

# Eco-friendly Colorado ski resorts

Skiing puts us in direct contact with nature. It is good to know that several of Colorado's world-class ski mountains, such as Aspen and Vail, are actively focused on reducing their impact on the environment.

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## Aspen's Environmental Stewardship

We know Aspen holds world-wide fame as an outstanding ski mountain. Yet, how many people realize Aspen is guided by an environmental mission statement: "We will remain stewards of our mountain environment."

"Most corporations don't have sustainability in their mission statement," says Auden Schendler, executive director of sustainability for Aspen Ski Corp.



A ski patrolman sweeps snow off the solar panels of a 2.3 kW PV array which powers the Aspen Highlands patrol headquarters at the top of the mountain's Lodge lift. In the summer, when the building isn't occupied, the system runs the electric meter backward, creating a credit for the following year.

Photo: Daniel Bayer

To further reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, Aspen built a 115 kW micro-hydroelectric plant on Snowmass Mountain. Using water from a snowmaking pond, the hydro plant generates 150,000 kWh annually. In September 2008, Aspen teamed with the Forest Service and Poma to install and test 4-anemometers wind tower at the top of the cirque in Snowmass.

Aspen has led the ski industry with three on-mountain LEED certified buildings, including Sam's Smokehouse, a new restaurant in Snowmass which just received a LEED Gold designation. Green steps on the food front include: cooking oils with no trans fats, compostable hot and cold water cups, green paper products and green cleaning supplies.

At Aspen's five-star Little Nell hotel and spa property, a new Control4 room digital and wireless automation system allows hotel employees and guests to adjust the temperature, lighting, audio/visual systems and gas fireplaces in the rooms. This system is estimated to cut room energy use by 25 percent.

Aspen is well known for its world-class skiing. Now the mountain is also influencing the skiing industry as a leader in environmental stewardship.

~ Neshama Abraham

Neshama Abraham is a freelance writer based in Boulder, who covers green building and sustainable solutions.

"You have to live up to it. It is profound, and powerful," adds Schendler, author of "Getting Green Done: Hard Truths from the Front Lines of the Sustainability Industry."

True to its word, Aspen has installed more renewable energy than any ski resort in the world. Aspen Highlands hosts the first on-mountain solar photovoltaic array in the ski industry, where a 2.3 kW powers the patrol headquarters at the top of the Lodge lift. In addition, Aspen has installed four other solar PV systems, including a half-acre 150 kW solar farm providing renewable energy to a school in Carbondale.