



SKI TRACKS

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

April 2014 — Volume 12 — Number 4

Inside:

Program: Groomers - Saga of Heroes

President's Message

Photo by Patrick Chaplin

President's Message

This ski season is fast drawing to a close and it is time to begin planning for the 2014-2015 season.

It has been an epic snow season for the Bitterroot Mountains and it had a serious impact on our grooming crews and machinery. Our “test” agreement with Scott Grasser (*Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area*) proved to have been fortuitously timed. Without the services of one of Lost Trail’s big PistenBully grooming machines, there were several weeks when it would have been impossible for us to groom, especially during February.



Even when grooming did occur, significant new snowfalls on subsequent days often obliterated any sign of ski trails at Chief Joseph Pass. Although that may have been fine for those who use backcountry ski equipment, most people who visit the Chief Joseph Trails want to ski on groomed and tracked ski trails.

And, because the PistenBully is too wide to fit on trails less than 22’ wide, we were unable to keep several of our new multi-use trails open past the end of January. That was equally unfortunate if for no other reason than those new trails attracted many new members to our club the last couple ski seasons.

It is too much to ask volunteer groomers to expose themselves to the weather while using snowmobiles pulling grooming equipment over the ski trails every day of the week—that would have been required during February, just to keep up with constant snowfalls.

The PistenBully “test” proved that such a machine can easily cope with gigantic snowfalls leaving a perfectly groomed ski surface behind. Asking different sets of 2 groomers to ride in a PistenBully’s warm, enclosed cab over the ski trails even several days in a row is probably not too much to ask—several members of the grooming crew are already chomping at the bit.



Using a PistenBully to groom the trails has several advantages besides producing perfect ski trails.

- Because it does all the work, grooming requires far less effort from our volunteers than snowmobile grooming;
- Grooming can be accomplished in a single pass vs. the multiple passes that are required using snowmobiles; and
- Single-pass grooming, even with a PistenBully, uses far less fuel than multiple-pass grooming.

Several possible courses of action are being pursued to make it possible for our Club to have an appropriately-sized PistenBully (*one that is able to fit on most if not all of our trails*) available for next ski season and beyond.

However, for the Chief Joseph Ski Trail to accommodate a PistenBully, work needs to be performed on some of the trails this coming summer and fall. Most of the work will consist of branch trimming and debris removal, something our Club's volunteer members have done almost yearly anyway. There are also certain trails which have especially narrow sections—part of the downhill section of Vista View comes to mind—that will need to be widened by removing a few (*hazard*) trees.

To maximize our volunteer trail work efforts, beginning in mid-August, we will organize multi-day work parties. Those wishing to participate will camp in the area of Chief Joseph Pass—there are some terrific spots along Gibbons Pass Road, near Gibbons Pass,



and close to Sentinel Meadow—to save several hours a day of travel time. Volunteers who can only help a day-at-a time will be welcome to join the “camping” crews any time. Envisioned are several 2- to 4-day sessions from mid-August on, until the task is completed.

We have permission to open a trail section connecting the north end of the Overlook Trail with Gibbons Pass. This trail section is currently covered in lodgepole pine killed during a fire. The wood is perfectly dry and would make good firewood. Because the trail is an old road—easily drivable except for the downed trees—it will be quite easy to clear. While the road is being cleared, volunteers will be able to collect firewood for use at home if he or she desires. The Backcountry Horsemen have agreed to help with the clearing of this trail. That will make the task much easier and proceed more quickly.

A lot of people like to ski on the Chief Joseph Trail System, a set of trails that requires off-season work to make grooming possible. A tremendous amount of trail work has been accomplished over the last few years, but there is still more to do. Remember, it is the trail work performed during the off-season makes grooming possible. Without grooming, we'd all be backcountry skiing at the Pass even those who prefer groomed trails.

If you enjoy the Chief Joseph Ski Trail, please volunteer to help get the trails in shape for next ski season. Don't wait for “someone else” to do the work. **YOUR** volunteer hours help make it possible for **YOU** to ski during the winter.

Newsletters and email over the summer months will keep people informed regarding work party scheduling.

Mike Hoyt
Michael.hoyt@gmail.com



Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club presents

GROOMERS

A Saga of Heroes



Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club Vice President Kelly Zeiler and Trails & Grooming Chief Mel Holloway for the Chief Joseph Ski Area wrap up the ski season with a program reliving the adrenaline rush challenges of record snow conditions, new equipment and partnering benefits from the huge Lost Trail PistenBully groomer. Come learn about this epic snow season through photos, videos, and first hand accounts of how we made it through, what we learned and what plans there are for next year. For classic, skate, dog sledgers, snowmobilers and snowshoers, this is your chance to meet the team that makes it happen, understand their equipment, pat their backs and see what the future holds.

Meeting starts at 7:00 April 10, 2014 at the Presbyterian Church
1220 West Main Street - Hamilton

The public is encouraged and welcomed to attend all meetings

Meeting Minutes of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

Meeting Date: Thursday March 13, 2014

Call to order: 7:05 pm

Number attending: about 25

Membership: 240 members which is about the same as last year at this time, *(62 are new members)*

Trail Report:

- The dog mushers sent a \$200 check and photo of the competitors in thanks for the grooming of Gibbons Pass Road in time for the dog sled races.
- Scott, owner of Lost Trail, used his large PistonBully to groom Broadway, Solitude, Gibbons Pass, Trail Creek Rd, etc. Scott is looking for a narrower groomer for our other trails, these machines are superior to our snowmobile grooming.
- This summer we will need to widen the existing trails for the larger machine. The maintenance will begin mid-August. The Backcountry Horsemen have volunteered to help. This will be an excellent time to pick up firewood.

Treasurer Report: \$21,000 in the bank, our income is covering our expenses

Youth Ski: over 100 kids attended the sessions this season. The Salmon group sent a nice Thank You note.

Guest Speaker: Steve Slocum showed his beautiful and informative video, The Story of the Bitterroot.

The meeting closed at 8:55 pm

These minutes were prepared by: Marrea Matthews



Board Meeting Minutes of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

Meeting Date: Thursday March 13, 2014

In attendance: Michael Hoyt, Reine Hilton, Marrea Mathews, Mel Holloway, Jim Greenfield, Jack Cooley, Richard Stone, George Corn, Earl Phillips

Call to order: 6:30 pm

Membership: 240 members, about the same as last year at this time, *(62 are new members)*

Trail Report:

- Mel is looking at trading a 2-cycle snow mobile for a 4-cycle to better handle the temperature on warm and lo-snow days.
- \$10,000 will be reimbursed from the grant funds to the club for the grooming. \$8000 will be reimbursed for Lost Trail's for the grooming with their PistenBully. This will close out the 2012 RTP grant.
- Mike is looking into possibly acquiring a small PistenBully for the club and how to best organize trail work for this summer. We will to cut out the trail ways for the larger grooming machinery. This would start in mid-August.
- Mel explained the small chainsaw is missing, stolen/lost. Hopefully it will turn up.

Treasurer Report: \$607.99 in checking, \$20,443.66 in savings, total \$21,051.65

Website: nothing new to report

Grant: Mike reported the 2014 RTP Grant application was submitted for \$90,000. This will cover 2 years of grooming costs, installation of a double stall toilet, maps and signs on trails.

Youth Ski: 110 students have attended the 2013-1014 ski sessions

The meeting close at 6:45 pm

These minutes were prepared by: Marrea Mathews



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: \$ _____