

## **SIERRA CLUB SAYS "NO" TO BELLEAYRE RESORT COMPROMISE, SEES THREAT TO WATER**

(New York, NY – October 31, 2007) The Sierra Club announced that it will not sign on to a recent agreement to build a mega-resort on Belleayre Mountain in the Catskills, citing "serious adverse environmental effects" of the development on New York City's water. It had been predicted that the organization would join the agreement – put together by the developer and Governor Eliot Spitzer - because of political pressure.

With 1.3 million members, 42,000 in New York, The Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

"The Sierra Club has been a part of the coalition fighting this project for years," said Ken Baer, Chairman of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. "The recent agreement would allow an unacceptable amount of building that would be very harmful to the environment, and would set a precedent for more environmentally unsound development. We stand with other local organizations in opposing this agreement." [www.newyork.sierraclub.org](http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org)

"Our concern is the environment. The beauty of the mountain, the character of the local towns and villages, and our water supply -- this development would be a disaster to them all," said Carolyn Zolas, Chair of the Atlantic Chapter Clean Water/Watershed Committee.

Five Catskills environmental and community groups oppose the project, which would add pollution to the headwaters of the Pepacton Reservoir, an unfiltered source of water for NYC. Pollution from development could force the city to filter its water at a cost as high as \$20 - \$30 billion – more than half of New York State's total debt. Visit [www.SaveTheMountain.net](http://www.SaveTheMountain.net) to follow SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review) process developments.

The compromise plan, reached by Governor Spitzer, the developer and several other environmental organizations during closed-door negotiations, still includes 85% of the original plan, stalled for years because of serious environmental concerns. The current plan allows the developer to build 629 housing units, two hotels, an 18-hole golf course, and miles of roads, one of which would travel 3,000 feet above sea level to Highmount Ridge. Many local residents in the sparsely populated area are against the plan, saying it will overrun their communities, clog their two-lane roads, and ruin their tourist-based economy, bringing city-like congestion to the last unspoiled area within 3 hours of New York City.

Governor Spitzer is reportedly offering \$42 million in taxpayers' money to the state-run Belleayre Ski Center to add nine miles of ski trails and special accommodations for the resort. The Department of Environmental Conservation, which runs the ski center, is also the lead agency in the state environmental review of the project.

"Our highest priority should be to protect New York City's water supply. Millions should not be given to support a massive development in the Catskills that could seriously pollute that water," said Susan Lawrence, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Conservation Chair.

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