

# ***Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation***

---

***15 Village Way - Unit -6 \* Vernon, NJ 07462 \* 973-764-0375 \* e-mail: johnw@hvara.com***

## ***Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation***

***Developed by:***

***Dr. John T. Whiting***

***In cooperation with Hidden Valley Club Members, HVARA  
Member, Season Pass Holders and Parents***

***Contact Information:  
johnw@hvara.com***

***April 26, 2011***

## ***Table of Contents***

Purpose Statement: .....	1
The Evaluation Process: .....	1
The Evaluation Form: .....	1
The Analysis of the Results of the Evaluation: .....	1
The Evaluation Findings: .....	2
Evaluation Respondent Information: .....	2
Strengths of the Hidden Valley Club in 2011 (listed in rank order).....	3
Weaknesses of the Hidden Valley Club in 2011 (listed in rank order) .....	3
List of Respondent Priorities to Prepare for the 2012 Ski Season.....	4
Analysis of Priority Rankings:.....	5
Summary and Conclusions: .....	5
Additional Comments from Respondents: .....	5

**Purpose Statement:**

The Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation was carried out to provide the owners of the Hidden Valley Club and Management with feedback on how various visitors to the Club perceived the 2011 ski season and input on what those visitors believed to be the strengths, weaknesses and priorities should be to help make future ski seasons better than those of the past.

It is hoped that this evaluation will help those in decision making positions with the Hidden Valley Club to have an insight into how the Club is perceived by its visitors and to help identify goals, objectives and priorities as plans are set into motion to prepare for the 2012 ski season.

**The Evaluation Process:**

The Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation was not intended to be scientific, but was intended to gather information that would be helpful to the owners and managers of the Club.

Present Members of the Hidden Valley Club, Members of HVARA, Parents and other visitors who had provided an e-mail address were contacted regarding the intention to conduct an evaluation of the 2011 ski season, were asked to provide input on the form and content of the evaluation process and participate in the evaluation.

Based on feedback from these groups a simple Evaluation Form was created and posted on the [www.hvara.com](http://www.hvara.com) web site. Those who wished to participate in the evaluation process were able to complete the Form with the results automatically delivered to the owners of the Hidden Valley Club and the General Manager via electronic e-mail.

**The Evaluation Form:**

The Evaluation Form sought information from the participants including the following:

- Evaluation Respondent Information
- How many years they had been coming to Hidden Valley
- Their plans to return to Hidden Valley for the 2012 season
- Would they recommend the HVC to someone else
- Do they have children in HVC Snow Sports Programs, and if they did which programs
- Their perception of the HVC Strengths
- Their perception of the HVC Weaknesses
- Their list of Priorities to prepare for the 2012 ski season
- Other comments related to the HVC.

**The Analysis of the Results of the Evaluation:**

The analysis of the data derived from the evaluation was not scientific but empirical in nature. The responses provided by the participants were quantified and transformed into

## *Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation*

averages and percentages to help establish some indication of the degree to which all respondents believed that a specific item or topic represented the general consensus of all respondents. No statistical test was conducted to establish the level of validity, reliability or statistical significance of any of the responses.

The Comments listed at the end of this report are provided verbatim to provide the owners and managers of the HVC with an insight into what respondents wished to say regarding the HVC.

### **The Evaluation Findings:**

A total of 24 HVC visitors chose to participate in the evaluation process. The analysis of their responses is summarized below:

#### *Evaluation Respondent Information:<sup>1</sup>*

HVC Member – 52%  
Season Pass Holder – 44%  
Parent – 26%  
HVARA Member – 61%  
Other – 4%

#### Number of Years a Visitor to Hidden Valley:

First year – 0%  
1 – 2 years – 25%  
3 – 5 years – 14%  
6 years or longer – 61%

#### Do You Plan to Return to Hidden Valley for the 2012 Ski Season?

I do – 88%  
I don't – 0  
Undecided – 12%

#### Would You Recommend the HVC to Someone Else?

I would – 67%  
I would not – 17%  
Undecided – 16%

#### Do You Have Children in the HVC Snow Sports Program?

Yes I do – 79%  
No I don't – 17%  
No Answer – 4%

---

<sup>1</sup> Total more than 100% because respondents may be a part of multiple groups.

## *Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation*

If “Yes” Which Snow Sports Programs:

- Ski Wee – 0%
- Hurricane/Hot Shot Program – 46%
- USSA/J Program – 54%
- Ski/Snow Board Instruction – 8%

*Strengths of the Hidden Valley Club in 2011 (listed in rank order)*

- Family Orientation – 63%
- Friendly Atmosphere – 54%
- Proximity to Home – 29%
- People – 21%
- Nice pitch for a small mountain – 21%
- Lack of crowds – 21%
- Private Membership – 21%
- Safe environment – 17%
- Hurricane/Hot Shot Program – 13%
- Friendly staff – 13%
- Great race coaches – 13%
- Small than most mountains – 8%
- Short lift lines – 8%
- Ski instructors – 8%
- Clean locker room – 8%
- Terrific Ski Patrol – 4%
- Ski focused – 4%
- Low prices – 4%
- J5/J6 Program – 4%
- Don't have to worry about theft – 4%
- Absence of careless, dangerous skiers/boarders – 4%
- Member parking – 4%

*Weaknesses of the Hidden Valley Club in 2011 (listed in rank order)*

- Snow making – 71%
- Grooming – 29%
- Short ski season – 21%
- Not enough trails open – 17%
- Restaurant service – 17%
- Chair lifts – 17%
- Management cohesiveness – 13%
- Lack of friendly helpful staff – 13%
- Lack of planning to prepare for ski season – 8%
- Lack of commitment to HVC potential – 8%
- Oversight of J coaching staff – 8%
- Condition of the HV Lodge – 8%
- HVC thinks they are doing a good job but they are not – 8%
- Lodge needs a fireplace – 8%
- Parking lots & parking lot maintenance – 8%

## *Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation*

- Lack of preparation for summer – 4%
- Chaotic lessons, rental lessons process – 4%
- Young inexperienced staff with limited training – 4%
- Need more snow programs for adults – 4%
- Daily maintenance of stairs, chair lifts, locked doors, etc. – 4%
- Crummy lockers – 4%
- Lack of organization – 4%
- J4 groups too large & catered to best skiers only – 4%
- Lack of retail Ski Shop with ski basics for sale – 4%
- Lack of seat pads on lifts – 4%
- Safety – 4%
- Need for less fried and healthier food – 4%
- Terrain park with more features – 4%
- Members should be in front of lift lines – 4%

### *List of Respondent Priorities to Prepare for the 2012 Ski Season – Ranked 1 – 16 (1 ranked as greatest priority and 16 as lowest priority)*

- Priority #1 - Upgrade snow making capability – 1.8<sup>2</sup>
- Priority #2 - Upgrade grooming capability – 2.8
- Priority #3 - Prepare to open all trails earlier – 3.2
- Priority #4 - Plan to make more snow to stay open longer – 3.3
- Priority #5 - Get all chair lifts inspected and approved before the start of the ski season – 3.9
- Priority #6 - Recruit and hire quality, friendly and capable employees – 6.0
- Priority #7 - Plan to groom the trails more frequently – 6.1
- Priority #8 - Improve the quality of Snow Sports Programs – 6.3
- Priority #9 - Upgrade chair lifts – 6.4
- Priority #10 - Improve parking – 6.8
- Priority #10 - Make staff orientation and training a priority – 6.8
- Priority #10 - Improve communication with Members and Pass Holders – 7.8
- Priority #13 - Improve the Food & Beverage service – 8.6
- Priority #14 - Make the Hidden Valley Club web site more user friendly and informative – 9.6
- Priority #15 - Make Food and Beverage pricing more reasonable – 9.8
- Priority #16 - Keep the Hidden Valley Club open all year – 10.3

#### Other topics volunteered as priorities by respondents:

- Add personal photos to lodge
- Upgrade J program
- Adult ski program
- Make repairs before the season
- The ski racing kids are the future
- Create a retail ski shop
- Remove brush and rocks to reduce amount of snow needed
- Improve snow maintenance
- Open member lift line to Hurricane/Hot Shots

---

<sup>2</sup> Number represents the average ranking score for the item by all respondents.

*Analysis of Priority Rankings:*

It is interesting to note that the top 5 priorities all have to do with the planning and preparation of ski operations for the ski season to ensure that there is quality snow, it is properly maintained and groomed and is produced at an early enough date to begin the season with all trails open and make sufficient reserves of snow to ensure that the season does not prematurely come to an end.

The second tier of priorities tends to do with the day to day operation of the Hidden Valley Club and focuses on improving the quality of staff, daily grooming and improving the quality of the Snow Sports Programs.

It is noteworthy that the top 10 priorities were noted by a sufficient number of the respondents to rank it as one of the top 50% of priorities (achieving an average score of less than 8) suggesting that all of these items ranked as top 10 priorities are sufficiently important to receive a weighted score between 1 – 8. Only one item, “keep Hidden Valley Club open all year” even approached being considered a low priority with a weighed score of 10.3 (with the lowest possible priority being a 16).

**Summary and Conclusions:**

A review of the information in this Evaluation Report confirms what most long term visitors to Hidden Valley already know, that Hidden Valley is a special place for families due to the friendly atmosphere, nice people, safe environment, proximity and excellent racing program; but that Hidden Valley’s greatest weakness, in summary, is its limited ability during the 2010 ski season to deliver quality on snow programs and a timely, consistent, quality skiing experience to its visitors.

The challenge for the HVC appears to be one of focusing the resources of the Club on the planning, preparation, actions and activities during the summer months that are essential to preparing for the upcoming ski season, and that this process not be left until October and November when it becomes impossible to be adequately prepared for all that must be accomplished to be able to deliver quality on snow programs and a quality ski experience.

**Additional Comments from Respondents:**

The following comments are copied verbatim as they were included in the Evaluation Form by the respondent.

“The HVC Owners and Management needs a plan and a commitment to follow the plan to prepare for the upcoming season during the summer months and also to make Snow Sports Program quality a priority to be addressed during the summer months.”

“I wish there was an adult training program, to correspond with kids training time wise. So parents can train while children do. I would love to have some coaching, and opportunity to learn. I'm sure there are other parents who would like that.”

“Improving snow making, opening earlier and staying open longer is really the same, and I would make it first priority. Upgrading chairlift would be nice. But without snow, there's no point. Snow school is great as it is, as is staff friendliness.”

“This season was really rough, and almost caused us, and others, to move our family to Mr. Peter. As you may be aware, many families have already moved from HV to MP over the past few years. I'm not aware of any families that have moved from MP to HV during that period.

In my opinion, it's really inexcusable to not have the snowmaking and snow grooming equipment ready for the first storms, so that the full mountain can open at the beginning of the season, as they did at the surrounding, competitive mountains.

Added to that frustration was the sight of many of the J4 girls, skiing without a coach for much of the first couple days, because they weren't able to figure out who their coach was. Leadership and organization was lacking. Finally, the J4's found out that they were part of a 40 person pack of J3 and J4 kids that were with Tommy and Ken. Despite countless complaints about how ineffective it is to have 40 kids in one group, where the fast J3's got most of the attention, the problem was not addressed until more than half way through the season; too late to really make a difference.

Finally, coaches and racers have only an hour to eat lunch between sessions. Therefore, considering that it takes 5 min to park/collect skis and get in and out of the restaurant, if it takes longer than 50 min to order and receive a meal for lunch, kids and coaches will be late for their teams afternoon session. This happened many times to many coaches and racers, and is also inexcusable. Folks need to be able to order, eat and pay for their meal within 50 min.

If not for the community of families and relationships that we have developed over the years, we would have left at the beginning of the season after experiencing all these issues. Hopefully HVC can learn from its mistakes so that we don't have to experience these issues again and reconsider that option.”

“YOU HAVE A GREAT IDEA TO MAKE INTO A PRIVATE CLUB - IT IS HARD TO GET MEMBERS WHEN YOU CAN SEE YOUR VISION. I NOTICE VERY LITTLE HAS BEEN DONE IN 2 YEARS SINCE WE BECAME MEMBERS. TABLECLOTHS ON RUNDOWN FURNITURE AND A BAD PAINT JOB ON SECOND HAND LOCKERS TO NOT MAKE FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS.”

“HV is situated to make a difference in the market instead of being an afterthought, but it will take commitment from the ownership.

Infrastructure upgrades are crucial. On the other hand, there are easy things that need tending too. Staff needs to go out of its way to make the customer experience



## *Hidden Valley Club 2011 Ski Season Evaluation*

better, with the goal ultimately being to entice more visitors to buy memberships. These easy things slip too often.

For example, when the parking lots were coated with ice one weekend toward the end of the season, staff should have been quicker to sand on Saturday. On Sunday, when I arrived at the mountain, it was apparent that no sanding had been done on the lower parking lot. It was ridiculous and inexcusable. Other things - the cafeteria food is unacceptable, and there are no good options for vegetarians because the kitchen staff only on rare occasion will agree to cook a veggie burger downstairs. Of course, this is indicative of a bigger problem that food - staff should go the extra mile **WHENEVER ASKED TO DO SO!**

Inattentive staff is for Mountain Creek.

Also, we need a retail space other than behind the ticket counter, even if it's not elaborate. At the very least we need skiing basics, but also some HV paraphernalia, like sweatshirts and mugs.”

“Now that the snow is gone: Visit Mount Peter (or even Camelback or Shawnee). Take a picture of the slopes in Warren. Then compare the picture to the slopes at Hidden Valley. Image how much more snow it takes to cover all those rocks and shrubs at Hidden Valley compared to the grass lawn at Mount Peter. Imagine how much more damage the Hidden Valley grooming equipment going to encounter next winter chewing up all those rocks and branches.”

“Race program needs to be much more organized and focused more on USSA and less on HS Racing”

“Generally great service in the member’s dining room! Thank you member outreach too!”

“snow making should be done in excess to preserve ski season as long as possible”

Prepared by: Dr. John T. Whiting

Date: April 26, 2011