SOLUTIONS LAB · TUE, OCT 13 · 1:15-3:30 PM

Solutions Lab: Mountain Resorts (Hosted by the National Ski Areas Association)

Ski areas feel climate change first, and their choices shape the housing, forests and economy of the towns around them. Six resort case studies offered tools a town can borrow: staff scenario workshops, a housing gap analysis, rock dust carbon removal, ski hill forest thinning, local offsets and a legal brief on federal climate rules.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Rehearse a bad season before the next one.** Brendle Group walked about 25 Grand Targhee staff through low-snow and wildfire smoke scenarios, mapped ripple effects, and ranked fixes.
2. **Start with the housing gap, not the funding tool.** LIHTC serves about 60% of area median income, but many valleys struggle most to house middle-income workers.
3. **Waste rock dust can store carbon cheaply.** Mt. Rose spread 11 tons of waste basalt dust on half an acre. Soil pH, calcium and magnesium rose, and modeling showed about 0.45 tons of CO2 removed in seven months.
4. **Local money unlocks federal forest work.** On Bald Mountain, donors matched federal funds by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Thinning also opened 430 acres of new ski terrain, which helped win broad community support.
5. **Offsets can be local and verifiable.** With few clean power options in Montana, Bridger Bowl offsets direct emissions through Verra-verified regenerative grazing on ranches it can visit.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Hold a climate scenario workshop with frontline staff.** Use one winter and one summer scenario; sort fixes into quick wins and must-dos.
- ☐ **Do a housing gap analysis by worker type,** from seasonal staff to families, counting beds versus units.
- ☐ **Pair seasonal users to share housing.** At Marolt Ranch, the Aspen Music Festival fills about 300 beds in summer and ski and lodging workers fill them in winter.
- ☐ **Add housing without big construction.** Deed-restriction buy-downs (one coalition did 30 in 18 months), hotel conversions, caretaker units in new buildings, and season-pass perks for landlords.
- ☐ **Give forest projects one dedicated manager.** Add weekly field-season meetings and public tours to keep partners and residents on board.
- ☐ **Extend fuel breaks onto private land.** Next year NFF plans to use NRCS EQIP funding on private parcels to close a continuous fuel break south of Bald Mountain.
- ☐ **Consider joining the winter economy amicus brief.** Aspen One invites resorts and mountain towns to sign on, at no cost, to an economic brief in the case challenging EPA's endangerment finding repeal.

BY THE NUMBERS

603 acres
Logged and hand thinned on Bald Mountain

~55,000
Trees planted on Bald Mountain

0.45 t CO2
Removed on half an acre in 7 months (plus or minus 0.1)

30 in 18 mo
Home buy-downs by a regional housing coalition

370 units
Aspen One goal for year-round staff by 2035

$80B
U.S. ski industry, with about 600,000 jobs

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Buy-downs and middle-income housing are hard to fund with state and federal programs, which mostly target lower incomes. Philanthropy can fill the gap.
- ! Utility rules can stall clean power: Bridger Bowl has hit Montana's solar limit at about 3% of its operations, and green tariff talks have taken 10 years.

RESOURCES

U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit
toolkit.climate.gov

Climate Explorer (county projections)
crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org

National Forest Foundation
nationalforests.org

Riseline Foundation (rock weathering)
riselinefoundation.org

CONTACTS

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