



Nordic & Backcountry News

Working to preserve quiet, non-motorized areas for quality Nordic and backcountry skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing

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Message from the President

Greetings, fellow Nordic and backcountry enthusiasts! It is with great pleasure that the Nordic and Backcountry Skiers' Alliance of Idaho (NAB) brings you its inaugural electronic newsletter. In addition to helping NAB join the 21st century, the e-newsletter saves trees, pollutes less, and conserves your valuable donations! Nevertheless, please continue to support NAB by giving on-line at www.skiersalliance.net.

2007 is already turning out to be a great year for everyone at NAB, and we have a great line-up of things to discuss, issues to get involved with, and new ways for people to become part of the organization. With your help, NAB will continue to preserve quiet winter recreation for our area.

NAB also continues to work with other advocacy groups to accomplish our mission. For example, NAB recently helped finance the Winter Recreation Coalition's fresh batch of area usage maps. And in an effort to build stronger recognition, NAB is teaming up with local businesses and individuals who are helping NAB spread its name and message; we want our nordic and backcountry community to know that NAB represents their recreation interests.

Before signing off and encouraging you to read this brief newsletter from "cover to cover," I would like to share a few highlights from the past year. Foremost, NAB's board of directors and general membership continues to grow; youth is the majority component of new additions. In fact, board member Hillary Sinnamon and NAB member Phoebe Pilaro have gone above and beyond the call with respect to increasing NAB youth membership; both are "expecting" new additions this spring.

We've also had some positive interactions with both the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (see *Forest Service Prosecutes* and *New Murphy's Bridge*). As is part of our mission, NAB will continue to hold the Forest Service and BLM accountable, and work with both agencies (as well as other user groups) to promote healthy and tolerant use of our public lands.

Finally, NAB very much welcomes Eric Rector to the Blaine County Recreation District staff, Renee Catherin to the Ketchum Ranger District and NAB board members Erin Zell and Don Shepler as Galena

Lodge's new concessionaires. Having NAB supporters in these key positions is beneficial to all who advocate for quiet winter recreation.

I look forward to growing NAB's group of like-minded and dedicated individuals as we continue to ski and recreate in the backcountry of the Wood River Valley.

Remember to visit www.skiersalliance.net. See you out there...

—Chris Pilaro, President

BLM and County Recreational Plans Affect Skiers

Chris Pilaro

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which manages most of the public lands south of Ketchum, is creating a recreation travel plan for summer and winter users. The plan will impact Nordic and backcountry ski opportunities on over 600,000 acres in Blaine County.

The good news is that the plan is similar to one created by the Winter Recreation Coalition six years ago. This effort resolved an ongoing conflict between snowmobilers and backcountry skiers in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area north of Ketchum. The basis of the BLM plan is to be a local plan that reflects the interests and passion of all users, both winter and summer. The maps will show voluntarily separate recreation areas. As this develops, the Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance will keep you informed.

"I have always thought that recreational zoning made a lot of sense," said Blaine County Commissioner and NAB founding member, Sarah Michael. "That way you know what you can expect in the backcountry. I think predictability is really important for users."

Michael was echoed by Becki Keefer, chairwoman of the Hailey Parks and Lands Board.

"Comprehensive planning is always the way to go, and this is just wonderful," she said.

Results of the BLM's study can be viewed on the county's Web site at www.blainecounty.org.

Winter Recreation Coalition Update

Andy Munter

Skier and snowmobiler representatives of the Winter Recreation Coalition (WRC) continue to meet regularly with respect to the 2000 Snow Pact Agreement. At this fall's meeting, the Forest Service's Ketchum District Head Ranger, Kurt Nelson, briefed attendees on parking issues at the Forest Service's Hyndman Creek trailhead.

Owners of the "Nye" house recently installed new landscaping that eliminates former winter parking, forcing current winter parking into an area significantly further removed from the trailhead. Backcountry skiers and snowmobilers are negatively affected by this development. Nelson assured the WRC that he is working hard on both immediate and long-term solutions to the conflict.

On another note, the WRC recently raised funds for the reprinting of 5000 fresh copies of the Wood River Valley Winter Recreation Usage Map. This document delineates Forest Service snowmobile closure areas, groomed ski and snowmobile trails, and skier/snowmobiler shared use areas. Snowmobilers wanting to know where they can and can't ride consume the maps in great numbers, which is a good thing for all users of our public lands. Many thanks to the organizations which contributed to this reprinting: Sawtooth Snowmobile Club, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Blaine County Recreation District, Bigwood Backcountry Trails, The Sawtooth Society, and NAB. Thank you, as well, for continuing to support the Snow Pact!

New Murphy's Bridge Project

Erin Zell and Don Shepler

The summer of 2007 may see improvements to the Harriman Trail, for both summer and winter trail users. Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD) has submitted a proposal to the Forest Service for design, funding, and construction of a new Murphy's Bridge, located ten miles north of Ketchum. The proposed new span over the Big Wood River would greatly improve efficiency and safety for wintertime grooming equipment, and also would facilitate two-way traffic on the bridge in summertime.

Installation of the new bridge would be funded by BCRD, overseen by the Forest Service, and implemented by a private contractor. The two-month construction campaign, costing approximately \$400,000, could begin as early as August 1, 2007.

Currently, Murphy's Bridge (5 km upstream from SNRA headquarters) is just 5.5 feet wide. That width cannot accommodate two-way skier/biker traffic, let alone grooming equipment. The proposed new bridge will be 16 feet wide, with guardrails 8-10 inches higher than the current rails. Besides making the crossing safer and more convenient for users, the wider replacement will eliminate winter grooming equipment's need to bypass the narrow crossing; current constraints force the costly Piston Bully onto Highway 75. Eric Rector, director of BCRD's North Valley Trails System, estimates that a new bridge could save BCRD as much as \$200 during each grooming session.

BCRD has already received commitment for approximately 50% of the new projects estimated expense. This commitment from Continental Bridge Company is the actual bridge! Additional funding will be raised by BCRD, or leveraged with money already present in a Harriman Trail fund.

Quick action is imperative. Yet, the project still faces some obstacles. Although Rector doesn't anticipate any negative public feedback during the Forest Service's public comment period (which closed Feb. 2, 2007), enough opposition could prompt the Forest Service to take more public comment in March, further slowing the process down.

For several reasons, Forest Service approval of the project needs to happen in a timely manner. First, Continental's offer could be withdrawn at any time. Second, BCRD must order the new bridge by an April 1 fabrication deadline. Third, bids must be solicited from contractors for the entire project, including relocation of the existing bridge to Alturas Lake. Finally, donations from BCRD supporters will be critical for success of this project, as monies raised will augment the project's financial feasibility; prospective donors want to see action!

NAB supporters can help by:

- Sending an email for public comment to: comments-intermtn-sawtooth-nra@fs.fed.us
- Contacting Dave Fluetsch by fax at 727-5029
- Making a donation earmarked for Murphy Bridge to BCRD
- Stay tuned in by contacting Eric Rector at BCRD, or Dave Fluetsch at USFS Ketchum Ranger District

New Owners of the Pioneer Yurt

Pioneer Yurt is under new ownership! Long operated by Sun Valley Heli-Guides, the yurt was just recently transferred to Sun Valley Trekking, the Wood River Valley's Backcountry Hut and Ski Guiding Service.

Pioneer Yurt has opportunities for those seeking a cross-country ski touring experience, or when conditions permit, to ski the steep and deep. The yurt sits on the edge of a lovely alpine meadow with the flowing Hyndman Creek nearby and wonderful views and ski lines everywhere. The yurt serves as the gateway to skiing in the heart of this dramatic range. Terrain surrounding the yurt includes large open bowls, rugged peaks, and rolling meadows. The mountains surrounding Pioneer Yurt are ideal for ski mountaineering with big vertical relief on shapely alpine peaks up to 12,000'; stunning ascent and descent lines beckon. It's a ski mountaineer's nirvana! For a description and pictures of this stunning hut location, check out the website: www.svtrek.com.

Thanks!



NAB board member, Joe St.Onge, on the steep and deep in the Pioneers, enjoying the silence and solitude



Skate skier enjoying one of the many groomed trails in the Wood River Valley.

Forest Service Prosecutes Snowmobiler to Full Extent of the Law

Jeremy Fryberger

As an advocacy group for quiet winter recreation, one of NAB's responsibilities is to stay on top of events that conflict with the interests of NAB supporters.

Following is the description of one such event, as well as this case's positive resolution.

In mid-March 2006, on the Forest Service's East Fork of Baker Creek backcountry (near Tornak Yurt), an intoxicated snowmobiler violated the Winter Recreation Coalition's Snow Pact agreement by operating his unregistered machine outside of designated snowmobile routes. Worse, the offending individual also verbally harassed skiers in residence at the yurt, destroyed private and government property with his snowmobile, and threatened Jeff Halligan, a Forest Service backcountry ranger who witnessed some of this activity.

Through word of mouth, NAB became aware of these events. Several months later, NAB president Chris Pilaro contacted Ketchum Ranger District Head Ranger Kurt Nelson for an update. Good News! The Forest Service identified the individual, brought him to court, and helped convict him of numerous offenses.

Although this is an isolated case of extreme conflict between snowmobilers and quiet winter recreation enthusiasts, news of the Forest Service's decisive action has spread quickly. This, in turn, should help reduce future conflicts by clarifying the boundaries identified in the Winter Recreation Coalition's Snow-Pact Agreement.

Knowing that organizations like NAB are paying attention encourages the Forest Service and motorized recreation groups to hold up their ends of the bargain. As a result, the desires of quiet winter recreation enthusiasts are better served and protected.

NAB Board of Directors

Ted Angle	Jenny Busden
Jeremy Fryberger	Bob Jonas
Jim McClatchy	Sarah Michael
Andy Munter	Chris Pilaro
Don Shepler	Hillary Sinnamon
Francie St.Onge	Joe St.Onge
Erin Zell	

Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Allianceworking to protect your public lands access and solitude in winter!

We are writing to ask you to join or to renew your membership in the Nordic and Backcountry Skier Alliance. Since 1999, NAB has been the single voice of cross country and backcountry skiers and snowshoers for solving recreational user conflicts and promoting non-motorized winter recreation in the Wood River Valley.

NAB was instrumental in the landmark Snow-Pact Agreement of 2000 that created separate skier and snowmobile trails in the North Valley; annually, NAB members work to see that the agreement is honored and conflicts resolved. NAB also worked actively to oppose creation of a snowmobile parking area at the Greenhorn trailhead.

Most recently, NAB members Judy Harrison and Ted Angle organized a neighborhood response to solve snowmobile trespass problems in the Croy Canyon Area. Along with Barb Acker, Judy and Ted enlisted State Representative Wendy Jaquet to facilitate a stakeholder meeting of representatives of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, snowmobile interests, landowners, the Sheriff's office, and BLM. The meeting created a long-term parking plan, monitoring by law enforcement, plans for additional training and safety courses for snowmobile riders, more visible licensing of snowmobiles, and better signage of private lands.

NAB members also worked successfully with the Ketchum Ranger District to retain public parking for winter access out Hyndman Creek when a private landowner blocked access. NAB is currently monitoring the new BLM travel plan to ensure that quiet winter recreational opportunities are maintained.

NAB members are active volunteers on the North Valley trails and part of your membership dues will be contributed to the new Murphy's Bridge project. NAB and many of its members are also members of Winter Wildlands Alliance, the national voice for those like us who love Nordic and backcountry skiing.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

The Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance

P.O. Box 1251

Hailey, ID 83333

Yes, I support quiet, non-motorized areas for quality Nordic and backcountry skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing.

\$25 Individual ___ \$50 Contributor ___ \$100 Patron ___ \$250 Benefactor ___ Other ___

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Please make checks payable to: Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance or Give Online

www.skiersalliance.net

info@skiersalliance.net

NAB - Your Voice in the Wood River Valley for Nordic and Backcountry Skiing