

**Winter Media Guide  
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**Cashing In On the Scenery – Environmentalists Aren't the Only Ones Interested In Preservation**

SALT LAKE CITY – Is it true that money doesn't grow on trees? In Utah, the Aspen groves and pine nestled in the Rockies as well as the lanky Cottonwoods down south have all appreciated in value. Especially if their rooted in some of Utah's wild, open spaces.

Ever since the Outdoor Industry Association (a coalition of 1,100 retailers who are part of an \$18 billion industry) threatened to uproot its Salt Lake City-based trade shows last year and take them somewhere else, the state has attached economic value to its scenic, quiet spaces. As tree huggers loosened their embrace, business people and government officials offered a handshake with promises and action to preserve Utah's untrammelled places. After all, no one wanted to miss out on the \$32 million spent during Utah's two biggest conventions.

"If you are going to be a steward of the land and a law maker you need to look at your asset base. In a business, would you take your most beautiful places and degrade them on your balance sheet? No, you would enhance them so you have a greater return," explains Franks Huglemeyer, president of the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). "Protecting your public land makes good economic sense." Since flexing its economic muscle in Utah, OIA has formed a one-of-a-kind partnership with the governor-appointed task force and the Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau to identify land that should be valued by the state for its recreation use.

Huglemeyer hopes to use Utah as a model to convince other Western states that protecting areas that have high-recreation value makes more economic sense long term as an investment in jobs and repeat tourism dollars than using these lands first and foremost for mining, logging, and energy production—where there is a consistent boom and bust cycle.

"Utah is one of the icons of the world in terms of recreational significant land. Our trade shows are really the Olympics of the outdoor industry," says Huglemeyer.

The economic value of Utah's pristine landscape has not eluded Dianne Binger, Director of the Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau, whose job is to increase tourism dollars. "Before the Olympics, people either had no image of Salt Lake or thought that we were a conservative desert town on the edge of a briny lake."

National polling after the Olympics revealed a 180-degree change in perception. The near constant televised panoramic scans of snow-covered peaks and deep powder had delivered another, and truer image of Salt Lake City—that of an alpine destination.

Viewers with an affinity for skiing salivated at the fact that the city is surrounded ski towns and resorts. Four resorts - Alta, Brighton, Snowbird and Solitude - are less than 30 minutes from Salt Lake's International airport. Six others are less than 60 minutes away. "Let's face it, where else in the country can you be skiing within an hour of claiming your baggage," says Nathan Rafferty of Ski Utah. The ski industry kicks in a healthy \$200 million annually into the local economy.

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