

Reno gets first new golf resort in nearly 20 years

By Peter Blais

Eight years of planning will finally pay off this spring when the Galena Resort begins construction in Reno, Nev.

The 3,000-acre resort will include an 18-hole, Algie Pulley-designed golf course, 107 ski runs, underground parking for 1,000 cars, hotels, 1,460 condominiums, 100 single-family homes and housing for 500 employees.

The ski area is scheduled to open in 1992 or 1993 contingent upon financing. The golf course and the

rest of the project will be phased in over the next 15 years.

The Reno-Lake Tahoe area was under a building moratorium for large projects from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s. Developing plans and obtaining permits for Galena Resort began eight years ago, according to Bruce Erickson, resort design manager for The Sear-Brown Group, the engineering firm that spearheaded the project.

Twenty-two federal, 10 state, four regional and 13 local government agencies had to be satisfied before

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construction could begin. Their concerns included wetlands, traffic, water quality, flooding, water supply, air quality, cultural resources, erosion and geologic hazards (earthquakes and avalanches).

The final agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, gave its approval by issuing a permit last November to fill in 5.5 acres of wetlands, about two percent of the 252 acres of wetlands at the Galena site.

"We started working on this project in 1983 — the conceptual plan, cost work, identifying potential problems," Erickson said. "We got all the federal, state and local permits we needed, except for wetlands, in six months. It took from 1984 to 1990 to complete the wetlands work.

"The regulations changed halfway through the process. President Bush promised when he took office there would be no net loss of wetlands. We had to go back and evaluate eight alternative locations for the project, some of which we didn't even own. None were better than this site."

The keys to obtaining approval, Erickson said, were doing a complete engineering study as early in the design phase as possible; tier-



Mountains rise as a backdrop to the Galena Resort golf course site.

ing the approval process, meaning the approvals for each issue are built on previous approvals; sharing information with the public; the refusal of Galena partners Bob Weise, Bob Wells, Alpine Meadows of Tahoe, Doug Clyde, Redfield Land Co. and Jerry Smith to be intimidated by opponents into dropping the project; and using the Development Standards Handbook to provide enough technical data so that agencies could make decisions.

To minimize changes to the terrain, some ski runs were laid out along fairways. Erickson said skiers should have little impact on turf quality because of the area's snow conditions.

First, the Reno-Lake Tahoe area receives 400 inches of snow a year, providing a deep cushion between skis and grass. Second, the snow is much drier than that found in the East, meaning it won't ice over and further damage the turf. Pre-season turf treatments should also help reduce wear.

"There will be some compaction, but it should be minimal," Erickson said.

The ski runs were also aligned so they didn't come into contact with the most sensitive areas of the course, the greens and tees.

"Galena promises to be a challenging resort golf course that appeals to both the high-level amateur and beginner golfer," Pulley said. "It will represent the state-of-the-art in golf course design with minimal irrigated and fertilized areas and an overall layout that offers a strategic game."

Water will be supplied from as many as seven wells drilled on the property. Studies showed they would have little measurable impact on the surrounding water table. Effluent was considered as a source of irrigation water, Erickson said. But it was rejected because of the area's 8,000-foot altitude and its long, cold winters.

Of great benefit during the water supply discussions, Erickson said, was having all the water needed for the project (and substantial reserves) in the direct ownership of the partners as early as possible, but definitely before the public approval process.

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