



**Contact:** Public Relations  
604-938-7668  
publicrelations@intrawest.com

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## **WHISTLER BLACKCOMB WINS GLOBAL AWARD FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM**

**WHISTLER, BC**, November 14, 2006 - Whistler Blackcomb was recently named 'Best in Mountain Environment' by the England-based First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards (FCRTA). The FCRTA are the largest awards program of their kind and are awarded in collaboration by responsibletravel.com, The Times, Geographical Magazine, Conservation International and The World Travel Market.

The awards are different from other tourism awards in that the winners are nominated by the tourists themselves. Whistler Blackcomb was among 1,200 nominations put forth from across the globe this year, and impressed a panel of 13 expert judges with its responsible tourism practices to be awarded the top prize in the 'Best in Mountain Environment' category.

"We are very honoured and humbled by this award and it could only happen through the hard work and support from all levels of Whistler Blackcomb employees and the community," says Arthur DeJong, mountain planning and environmental resources manager at Whistler Blackcomb. "We have had an Environmental Management System in place since 1993 and, thanks to community partnerships and staff initiatives, we are making real progress in achieving the highest level of mountain stewardship in the global resort industry."

When announcing the award, the FCRTA cited Whistler Blackcomb's environmental stewardship program, Operation Green Up, as a key element of their decision. Operation Green Up has spent over \$1.5 million on watershed restoration, initiated an employee carpooling program to reduce CO2 emissions by 585,856 pounds per year, and developed a Habitat Improvement Team that has aided in 64 restoration projects to date, promoting conservation of biodiversity and community collaboration around a common cause.

"The large increase in the number of nominations this year was challenging for the judges," says Dr. Harold Goodwin, Professor of Responsible Tourism Management at Leeds Metropolitan University and Chair of the judging panel. "In most categories there were strong fields and we worked hard to select the

winners. This demonstrates increasing awareness of Responsible Tourism amongst travelers, and the advances being made by those at the forefront of responsible tourism.”

Whistler Blackcomb has received other environmental awards in recent years and is a two time Golden Eagle winner in 2003 and 2005, and a six-time Silver Eagle winner. The Eagle Awards are the ski industry’s top prize for environmental excellence and are awarded by USA-based National Ski Areas Association. While all these awards recognize growing awareness and commitment to sustainability, DeJong says there is no time to sit back.

“We have both the need and the capacity to make far greater steps in environmental, social and economic sustainability,” he stresses. “Our vision is to be a global tourism leader in sustainability. And to get there, we have to continue to work harder and more passionately towards sustainability, most importantly by reducing fossil fuel consumption through conservation programs and development of renewable energy alternatives.”

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