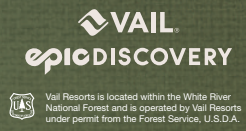




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An ideal mountain resort

Vail receives designation as world's first sustainable mountain resort thanks to local collaboration. **A3**



Out of office and into field

Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley invites local business execs to lend a hand. **A2**

Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley hosted its first CEO Build Day. Local business leaders volunteered to help build Habitat homes. From left, these volunteers are: Jim Haymaker; Jan Olewnik; Colleen Weiss, CEO East West Partners; Bret Hooper, Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley vice president and Edwards Jones financial consultant; Kathy Chandler-Henry, Habitat for Humanity board member and Eagle County commissioner.

RANDY WYRICK
RWYRICK@VAILDAILY.COM

WEATHER
TYLER MEYER
Red Hill Elementary School
Partly cloudy
High 83; low 52 — Weather, B8



TOWN TALK
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
A22

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Vail is world's first sustainable mountain resort

Years of effort required to earn sustainability certification

By Scott N. Miller
smiller@vaildaily.com

VAIL — After an initial announcement in December 2017, it's official: Vail is the first resort in the United States — and first mountain resort in the world — to achieve certification as a "sustainable destination."

The announcement was expected Friday, July 20, from Sustainable Travel International.

The certification was years in the making and required work by the town of Vail, Vail Resorts, Walking Mountains Science Center the U.S. Forest Service and other public and private agencies and groups.

Kim Langmaid is the co-founder of Walking Mountains Science Center and the organization's current vice president. She also serves on the Vail Town Council.

Langmaid said the certification has taken years to achieve. In the

summer of 2013, Walking Mountains launched its Actively Green program for local businesses as a lead-in to the 2015 FIS World Alpine Ski Championships. About 200 businesses have participated in Actively Green training in sustainability practices. Of those, 57 are certified.

But Actively Green was just part of the effort. Town of Vail programs including the town's disposable bag ban, its recycling mandates and the Restore the Gore effort to improve water quality in Gore Creek also played a large role.

The certification effort also included looking closely at housing, transportation, wildlife preservation and other issues, as well as sustainability efforts by other partners.

CONDITIONAL CERTIFICATION

Those efforts paid off last year, when the Global Sustainable Tourism Council audited Vail. Its findings were released in December, and a conditional certification was granted.

Sustainable Travel International Director of Standards and

BY THE NUMBERS

- 60 percent:** Leisure travelers classified as "sustainable."
- 53 percent:** Sustainable travelers who say sustainable practices influence their travel decisions.
- 30 percent:** Increase in accommodation spending by sustainable travelers over others.
- 105 million:** Size of the sustainable group of travelers in the United States.

Source: Sustainable Travel International

Monitoring Bobby Chappell said that conditional certification was followed up this year.

Chappell said some of that follow-up work included developing a multi-year strategy for sustainability efforts, as well as integrating separate plans into a cohesive whole.

Langmaid said every local organization that participated in the certification effort had its own mandates for sustainability practices. But, she added, the work has been helpful in creating "shared understanding" between those entities and helped all those groups look more toward the future.



SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

The effort to have Vail certified as a sustainable destination began in 2013 with the launch of Walking Mountains Science Center's "Actively Green" program for businesses. Here, Walking Mountains co-founder Kim Langmaid leads a training session.

And, she added, the future plays a key role in both certification and the efforts to earn it.

The current certification lasts for three years and requires annual updates.

"This is a huge deal," Langmaid said. Becoming the first certified U.S. destination was complicated,

in part because there were no other resorts for guidance.

The same is true, and then some, to be the first certified mountain resort in the world. Local partners and Sustainable Travel International used

SUSTAINABILITY, A14

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SUSTAINABILITY

From page A3

existing guidelines, as well as information about the local effort, to create the “Mountain IDEAL” destination standard.

“When you think about sustainability, it’s a broad subject,” Chappell said. Thinking about the subject requires both immediate and forward thinking.

Sustainability efforts are never finished, and constant improvement is needed, Chappell said.

“That’s why this is important,” he said. “It’s thinking about how you improve yourself (and looking at) all the things happening in a destination.”

TRAVELERS SEEK SUSTAINABILITY

While wildlife habitat preservation, stream health and energy conservation are worthwhile in themselves, more travelers are paying attention to how destinations address those and other issues.

Research by Sustainable Travel International and Mandala Research indicates that 60 percent of all U.S.-based travelers classify themselves as interested in sustainability. Of that group — roughly 105 million people — more than half say that sustainability efforts play a role in choosing a travel destination.

Certification tells travelers that a destination is doing more than the basics in terms of sustainability.

“In tourism, it’s easy to get caught up in teeny things,” Sustainable Travel International Communications Director Kaitlyn Brajcich said. Those “teeny” things include hotels asking guests if they want their towels laundered after just one night.

Brajcich said certification tells travelers “the whole destination has gone above and beyond. ... They’re actually doing something.”

Since not many destinations are certified, getting that certification is “a really big deal,” she said.

Langmaid was raised in Vail and has lived most of her life there. The sustainability certification is both personally and professionally important to her.

“It makes me proud to be part of a community committed to sustainability,” Langmaid said. “I wouldn’t expect anything less from Vail. We’ve always been a leader.”

With Vail’s position as the first Mountain IDEAL destination, Langmaid said she believes other mountain resorts will both join the effort. That will give mountain destinations a chance to learn from one another.

Guests will ultimately benefit, Chappell said.

“Sustainability is a reflection of quality,” he said. “When you put in the time and work, you’re offering a higher quality product.”

Vail Daily Business Editor Scott Miller can be reached at smiller@vaildaily.com and 970-748-2930.

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