

Snowsports Builder Awards

by Steve Coxen, Awards Chair

The FWSA Snowsports Builder Award is given to individuals who have made an indelible positive impact on snowsports. The builder may be honored for achievements in athletics, the press, publishers, historians, industry, humanitarian work, area development, or technology. In short, they honor those who have made significant contributions to snowsports.

The Drake Family

Founders and Operators of Mt. Hood Meadows

In 1966, a company headed by Franklin Drake and his two brothers, Donald and Mitchell, edged out a Hood River-based group and got a 30-year lease from the U.S. Forest Service to build and operate a ski resort on Mt. Hood's east side.

Franklin Drake, an enthusiastic skier himself, used helicopters to haul concrete and steel for the two original chairlifts. He managed to build a lodge, a parking lot, all the infrastructure and the lifts in a year and opened for business in 1967.

Mt. Hood Meadows now draws about half-a-million people a year, second only to Mt. Bachelor. Drake managed the resort until 2006, when his son, Matthew Drake, took over. Franklin Drake died in 2021.

The Drake family has maintained a philosophy of continuous improvement

and development at Mt. Hood Meadows. The ski resort has expanded over the years, the most notable was the development of the adjacent Heather Canyon ski area in the 1980's. In 1984, they began adding triple and quad express lifts.

While Mt. Hood Meadows had always been committed to preserving and maintaining the environment in which it operates, it was the 90's when it became recognized as being on the leading edge of these environmental issues.

The resort was the recipient of National Ski Areas Association's prestigious "Golden Eagle Environmental Excellence Award" in 2015. The Resort received the Recycler of the Year from the Association of Oregon Recyclers in 2016.

Mt. Hood Meadows began construction of the new Sahale Lodge in 2019.



It is the first significant commercial improvement at the Resort since 1999. The Lodge was designed to add 10,000 square feet for dining and 13,500 square feet for skier services. Sahale is equipped with a heated roof and concrete embedded hydronic snow-melt system in the outdoor dining area and entry slabs.

Mt. Hood Meadows was named to the list of 100 Best Companies to Work for in Oregon by Oregon Business Magazine, as well as making the Top 100 Green Companies to Work For, marking the seventh year in a row Meadows received the award.