

Knob ski issue is reborn

The controversial proposal concerning the establishment of a ski area in a portion of Pilot Knob State Park near Forest City popped up again Monday night.

Members of the North Iowa Area Development (NIAD) group's recreation and tourism committee were told that operators of a Wisconsin resort are willing to invest in a ski operation there.

Ernest Zerble, Mason City, a member of the committee, said operators of Trollhaugen, located at Dresser, Wis., feel that Pilot Knob offers potential as a ski area. He said they would be willing to undertake such a project and would even post a bond with the state.

Feelings of committee members toward the proposal were mixed. However, the majority believes that if an extensive study is made and proper safeguards are taken that such a plan might be feasible.

Last June, a proposal made by advocates of a ski area at Pilot Knob was withdrawn to "avoid further controversy." The proponents of the plan said that additional information would be needed before further steps could be taken. Most objections came from naturalist groups.

Stanley L. Haynes, Mason City, a member of the Iowa Na-

tural Resources Council, told the meeting at Mason City Junior College that with "proper safeguards" and a thorough study he can "see no great objection to a ski run."

"However," said Haynes, "you have to keep in mind that this would be a commercial development. If it was not a commercial success, fellows would get tired of putting money in there."

He said if such an area should be abandoned, it could leave this part of the park "destroyed."

Zerble said the bond would be posted to avoid such a situation.

Haynes said he had talked to persons — many of whom are avid skiers — who believe Pilot Knob would not be suitable for such an operation. Zerble pointed out that this is contrary to the beliefs of the Trollhaugen operators.

Harvey Johnson, Forest City, head of the biology department at Waldorf College, told the group that it is difficult to say "what could happen by cutting down trees and brush for a ski area." He said it is possible that such measures could change the entire environment of the park over a long period of time.

"On the other hand," said Johnson, "with a ski area, the park might involve 10 per cent of the people of Iowa instead of one per cent."

Johnson said expert biologists and conservationists believe a further study is needed to determine if harm would come to Pilot Knob by clearing the area for skiing.

Haynes said his group has recommended to the governor that "arrangements be made to study, in depth some of these areas."

Zerble said agreements between the state and commercial enterprises are not uncommon. "With a bonding arrangement, I am sure they wouldn't be willing to pull out" and leave the area in poor condition.

"I have heard that a portion of Pilot Knob would erode very rapidly if brush and trees were removed," said Haynes.

"This could be correct," said Johnson.

Haynes also said he had been told that the slope is not steep enough to attract many skiers.

"I think 90 per cent of the Iowa people would fall half way down the hill anyway," said Johnson. "I think they would get quite a charge out of it. They aren't looking for an Aspen, Colo."

Zerble said the Trollhaugen operators have estimated they could attract from 500 to 1,000 skiers to Pilot Knob for each of 10 weekends during the winter. "We're talking about a half million dollar industry."

"I think if it developed into a \$100,000 industry it would be beyond reality," said Haynes. "Last weekend at Trollhaugen they had 3,000 people," said Zerble. "In Iowa you don't have people going to two or three other areas."

"At Pilot Knob, you couldn't develop a type of skiing that would attract those numbers," said Haynes.

Johnson said if a ski area "met with that much success, you wouldn't have a park left."

"These fellows are willing to make an investment and put up bond," repeated Zerble. "What I am concerned with is that we don't let this go by the board."

"The Trollhaugen operators say this area has every potential that Trollhaugen has. Isn't this the best ski area we have in our nine-county area? If there is a better one, I'll shut up and we'll go look at it."

Zerble made some other suggestions for the development of Pilot Knob. Included in his plan is an olympic swimming pool, children's pool, golf course, tennis courts, badminton courts, new and improved camping grounds, an all-faiths chapel, archery range, stable and riding facilities, toboggan slide, nature trails, children's playground, pistol and rifle range, children's zoo and a

lodge or chalet with a dining room.

This detailed plan was not discussed by the NIAD committee.

Committee members discussed plans for distribution of 100,000 brochures, which will show tourist attractions in the NIAD area. They talked about distribution to gasoline stations and travel organizations.

Also discussed were place mats which show the NIAD area and the attractions. These will not be available for distribution for at least a month, the committee was told.

Steal \$1,600 from Catholic Church

ROME, Italy (AP)—Police said that burglars who ransacked a Roman Catholic Church at Centocelle lighted a candle before the statue of Saint Antonio before walking out with loot amounting to more than a million lire (1,600 dollars).

CIRCLE MEETING

THOMPSON — The Priscilla Circle of the Thompson Methodist Church will meet at the Methodist parsonage Tuesday at Lake Mills with Mrs. E. Ulland as hostess.