



Where is it?

By Brian Zongker, NSP

Well, whoever writes the Farmer's Almanac is full of crap. I know that I said that I didn't get excited about what someone or some entity said about whether it is going to be a good snow season or not but, this is ridiculous. I tell people that when I am sliding on it, I'll believe it. Well, guess what, I'm not sliding on it so, I believe there is no snow and it is driving me crazy. At the time I am writing this, there really isn't any prediction of snow in our immediate future. Hopefully, by the time someone is reading this -- come on, I know there are at least two of you -- it will have snowed. Fingers crossed.

Right now, Sunrise Ski Resort is open from mid-mountain down on man-made snow. They are doing their best with what they have. I always talk about how fortunate we are to live in such a wonderful community and area. Unfortunately, we live in a community that depends highly on the weather. We are a resort community, no matter how you slice it. Our local economy does rely on tourism and those who have second homes in this area and visit on a regular basis. We rely on their dollars for our survival. Golf courses, campgrounds, and fisheries rely on good weather throughout the summer and fall while the ski areas and other winter activities rely on good snow conditions for the winter. The hotels, restaurants, shops and grocers rely on good seasonal weather all year long to bring in the dollars.

Perhaps the most unfortunate thing about a dry winter is the threat of fire danger in the spring and summer. The less moisture we get now, the drier the forest becomes and hence the risk of forest fire escalates. As our community has seen, many times, how a forest fire -- or even the

threat of one -- can dramatically affect our economic livelihood. Back when I was in the golf business, we had the Wallow Fire going, which really was not that close to Pinetop or the golf course. We still dealt with people not coming up and making tee times because they did not realize the proximity or lack thereof. The golf course was in amazing shape and the weather was good, yet we still felt the impact of the fire. Of course, it had some devastating effects on our neighbors in Alpine and Greer and, if it is bad for them, it is bad for us and vice versa.

So, what do we do? We pray. We ask the snow gods, Mother Nature, the clouds above or the man on the moon, whomever you believe controls things, to bring us the moisture. Selfishly, I say, "Give me snow" but, in all reality, we just need moisture to keep the fires away. The other thing you can do is shop local. Give Amazon a rest and check out the local shops. Go out to dinner in your own town. If you have friends and family that usually come up to enjoy the snow, ask them to come up anyway. Have fun with friends and family whether it is snowing or not. Get out and ride your mountain bike, take a hike or enjoy a horseback ride. The trails are fantastic! Go up and ski or snowboard on what Sunrise does have. It's a great time to learn or even practice your skills. Trust me, it will feel good to be up there and will help the local economy as well.