Bobsledding on Bottles

It took one million milk jugs and detergent bottles, but the site of the 1980 Winter Olympic Games now has new and improved platforms for bobsled, luge, and skeleton racing, in the first application of recycled plastic lumber specifically designed for a commercial structure.

In preparation for the 2000 Winter Goodwill Games, the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) of Lake Placid, New York, added three staging platforms to its bobsled/luge/skeleton run made from recycled milk and detergent bottles and reinforced with fiberglass. ORDA built one platform at the top of the track where the bobsled and skeleton races begin. The group constructed the second plastic platform further down the track at the launching point for the double luge races, and the third was placed at the track's finish line where the sleds encounter a slight incline to reduce speed.

These platforms are expected to remain in good condition for 20 to 30 years with minimal maintenance, far outlasting traditional wood. The structures do not require the protective coatings that wood demands to bear the wintery conditions. They have also passed rigorous safety tests and sub-zero temperature performance trials. "Feedback from athletes training up here has been good," said Sandy Caligore of ORDA.

Besides improving the race site for the Goodwill Games, ORDA's use of plastic lumber supports New York Governor George Pataki's goal of building with green materials to limit pollution, minimize waste, and encourage recycling. The improved track may even improve Lake Placid's chances for hosting future events. "This recycled plastic lumber has helped to make our combination luge/bobsled/skeleton run at Lake Placid state-of-the-art, and increases our chances of winning a future Olympics bid," said Ted Blazer, ORDA's president and chief executive officer.

For more information, look at Plastics Resources's Web site:
<www.plasticsresource.com/recycling/other_resources/NewYork.html>