



Hello,

I hope you will join me this Summer in helping to develop a special project involving work in the outdoors, enrichment and fun!

First, you may not know me, so let me introduce myself. My name is Peter Ingvaldstad and for the last thirty-one years I have had the pleasure of working at Smugglers' Notch Resort. During my tenure with Smugglers' I have had many opportunities to help Smugglers' grow and become what it is today. Some of the programs I have directed and been a part of creating are our *Snow Sport University* and *Summer Fun University*. I also worked on designing and building some of our waterpark facilities, as well as many smaller projects and programs. I feel truly fortunate to have been given the support of Bill Stritzler and the management team of Smugglers' to work on these exciting programs and projects. Just as importantly, I have been blessed to work with all the instructors, camp counselors and other staff who, over the years, have truly brought their effort and creativity to every project and program we have worked on.

This brings me to the purpose of my letter, which is to invite you to be a part of a new non-profit program that we have started, *Gateway to Nature*. It is a program that, I believe, goes to the core of what has brought many people and myself to Vermont. It may be part of why you want to be in Vermont. It is the desire to be part of a community where the expectation is to work hard and still experience life at a pace that allows for the enrichment that can only happen when one is close to nature. My friend Oliver Blackman, who teaches skiing for us, has been known to say, "Skiing the open trails is like sightseeing from the Interstate." Oliver loves to show his Winter guests the slower, more enriching experience of skiing in the woods. I want to do the same with you in the Summer.

Back in the 1970's, before I came to Vermont, I read a book about a couple, Helen and Scott Nearing, who moved from New York City to Vermont and started to build a home for themselves using a method of constructing stone walls called "slipform construction." The most interesting piece of the book to me was a rule they practiced. The rule was to do the physical work for the first half of the day and then come together over lunch to celebrate their work. They then would spend the afternoon doing enriching and fun things like reading, canoeing, hiking or taking a nap in a hammock under a tree. The Nearings found their visiting friends planned for short visits but would end up staying much longer. They had found a wonderful balance between the satisfaction of working hard and celebrating the results of the work and the enrichment of play, learning about nature and their role in nature and, yes, just enjoying each other's company. That is the basis of this idea that I want to share with you.

The idea of the Resort's *Gateway to Nature* program is to work together to design and build a center that would act as a gateway to the wonderful natural resources that surround us at Smugglers'. As the center develops, it would be used for enjoyable educational programs about conserving and enjoying our Vermont flora and fauna. The structures would serve as models of environmentally friendly construction and living practices.

This Summer, we have three projects to spend our mornings working on. The first project is the building of a 16' x 16' Adirondack-style pavilion and connected tool shed to keep us out of the elements when we build the next project. The second project will be building an Adirondack-style treehouse for volunteers to sleep in as we build the *Gateway to Nature Center/Trail Hut*. Along the way we also will be building rustic furniture, trail benches, and gazebos to enable visitors to sit and quietly watch for all the signs of nature.

In the afternoon there are many activities for you to choose from. I will most likely accompany the majority, but you can enjoy on your own: swinging in a hammock enjoying a good book or a nice snooze comes to mind!

Would you be interested in working with me in the morning to build a log pavilion or a tree house? Would you be interested in playing and learning with me in the afternoon? Do you have any ideas that would improve this program? I am hoping that six to eight people will want to join us every week; too few and the work will take a long time and too many, well, that would be too much like a real construction site! We want to be close to nature, not chase it away. To give feedback or to save a spot please e-mail me at [pingvaldstad@gmail.com](mailto:pingvaldstad@gmail.com)

Looking forward to spending quality time with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Ingvaldstad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter Ingvaldstad  
*Gateway to Nature* Project Director

