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Sustainability Guiding Change – An Update from Alta Ski Area

Alta, Utah – December 5, 2018: Change is a constant which reminds us of the work and balance needed between the environment, its people and business. At Alta Ski Area we call this sustainability. Alta had undergone varying levels of changes from 80+ years ago when the ski area came to be, some rapid and some slow. This year's annual sustainability report updates readers, stakeholders, and patrons with a glimpse of the changes that are happening in Alta and how the Alta Environmental Center is working hard to include sustainability when addressing changes in Alta.

The Alta Environmental Center (AEC) helps guide the ski area's efforts internally while working with third-party entities to address changing needs in conservation. What has not changed is Alta's strong culture, and it is this culture that motivates and guides the AEC to protect and improve the ski area's environment, industry, and community. The great task the AEC brings to its company is to meet a 20% greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goal by the year 2020. This goal and other efforts are done in alliance with ski industry partners and led by the National Ski Areas Association Climate Challenge program. The Climate Challenge program asks participating ski areas to track their annual carbon footprint, create reduction goals and projects to meet these goals, share their progress publicly, and advocate at a national level for GHG reduction. The program took flight in 2011, and Alta is pleased to say they have been supporting these objectives officially since 2008 with the AEC, and culturally long before that.

Beyond the Climate Challenge program, the AEC releases an annual update with a more detailed look into their sustainability progress. For this year's update, the winter season of 2017-18 focused on the social aspects of sustainability, and an authentic "state of sustainability" for Alta Ski Area that is summarized by the AEC's director in the report. While the summer is an ever-increasing challenge to balance natural resource protection and visitor use, the community of Alta introduced significant changes in operations this last summer, and they are pleased to report success. The upcoming season of 2018-19 highlights many new projects in tackling their GHG reduction goal in response to a changing climate.

The ski area plans to release an annual update through 2020 after which AEC will revisit their 20% reduction goal and put together a comprehensive report. Until then, skiers, industry partners, and Alta patrons are welcome to follow the ski area's progress via their social media

platforms and monthly newsletters. To learn more about Alta Ski Area's sustainability efforts or to subscribe to the AEC e-news, visit [alta.com](http://alta.com).

2018 Sustainability Report: <https://media.alta.com/resources/Alta-Environmental-Center/News/2018-2019/2018-Sustainability-report.pdf>

All Ski Area Reports: [www.alta.com/alta-environmental-center/our-efforts#reports](http://www.alta.com/alta-environmental-center/our-efforts#reports)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/altaenvironmentalcenter/](http://www.facebook.com/altaenvironmentalcenter/)

Instagram: [altaenvironment](https://www.instagram.com/altaenvironment)

Twitter: #GreenAlta, #AltaSustainability #AEC

Images: 2018 Sustainability Report



# sustainability report 2018



## The State of Sustainability at Alta: People, Planet, Profit – Maurs Olivos, Alta Environmental Center Director

As we roll into the Alta Environmental Center's 30th year, and my 9th year, I'm reminded of all the work and reflection that Alta Ski Area has undergone and accomplished to be where we are now. The question is though, where are we now with sustainability? Being there are 3 legs in sustainability, here are my 3 reviews.

**The People or social spectrum.** I don't often use the phrase "I'm proud", but I can honestly say that I am proud of my co-workers' strides in sustainability. This is not because they support me, but because they challenge me and each other to do more. They believe in sustainability. They want to do better in reducing our company's environmental impact. They are willing and working to include sustainability in their departments, because they care for each other and Alta. Sure, there is some tough love, some ups and downs, some feet draggers, as well as losses of great people, but through it all my co-workers have maintained the Alta family. This is important because unlike many corporations, Alta is not just a top-down company, the people that make up this company have a voice, input, experience and dedication to Alta, thereby giving our community a striving chance to reach our sustainability goals.

**The Profit or economic spectrum.** In relating sustainability to profit, I often say this. As we roll into the Alta Environmental Center's 30th year, and my 9th year, I'm reminded of all the work and reflection that Alta Ski Area has undergone and accomplished to be where we are now. The question is though, where are we now with sustainability? Being there are 3 legs in sustainability, here are my 3 reviews.

**The Planet or environment spectrum.** For Alta there are two sides of this spectrum land conservation and greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigating on-the-ground impact for our lands takes a lot of blood, sweat and tears, and dedication. I can say without hesitation we have been doing a good job, especially from within the ski industry. We have many opportunities and resources at our fingertips to continue to progress. As for our carbon footprint, we are consistently recycling about 50% of our waste (with a 75% diversion rate goal), and are continuously and routinely upgrading to energy efficiency technology. Even with these constants, we still have ways to go to meet our 2020 goal. Meeting our environment goal will take a community effort, and I look forward to continuing to work with my Alta friends and family on this task. Thank you.

**The Climate Challenge**

Alta Ski Area continues to meet its Climate Challenge goal of a 20% carbon reduction by the end of 2020 with the National Ski Areas Association. Alta is working towards an on-site reduction of carbon without buying RECs (Renewable Energy Credits). This takes strategy, research, and planning for the ski area and for our skiers. Over the 2018-19 season the ski area 1) installed an electric vehicle (EV) charger at Albion Basin, 2) we conducted an extensive food waste from landfill feasibility study, and 3) completed a preliminary wind energy audit. The results were encouraging with an EV charger average usage of 64% over the winter and summer, and a potential to reduce our footprint by 70 tons by diverting food waste from the landfill, which is about 5% of our carbon reduction goal or 1% of our total carbon footprint.



## Alta Summer Recreation Program Update

In many ways this summer was no different than the summer before. The norm included tens of thousands of vehicles bringing over 200,000 visitors, spectacular wildfire smog, beautiful sunsets, and lots of alpacas. IEC changes were introduced. Under their special use permit with the Forest Service, Alta Ski Area oversees visitor management of Albion Basin. Changes included: Alta Ski Area staffing the information booth to limit vehicles into Albion Basin based upon available parking and charging 50 amenities fee per vehicle at a second booth; the Sunnyside lift replaced the shuttles and ran weekends and holidays with tickets at \$10/adult and \$5/child 12 and under; and the Albion Grill was open 7 days/week with extended hours. A summary of the summer is as follows:

- 53,764 vehicles counted over 79 days from 7am-8pm. An estimate of 134,410 visitors at 2.5 people/vehicle.
- 18,624 vehicles drove up the summer road into Albion Basin, that is 34.6% of total vehicles bringing 146,550 people.
- The limited access potentially diverted up to 65% of all vehicles from the summer road.
- 1.5 hours was the longest wait for the summer road. It was well accepted by visitors due to available parking in the basin.
- The lift and amenities fee revenues fell short of covering the costs for the summer.

Overall, the program was well accepted by visitors, the summer road was safer with less traffic, and natural resource impacts were still evident, especially by the trails. This summer would not have been possible without the support and hard work of the summer employees and our partners Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, Friends of Alta, Salt Lake Ranger District, and the Town of Alta. The ski area will continue to work with partners to improve visitor management, mitigate natural resource impact, and support a positive outdoor experience. The summer program still has work ahead and there is no shortage of motivation when looking across Alta's landscape.



## Supreme Wetland Mitigation - Progress Update

The installation of the new Supreme lift resulted in the permanent displacement of less than 300 square feet (sf) of wetland. Disturbed wetland areas are being restored with removed wetland soils, and recovery of native vegetation is being observed. An additional 520 sf of wetland is actively being restored through the removal of these old cotton towers. The ski area and Forest Service are pleased with the progress of a separate disturbed area referred to as the "waits," as well as the development of new wetland both within the waste and base terminal cut. Restoration efforts by the ski area this summer includes:

- Continued amendment of an estimated 500 sf of disturbed wetland with peat moss, native Alta-sourced biomass and grass seed.
- Planting 3,300+ native flowers, grown from hand-collected Alta seed (plan includes 3000 plants annually through 2020).
- Transplanted approximately 30 sf of native plants into the disturbed areas (to be followed with 50 sf annually through 2020).
- Seeded approximately 3000 sf with commercially sourced native wetland seed mix.



## Stewardship and Education

### Conserving Our National Forest and Protected Watershed

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 [Cottonwood Canyons Foundation](http://www.cottonwoodcanyons.org), [Friends of Alta](http://www.friendsofalta.com), [Salt Lake Ranger District](http://www.saltlake.org), [Town of Alta](http://www.townofalta.com), [University of Utah](http://www.utah.gov), and [US Forest Service](http://www.fs.fed.us). Salt Lake Ranger District, and last but by no means least our very own Alta Volunteer Maintenance, Ski Patrol, Lift department and AEC crew – Coleman Worthen, Lydia Keenan, Anabelle Blain, and Jessica Gullfanti. Thank you all for a great summer!

- We had 25 partnered stewardship events this summer with 389 volunteers and 4,554 work hours (2017: 703 volunteers and 2,553 hours).
- Planted 1,500 Douglas fir and Engelmann spruce seedlings and over 5,700 native flowering plants grown from handpicked seed.
- We hosted 1,630 "students" from a variety of schools and levels with 6,350 hours of environmental education – ensuring our future stewards (2016: 2,333 students and 9,223 education hours).
- Bird watching is becoming an ever increasing activity with Tracy Avery and HawkWatch surveying 45 miles or 185 acres, and reaching about 170 adults and youth. Birding opportunities will continue with Tracy Avery the 2nd Monday each month.
- Our AEC crew and partner staff from FTA and CCS along with volunteers and HawkWatch surveying 45 miles or 185 acres of surveying over 105 acres and pulling invasive weeds within Alta.



## A Summer to Remember - By Lydia Keenan

Little Cottonwood Canyon has been my second home since I could babble the word "mountain." Growing up in the Salt Lake Valley gave me access to amazing places to hike, ski, backpack, explore, escape and reconnect. Alta has always held a special place in my heart: craggy peaks, mountain lakes, deep powder and incredible people. This summer was the first time I was able to give back to a place that has given me so much.

Working with the Alta Environmental Center (AEC) on a variety of projects was rewarding in so many ways. Some of these projects included vegetation and weed surveys, community outreach events, and restoration such as wetland rehabilitation and planting over 3,000 native plants. As a graduate from the University of Utah in Environmental and Sustainability Studies and Geography I have a profound interest in conservation and sustainability initiatives. The AEC gave me the hands-on, direct exposure to many of the things I learned about in the classroom. Working with so many different organizations alongside the AEC provided me with insight into how a strong environmental ethic plays out in the real world, a variety of people working towards similar goals with a shared passion.

When I graduated in 2017 I was overwhelmed with the possibilities and intentions of my degree. Working with the AEC has helped me focus in on my specific career goals and narrow the scope of my future pursuits. I am excited to continue my time at Alta this winter as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) intern. Improving my proficiency in GIS is extremely important to me and I am looking forward to honing my skills and learning new methods.

The last few months have brought me incredible joy, the opportunity to learn and work in a place that means so much to me is hard to put into words. I am truly grateful for all that I have learned and will continue to learn in such an amazing place alongside true changemakers.



# 2018 sustainability report

our mission is SUSTAINABILITY to protect and improve the well-being of Alta's environment, ski industry and community

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