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## **DCNR Secretary, Seven Springs and State Park Officials Mark Progress on Laurel Mountain Ski Resort Renovations**

**Ligonier, PA** – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today joined Seven Springs Mountain Resort Chairman Robert Nutting and Bureau of State Parks officials in a celebratory groundbreaking marking progress on major renovations under way at Laurel Mountain Ski Resort, Laurel Mountain State Park, near Ligonier, Westmoreland County.

DCNR's Bureau of State Parks and the Department of General Services have committed to \$6.5 million in improvements that are scheduled to be completed in time for Laurel Mountain to open for the 2016-17 season. The ski area, part of Laurel Mountain State Park, will feature major enhancements including a new chair lift, doubled snowmaking capacity, trail improvements and more. Seven Springs is assuming operation of the ski area and facilities, and DCNR is maintaining its role as steward of park resources.

"This is an ideal partnership, with Seven Springs bringing its proven expertise in winter sports to Laurel Mountain and the Bureau of State committed to reestablishing the park as one of the Laurel Highlands' many natural jewels," Dunn told a slope-side gathering. "There is a tremendous amount of energy coming from Seven Springs and our bureau that is committed to making this work for skiers and snowboarders, park visitors and the many local communities that will share in this renewal."

Speaking at a commemorative groundbreaking at the ski area, where construction has been under way since the fall, the DCNR secretary commended Seven Springs for hosting a town-hall type meeting in March 2015 at which questions were invited from neighboring Ligonier and Jennerstown officials, Chamber of Commerce representatives, tourism bureaus, reporters, and a knot of dedicated skiers who learned how to ski on Laurel Mountain.

"I know many of you are here again today and I commend and thank you all for your demonstrated support," Dunn said. "Not only will this opening pump new vitality into area the snow sports, it will bring new visitors and customers to the areas and businesses you represent. It also helps prove our state parks are a tremendous boon to local economies."

"Our partners -- DCNR and Ligonier Construction -- have made tremendous progress in helping us push towards our goal of reopening Laurel Mountain," said Nutting. "This is a renowned skiers' mountain with a unique and proud history. By reestablishing the ski

area as a community asset, it will bring with it new jobs, activity and the ability to attract even more visitors to our region.

“We look forward to realizing our goal and celebrating as the first skier takes the first run down Lower Wild Cat and the steepest terrain in the commonwealth is reopened for all to enjoy.”

Operation of the resort by Seven Springs would be the latest development in an on-again, off-again history of one of three ski areas privately operated on state parkland. Once the exclusive winter playground of Rolling Rock Club members, it opened in 1939 and later was deeded to the state. Laurel Mountain is among the first ski areas in Pennsylvania.

Facing financial issues and warm winters, it was beset by a series of closings -- one lasting 10 years. Seven Springs Mountain Resort signed a 10-year lease to operate the area in 2008.

Undertaken by Ligonier Construction Co. of Laughlintown, work now under way and scheduled to be completed by late summer 2016 includes:

Tree removal and site clearing; earthmoving as part of pump house and pond connection piping work; installation of water and air Lines for snowmaking guns; ski lift demolition; ski lift foundations; ski lift erection, installation and testing; electrical work; and inspections.

High atop Laurel Ridge at close to 3,000 feet in elevation, Laurel Mountain State Park is known for offering a family-oriented downhill skiing area and beautiful views of rolling countryside that is the Ligonier Valley. The slopes and trails provide opportunities for skiers and snowboarders of all levels.

Located just 72 miles east of Pittsburgh and only 35 miles from its sister resorts Seven Springs and Hidden Valley, Laurel Mountain should be a strong attraction to avid skiers looking to add to their Laurel Highlands winter experience. Now skiers can use their Highlands Season Pass at Laurel Mountain in addition to Seven Springs and Hidden Valley.

For details on Laurel Mountain and Pennsylvania's 119 other state parks, visit [www.dcnr.pa.gov](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov) (select "Find a Park").

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