



## ASPEN SKIING COMPANY, USA

### CONSERVATION AWARD

### WINNER 2007

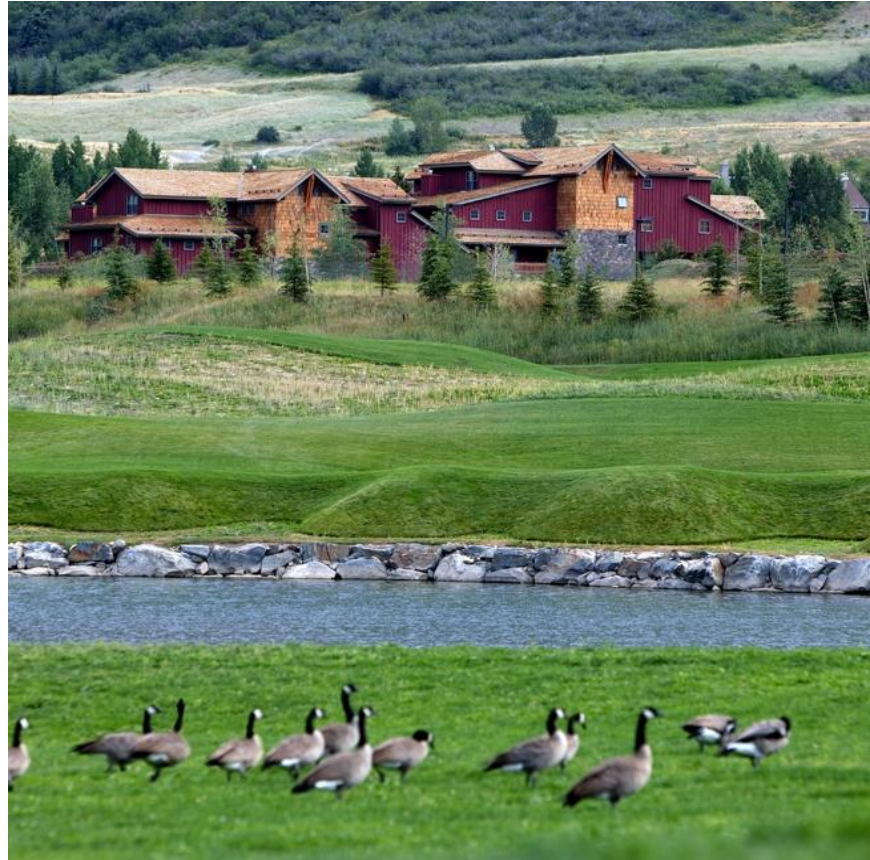
# CASE STUDY

**Aspen Skiing Company** (ASC, and known locally as the Ski Company) was founded in 1947 by the Tenth Mountain Division veterans of World War II. Today, ASC hosts approximately 1.3 million visitors annually at its four ski resorts, golf course and 15 restaurants. As a leader in corporate culture that embraces and exemplifies the conservation ethic, it has provided an example for the entire ski resort industry.

ASC's environmental programme was created in 1997 to preserve the earth since, to quote the company: "Without clean air, a stable environment and beautiful viewsheds, ASC is out of business."

At every level of the company, it seeks to promote its three main principles:

- Advocacy
- Renewable energy purchases, and
- Energy efficiency.



This ethic pervades its operations, in investments as simple and effective as switching bulbs in the underground parking garage that saves the company US\$10,000 and 300,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, and even in the choice of its office furniture. ASC not only selected the bid for furniture based on the furniture company's environmental commitment, but also educated the losing bidders as to what it based its decision on.

Aspen Skiing Company has tracked and recorded data for the past 50 years and recently announced that it has discovered that the ski season is a full month shorter today than it was 50 years ago. With its self-financed environmental management programme, GREENTRACK, ASC works to combat climate change by having one the largest solar photovoltaic systems and the first LEED-certified buildings in the ski industry, as well as a micro-hydroelectric plant.

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The company also works to address its indirect impact: those 1.3 million visitors all create significant air- and automobile-travel related emissions that impact global climate change. To help visitors offset their emissions, ASC supports initiatives like the Ski Green programme, whereby mountain visitors can tack US\$2 onto the price of their ski pass as part of an offsetting programme. ASC also encourages the use of airplane jets with 40% increased fuel efficiency. The approximately 3,000 employees of ASC are also an important part of the conservation effort.

The Environmental Foundation, in partnership with the Aspen Community Foundation and the Aspen Skiing Company Family Fund, is a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting the regional environment, and funded through a volunteer payroll reduction plan. Employees can donate as little as US\$1 per week, and with a triple fund match, ASC has donated nearly US\$1,000,000 in nine years to hundreds of conservation and community projects.

One of the most important elements of this system is the sense of pride the employees take in their contributions to their employer's efforts – from the posters hanging in the maintenance shed that recognise the latest initiatives to the ski instructors on the slopes who are happy to share the story with visiting skiers.

Aspen Ski Company also leverages its public presence by its ongoing commitment to visible activism. It has instituted a legally binding contract with Chicago Climate Exchange to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually, and it has reduced its impact by 73.5%, or over 24,462 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> taken out of the atmosphere. After ASC made the largest purchase of renewable energy credits in the ski industry and offset 100% of its carbon footprint from electricity, the much larger Vail Resorts Inc followed its example several months later, surpassing ASC in purchasing renewable energy credits, and ASC hailed this as a victory.

Now at least 45 other resorts use renewable energy through credits or other initiatives. And ASC has even seen a return on investment in this field: it is the only resort that has developed a consulting business to help other ski companies implement conservation measures and initiatives.

The Aspen Ski Company provides leadership in a corporate world that directly depends on the health of the environment and, as a result, it has taken every environmental element – from the regional to the global – and moved progressively to reform the entire industry by example. It has not been afraid of making mistakes and learning from those mistakes, sharing important lessons learned with other businesses. In 2009, Auden Schendler, Executive Director of Sustainability at ASC, chronicled more than a decade of sustainability work at the company in his book *Getting Green Done: Hard Truths from the Front Lines of the Sustainability Revolution*.

The company continues to challenge itself and other resorts to save the very product on which their livelihoods depend: our natural environment.