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Birchwood Valley Ready For Winter

SPARTA, Wis. — Monroe County will open its Birchwood Valley recreation area north of Sparta as soon as it snows.

The 152 acres of county-owned, hilly and heavily wooded land is located about a mile east of County Highway B five miles north of Sparta.

The area includes two ski runs, each 1,000 feet long. One of them is lighted. There also is a 900-foot slide that will be lighted for inner tube use. Plans call for construction of 2,500-foot ski run along the ridge of an adjacent hill. The area has a parking lot for more than 50 cars.

Other installations include 1,900 feet of ropes for towing skiers and inner tube users to the top of the hills. The ropes are powered by a newly installed 10-horsepower motor. The lift poles were put in several years ago by Job Corps workers.

The ski hill project was launched about 10 years ago by Leonard Anderson, county resource development agent. Through his efforts and with the assistance of high school ski club members, and teacher, Lloyd Larson, the slopes were cleared of trees.

A former county forester, Julian Hutchinson, now at Fort McCoy, coordinated activities with Job Corps personnel to erect poles and install a power lift. After rope was purchased for the tows, a trailer was brought in for a warming house, but the project bogged down.

In an effort to revive the project, the county turned the operation over to Sparta's Explorer Post 467 headed by Mel Janzen. Four years ago the Explorers under Rich Hem constructed a chalet. The explorers turned the area back to the county about a year ago, but further work was delayed until this fall.

County supervisors serving on the administration committee for the hill are Gale Baumgarten of Tomah, William Hesselberg of Leon, Elmer Bradley of Kendall, Herb Guthrie of Oakdale, and Walter Bredlow of Ontario. Supervisor Adolph Heilman of Sparta, board chairman, spearheaded the final effort to convert the area into a winter recreational center.

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