

CHA Applauds Sierra Club Refusal to Back Belleayre Resort Agreement

SHANDAKEN, N.Y., Nov. 2 /PRNewswire/ -- In a statement by its leadership, the Catskill Heritage Alliance (CHA) today praised the refusal by the Sierra Club to sign an Agreement in Principle (AIP) to build a mega-resort on Belleayre Mountain in the Catskills. The statement by the grass-roots citizens group, which spearheaded the initial opposition to the proposed Belleayre Resort at Catskill Park nearly eight years ago, said the 500-member organization "applauded this decision by the nation's most famous and most influential environmental organization."

<http://www.CatskillHeritage.org>

In 2003, the Sierra Club had joined with the CHA and other organizations in the Catskill Preservation Coalition to oppose the resort. When a number of the nationally known members of the Coalition broke with the local organizations this past summer to support the AIP orchestrated by Governor Eliot Spitzer's office, the Sierra Club came under heavy pressure from the Governor and others to sign the AIP. The Club's refusal to do so cited the proposed development's "serious adverse environmental effects."

"We applaud their decision and are grateful to hear their voice on this important issue," said CHA Chairman Rich Schaedle. "With a million and a half members, the Sierra Club is, like the CHA, a true grass-roots organization-the oldest, biggest, and most important environmental organization in the country. We're pleased they stand with us in continuing to oppose this ill-conceived development."

Of particular concern to the Sierra Club was the potential impact of the development on New York City's water supply as well as on "the beauty of the mountain (and) the character of the local towns and villages." The Sierra Club announcement noted that the "compromise" AIP reduces the originally proposed size of the development by a mere 15 percent, placing what had been planned for two sides of the mountain onto just one: 629 housing units, two hotels, an 18-hole golf course, and miles of roads. Much of the construction would be on slopes steeper than 20 percent, despite a state recommendation not to build on any topography steeper than 15 percent, and even the top of the historic Highmount Ridge would not escape forest-clearing and the construction of high-end houses.

Along with the Sierra Club's strong statement of opposition to the proposed resort, the CHA is joined by the member organizations of Save the Mountain: Hardenburgh Association of Residents and Taxpayers (HART), the Highmount Preservation Association (HPA), the Pine Hill Water District Coalition, and Friends of Catskill Park.

<http://www.SavetheMountain.net>

SOURCE Catskill Heritage Alliance