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Breckenridge Certified as a Sustainable Mountain Resort Destination

Breckenridge, Colorado (April 5, 2021) - Today, Breckenridge announced their certification as a sustainable mountain resort destination using the [Mountain IDEAL](#) standard. Breckenridge was certified by Green Destinations and is only the third destination in the United States to become certified through a program that is accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The certification is the result of a multi-year partnership between the Town of Breckenridge, Breckenridge Tourism Office, High Country Conservation Center, Vail Resorts, Summit County Government, Breckenridge Heritage Alliance, Walking Mountains Science Center, U.S. Forest Service, and others. It marks the culmination of two years of leadership by the Breckenridge community in progressive environmental conservation policies and programs.

Robert (Bobby) Chappell, Green Destination's North American Representative says, "Breckenridge has a long history of sustainability good practice and were able to leverage that experience to design an effective destination management framework. Certification is recognition for that journey."

Like many mountain resort destinations, Breckenridge's economy is highly dependent on tourism. While the town is home to nearly 5,000 local residents, it welcomes over one million guests annually. Breckenridge has seen tremendous growth since its incorporation as a mining town in 1959 and as a ski resort in 1961.

Recognizing the community-wide impacts of rapid growth, the Town embarked on a series of studies, discussions, and public meetings to further identify and define what sustainability meant to the community. The SustainableBreck Plan was the culmination of those endeavors in 2011 addressing the need to balance resource conservation, economic development, and socio-cultural issues with a growing tourism sector. This plan built on notable past achievements including preservation of 4,425 acres of open space, creation of a workforce housing program and fund, establishment of a child care tuition assistance program, and improvement of a robust land use and development code protecting historical assets of the town. Now in its 10th year, the SustainableBreck program and partnerships have evolved to address 100% renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions goals, a ban on single use plastic bags, and the transition of the Town's transportation fleet to electric powered. The most recent accomplishment is the recognition by Green Destinations as a Mountain IDEAL sustainable destination.

"Breckenridge has long been a leader in environmental stewardship and cultural preservation," said Jessie Burley, Sustainability Coordinator for the Town of Breckenridge. "The goal now is to seek an appropriate balance between our locals and our visitors. We have an important platform as a destination to amplify our voice in this space, and we hope to engage our visitors and pass on our values as a community so we might have a broader impact."



“We are very proud of this Mountain Ideal Certification,” said Lucy Kay, CEO, Breckenridge Tourism Office. “Local lifestyles revolve around our incredible natural environment and residents are very passionate about how well we care for it. In addition, environmental sustainability is increasingly cited by travelers as being important in their destination decisions. This recognition means so much on so many levels.”

Breckenridge began its pursuit of the Mountain IDEAL standard in 2019 following the development of the community’s Destination Management Plan. This plan’s 10 year roadmap seeks to accomplish a shared vision for a more balanced future. One of four strategic goals outlined in the plan is to establish Breckenridge at the leading edge in mountain environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. In order to achieve this, a multi-year partnership was established to shepherd through the Mountain IDEAL certification, a rigorous process that provides 3rd party verification and review of sustainability efforts as a community at the destination level. The Mountain IDEAL Stewardship Council, comprised of representatives from various town departments, organizations, and businesses, provides accountability and ensures continued improvement toward recertification.

As part of the certification, the destination must provide a sustainability training and certification program for local businesses. The ResourceWise program, developed and administered by the High Country Conservation Center, is a free program that coaches businesses through improvements to their operational efficiency, employee engagement, and resource conservation. To date, the ResourceWise program has certified over 113 businesses in Breckenridge. In addition to existing employee training programs at Vail Resorts and Breckenridge Grand Vacations, the Breckenridge Tourism Office has begun to incorporate sustainability and responsible tourism trainings in their guest services and visitor engagement programs.

In the fall of 2020, Green Destinations, an internationally accredited certification body, conducted an onsite assessment of Breckenridge. Through a rigorous process, Green Destinations auditors reviewed documentation, interviewed key stakeholders, and completed a thorough evaluation of Breckenridge’s overall approach to sustainable destination management. Following a months-long certification process, Breckenridge was officially certified to the *Mountain IDEAL* standard in March 2021 making it only the second such destination in the world.

“This Mountain IDEAL Certification is critical for the Council’s goal of Breckenridge being a leader in environmental stewardship,” said Eric Mamula, Mayor. “We are honored to be a certified destination and are grateful for all the hard work that went into pursuing this certification. We hope this sends a message to the rest of the country and the world that tourism, community, and sustainability can go hand in hand and that this balance is the future of protecting our natural resources.”

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About Breckenridge

The Town of Breckenridge is located 9,603 feet above sea level in a U-shaped valley on the western slope of the Continental Divide. Established in 1859, the Town has survived and thrived throughout its mining and recreational history. The Town of Breckenridge endeavors to ensure economic sustainability for the community while preserving the quality of life for residents and quality of place for visitors. The Town of Breckenridge works to create a balanced year



round economy, maintain a hometown feel and authentic character, increase alternative transportation, prioritize equity, and lead in environmental stewardship.

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About Walking Mountains Science Center

Walking Mountains Science Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit based in Avon, CO and their mission is to awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education. Their sustainability programs act as an agent of change to improve the social, economic, and environmental resilience of the Eagle County Community through energy efficiency and assistance programs, sustainable tourism certification and training, recycling and waste reduction, sustainable business training and certification, and climate action.

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About the *Mountain IDEAL* Standard

The Mountain IDEAL standard was authored by Sustainable Travel International and Walking Mountains Science Center, with support from the Town of Vail, and with input from numerous stakeholders. The standard aims to support resort, rural, recreation, and gateway communities in advancing a sustainable development agenda. The standard addresses challenges faced in most mountain resort destinations including: managing impacts from overtourism, managing recreation on public lands, protecting vast watersheds and preserving scenic views, developing year-round employment and affordable housing, and embracing the unique mountain cultural heritage. Breckenridge joins Vail, Colorado as the only destinations in the world certified to the GSTC-Recognized Mountain IDEAL standard. To learn more visit the [WMSC](#) for information.

About Green Destinations

Green Destinations is a non-profit organization of experts and destination ambassadors working in 80 countries. Green Destinations supports the world's largest community of local, regional and country destination managers and stakeholders, enhancing destination sustainability, market visibility, and tourism quality. Green Destinations developed a complete, affordable and easy-to-use Assessment & Certification program that fits the needs of both small and larger destinations. It is operated through an online Assessment & Reporting platform based upon the GSTC-Recognized Green Destinations Standard and the GD Database with data from 2000 destinations. The GD platform helps destinations to improve sustainability management and performance, and it facilitates the validation of pre-certification benchmark awards (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) for various standards (QualityCoast, Mountain IDEAL and national standards) and strategic development progress, also in relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.