

Basinwide ski marketing group disbands

By Kathryn Reed

Ski Lake Tahoe has long been a behind the scenes group of Tahoe area resorts that collectively promoted their industry.

After 20 years the group has dissolved and will no longer be that one voice this winter or beyond.

“Ski Lake Tahoe certainly was a brand platform for the regional ski product, but the individual marketing efforts of the resorts may end up being equally powerful. In other words, whether we’re sending a single message ‘Ski Lake Tahoe,’ or several messages, we’re marketing the destination,” Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It’s still possible resorts will partner, but the ownership landscape has changed since Ski Lake Tahoe first formed. At the time owners were all different for Sierra-at-Tahoe, Heavenly, Kirkwood, Northstar, Squaw Valley, Alpine Meadows and Mount Rose. In many ways this made for a more level playing field no matter the size of the resort.

Today, Heavenly-Northstar-Kirkwood have the same parent company, while Squaw-Alpine are united.



Sierra-at-Tahoe has new plans for attracting skiers this season. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“Sierra-at-Tahoe originally joined to have one common voice amongst seven different major resorts around the lake. To promote the destination as a whole and educate people on all the amazing options when it came to winter recreation in Lake Tahoe,” Steve Hemphill with Sierra told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Fast forward to today, while there are still seven ‘separate’ resorts, we really only have four sitting at the table. With two of those, owning five out of the seven mountains.”

Sierra realized last spring it wanted out. The board agreed to disband in the summer. Letters were sent to destination marketing organizations and lodging partners.

In part it said, “As the competitive landscape continues to change, Ski Lake Tahoe resorts will refocus their efforts and resources. The resorts will continue to play an integral part in the Reno-Tahoe tourism industry and continue to promote the region and look forward to working with you in those efforts.”

Ski Lake Tahoe had offered an ultimate pass for the seven resorts. Those no longer exist.

“We continue to work closely and collaboratively with other partners including Visit California and (North Lake Tahoe Resort Association),” Liesl Hepburn with Squaw-Alpine told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Reps from Heavenly, Northstar, Kirkwood and Mt. Rose did not respond to an inquiry.

The resorts have long worked with the visitors bureau in its region. Other partnerships are part of the mix, too. Each benefits from the other’s marketing because so many tourists just think of skiing Lake Tahoe, without realizing the choices they have that even go beyond the seven resorts that were in this select group.

“I believe the resorts are still having conversations about where they still collaborate, so while the actual organization goes away, the shared goals don’t,” Chaplin said. “Finally, if we are to stay current with our customers/visitors, we constantly have to look at what’s the best and highest use of funds. It’s not a bad thing to look at different ways to market, particularly since technology causes us to do so frequently these days.”

Hemphill at Sierra echoed that sentiment.

“Each resort will continue to move forward with their individual campaigns and marketing efforts. Sierra and the other resorts remain committed to marketing the destination as a whole and will look for opportunities to collaborate when they’re presented,” Hemphill said.