MT. HOOD MEADOWS
SKI RESORT

August 5, 2005

The Honorable Senator Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate
Chair, Subcommittee on Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development
Washington, D.C. 20510-6125

RE: Winter Olympic Opportunities in 2010

Dear Senator Smith,

The 2010 winter Olympic Games will attract approximately 6,000 athletes and officials, 10,000 members of the media, and 14,000 volunteers.

Salt Lake City reported the 2002 Olympics attracted 220,000 total visitors during the 17 days of the event. 90,000 of those visitors were domestic – a good portion of that from the western United States.

But the legacy that Vancouver and Whistler will have created through their hosting of the 2010 Olympics will have an impact long into the future.

1. The key 'win' for Salt Lake City's hotel industry was the massive international exposure. Whistler will benefit from this exposure for decades to come.

2. VANCOUVER TO WHISTLER - SEA TO SKY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS
   The $600 million construction project will reduce the drive time from Vancouver to Whistler by 30 minutes.

3. The construction of world class winter sports training facilities and competition venues in Vancouver and at Whistler will attract enthusiasts and spectators for training and competition long into the future.

However, studies indicate that the economic impact with the biggest payoffs will require an exemplary tourism marketing program both before and after the Games for the whole of British Columbia (in addition to the Games marketing planned for by the Bid Corporation).

So what can Oregon do to take advantage of this Olympic opportunity?

1. Capitalize on skiers and snowboarders around the world avoiding Whistler during the Olympics, looking for other places to recreate.

2. Travel Oregon should place TV and internet ads during Olympic coverage to reach those "tuned in".

    a. Television ads promoting Utah tourism aired in select West Coast markets reaching 6.1 million people during closing week of the Games. This advertising resulted in nearly 50,000 visits to the Utah.com and skiutah.com website promotion pages and roughly 3,000 calls to the Ski Utah call center.

    b. The official Nagano Games web site set a world and Olympic record, receiving 646 million hits during the 15 days of the Games, peaking at 103,429 hits per minute.

3. Travel Oregon should work closely with the ski areas to leverage international media that travel here to profile and feature their athletes.

    a. Profile packages should be produced and written weeks if not months in advance.

4. Capitalize on the drive traffic through the I-5 and I-84 corridors of spectators traveling to and from the Games.

    a. There could be 15,000 or more spectators from the intermountain west and California traveling through Oregon on their way to and back from the games. Boarder crossing will have to be expedited for automobiles as well as air travel passengers.

5. Establish Oregon grown and manufactured products in Vancouver and Whistler restaurants and retail shops.

6. Oregon Welcome Centers should sell official Olympic merchandise (and Oregon businesses can offer discounts and incentives to those that show their Olympic merchandise to generate incremental repeat business).

And if we do all that, we may see some increase in tourism particularly during the 17 days of the Olympics.

It is interesting to note that the weather patterns and snow quality on Mt. Hood are no different from Whistler, BC. We share the same pacific zone conditions.

If Oregon really wants to increase the economic impact from winter tourism, amenities and event venues that meet the expectation of the international visitor have to be constructed on Mt. Hood.

Portland, Hood River, and Government Camp already have much of the infrastructure needed to host the Olympics or other large winter competitive events. Mt. Hood can provide the venues for the alpine and Nordic events. But consider what is still needed:

1. A village or villages constructed on Mt. Hood to be able to host a delegation of 6,000 athletes and officials.

2. Winter sport competition venues constructed at Mt. Hood and in Portland which will serve as venues during the large events, but also be used to train athletes on Mt. Hood year-round into the future.

3. Transportation improvements between Portland and Mt. Hood and between Government Camp and the major ski areas.

The reality is that Oregon has not been able to capitalize on winter tourism at the level of California, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, or British Columbia because of Forest Service reluctance to approve the necessary amenities and facilities on federal lands at the base of the existing winter sports areas.

Even if Oregon does not pursue an Olympic bid in the future, we can best take advantage of the displaced visitors who would have otherwise gone to Whistler by developing the amenities on Mt. Hood between now and 2010 that are necessary to influence their vacation destination choice. We can use the exposure that the Olympics will bring to the northwest to expose the international tourist to the new facilities, if constructed by 2010.

I leave you with this – until Forest Service policy and strategies change to allow for the construction and development of world class facilities and venues needed to present major winter events and meet the expectations of the winter tourist, we will never capitalize on winter international tourism. Even though we have spectacular mountains and ski slopes, we don't have the amenities and facilities that other winter destinations enjoy. Oregon has a unique combination of a vibrant city in close proximity to a world class winter recreation area but it is incomplete from an international visitor's point of view due to the lack of pedestrian villages at the base of the ski areas. One only needs to visit Whistler or Deer Valley to see what Oregon is missing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this input.

Sincerely,
Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Resort

Dave Riley
Vice President
General Manager