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For Immediate Release

TURNKEY AUTOMATION HIGHLIGHTS LARGEST SNOWMAKING EXPANSION IN WISP RESORT HISTORY

[Midland, MI] -- By any standards, a 40% expansion in skiable acreage is an aggressive undertaking. Coupled with a 50% increase in snowmaking capacity and plans for extensive automation to integrate ski area operation and control, it presents a monumental challenge to even the most experienced resort managers. At Wisp Resort in McHenry, MD, the complex task was awarded to SMI of Midland, MI, one of the world's oldest and most experienced providers of snowmaking and automation systems.

“A project of this magnitude can become a nightmare of planning, coordinating contractors and setting timetables,” said Bob Yaste, Wisp VP of Planning and Development. “There are many opportunities for complications, and we needed a firm that could basically handle the whole thing.”

SMI took responsibility for virtually all phases of the ski area expansion. “We began by clearing ten trails to create 33 new skiable acres,” said SMI President Joe VanderKelen. “We then coordinated the site's master plan with the resort's present and future needs to design a state of the art snowmaking system to serve not only the new acreage, but also the existing runs.”

The result is a 50% gain in total snowmaking capacity, giving Wisp Resort 90% coverage of skiable terrain, with the capability to charge the piping system and start up more than 150 snow

machines within just 30 minutes. The system has a pumping capacity of approximately 15,000 gallons per minute from a new 10 million gallon reservoir.

Even more important, the snowmaking project enabled Wisp Resort to open on schedule for skiing and snowboarding in December, 2005, providing excellent conditions. With the fine snow base, Wisp extended the season into April, exceeding expectations for snow production and quality.

Automation is key

Wisp Resort now operates with full automation of pump stations, trail lighting, cameras and snowmaking equipment. The system relies on a new fiber optic network and Allen Bradley programmable logic controllers for comprehensive ski area management, including building and slope lighting, HVAC control, lift monitoring, electric power monitoring, weather updates, security and webcam feeds.

On the slopes, a series of computerized weather stations measure temperature, wind direction and speed, as well as humidity. The central processor then dictates water flow and pressure to a total of more than 250 snowmakers to deliver the optimum snow consistency.

The snowmaking expansion features 113 new Viking SnowtowersTM from SMI. The patented new Viking employs 2 valves and 12 water nozzles, with nucleation by an on-board 5 HP compressor feeding two custom nucleating nozzles, all mounted on a 30-foot tower. The design can deliver up to 80 gpm, and the 7-sided head was developed to avoid freeze-ups and simplify maintenance. The galvanized steel tower can be raised and lowered with its hydraulic jack.

SMI also installed 13 new Super PolecatTM snow machines, the company's fan-driven "big throw" snowmakers that excel in virtually all temperature conditions. The Super Polecats can be specified with either a vane or piston compressor (5 or 10 HP), available with a 20 or 25 HP fan for extended range. Four heated valves deliver up to 142 gpm of water to thirty nozzles, with a

central 6-jet nucleator. Available options include a spray manifold heater, tower or carriage mounting and even an oscillator that delivers a 70° range of motion.

The ski area project at Wisp Resort was part of an overall resort expansion that included real estate developments, a new water source, holding pond and added pump capacity. “SMI provided the best service and support of any supplier for us,” Yaste concluded. “With this complex automation project, I would not have used any other company to manage the job.”

SMI is a global supplier of cutting-edge snowmaking equipment, construction and engineering services. Headquartered in Midland, Michigan, SMI has flourished through five decades of consistent growth in quality, production and reputation. The company has served over 400 resorts around the world, from simple to very complex designs, and typically has over 30 snowmaking and engineering projects in motion simultaneously. SMI services customers ranging from marginal snow areas like Southern California, New Zealand and the lower Midwest to very cold climates such as Northern Canada, Northern Russia and Northern China.

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Captions for Wisp Resort case history:

Control room photo:

The Wisp Resort control room is equipped with SMI's state-of-the-art automation software called SmartSnow™ -- which delivers unmatched efficiency and control over snowmaking, as well as a wide variety of other facility management tasks, such as HVAC, lighting and video cameras.

Construction photo:

SMI engineered and constructed virtually the entire ski area expansion, including trail clearing, water distribution, snowmaking equipment and a new ten million gallon reservoir, as well as the automation systems and software to make it all work together for optimum efficiency.

Polecat photo:

The snowmaking expansion at Wisp included 113 Viking Snowtowers and 13 Super Polecats, as well as custom-designed vaults with trail lights, valves, controls and video equipment.