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Gore Mountain, NY Goes Solar



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December 7, 2017



ORDA President and CEO Mike Pratt speaks in front of the solar array in the Town of Whitehall.

By Peter Hines – Ski areas are increasingly looking for ways to improve their product and help the environment. Gore Mountain, located in New York's Adirondack Mountains is taking it a step farther. Last year, New York's Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), which operates Gore Mountain, teamed up with Borrego Solar Systems to deploy one of the nation's largest solar farms dedicated to a ski area.

Opened in 1934, Gore Mountain operates more than 280 acres of skiing that is accessed by 14 lifts. Snow making covers the vast majority of the mountain. Ski areas in the east cannot effectively operate without large and efficient snow making systems.

The solar farm is almost 29 acres in size, and over the course of a year it will produce almost 85% of the electricity that Gore consumes. However, it's a not near any slope, lift or snow gun. The solar farm is located almost 40 miles to the east of the mountain in the Town of Whitehall. Using a concept known as remote net metering the power generated is put into the power grid and Gore Mountain receives the credit.

Rated at 5.3 megawatts, the array can generate the equivalent of the power consumed by over 870 averaged sized homes. Running flat out Gore's compressors and pumps consume about 9 mega watts according to Mike Pratt, President and CEO of ORDA. While Gore consumes most of it's electricity during the winter months the solar array is producing electricity all year, and most of that during the summer months.

The lifts, pumps, compressors and lights at Gore consume about \$1 million worth of electricity annually. Pratt said that the array will offset about \$200,000 in electrical costs in the first year.

The array cost over \$12.5 million to build with most of that coming from private investors. The New York State Energy Resource Authority provided a \$1.65 million Sun subsidy.

In 2016 Gore Mountain was the recipient of the National Ski Areas Association Golden Eagle Award for Overall Environmental Excellence. The solar array was one of 12 initiatives that Gore listed as helping the environment.

New York State has set a goal of having all three of its ski resorts, Gore, Whiteface and Belleayre to be powered by renewable energy by 2030.

ORDA is pursuing a smaller solar project for Whiteface Mountain according to Pratt. That 2.3 megawatt array will be located in the Town of Champlain near the Canadian border.

Gore and Whiteface Mountains are located within the boundaries of the Adirondack Park that has strict use restrictions. The solar arrays are located outside of Park where development is easier.

Pratt said that they are still searching for a site for a solar array for Belleayre Mountain that is located in the Catskill Mountains. There are several variables that must be considered in siting a solar array such as terrain, sun exposure and access to the power grid.

