

Pilot Knob ski controversy may come to head Monday

By CHARLES W. WALK
North Iowa News Director

FOREST CITY—A triangle of private winter recreation area controversy raging through Pilot Knob State Park east of here could come to a climax Monday and Tuesday at a meeting of the Iowa State Conservation Commission in Mason City.

The commission is expected to take under study a proposal for the construction of a private ski area on the park's land. This has been the center of the controversy.

At one corner of the triangle is the Pilot Knob Ski and Recreation, Inc., a group made up of skiing enthusiasts who want to construct the ski area on park land.

At the second corner is Odell Forslund, Forest City school teacher who has operated a private winter recreation area just across from the park for three years.

Occupying the third corner of the triangle is a group of Iowa naturalists and conservationists. The battle lines in the controversy are thus:

The naturalists and conservationists are opposing the Mason City group because they believe the area on state land would create an unfair competition for his recreation area.

Among the groups who are opposing the Mason City group's plan are the Isaac Walton League and the Iowa chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

Both organizations oppose the project because they maintain it is afraid would be disturbed.

David Butler, Mason City at-large spokesman for the project, is a sphagnum bog enthusiast, terms the park was originally established. "Among the things these groups found only in the park in Iowa, aggregated."

He points out that there are 320 acres in the park and that the proposed ski area would take up only about 15 acres—about half of which would have to be cleared of trees and brush.

The proposed runs — which would start at the stone monument at the top of the park and run north—also would be located more than a half mile from Dead Man's Lake, Butler continues. The lake is one of the park areas which the naturalists want untouched because of an unusual noise found floating there.

Pilot Knob Ski and Recreation, Inc., is prepared to invest between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in the construction of the area, Butler says.

This would include the cost of clearing the areas for the four runs, the purchase and installation of a motorized ski lift, the purchase of a snow-making machine and the construction of a parking area and chalet at the bottom of the runs.

The runs would vary in length from 1,200 to 1,800 feet. The two middle runs would be about 1,200 to 1,300 feet long and the outside runs would be 1,500 and 1,800 feet long. Each run would be about 100 feet wide with another hundred feet of wooded area separating the runs. Another 50 feet would have to be cleared for the lift area, which would be located between the four runs.

One unusual aspect of the

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"The newspaper that makes all North Iowans neighbors"

MASON CITY GLOBE-GAZETTE

Home Edition
VOL. 194

MASON CITY, IOWA, THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1964
(This is copy)—This Paper Consists of Two Sections—Section One

Associated Press Full Leased Wire
No. 75