sports associations to ban the Russians. Apparently, state-sponsored drug cheating, rigging other countries' elections, bribing officials to host world cups and calling the head of FIFA a Nobel Prize winner for giving Russia the World Cup bid before he was fired for corruption weren't enough.

There are a series of questions that the International Olympic Committee and future local organizing committees — perhaps including Salt Lake City — will have to consider. The IOC needs to give clear answers on why it blocked parents, didn't disqualify Russia — especially its star skater — and ignored China's human rights violations.

In its upcoming conference calls

and meetings — for their "after-action" reports — the IOC and its executive committee face these and other serious issues they need to confront for the Olympics to be successful in the next several cycles.

In the Beijing Games, there were heroes and Utah performers to celebrate, with 19 Utah residents winning medals, including individual Gold medalists Nathan Chen, Alex Hall and Erin Jackson.

However, during the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, the IOC, doping officials and local police partnered and enforced the Olympics' anti-doping laws. The games reserved seats for parents, and there were no human rights crackdowns needed against innocents.

The Beijing backdrop, which the networks had to include given the diplomatic boycott, was that China was forcing its Uyghur minority into concentration camps. Tennis player Peng Shuai had to claim her allegations of rape against a former Chinese vice-president was a misunderstanding. China has a history of silencing problems.

Last year, to cope with the death

of her mother, Sha'Carri Richardson smoked marijuana in a state where it was legal before heading to the 2022 Tokyo Olympics. The US Anti-Doping Agency then suspended Richardson. The fact that the Court of Arbitration allowed Russian athlete Kamila Valieva to continue to compete after testing positive for endurance-improving heart medication because it would cause "irreparable harm" is preposterous.

They accepted Valieva because she's a minor, but if she's a minor and requires drugs to compete at the same level as adults, then she should be judged and treated as an adult with regards to her narcotics use.

We asked several 14- and 15-year-olds if they were told the rules before they played a sports event, and they all said "yes" or "of course" and asserted they "played by the rules." If you're in the Olympics, you play by the Olympics' clear rules. Olympic champion Scott Hamilton was right when he said, "She should have been sent home."

Incidentally, questions remain on how Valieva fell just enough

(two falls, two slips) to remove her from the podium while two other Russians got gold and silver. At the end of her program, she slammed her arm down as though to say, "Take that." Who knows what the Russian program leaders made her do to avoid a medal ceremony embarrassment.

During the 2021 Tokyo Paralympics, blind and deaf athlete Becca Meyers had to withdraw because the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, which is part of the IOC, denied her a "reasonable and essential accommodation" by blocking her mother — her caretaker — from attending. The Paralympics insisted there would be a personal care assistant there, one she never worked with. To say that these were the rules insisted by Tokyo due to coronavirus is not an answer.

Shaun White described the moment when his mother hugged him after his gold medal during the 2006 Olympics. "The magnitude of what I had just done hit when my mom hugged me." These athletes lost that moment last year. How do you expect them to act without



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their parents there? Elections are being won and lost right now in America based on allowing parental decision-making. Teens need parents in their lives. If the Olympics is the sports model for "educating youth," they must include parents.

The IOC has complete control and final say on how the Olympics

*Please see OLYMPICS, E6*

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