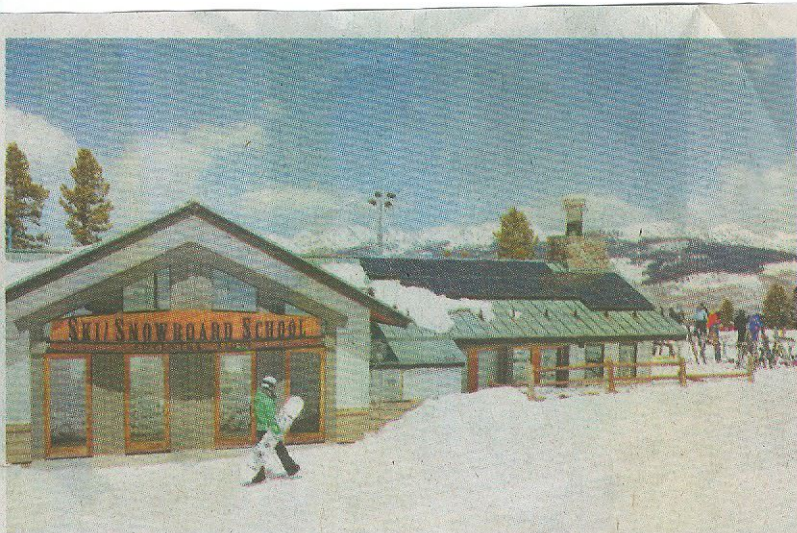


# Eco-friendly Colorado ski resorts

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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Bailey's Restaurant at mid-Vail Mountain uses energy from the sun to generate electricity from an 8.4 kW solar PV system mounted on the roof. Using renewable energy is one example of many green initiatives Vail Resorts is doing to reduce its energy use by 10 percent by 2010. Photo: Jack Affleck - Vail Resorts.

## Sustainable Vail

Vail Mountain has twice been named a Gold Leader from Colorado's Environmental Leadership Program. In 2008, Vail Resorts initiated "Use Less, Do More," an energy conservation program as part of the company's Echo corporate stewardship program. "Our goal is to reduce our energy across the company by 10 percent by 2010," said Julie Klein, director of environmental affairs at Rock Resorts International, Vail Resorts' flagship hotel brand. Vail Resorts has already achieved a 6.1 percent energy reduction since the program began, leaving less than 4 percent toward its stated goal by December 2010.

Vail Mountain manages the largest ski area recycling program in the world, recycling or

reusing more than 70 percent of the mountain's cardboard, aluminum, glass, and even chairlifts and mechanical parts. Vail Resorts realized that behavior changes can make a dramatic difference in saving energy. The campaign reminds employees to turn off lights, appliances and equipment when not in use. Vail Resorts also instituted a new policy reducing vehicle idling time to a maximum of 5 minutes. This program, "Idlewise," saved 34,000 gallons of gasoline from July 2008 through July 2009.

Vail Mountain and the company's other locations have further reduced energy consumption by installing new lighting timers and motion sensors, improved energy-efficient snow-making guns and mechanical machinery, and new high-efficiency boilers.

Vail Resorts replaced 25,000 light bulbs across the company including those in hotel guest rooms with energy-efficient, compact fluorescent bulbs. It is estimated that this lighting retrofit reduced energy use by over 2 million kilowatt hours per year. For water conservation, Vail Mountain has replaced or retrofitted old plumbing fixtures to more efficient low-flow fixtures, leading to a 27 percent reduction in drinking water usage over a four-year period.

Now when you're swishing down the back bowls of Vail, you may have a greater appreciation for the mountain knowing it is guided by a company-wide commitment to resource conservation.

~ Neshama Abraham

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