



Snowmaking...Harder Than it Looks

Shaun Nordlie

Every year we have members who react when they read notices saying that our Ski Hill and/or Tub Tow do not have adequate snow coverage for use. They compare us to Chestnut Mountain or other full-scale ski facilities. Some even compare us to a 100 mile radius of facilities. While I can appreciate your frustration, it is important for LCA members to understand that we are not a ski resort community. Our amenities are widespread and our staff does a great job at keeping those amenities available to the community...when it's within their power and ability to do so. Snowmaking is one of those things we just can't 100% control.

I would like to explain though what it takes for our staff to make snow. With the snowmaking equipment we have, temperatures must be in the single digits for us to make snow. Realize though, that a predicted low temperature of 7 or 8 degrees could produce minimal results as the low temperature may last only an hour or two. The wind also plays a big role. Sometimes it's our friend and sometimes it takes our manmade snow and puts it in places where we can't use it. A third factor is humidity. Believe it or not, humidity can be high even at these low temperatures; and when it is high, the manmade snow can turn into a cloud and float away. We prefer when the temperatures get down to around zero or lower so we can really pour out the snow. This year we have added a second PoleCat. Temperatures still need to be single digits for the PoleCat, but when they are, the amount of snow that it can create is amazing. We're hoping that these two machines will have a great impact on our snowmaking abilities and can make a difference in everyone's skiing experience.

As for the comparison between us and Chestnut – I am afraid this is not a fair fight for Lake Carroll. The PoleCat that we are so excited to have two of this year – Chestnut has 65 and the majority of them are mounted 30 feet in the air to maximize snow making. They also have 15 Super PoleCats that are mobile – these pour out at least 1.5 times the snow that a regular PoleCat can make. Chestnut also has coverage; a lot of their runs are in the trees, not in the open like our Tube Hill or the Ski Hill. Chestnut has an endless supply of cold water out of the Mississippi River whenever they want. We have a pond that worked great last year, but did show its limits when we made snow for 72 continuous hours. Water pressure is another thing that we always need to consider when making snow, something Chestnut never has to worry about.



I want to thank the staff of Mike Reed and Jon Doty along with their part time help for putting in sometimes long hours in very cold conditions doing anything they can to have the Ski Hill open for the members. No matter what, Mike and Jon stick to the tasks of moving snow sticks and checking water lines, battling ice, electrical issues, and anything else that may hinder their goal of making snow. Please know that these guys really care about the Ski Hill and want to have it open; so if temperatures are cold enough, they are out there making snow no matter the occasion.

Hopefully, this information helps you understand that unfortunately, we do not have complete control of the situation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at snordlie@golakecarroll.com. With a little luck, by the time you read this article, you will have the opportunity to enjoy the Ski Hill and Tube Tow.