

## Survey finds 94 percent of patrons favor move.

By Kelsey Dayton

Jeff Golightly used to leave his coat in his car before going into the bar at Togwotee Mountain Lodge, the resort he manages.

"I hate to say this," he said, "but I didn't like going in our bar."

But now the resort is smoke-free. For several years, the lodge has been smoke-free during the summers. But winter guests are usually Midwestern men coming to snowmobile and many of them smoke, Golightly said.

But then Minnesota, where many of the lodge's guests come from, went smoke free in October. It was the perfect time to do it, Golightly said.

Golightly sent a survey out to the lodge's guests, giving them four choices. It asked whether they would be more likely to come back if the resort was smoke free; prefer the lodge be smoke free; want no changes; or would be less likely to return if it went smoke free.

About 260 people responded to the electronic survey and of those, 94 percent said they would be more likely to come back or would prefer the lodge to be smoke-free. Five percent said Togwotee should leave smokers alone and 1 percent said they would be less likely to come if the lodge was smoke-free.

"It was really extraordinary," Golightly said.

He had expected about 60 percent to be in favor.

"We always wanted to go smoke-free," he said. "It's better for the employees, better for other guests, it's better for your property."

It's also been better for business.

The snow has been great this year, so the whole resort is doing well, but bar revenue increased more than overall business, Golightly said.

Guests who used to bring their own beverages and stay in their cabins are now buying drinks in the bar, he said.

Golightly has already noticed benefits in being smoke-free in regard to property maintenance.

There will be less need to clean walls and shampoo carpets, Golightly said.

"Right now, when you walk in the front door, it doesn't have that stale smoke smell," he said.

There have been few complaints since making the switch.

Julia Heemstra, of Teton County Tobacco Prevention, said the move represents an important shift in standards for people who travel. People have grown accustomed to living in smoke-free places and expect the same standards when traveling, he said.

"And if you look at the demographic of patrons, the desire for smoke-free is really permeating through all social stratas," Heemstra said.

The Virginian is the last bar in Teton County that still allows smoking.

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