

# Report: 150 ski areas on verge of closing

By Ski Area Management

DENVER – There's stoke, and then there is the opposite of stoke. When Bill Jensen, former CEO of Intrawest, told a crowd of nearly 400 ski industry executives that from his view, 150 ski areas were in "the sunset of their existence" and an additional 150 ski areas could also be out of business within the decade, it became an immediate water-cooler topic.

Jensen was speaking as part of the Assembly 2015, a one-day forum that took place on the first day of the SIA Snow Show at the Colorado Convention Center.

In his presentation, Jensen laid out a hierarchical pyramid of U.S. ski areas (left nameless), with the most viable ski areas at the top, that he labeled, "Ubers" and "Alphas". He estimates that there are 45 ski areas in those categories, while 125 resorts are "status quo" and 150 more were breaking even. The remaining 150 he called "Sunsets", and predicted they would eventually fade out of the business.

Jeff Harbaugh of Jeff Harbaugh & Associates, a consultant to the action sports, outdoor and youth culture attended the above presentation and noted that much of the discussion focused on the critical millennial group but wondered "why there were no Millennials on the panel."

Harbaugh went on to say there was acknowledgement on the panel that "family incomes of \$100,000 is sort of the floor below which we can't hope to attract people." But, he observed, that acknowledgement comes with a further acknowledgement that "we're increasingly dependent on the millennials who don't have anywhere near that income, and may not in the foreseeable future."

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