



Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce Newsletter February 2024

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Wolf Creek Ski Area Alberta Peak



Did you know?

Wolf Creek Ski Area (WCSA) is a ski area in southwest Colorado, located on the Wolf Creek Pass between Pagosa Springs and South Fork. It is best known for receiving more average annual snowfall than any other resort in Colorado, at about 430 inches per year.

The following is the final segment in a series about this vital local treasure.

The first sale of the area

The first 5 years showed slow but steady growth and there was an increasing need for more full-time management and some investment capital. "The corporation began considering selling the area to someone else to develop."

The San Luis Valley Historian records this history from Mr. Sharp: "About that time, we felt we were getting too big for volunteer management by a board of directors. With the growing number of skiers, we thought we needed to enlarge the area. We needed full-time management and a million dollars to develop it properly. We didn't think we could raise that much money. We considered selling it. In the fall of 1960, after considering several offers to buy or take over the area, we entered into a deal with Mr., Joe Dyer of Dallas and a group headed by Clay Scott, a lawyer, to sell the assets of the corporation. They put Mr. Joe Brown in as resident manager and took over at the beginning of the 1960-61 ski season. They operated it for two years, however, the third year they didn't even open the area! Brown had left the country, and no one looked after the area or was in charge."

"So, in February 1963, we started proceedings to repossess the area and operate it. Our legal claim was their failure to make payments for two years. We got possession in the late fall, just barely in time to check over the equipment and get it into working order."

Therefore, from 1963 to 1964 season until 1971, various other local individuals served as manager, ski school and ski patrol directors and coordinators, almost all without any pay! The area continued to grow for the next decade with the addition of two more Poma tows and increased runs with slope groomers.

The second sale of the area

Continuously struggling to remain financially solvent, there was continuing effort by the board to complete a sale. In 1971 the annual financial report indicated \$48,000 of skier revenue, an additional \$16,000 of snack bar, ski rental and other miscellaneous income. There were \$19,000 in salaries plus a manager's commission of \$3,149. There were \$93,692 in total assets and a gross profit of \$2,191. That year Sharp and most of the directors had been running the corporation and ski area for over ten years and the board determined once again that a sale was the best "end game". Glen Edmonds, then publisher of the *Pagosa Springs Sun*, was a stockholder and had become president when Sharp stepped into the treasurer's role. Ben Pinnell, a Dallas realtor, brought in Don Carter as a prime investor. Pinnell also interested three Dallas Cowboys as investors in promoting Wolf Creek: Charlie Waters, Dave Edwards, and Mike Ditka, who used to coach the Chicago Bears and the New Orleans Saints. The Dallas investor group purchased Wolf Creek in 1972 for a total of \$275,000. They installed Wolf Creek's first chairlift in 1974. It was installed by Borvig, an east coast lift manufacturer. Sharp remained the treasurer for

the new Dallas investors for a few years.

Sale of the ski area to Kingsbury Pitcher

The ski area was eventually sold by the Dallas Investment Co. to Kingsbury Pitcher in 1976, another pioneer of Colorado skiing lore. Pitcher is best known for becoming a major stockholder in and CEO of the Wolf Creek Ski Development Company in 1976, and then later taking full ownership and control of the company in 1978. "Pitch," as he was affectionately known, was an inductee into the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame on October 17, 2014.

The Wolf Creek Ski Hall of Famers

Charles Elliott, another of the other pioneers at Wolf Creek Ski area was officially inducted into the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame in 2011. Both Charles and Pitch were preceded into the Hall of Fame since, on October 18, 1996, Ed Sharp was posthumously inducted into the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame (now known as the Colorado Snowsports Hall of Fame) in the Sport Builder category, for his long involvement in the development and growth of the Wolf Creek Ski Area and his role as president of the corporation for 12 years. He died in September 1996 at age 85, 33 days before his induction ceremony.

Future

WCSA's future as a local's resort is less certain, in light of Texas-billionaire Red McCombs' proposed development of the "Village at Wolf Creek," a year-round resort of 8,000 people adjacent to the ski area. For decades McCombs has pursued his vision for the development and has been working with the Forest Service to acquire highway access to the property, which is an inholding.

Over several decades the Forest Service has been the target of multiple lawsuits from community groups for incompletely assessing the environmental impact of approving a highway access point to the property and withholding information requested through the Freedom of Information Act. Following the most recent lawsuit, the developers reached agreement not to break ground at the site until the case is resolved in court.

Opponents of the Village state that the development would likely harm a vital wildlife corridor between the Weminuche and South San Juan Wilderness areas, alter backcountry experiences on Wolf Creek Pass, compete with local businesses in nearby Pagosa Springs and South Fork, adversely affect rare fen wetlands, and stress water supplies in the Rio Grande watershed. Proponents claim the "Village" would improve the economics of the region.

This is the last of three articles about the history of Wolf Creek Ski Area!

(info gathered from Wikipedia)

Business of the Month:



Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges Colorado

[Visit Website](#)

Address: Monte Vista, CO

The Friends is an independent, non-profit group dedicated to supporting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge System. Our mission is to promote awareness of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Alamosa, Baca, and Monte Vista) through education, assisting in refuge projects, and supporting visitor services.

The Friends formed in 1999. The Friends partner with the Refuge Complex and other local entities to plan and operate the annual Monte Vista Crane Festival, which brings thousands of visitors from all over the world to the San Luis Valley. Among our many projects, the Friends have contributed to the building of the Meadow Lark Trail on the Monte Vista NWR, the Discovery Room at the Alamosa NWR, many years of Kid's Crane Festivals, and funded a critical Crane viewing parking area on the Monte Vista Refuge. We help the refuge with the Friends and Neighbors Picnic every year, informing the neighbors about the latest happenings.

Crane silhouettes are available for sponsorship for the 2024 Swoop of the Cranes! [Click here to visit the Crane Swoop website](#) for more details.

**2024 SPONSORSHIPS
NOW AVAILABLE!**

**REGISTER AT
MONTEVISTACHAMBER.ORG
OR CALL 719-852-2731**

**THE CRANE SILHOUETTES ARE
READY TO BE PICKED UP
AND PAINTED!!**

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The Craft and Nature Fair

41st Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

March 8, 9, 10th
2024

Get ready to be thrilled! This weekend is packed with crafty, homey, and garden-y vendors. You'll also get to soak up some nature, check out some wildlife info booths, and catch a live bird rescue demo! Don't miss out!

For more information or to sign up as a vendor,
please check out the Chamber website at
montevistachamber.org or call 719-852-2731

Crane Craft and Nature Fair Vendor Registration

Questions or seeking information? - Click the buttons on the right-hand side to view more information about Monte Vista as well as

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Commerce

The next Monte Vista Chamber board

*various local events in
the San Luis Valley!*

meeting Thursday, February 29th at 7 AM.

Member Updates



*We hope you decide to
move messages from
the Monte Vista
Chamber to your
Primary tab from the
Promotions tab. By
doing so, all future
emails from us should
be delivered to the
Primary tab. Thanks!*

**CHECK OUT
MEMBERSHIP
BENEFITS HERE!**

New Members:

- Mountain Valley Mortuary
- Savory Blys Bakery, LLC
- San Luis Valley Food
Coalition/Rio Grand Farm
Park

Renewing Members:

- Healdworks, Inc.
- Colorado Potato
Administrative Committee
- Dairy Queen
- Ecodynamics
- Mark Lounsbury
- Master Print
- Upper Rio Grande Animal
Society
- Valley Publishing

Do you have an event in the San Luis Valley that you would like to add to our website? Please click the button below to fill out an Event Submission Form with as much information as

possible. We will add the event to the Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce website as soon as possible and will contact you if we have any further questions about the event.

Thank you!

Event Submission Form