

niseko news *tracking down local stories*

By Matthew Thomas + Kristian Lund

Master plan will 'lift' Niseko

NISEKO United is in need of a 'mountain master plan' to reach its full potential, according to a world-renowned, Whistler-based mountain resort planner.

Paul Mathews is founder and president of Ecosign, which since 1975 has directed the planning and design of more than 350 major mountain resort projects in over 32 countries, including Whistler-Blackcomb's record-setting Peak 2 Peak Gondola. The company also drafted the original Niseko Hanazono master plan in 1992.

Mathews cited similarities between the Niseko United and Ecosign's most famous master plan of Switzerland's Zermatt resort, where five operating companies were successfully merged into one.

Ecosign has worked on about 10 European 'resort fusions' to merge big-name ski resorts throughout Switzerland and Austria. "Earnings have grown in Zermatt five-fold due to efficiencies of scale," Mathews said. "This allowed the area to invest more to improve and expand, and this as a consequence has driven up occupancy of all resort hotels and properties."

Mathews proposes that Niseko's four resorts – Grand Hirafu, Hanazono, Niseko Village and Annupuri – be replanned as one resort, so ski lifts, patrol, grooming and maintenance would be governed by one entity.

He said that this fusion would mean an upgrade of fa-



ilities for the entire mountain, a better skiing experience for visitors, and more business for each of the resorts, and the area in general. "Right now there are five operating companies in Niseko fighting each other for market share instead of trying to grow the total pie," Mathews said.

President of Hanazono resort Colin Hackworth (pictured) said he would be in strong support of a unified mountain master plan, adding that Niseko as a whole would benefit from improvements to its lifts in particular.

He said new lifts were cheaper and more efficient to operate, and that one operations system would by definition be healthier and more cost-effective for the future of

Niseko. "Many of the existing lifts are old, ill-positioned, and it is easy to see they were installed with each particular owner's point of view to try and corral their customers as best they could, rather than with a view to uniting Niseko mountain as one ski resort," he said.

"At the end of the day, the customer just wants to be able to ski in a large ski area and travel from side to side in comfort, unfettered and unhindered. In comparison to Europe with its state-of-the-art six-packs, eight packs, gondolas and trams, the skifield infrastructure in Niseko is very dated indeed. Recognition of the issue is certainly a step in the right direction – solving it must be the next."

基本設計がニセコを'lift' -活気づける

ウィスラーを拠点とする世界有数のリゾート設計者によると、ニセコスキー場は最大限の可能性を広げるためにも『山岳基本設計』を必要としている。ポール・マシューズは*エコサインの創設者であり社長である(*ウイスラー・プラッコムにある世界記録を打ち立てた有名な「PEAK 2 PEAK」 Gondolaを含め、1975年以来、世界32カ国で350以上の多数のマウンテンリゾートのプロジェクトを指揮してきた企業)。この企業は1992年に花園リゾートの基本設計を計画した。マシューズ氏は、エコサイン社の最も有名な基本設計であるスイス・ツェルマットリゾート(5つの事業会社が首尾よく1つに結合した実績を持つ)とニセコスキー場の類似点を引き合いに出した。エコサイン社はスイスとオーストリア中の有名なスキー場を合併

するために約10のヨーロッパの『リゾート結合』に従事してきた。「ツェルマットでの収益は規模効率により5倍に伸びた。これによって土地価値の向上、発展の為に一層投資され、その結果ホテルを始めとするリゾート建設開発に繋がった。」マシューズ氏は述べた。マシューズ氏は、ニセコの4つのリゾート(グランヒラフ、花園、ニセコピレッジ、アンヌプリ)を1つのリゾートとしての再計画を提案する。それによって、1つの独立体下でスキーリフト、パトロール、手入れ、維持を管理することができるからだ。この結合は山全体の施設のアップグレードを意味し、スキー客はより一層スキーを楽しめ、各リゾート、地域の経済発展にも繋がると氏は言う。また、マシューズ氏は、こうも述べた。「現在、ニセコでは5つの事業会社が協力し合う代わりに競い合っている」と。花園スキー場の代表取締役であるコ

リン・ハックワース氏も山岳基本設計の支持を強く表明し、この開発によって特にリフトの改良という利点を期待できると述べている。ハックワース氏は、最新のリフトは安価で効率が良い上に1つの操作システムを導入する事は当然ながら、ニセコスキー場の未来にとってより経済的であると言う。『既存のリフトは古く、状態も良くない。また、ニセコを1つのリゾートとして開発したのではなく、それぞれの管理企業が収益という観点で設計されたものだ」と一目瞭然だ。結局、スキー客の望みは大規模なスキー場を楽しみ、自由かつ快適にリゾートを行き来することだろう。ヨーロッパの最新の6人、8人乗りのリフト、最新の Gondola、トラムと比較すると、ニセコの基幹施設は確実に遅れを取っている。問題点の認識は確実に正しい道へと導くでしょう。次は問題解決が鍵ですね」とハックワース氏。



Best of Niseko final call

RHYTHM

ENTRIES are about to close for the Best of Niseko, so be quick cast your vote for your favourite business in Niseko. Now in its third year, Best of Niseko is an opportunity to give a pat on the back to all those little businesses that make Niseko such a great place. Everyone who takes part goes in the running to win a set of the some of the best powder skis money can buy – a set of Armada ARGs (pictured) thanks to Rhythm Snow Sports. Second place win goggles and gloves, and third gets a beanie. Entries close at midnight on Wednesday, March 10, and the winners of Best of Niseko and all prizes will be announced in the final edition of Powderlife for the season on Saturday, March 20.

To vote, go to: www.powderlife.com/best-of-niseko-2010

