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Alta Environmental Center, Alta Ski Area
PO Box 8007 • Alta • UT 84092
801.832.1700 • environment@alta.com
alta.com/alta-environmental-center



sustainability 2017 report

Supreme Lift Environmental Mitigation

Alta Ski Area's major project this summer was the replacement of the Cecret and Supreme lifts with a new detachable quad lift. Upon starting this project it was recognized that the majority of the old Cecret lift is in the wetland known as the Albion Fen. To improve upon this, the Forest Service approved the proposal for the bottom portion of the new lift line to bend outside of known wetland.

As the project proceeded, it was determined that the sites of three new lift towers and a small portion of the excavation for the bottom terminal located along the edge of the wetland, met the requirements to be classified as wetland. In harmony with our commitment to protect and improve the well-being of Alta's environment, we worked with the Forest Service and Salt Lake City Public Utilities to develop a mitigation plan that would ensure there was no net loss of wetland.

Our wetland mitigation plan includes removing four of the old Cecret lift tower foundations within the Albion Fen, and restoring approximately 520 square feet (sf) to wetland. The wetland displacement from the three new towers will be 60 sf resulting in a net gain of 460 sf of wetland. Measures were made to save the vegetation and soil layers from the new tower sites and place them back into the ground in order.

Excavation for the base of the new lift disturbed approximately 560 sf of wetland. An earthen swale was used to preserve the disturbed area as wetland, and an additional 1,480 sf of wetland was created as the outlet for the swale. In addition, approximately 2,000 sf of area in the base terminal cut was identified as having wetland potential and was terraced and seeded as wetland. Within all disturbed areas, the topsoil was reserved and placed back, along with native vegetation plugs. Nearby native seed was harvested and spread atop the native topsoil, as well as commercial seed made up of native species identified from the site survey to facilitate rapid recovery.

Alta Ski Area is committed to continuing the mitigation of environmental impacts of projects. Some of our wetland mitigation plan will be implemented next spring-summer, due to early snow this fall. Additional mitigation measures over the next three years will include AEC surveying the site annually for noxious weeds and monitoring native plant recovery, planting an additional 3,000 plants in the project's disturbed area from harvested native seed, and the annual planting of 1,500 native tree seedlings grown from hand-picked seed within Alta. We are confident that the mitigation measures we have implemented and will implement over the next few years through the AEC will result in a net gain of wetland, and potentially a ratio in excess of 5:1.



Managing Our Carbon Footprint

Photo: Colton Rice, April 2017

The 2016-17 season was filled with snow and a renewed zeal for skiing powder. Though the snowfall may have temporarily distracted us from a changing climate, it certainly had an impact on our energy usage. The more snow, the colder the temperatures and the more natural gas we use for heating, the more fuel we use to push the snow around, and the more electricity we use to brighten the darkness from the snowy skies. It's a dilemma, but not the end of our endeavors.

This is where capital investments in renewable energy and advocacy for national carbon emission reduction come in to play. Alta Ski Area is getting close to meeting its energy efficiency targets, so to meet the 2020 goal of a 20% reduction, we must broaden our horizons. The [Climate Challenge](#) from National Ski Areas Association guides members is effectively identifying advocacy opportunities. For Alta, this included supporting [The Carbon Pricing Principles](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#). We know that if energy providers reduce their on-site emissions, this translates to a carbon reduction by the end-user. Advocacy is not just for

the national level, it also holds a place locally and within your state to support renewable energy, cleaner transportation, and conservation. Sustainability can be daunting at first, but from our experience, it is worth the mission.

Continuing Sustainability: A message from our new general manager, Mike Maughan

In the Spring of 1990, Alta Ski Area hired Ernst & Young to computerize their accounting system. I had the opportunity to lead that project which resulted in Onno asking me if I had any interest in working for the ski area. Since I love the outdoors and it is where I feel most at home, my decision to join the Alta family was not difficult. Twenty-seven seasons later, my appreciation and love of the outdoors and Alta have only intensified. The beauty, mystique and charm of Alta coupled with the Alta family make it a unique and special place to be any season of the year. In my opinion, in addition to having the greatest snow on earth, it is also one of the greatest work places on earth.

As General Manager, I am committed to working with the various Alta stakeholders and partners to accommodate and manage growth in environmentally responsible and sustainable ways that enable us to preserve the heart and soul of Alta. The Alta Environmental Center (AEC), under the direction of Maura Olivos, has led Alta Ski Area to be recognized as a ski industry leader in sustainability. Often unheralded, the work accomplished through the AEC reflects a real love, concern and passion for improving and sustaining the Alta environment. There are variety of opportunities for volunteers to be involved in sustainability events managed or sponsored by the AEC that help protect and improve the Alta environment. If you haven't had a chance to be involved, I encourage you to do so. Thank you to those who have been involved, your involvement helps tremendously.

Thanks also to our many partners which enable us to leverage our efforts and accomplish much more than we could on our own. The expertise, collaboration and resources provided by our partners have contributed significantly to quality, depth and magnitude of our sustainability work. And last, but not least, I must recognize and thank the employees that work for the ski area and assist us in our sustainability efforts. Their passion for skiing, concern for our guests and involvement in our sustainability efforts are a significant part of the heart and soul of Alta.



Upcoming Sustainability Events

Adventure learning is the best way to go. Here are this winter's sustainability activities for the whole community.

- **November 29—Birdhouse Contest Deadline:** Start your birdhouse today! This is a free contest for all ages. tracyaviary.org/upcoming-events/skiing-birds
- **December 8 & 9—Skiing & Birds:** We are pleased to host a fundraiser for Alta's Bird Survey Program. Join us Friday at Brewvies for "The Big Year", then Saturday fun on the snow, and après ski. tracyaviary.org/upcoming-events/skiing-birds
- **April 14—Alta Earth Day:** An annual community event building awareness and celebrating the environment. alta.com/the-mountain/events/earth-day
- **Monthly—Bird Surveys:** Join Tracy Aviary on skis the 2nd Monday each month to meet some feathered locals. alta.com/the-mountain/events/birding-on-skis
- **Monthly—Snowshoe with a Naturalist:** Take a short break from skiing and join Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. info@cottonwoodcanyons.org
- **Weekends & Holidays—Tour with a Ranger:** Ski and explore Alta's wild side. alta.com/the-mountain/tour-with-a-ranger



Photo: Dobber Price, Skiing & Birds, March 2017



Corkscrew & Nina's Recovery - Progress Update

This summer was the third and last year of 3-year post restoration commitment for Corkscrew and Nina's Curve runs. The 2014 project included widening and filling of the runs, as well as the removal of a mine overburden disturbing about 4.7 acres total. For the last three years we have put an equal level of revegetation effort each year to assist the native restoration of these runs, including a riparian area. From this point on, we will continue to monitor the site for noxious weeds and native plant recovery. We are hopeful this will be a model for future work in the industry.

- This summer we planted 3,000 native flowers and shrubs, grown from hand-collected Alta seed (over 9,000 plants since 2014).
- Worked with volunteers to restore the riparian zone where the mine overburden once laid (over 140 volunteer hours since 2014).
- Surveyed for invasive weed species and pulled from less than a 0.06 acres, which is down 65% since 2016, and 96% since 2015.



Keeping Up With Summer - By Coleman Worthen

With a summer of record high average temperatures in the Salt Lake valley, a stellar display of wildflowers, and an increased interest in outdoor recreation, we had a record number of visitors in upper Little Cottonwood Canyon. The continued influx of people to the area creates some complex challenges in managing human impacts on the natural environment. In fact it takes a village to address these issues.

Many Alta visitors are unaware that they are in a protected watershed, and that they play a huge role in the health of the area. The Town of Alta staff at the summer info booth, as well as the weekend hosts staffed by Friends of Alta, Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, and the Alta Environmental Center, were absolutely essential in providing guests with useful information on trails, parking, shuttles, and most importantly, tips on how to recreate responsibly in a protected watershed.

The Alta community also organizes many stewardship events each summer. These events at first started as opportunities to introduce people to the sensitive nature of the area and build stewardship. In the process, the partners have recognized these volunteers are essential to managing Alta's environment.

Another step being taken toward addressing our crowding issues, is the formulation of an Alta Summer Trails Plan. This plan has many partners and is being led by the Town of Alta and Alta Ski Area. By designing purpose-built, sustainable-use trails, we can help to alleviate crowding and user conflicts on trails throughout Alta, increase safety between user groups, and reduce the expansion of highly erosive user created trails. A trail network that is designed with the user AND the environment in mind, and one that highlights the areas natural beauty, can benefit everyone by helping preserve the unique character of Alta for decades to come. This a long process and is in its early stages but, we're very excited to roll up our sleeves and see it through. Stay tuned.



My Summer Internship at Alta - By Shelby Sly

Growing up in Park City, the Wasatch Mountains fundamentally shaped my worldview, my passions, and the person I am today. As an avid skier, hiker, and climber, these mountains provided me the ultimate playground and classroom, as well as fostered my deep appreciation for the beautiful landscapes around me, and the natural resources they provide. It wasn't until I moved to Salt Lake City to attend the University of Utah, that I discovered my fondness for Little Cottonwood Canyon. It quickly became my escape from the stress of school and city life.

In the summer of 2016 I was offered an internship with Friends of Alta, which cultivated my love for Alta, its ecosystem and colorful community of people that call Alta home. I was grateful to then be given the opportunity to continue working in Alta as the Environmental Center's Summer Stewardship Intern. After recently graduating from the U with a degree in Environmental and Sustainability Studies and Geography, it feels special to have a position in my field at a ski area. Additionally, my time with the AEC has provided me valuable skills and experience in field surveys, community engagement and education, and geographic information systems (GIS) that has helped me better understand my professional interests and aspirations, and will continue to serve me into the future.

More personally, I've thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to hold a position that aligns with my passion for sustainable land management, ecosystem conservation and conscious recreation. It's inspiring to be apart of a company that truly cares for the land that sustains their business and community, and to work to improve the environmental health of an area I spend so much of my free time recreating. In the day to day grind, there's no place I'd rather be than on the mountain in Alta revegetating disturbed areas, managing invasive species, and surveying the vegetation. It truly has been an unforgettable summer, and I am grateful to have had such an incredible opportunity to learn and grow my skills in such a special place.

It was a pleasure to work with Shelby this summer and the AEC knows she has a great future ahead of her. Thank you Shelby, you rock!

Stewardship & Education Conserving Our National Forest

Our summer stewardship and education efforts would not be possible without the help and dedication of volunteers and partners. All events were brought to you in support and coordination with [Young Automotive Group](#), [Cottonwood Canyons Foundation](#), [Friends of Alta](#), [TreeUtah](#), [ACE](#), [HawkWatch International](#), [Town of Alta](#), [Tracy Aviary](#), University of Utah—[ENVST](#) and [GCSC](#), US Forest Service Salt Lake Ranger District, and last but by no means least our very own Alta Vehicle Maintenance, Ski Patrol, Lift department and AEC crew—Coleman Worthen, Shelby Sly, and Ellie Johnson. Thank you all for a great summer!

- We had 20 partnered stewardship events this summer and surpassed last year's total volunteers with 703 people and 2,551 work hours (2016 stats: 463 volunteers and 2,154 hours).
- Planted 1,500 Douglas Fir seedlings and over 2,232 native flowering plants grown from handpicked seed.
- We hosted 1,333 students from a variety of schools and levels with 9,223 hours of environmental education—assuring our future stewards (2016 stats: 837 students, 2,636 education hours).
- Bird watching is becoming an ever increasing activity with Tracy Aviary and HawkWatch surveying 75 miles, and reaching about 175 adults and youth. Birding opportunities will continue with Tracy Aviary the 2nd Monday each month.
- Our AEC crew and partner staff from FOA and CCF put in 100s of hours surveying and pulling invasive weeds over 90 acres around Alta.



2017 sustainability report

summer update

Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.
—Aldo Leopold