

at OKEMO, ART and INNOVATION ARE WHAT IS NEW for WINTER 2008-09

LUDLOW, VT – Art and innovation combine to address the challenges of creating a better resort experience at Okemo – all with an eye toward efficiency and sustainability. Laser-guided superpipe cutting, first-in-the-East lift loading and grooming technologies, plus energy efficiencies in snowmaking and other operations, these are just some of the innovations that comprise the art of Okemo.

NEW TERRAIN

Okemo has saved the best for last. The final two trails of the original Jackson Gore layout are completed in time for this winter's ski season. For years, skiers and riders traveling to the Jackson Gore summit on the Jackson Gore Express Quad have looked longingly upon the partially cleared trails located on skier's right halfway down Quantum Leap.

"These are not your typical Okemo trails," says Okemo Mountain Resort Vice-President of Operations Barry Tucker. "Offering some of the steepest pitch at Jackson Gore, they have lots of character with natural outcroppings and contours to enhance the way these trails will ski."

Looking a little like a scene from the History Channel's *Ax Men*, the summertime trail clearing at Jackson Gore took on an innovative approach to some timber removal challenges. To avoid a wetlands area located downhill from the trail-clearing operation, felled trees had to be hauled with a winch, uphill to a point where they could be loaded onto trucks and removed via Mountain Road.

Although they have not yet been named or officially ranked, Tucker thinks the new trails will be rated double black diamond. One of the new trails will measure about 1,000 feet long and the other will be about 2,600 feet long. The latter will have a vertical drop of 850 feet. Together, the new trails will add about eight acres to Okemo's skiable acreage total – now 632 acres.

MORE SNOWMAKING

In addition to the 96 percent of Okemo's trails that are equipped with snowmaking capabilities, 80 new snowmaking guns have been added to the arsenal this year. Okemo's operational focus this winter is on energy-efficient, early-season snowmaking. With the help of HKD's economic solutions and innovative technology, Okemo will continue to offer an outstanding snow surface at reduced energy consumption. Last winter, Okemo tested some new energy-efficient HKD guns. Featuring adjustable water flow levers, nozzle versatility and new valving technology, the HKD SV-10s and Genesis tower guns were a huge success. Due to the snow guns' ability to make snow more efficiently at closer-to-freezing temperatures, Okemo was able to make the same amount of

snow as in previous years using a reduced amount of energy and a fuel-cost savings of \$140,000.

In addition, Okemo is upgrading its snowmaking systems on some of its most-skied trails and those that are traditionally the earliest to open. These infrastructure efficiencies are being done at minimal cost by re-using a large amount of previously discarded materials.

GROOMING

Okemo's grooming fleet is the first in the East to include the new Prinoth BR500 grooming machine, affectionately referred to as "The Beast" by Resort operations staff. The 500-horsepower dual turbocharged behemoth is about eight feet wider and ten feet longer than the next largest model, the BR350. The Beast sports a 24-foot-wide tiller and a 20-foot-wide blade. With engineered efficiencies, additional width and an ability to travel at the same speed uphill and downhill, the newest machine in Okemo's grooming fleet will bring the art of grooming to a new level.

In addition, Okemo is replacing three other machines with Prinoth BR350s, one of which will be outfitted as a park cat for grooming the terrain features in Okemo's five ski and snowboard terrain parks.

LASER-GUIDED PIPE MONSTER

Okemo Vice-President of Operations Barry Tucker looks nothing like Buzz Lightyear of *Star Command*, but one thing the two have in common is laser technology. When Tucker and his crew were tasked with finding a more precise way to cut Okemo's massive SoBe Superpipe, they found a technological solution that cost \$50,000. "It simply wasn't a \$50,000 problem," said Tucker. So with a heaping dose of Yankee ingenuity and a dash of frugality, the operations crew came up with a solution using the same laser technology they use in summertime construction-site grading projects. By affixing adjustable laser units with a vertical orientation to a stationary base at the bottom of the superpipe, and attaching a receptor device to the arm of the Zaug Pipe Monster, Okemo's groomer operators can monitor superpipe shaping for better construction, upkeep and optimal vert. To infinity and beyond!

OKEMO'S "RED CARPET TREATMENT" LIFT LOADING AND UNLOADING CARPETS

Everyone loves the section of Warren Miller's films when the camera positioned at the top of a chairlift catches the crashes of skiers trying to disembark. The more tangled the carnage, the louder the laughs. For beginner skiers and snowboarders, riding the lift can be a stressful part of the learning

experience. Seasoned veterans grow increasingly impatient with each delay of elevation gain. Lift operators loading the uninitiated must be ever vigilant to maintain safety. As a way to make that first lift ride of the day less stressful and safer, Okemo is installing mechanized loading and unloading carpets on one of its base area South Ridge fixed-grip quad chairs. Although familiar to European skiers, the loading carpet is a rarity in North America. Okemo's loading carpet will be the first one in the East and the unloading carpet will be the first of its kind in the U.S. A conveyor belt, marked with lanes and moving in sync with the chairlift, will make loading and unloading easier and safer. It will reduce lift-line lengths, minimize starts and stops, reduce ride time and improve overall lift capacity.

SKI AND SNOWBOARD RENTAL FLEET UPGRADE

A total of 30 percent of the Okemo's rental fleet is being upgraded this winter with the newest skis from Atomic and Salomon. With its designation as an official Burton Learn-to-Ride Center, Okemo offers only the best rental snowboards Burton has to offer. All of the hottest new Atomic and Salomon skis will be available to demo for performance enthusiasts. The Tornado, Fury and Opal are sure to be this year's most popular boards from Salomon and Atomic's top-of-the-line demos will include Metron, Deviant, Stomp and Izor.

EPIC ART

Skiers enjoying lunch at one of Okemo's most popular and eclectic on-mountain restaurants will also enjoy the whimsical canvases of Vermont artist Donald Saaf. Hailing from Saxtons River,

Saaf is a graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. A painter, sculptor, musician and children's book illustrator, Saaf creates lively textural fields that complement the detailed imagery in his compositions. His recent work has focused on the tree, and the abstracted spaces between the branches expand across his canvases. The resulting patterns span the gap between his subjects, drawn from every day life, and a realm of historical fable. Saaf has shown his work extensively in the Boston area and elsewhere in the United States. He has illustrated eight children's books and has been reviewed in *The Boston Herald* and *Art New England*. Five paintings were commissioned and will adorn the walls at Epic starting this winter.

For more info, please visit www.okemo.com by logging on to their website via an easily found link in the New England section of the home page of www.skiernews.com or call 1-866-74-OKEMO (1-866-746-5366).



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(*SKI Magazine* Top 10 in North America for Terrain Parks)



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