Mark Earnest

From: Deborah Vogt [d2v@usa.net]
Sent: Friday, May 31, 2013 9:32 AM
To: Mark Earnest
Subject: Heliski Map comments

Attached please find my comments on any changes to the commercial ski map.

Comments on Possible Amendment of
Commercial Ski Tour Area Map

To: Haines Borough Assembly through Manager Mark Earnest

From: Deborah Vogt

I urge the Assembly to make NO increase to the area available for commercial skiing and snowboarding, and to seriously consider reductions in available area. The Map should be reviewed in the light of much better data, which the assembly should require.

We have had three fatalities in the last two years. Out-of-bounds infractions have been found in a significant proportion of the pathetically small number of random GPS samples; other infractions were revealed after complaint or accident.

At the same time, both the area of the map and the number of skier days have increased exponentially. It is time to take a deep breath and review where we are.

After many years of discussion, the Borough finally required the operators to record GPS data of their activities. But no sooner was this data required than the Assembly acceded to industry assertions that the information was proprietary and could not be provided to the Borough except by spot-check.

This conclusion is ludicrous. Even assuming that release of the GPS information would harm the business interests of the operators (despite the fact that both helicopters and ski tracks are plain to see), the information, if collected, does not need to be public. Every government commonly keeps certain information confidential, from tax returns to legal advice to personnel records to ongoing police investigations. One need only consider the frequency that the Assembly goes into executive session. The Borough can -- and should -- require **all** the GPS information in order to make more informed decisions about the Map. The Administration can conduct random or broad reviews of the data as circumstances warrant. One circumstance that should warrant review would be consideration of the Map. It is inappropriate to even consider changes to the map without a more thorough understanding about how the existing map is used.

Limitations to areas open to commercial helicopter-assisted skiing and boarding should be based on three concerns: impact on and annoyance to residents, backcountry users and wildlife. (In this regard I note that so far as I can see, no operator has EVER reported sighting wildlife.). The Borough should listen closely to the complaints and comments of residents and backcountry users. The Borough should seek the advice of appropriate wildlife agencies for impact on wildlife.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment, and for your consideration of my concerns.