

LETTER: Belleayre expansion, resort are catalysts for growth

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Dear Editor:

I have lived and been active in the town of Andes for almost nine years.

As a member of the Planning Board and active in numerous other regional activities, I have watched my neighbors, friends, acquaintances and people I don't know lose their jobs, lose value in their homes or, even worse, lose their homes. I have been witness, too many times, to these folks lose their hope for the future.

The unwanted companion of these events is that terrible state, agony. The fright and worry one experiences when trying to sleep wondering, "How will I provide?" The cold, frightened feeling when asked by a friend, "How are you doing?" Once again that word, agony – the bad collateral effect of bad times.

Why this region has and continues to suffer so is a result of its great natural resource – water. If you live here, you know only too well the history of water and the shackle it has imposed on the region's economy. The Catskills, the incredibly beautiful mountain region of lower New York, has struggled for years to alleviate the cause of this agony.

Finally, there is an opportunity to win.

Almost 15 years ago, the opportunity arose that could restore and reinvigorate the region's economy. It's an opportunity that is free of the conflict that water has always imposed: the \$400 million Belleayre Resort and the expansion of Belleayre Mountain as a four-season vacation destination. Lots of people would spend money and reawake the vacation region the Catskills once enjoyed.

It wasn't an accident that there were tens of thousands of rooms in the Catskills for vacationers and a thriving and robust economy. That same beauty and those same natural resources are still here.

For years there have been legions of efforts dedicated to stopping the projects for selfish reasons. Now we, the majority of citizens of the Catskills, have to collectively show our support for the projects. And once again, the Catskills can be what they once were: the premier vacation area in lower New York.

Consider that this beautiful region is only a two-and-half-hour drive from the Metropolitan New York area. No other place in the New York-New Jersey megalopolis – 38 million people - is closer to these kinds of natural resources. Our mountains peak at over 4,000 feet. Our landscapes are a spectacular experience.

Once you create a world-class resort with a complimenting four-season ski mountain, you will have provided the catalyst for growth throughout the entire region. There are many similar examples, but one only has to consider the history of Lake Placid in the middle of the Adirondack Park! And it is nowhere near a large population.

The collateral effect of the Belleayre expansion and resort project will grow many new businesses, revive hurting businesses, provide jobs in the region both in the resort zone and throughout the region, restore and expand real estate values, increase hunting and fishing and end this terrible economic agony of the past 25 years – the good collateral effect of good times.

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