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## PRESS RELEASE

**Contact Person: Monty Pagenhardt, County Administrator**

**Date: December 19, 2012**

**Re: Strong fiscal outlook for Adventure Sports Center International under Garrett County management**

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For the first time in six years of operation, Garrett County's Adventure Sports Center International, LLC will end the December 31, 2012 year with a projected net income of nearly \$28,000, enough to set aside funds for equipment repairs and replacement and give the mountaintop river park's its best fiscal outlook ever.

"We have turned something that was operating with a negative operating cash flow into one with a positive cash flow," said Scott Weeks, Garrett County's assistant financial director, whom the commissioners had invited – along with Mike Logsdon, ASCI's acting executive director – to present a year-end overview of ASCI at their Dec. 18 board meeting.

ASCI has now closed for the season, while water from its holding pond shifts from rafting use to snow-making for the adjacent Wisp Ski Resort, Mr. Logsdon said.

Mr. Weeks attributed ASCI's financial turn-around to "making ASCI's cash our cash," and funneling all payables through the county, as well as reducing ASCI salaries and fringe benefits by \$105,000; legal and professional costs by \$19,000; repair and maintenance costs by \$19,000 and utility costs by \$40,000. The utility figure included a \$25,000 savings that ASCI operations director Joe Schroyer achieved by obtaining a 42 percent reduction in electric per kilowatt hour charges.

Mr. Logsdon thanked all county agencies, citizens, employees, businesses and patrons who contributed to ASCI's "Season of Success." ASCI had been projected to break even with income and expenses, he said.

However, compared to the 2011 calendar year, before the county acquired ASCI in March 2012, the center had generated \$784,000 in revenues and expenses of \$935,000 for a \$151,367 net loss.

For the 2012 calendar year (*the county has since switched ASCI to a fiscal calendar, which begins July 1 for all county operations*), ASCI had projected \$772,000 in revenues and \$745,000 in expenses for a projected net income of \$27,748. All told, "this was a swing of \$179, 000," Mr. Weeks told the commissioners.

In March 2012, Garrett County government assumed ownership of the struggling artificial watercourse atop Marsh Mountain when it was about to default on \$3.2 million plus \$178,000 in accrued interest and late fees totaling \$ 3.4 million in bank loans. The Board of Garrett County Commissioners renegotiated the debt

down to \$600,000 and took over ASCI's operations as a county "Enterprise Fund," similar to the county airport, county landfill and Sanitary District, Inc., which generate income to support their own operations.

By taking over the facility and stabilizing its operations, Garrett County government has put ASCI "on the right road now," according to Board Chairman Robert Gatto, who called the whitewater park "a great venue and recreational experience."

To acquire ASCI, Garrett County government assumed the \$600,000 debt using money from the county's general fund. However, it will use \$100,000 from the tourist-paid hotel rental tax to help pay off the debt to county taxpayers in fiscal 2013, according to Mr. Weeks. County taxpayers should understand, he said, that "the county is fronting the money, but tourists are actually paying for it."

With legislative approval, the Board of County Commissioners increased the hotel rental tax from 5 to 6 percent in fiscal 2013, generating approximately \$300,000 in additional revenue which by statute can only be used for economic development and promotion of the county. In addition to ASCI, the tourist dollars also help fund the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, the county's department of economic development, country trails, broadband infrastructure and Deep Creek 2014.

Deep Creek 2014 is the International Canoe Federation's world whitewater paddling championships, which will be held at ASCI in September 2014. It will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 event, when the world championships were held on Garrett County's Savage River.

ASCI operates as the world's only mountaintop river park from April through October with course features that are unique, Mike Logsdon said. "We can change water features while the course is running," by changing hinged plates at five places throughout the 1700-ft long course. Operators can modify the channel, affecting the water horizontally and vertically and giving rafters – from beginners to advanced paddlers – a custom-made water ride.

Such design allows ASCI, among its other operational goals, to create in Maryland a "venue for adventure sports activities for all levels of ability," Mr. Logsdon said. ASCI also serves as a forum for education and training, a staging area for school and senior citizens programs and a place, which fosters economic development in Garrett County. For example, ASCI manages whitewater releases on the county's Savage River, where "hundreds of people" had rafted this year.

Since its opening in 2007, ASCI has taken more than 65,000 people rafting as well as helped guide people through its 550-acre Fork Run Recreational Area, with rock climbing, hiking and geo-caching. Fork Run, in fact, is a model for low impact, sustainable trail building. All told, ASCI offers programs for groups and individuals of all skills and backgrounds.

For more information, visit [www.adventuresportscenter.com](http://www.adventuresportscenter.com).