

## A Ski Resort's Plan for Success

Location: **Stowe, Vermont**  
Type of property: **Ski resort**  
Type of membership: **Sustainable  
Communities Program**  
Member since: **2006**  
Certified since: **2010**



Resort destinations rely on the environment, both natural and constructed, to provide the basis for attracting visitors. However, destinations can face adversity both in development and operation because of the impact on the environment. Ski Resorts are especially believed to have harsh environmental impacts due to water and energy use.

Add destination amenities such as golf courses and homes, and the environmental impact can quickly accumulate.

In 2006, Stowe Mountain Resort partnered with Audubon International to ensure the environmental impact of new construction was minimal. Starting with the Audubon International Signature Program, the Resort created a natural resource management plan for building the golf course. Management was eager to expand the efforts to the whole resort. While the comprehensive plan incorporated many rigorous environmental standards, operators realized that joining the Sustainable Communities program would have significant environmental, social, and economic benefits. The program gives them access to innovative resources, support, third party oversight, and a competitive marketing advantage.



*The abundant natural beauty in the Stowe community makes it a popular destination.*

The first step was to assess the comprehensive plan and policies in place. The results were impressive, and the Resort earned the Audubon International Green Community Award, recognizing the completion of Stage 1 of the Sustainable Communities Program and the voluntary policies and practices in place. Management didn't stop there. Stowe Mountain Lodge's management Company, Destination Hotels & Resorts, created the "Destination Earth" program in early 2008.

A taskforce established a "green team" at each Destination property nationwide, to adopt and implement earth-friendly practices in their businesses and to become better stewards of the natural resources that they utilize, and to monitor the effectiveness of these practices.



*The Stowe community includes not just the resort itself, but the visitors, guests, local, regional, and state residents.*

The Resort committed to the sourcing of environmentally sensitive products and services locally, and purchasing organic, environmentally friendly/responsible and recycled supplies whenever possible, and to create partnerships with other organizations committed to preserving the environment.

The goal was to lead associates to apply eco-friendly practices in their daily operations by utilizing environmentally-responsible building materials and strategies for new properties and renovations, retrofitting existing properties with energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, as well as water-saving devices, and implementing tools that allow each property to continually measure their progress.

Throughout Stage 2, Rob Apple, Planning Manager, worked with Audubon International to complete a goal-oriented vision plan that addresses fifteen focus areas. The objective is to organize corporate policies and longterm strategies in one central location. The portfolio that is created can serve as a guiding document for all departments, guests, and homeowners. Once the plan is completed, indicators that help measure progress are chosen. In February of 2010, Stowe Mountain Resort was awarded Certification in the Sustainable Communities Program by completing this task. Stowe Mountain Resort has achieved a high level of success with the goals outlined in the plan, including the following:

- **Food Sourcing:** The Resort has committed to support local farmers and community supported agriculture in food operations resort wide and the local economy by using local products whenever possible and thus reducing reliance on food that increases the carbon footprint of the resort.
- **Rural Heritage:** To maintain the “look and feel” of Mt. Mansfield and the Smugglers Notch region, Stowe Mountain Resort has worked with Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, and Audubon International. The planning and construction efforts have allowed the resort to utilize only a small percentage of available land in its development efforts.
- **Waste Reduction:** The new Spruce Camp Base Lodge established a food composting program for its kitchen and is currently expanding this program to its public areas. In 2009, the food composting program resulted in a landfill diversion rate of over 84% for the new Stowe Mountain Lodge. The resort was awarded the 2009 Silver Eagle Award for Environmental Excellence by the National Ski Areas Association, an Audubon International partner. The award hails Stowe for its leadership and innovation in waste reduction and recycling. Stowe Mountain Resort developed a stand-out waste reduction program by highlighting the power of food.
- **Environment and Wildlife:** The resort has conserved over 2,000 acres of natural habitat; 10 acres are summit terrain, which is highly specific breeding ground for Bicknell’s Thrush. Peregrine Falcons, Moose, and Bear are other major species that are being protected through these conserved acres. Food Sources for local wildlife have been planted on the Stowe Mountain Club Golf Course and have been integrated into the landscaping. Through partnerships with the Vermont Agency Natural Resources, The University of Vermont, and the Green Mountain Club,



*Sustainable food sourcing is a priority at Stowe Mountain Resort.*

the ridgeline of Mount Mansfield is managed and used for research by the university environmental professors and students.

- **Outreach and Education**—An Environmental Advisory Committee was established to identify potential additional environmental actions. The Employee Handbook has been revised to include more content describing the resort’s environmental efforts. Stowe Mountain Resort currently partners with groups to provide access for environmental education forums and public seminars such as birding events, Stowe Garden Fest, and nature walks, and tours that highlight the use of native vegetation and plans for all of the Spruce Peak landscaping.
- **Energy and Resource Use Efficiency:** Since 2000, Stowe Mountain Resort has installed energy efficiency improvements that are resulting in annual electrical use savings of 6,420,237 kW per year. Purchasing policies have been established that place a priority on the purchase of sustainable products such as 100% post consumer recycled paper, compostable eating utensils and plates, cups and biodegradable trash bags. The resort has retrofitted existing properties with energy efficient lighting, and heating/ cooling systems and all new buildings have incorporated lighting and HVAC systems that either meet or exceed Vermont’s Commercial Buildings Energy Standards.
- **Water Quality**—Current stormwater runoff from the development area is collected and stored in two snowmaking ponds to allow reuse of stormwater for both snowmaking and golf course irrigation. The mountain trail system is managed under management plan directed at improving the hydrologic characteristics of the trail system. Two new wetlands were created adjacent to the main snowmaking reservoir to help filter drainage from the golf course before entering the reservoir.
- **Transportation**—The Resort established an employee ride share program that enables employees to park in lots located at the base of the mountain if they travel with three or more individuals, and contributed \$40,000 for the operation of the municipal public Mountain Road Trolley system which experienced a 7% increase in ridership in 2009. There is a no idling policy for all resort vehicles and this policy, as well as other resort environmental initiatives, is highlighted in all employee orientations.



*Stowe Mountain Resort estimates a savings of over 6 million kW per year with their energy efficiency techniques.*

Stowe Mountain Resort is categorized as a private community in Audubon International’s Program. The “community” in destination resorts is not only the management, homeowners, and employees, but the visitors, guests, local, regional, and state residents. The impact of the Resort’s efforts has a watershed effect. For instance, the local and regional economy benefit from purchasing practices and tourism. But, perhaps the most beneficial result of the destination’s sustainable practices are the opportunities to “think globally, act locally”—everyone who learns about the Resort’s efforts begins the education process by gaining knowledge that can be turned into action.

