

TRANSWORLD

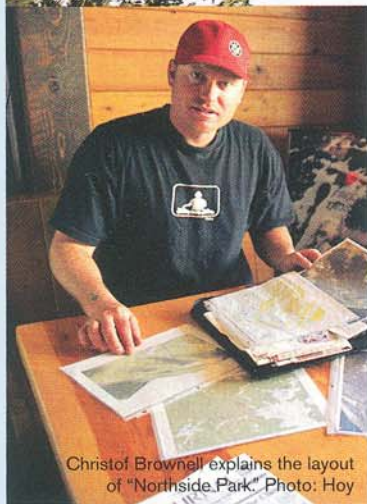
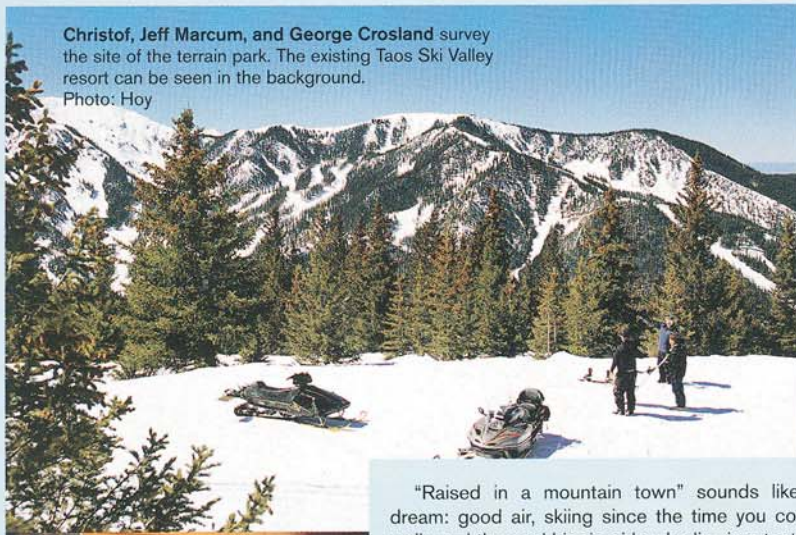
SNOWBOARDING

2005 RESORT GUIDE



SNOWBOARDING IN TAOS? ONE RIDER MIGHT MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Christof, Jeff Marcum, and George Crosland survey the site of the terrain park. The existing Taos Ski Valley resort can be seen in the background. Photo: Hoy



Christof Brownell explains the layout of "Northside Park." Photo: Hoy

"Raised in a mountain town" sounds like a dream: good air, skiing since the time you could walk, and the cool hippie girls who live in a tent by the Rio Grande. It's a liberal environment—usually.

Taos, New Mexico is different. It's one of the few places in the world that discriminates against people based on how they choose to enjoy the mountains. That's right, if you'd like to snowboard on the public lands your tax money funds, you'll have to go somewhere else.

Christof Brownell is working on an alternative. The lifelong local plans to open another resort in the Taos Valley. If you can't join them, beat them.

Following are a few questions with Christof to explain the situation and the project.—K.H.

What is really the deal in Taos?

Taos Ski Valley, Inc. wants to be the lone holdout to snowboarding in the world, focusing on purist skiing ethics, and priding themselves on elitism and segregation in the winter-sport arena, all while leasing public Forest Service land to do it on.

How do they get away with discrimination on public lands?

The Forest Service goes along with whatever Taos Ski Valley, Inc. [TSV] wants because they get a percentage of ticket sales, and TSV has given them the illusion that the mountain isn't made for, or is too dangerous for, snowboarding. This idea is constructed, of course, by non-snowboarders.

I asked the owner of the area how he draws the line between mono skiing—which is allowed—and snowboarding. He said as long as your toes are pointed forward it's considered skiing and is allowed at TSV. So basically, the whole ski-only policy at Taos is based on "stance angle."

What's the makeup of the potential resort area?

We're working on a 600-acre north-northwest-facing bowl with about 1,500 vertical feet—it's directly across the glacial valley from Taos Ski Valley ski area. The base would be about a three-minute drive up from the village of Taos Ski Valley.

The Pattison family owns the property—they own about 1,200 acres of mountainside adjacent to Taos Ski Valley Forest Service and wilderness land. My friend and business partner Roger Pattison is a member of the family that owns the land, and we have been exploring the potential runs and terrain park location for several years now.

I bought an old snowmobile a few years ago, and we've been towing up old logging roads to explore the forested bowl. Last summer we did a bit of tree trimming, glading runs top to bottom.

What do we call this place?

We're thinking of calling the area Northside Park at Taos Ski Valley.

What is the biggest challenge in front of you?

The biggest hurdle is establishing a long-term land-use lease from the Pattison family, so that we can continue to form the business and accept investor money—there's a considerable amount of investor interest.

We need to solidify the lease agreement before we can install a lift or two and some rope tows. We've already received a special-use permit from the village of Taos Ski Valley to pursue a winter/summer recreational area on the land.

What's the long-term plan for "Northside Park"?

Our long-term vision for the area is to create a year-round recreational area that provides more activities for the public than are currently offered in the valley, like snowboarding in the winter and lift-accessed mountain biking during the summer. Roger and I would like to power the area by alternative fuel, with a combination of wind, solar, and hydropower, and using bio-diesel to run the generators for the lift and snowcats. We want to create a recreational area that is eco-friendly as well as state of the art.

When should we show up?

Realistically, we would like to be open for business within two to three years. Until then we have our own private little area to play at—and work on.