

Northstar ramping up for summer operations

By Kathryn Reed

Zippering through the trees is soon going to have a different meaning for people visiting Northstar.

No longer will skis, a snowboard or mountain bike be necessary.

The Forest Flyer is expected to be in operation next winter. It's a toboggan of sorts that is on wheels on a track. People will be towed to the top of the track, then gravity will take them through the bank turns, loops, over bridges, through the forest and back to the starting point at the bottom of the Vista lift at mid-mountain.

This will be an attraction that is designed to be open year-round. (Pricing has yet to be set.)



A ride similar to this could be operational at Northstar this winter. Photo/Provided

"People have a need to get out in the woods and some don't have the ability or skill to do it," Bill Rock, chief operating officer of Northstar, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "One thing about this project and ziplines is they make the

outdoors more accessible to people. You really can get a sense of flying through the forest.”

Since Vail Resorts took over the Truckee resort, the location of the flyer has been changed. This is in large part to accommodate those who had voiced concerns.

Plans still need to be approved by Placer County. Then the state needs to sign off on the designs, too.

Also working its way through the halls of the county’s planning department is the resort’s master plan. The draft environmental impact report is expected to be released for public comment in June.

It’s possible some of the items in the plan could be implemented in 2014. A priority list has not been disclosed.

Events continue to be huge draw for Northstar. This year Tough Mudder will be over two weekends – one in July, the other in September.

Rock said last year it attracted so many people to the resort who had not been there before, that the organizers and Northstar thought doubling the exposure of the endurance event would benefit everyone.

This will be the third summer Northstar has hosted the Tahoe Trail 100. The amateur mountain bike race is a qualifier for Colorado’s Leadville 100.

On a less intense note are the Strider bike series for those who are new to cycling. Rock’s twins, who are now 8, learned at age 2 on Striders.

“It’s revolutionizing how to ride bikes,” Rock said. “We do it on the ice rink so it’s a contained environment.”

And when the rink isn’t full of little kids learning to ride a bike, that rink is for roller skating this time of year.

While Rock would like Northstar to be as popular in summer as it is winter, he knows it will take more work to make that happen. But he said the interest in the resort *sans* snow is growing.