Old ski lodge set to open on top of Echo Summit

By Kathryn Reed

ECHO SUMMIT – A true old-style mountain lodge is about to open in Lake Tahoe. Through large pane windows expansive views of rugged Sierra peaks are visible. A woodstove flanks one wall, ready to get people warm.

This isn't some newfangled structure designed to look old. This is the lodge that was built in the 1970s at the old Nebelhorn Ski Resort atop Echo Summit. For years it has sat idle.



Adventure Mountain's lodge at the top of Echo Summit is expected to open this month. Photos/Kathryn Reed

When Jim and Linda Mueller opened Adventure Mountain sledding hill six years ago their desire was always to have the lodge be part of the mix. Once the Lake Valley fire marshal signs off on the paperwork the Muellers will unlock the doors.

That’s expected to happen this month.

Food choices will be limited to begin with –pizza, chili, hot dogs, hot cocoa and other drinks.

A beer and wine license might be secured down the road.

“It will be a work in progress,” Jim Mueller said standing in the lodge.

Old skis still need to be mounted on the walls and a little bit of artwork hung. Plenty of stacked wood is out back.

The Muellers have made a substantial investment in the property. When they entered the lease with the U.S. Forest Service there was no running water and the septic system wasn’t working. Code upgrades were also necessary.

While the No. 1 complaint on Yelp is the vault toilets that sledders must use, when the lodge opens people will be able to use flush toilets.

The roof has been replaced, too.

“In the summer it will be available for weddings, conferences and day camps,” Mueller said.

Cathedral-like windows reveal some of the 13 machine groomed sledding runs. Soon those people – there were 50,000 last season – will be able to come inside.

But guests have adapted to playing in the outdoors. Some bring barbecues and chairs, making a day of it. About 80 percent of Adventure Mountain’s guests are day visitors from the Bay Area and Central Valley. The other 20 percent are mostly visitors to Lake Tahoe who are staying a week and want a break from skiing.

New this season is a beginner snowboarding run.

All the hills are accessed by walking as far up as allowed or

until the person wants to start sledding.

There are also four miles of marked, ungroomed trails for snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

The old ski resort closed in 1988, with the Forest Service taking out the two chairlifts and rope tow 10 years later.

In 1968 a running track was put in so athletes could train at a high elevation for the Summer Olympics in Mexico City. (The track was later moved to South Tahoe Middle School, but was replaced a few years ago.)

The California Conservation Corps called this site home for years before moving to their Meyers location in 2002.

Mueller said it’s possible the lodge will be open in the summer for recreationists.

From the parking lot several hiking and biking trails go off in nearly every direction. The Pacific Crest, Pony Express and Tahoe Rim trails touch the property. Mueller said the bike ride to Kyburz on the Pony Express Trail is a good one.

The Muellers, who live in Meyers, have big plans beyond opening the lodge this month.

“We hope to eventually have a special needs youth camp up here,” Mueller said.

He said regulators won’t allow overnight lodging even though the CCC did for years. The shower facilities remain. It is possible log cabins would be constructed.

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Details:

• Website

• Hours – weekdays 10am-4:30pm; weekends 9am-5pm

• Cost – $18 to park, unlimited sledding

• Other – equipment available to rent, small retail center.

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