

SKI TRACKS

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

March 2014 — Volume 12 — Number 3

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President's Message**

Photo by Mel Holloway

President's Message

We're not sure who didn't get the message last month, but every person who volunteers time to groom the Chief Joseph Ski Trails wants to emphasize, "IT'S TIME TO STOP THE SNOW DANCE!"

Chief Joseph Pass and Lost Trail Pass, along with just about every other place in the Bitterroot Mountains, have received more snow this winter than during any other in the last 10 years. March has just arrived. If the weather patterns don't change soon, this winter's snow depths may reach epic proportions.

February was a particularly cruel month for our groomers. Chief Joseph Pass received several dumps of snow over 2 feet, always difficult to deal with using grooming equipment pulled by snowmobiles. And to make matters worse it snowed almost every day, sometimes an inch or two, other times 6 inches or more. No matter how much effort our crews put into working the trails, all traces of grooming often disappeared within hours.

The only way to have kept up with the massive amounts of snow received during February would have been to have grooming crews working every day. Even with the number of people we have available to help groom, currently fifteen, snowmobile grooming every day would have quickly exhausted our crews. Our equipment would also have suffered from such heavy use.

This winter our groomers discovered for themselves that frequent, and sometimes massive, snowfalls do not hold tracks well. The simple fact is that newly-fallen snow (*especially powder*) must undergo a physical change before it will retain set tracks and/or hold up to heavy traffic. Such a change can be achieved either by using mechanical equipment to sufficiently churn the new snow—that's what grooming is all about—or allowing it to consolidate over a several day period. The groomers hoped to allow new snow to consolidate over several days, but it just kept snowing. And, unfortunately, grooming equipment pulled by snowmobiles must be used every day—during and after new snowfalls—to churn the snow enough to sufficiently change its physical characteristics. Unhappily for our Club to groom every day using snowmobile-drawn equipment is not currently feasible.

With the cooperation of Scott Grasser and the Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area, our Club conducted a test this season using large PistenBully equipment on the Chief Joseph Trails that are wide enough to accommodate such large machines. The advantage of using those machines quickly became apparent. They easily handled almost any amount of new snow and in a single pass the machines' tillers sufficiently churned the new snow to perfectly hold newly-set tracks. The skiing surface produced by a PistenBully proved to hold up to very heavy use (*even snowmobile traffic on Gibbons Pass and Trail Creek Roads and Moose traffic on Broadway*).

Of course it is possible, maybe even probable, that this winter's massive and frequent snowstorms were an anomaly. But as our Club plans for dealing with future grooming seasons, this February has clearly shown we should consider an increased use of PistenBully equipment on the Chief Joseph Trail System. Board members are currently looking into ways that we might reach such a goal. Stay tuned!

Mike Hoyt
Michael.hoyt@gmail.com



Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club presents

The Story of the BITTERROOT

The Story of the Bitterroot is a heartfelt look at a most unusual plant and its relationship to the Salish Indian culture and the Lewis and Clark expedition. This comprehensive video relates how the bitterroot came to be Montana's state flower, how it was loved by an old man, and why its botany is so unique.



Stephen Ambrose

Steve Slocomb started taking pictures in 1968 and was soon hired by designer/film maker Charles Eames where he learned motion picture techniques. He went on to a long stint in Hollywood on special effects films including several 3D theme park ones for Disney. Steve moved to Montana in the early 1980s and eventually was doing video projects for network news shows and continues to create Forest Service educational videos.



Steve Slocomb

Meeting starts at 7:00 March 13, 2014 at the Presbyterian Church
1220 West Main Street - Hamilton

The public is encouraged and welcomed to attend all meetings

Meeting Minutes – February 13, 2014

Call to order: Mike Hoyt called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

Number attending: 22

Meeting Notes

Membership: Mike reported that, according to Earl's records, memberships were approximately the same as last year.

Trails Report: Mel reported the groomers were having a difficult time keeping up with grooming because of all the new snow during the last couple of weeks. The groomers would appreciate it if "snow dancers" took a break.

Treasurer's Report: Reine reported the Club's finances were in good shape and that we had taken in almost \$700 more than we had spent.

Website: Jack reported that pictures from "Lesson Day" and one of the "school days" had been added to the website.

School Days: Richard reported that this program was going well and that 60 kids from Salmon, ID had a great time at Chief Joseph earlier today.

Mike reminded everyone that Linda Stoudt had "Shut up and Ski" bandanas available for \$8 each.

He reminded those present that we need a few people to sign up to bring refreshments to the March and April meetings.

Mike reported that the Club is applying for an RTP Grant to cover

- Grooming costs for 2 year;
- Installation of a double-stall outhouse at the trailhead; and
- Deploy new maps and signs along complete trail system.

Jim Greenfield presented a check in the amount of \$100 to the Club. The check was given in the name of Michael Hoyt, and was from Alan Burgmuller, director of the 2014 Open Canoe Nationals. To help the non-profit organization putting on the 2014 Canoe National Competition, Michael designed and is continuing to maintain the event's website at no charge.

Presentation: Jim Greenfield introduced Seth Tonsmeire, who gave a well-received and interesting presentation about the Stateline Yurt, a backcountry rental yurt located southwest of the Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area.

The meeting was closed at 8:27 pm.

In the absence of the Club's secretary, Marrea Mathews, these minutes were prepared by Michael Hoyt.

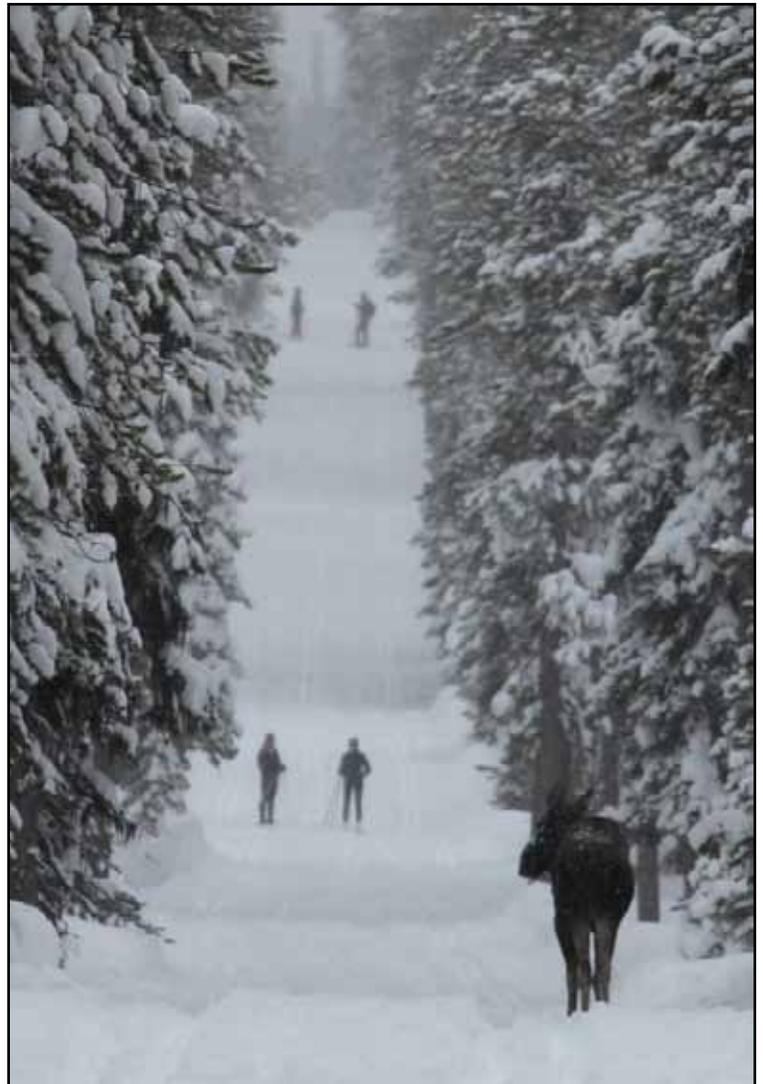


Photo by **Marrea Mathews**

Trail Report for February - A Month the Groomers Will Never Forget

Persistent snowfall during February has been a challenge for the grooming crews. It is difficult to groom the trails when the snowmobiles are challenged to merely get around without towing any equipment. Often the physical characteristics of the snow have defied packing to the point that it flowed around the lead machine almost like water, leaving a narrow wake. Sometimes it was very difficult for the following machines get out of that path and widen the track.

In the past, under somewhat similar conditions, waiting a few days for the snow to settle enabled crews to build a workable platform, smooth it, and set tracks. But over the last few weeks, storms have brought new snow that filled in everything we accomplished.

The Lost Trail PistenBully provided a great deal of relief this season by grooming Broadway, Timber, Gibbons Pass Road and the approaches to the cabin. Our crews could then concentrate on the narrower trails, but that would still require several passes to bring the trails to the desired conditions. However, new snowfall tended to continuously nullify our efforts.



The grooming crews got something of a break over the period of 22-27 February. On the 27th, the grooming crew managed to break out all the classic trails and get over them with rollers. But the drifting snow left trails that were somewhat bumpy. Snow conditions were not suitable for further treatment with the leveler/compactors.



While Jim Aronson, John Love, and Mike Connor were opening up the off-road trails, I got to ride in the Lost Trail groomer. It might be a slight exaggeration to say it was a revelation, but I was impressed. This machine gets it done in one pass. Drifted snow is no problem, and it easily moves snow from points of surplus to points of scarcity. It levels the trails from side-to-side and along the track. The tiller conditions the snow so that tracks can be set immediately.

After leaving the Lost Trail groomer, I used our Ginzu groomer and tracksetter to set tracks on the trails just groomed by the big machine. I then attempted to set track on some of the trails that had been rolled. The snow on those trails tended to ball up in front of the compactor section which required stopping to clear it.

As I write this, with the temperature in the 40's, I can only imagine what the snow and trail conditions at Chief Joseph are like. The Lost Trail Camera tells me it's snowing. The forecast for the Lost Trail-Chief Joseph area shows snow for most of the coming week.

Mel Holloway



Board Meeting Minutes– Thursday, February 13, 2014

In attendance: Jim Greenfield, Earl Philips, Jack Cooley, Richard Stone, Michael Hoyt, Mel Holloway, and Kelly Zeiler.

Meeting was called to order: at 6:27 pm by Michael Hoyt, President

- Reine Hilton, Treasurer, gave reported the current financial position of the Club.
 - Current Assets (*cash and equivalents*) - \$23,444
 - Fixed Assets (*equipment*) less accumulated depreciation - \$38,257
 - Liabilities - \$0
 - Income (*fiscal year to date*) - \$11,487
 - Expenses (*fiscal year to date*) - \$10,801
 - Net Income (*fiscal year to date*) - \$686

- Earl Philips reported our current membership is equal to that of a year ago and is increasingly more diverse than during previous years.

- Mel Holloway, head groomer, reported the grooming crews are having a very difficult time keeping up with the heavy snowfalls that have occurred over the past several weeks. He asked that people be patient while they deal with the almost impossible task they have been presented with. He reiterated that this winter is proving that the best option for keeping up with grooming tasks is having access to a large PistenBully-type grooming machine.



Photo by **Mel Holloway**

- Jack Cooley, webmaster, reported that our website is still receiving more than 100 hits per day – mostly to check trail and weather conditions.
- There was a short discussion regarding the Club’s application for an RTP Grant to cover:
 - Grooming costs for 2 years;
 - Installation of a double-stall outhouse at the trailhead; and
 - Deploy new maps and signs along complete ski trail system.

A formal vote was held to authorize Michael Hoyt, president, to apply for a grant. Everyone present voted in the affirmative.

- There was a discussion about the possibility of the Club acquiring PistenBully for grooming. Michael Hoyt informed those present that he was scheduled to discuss the availability of such a machine with Scott Grasser, the owner of the Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area on Friday, February 14, 2014. He will report back to the Board after the meeting.
- No other business was discussed.
- The meeting was closed: at 6:52 pm.

In the absence of the Club’s secretary, Marrea Mathews, these minutes were prepared by Michael Hoyt.

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club Officers

President Michael Hoyt michael.hoyt@gmail.com 406-360-3803	Vice President Kelly Zeiler krz-inc@live.com 406-363-8631	Treasurer Reine Hilton hilton@mcn.net 406-375-1952	Secretary Marrea Mathews mmathews5@aol.com 406-381-8377
Trails & Grooming Mel Holloway tromper@bitterroot.com 406-381-1334	Programs & Map Jim Greenfield jkgreenfield@q.com 406-363-2110	Webmaster Jack Cooley jackc@jcphotography.com 970-227-1360	Membership Data Earl Philips philips@montana.com 406-369-0073
	Youth Coordinator Richard Stone rcstone1@msn.com 406-642-9648	Ski Lessons George Corn gcorn@bresnan.net 406-363-1163	

Membership Renewals / Dues

Annual Memberships Expire on November 1st of each Year

Please Renew Your Membership Now

Family - \$25

Supporting Family - \$40

Individual - \$15

Supporting Individual - \$30

Mail To: Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club, PO Box 431, Corvallis, MT 59828-0431

Name (families, please include childrens names): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

Email (to receive monthly newsletters): _____

Type of Membership (see above): _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____