

SKI TRACKS

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

May 2014 — Volume 12 — Number 5



Inside:

Potluck at Woods Cabin!

New Pistenbully coming!

Suggestions for our Map?

Programs?

President's Message

Unless you are a dedicated crust skier or willing to carry your backcountry skis up mountains on your back, ski season is over. Now we're waiting for the melt to see just how high the flow in the rivers and streams is going to be this spring. While we wait, some of us are pruning trees and bushes and planting gardens.

This last winter provided an epic season of snowfalls unlike any seen in the Bitterroots for a long time. I don't remember another April when a person could see snow in the avalanche chute on Downing Mountain. Simply astounding!

Our "test" agreement with Scott Grasser (*Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area*) was perfectly timed (*by accident*) to coincide with a winter filled with heavy snowfalls. Without the services of Lost Trail's big PistenBully machines, there were several weeks during February when grooming of any kind would have been impossible.

The only "problem" with the Lost Trail machines was that they were too wide to fit on most of the Chief Joseph Ski Trails – their 22' width could fit only on trails that used existing roads. However, it turns out that Lost Trail was in the market for a narrower machine to replace one of their older groomers. A few days ago, Scott informed me that Lost Trail has purchased the replacement machine which will fit on any ski trail which is 12' to 13' feet wide. Even better, the new machine has two hydraulically-operated track-setters mounted on the rear tiller. In other words, it was designed specifically for grooming cross-country ski trails.



THIS IS THE MACHINE THAT WILL BE GROOMING OUR TRAILS NEXT SEASON. IT WILL HAVE 2 TRACK-SETTERS ATTACHED BEFORE DELIVERY TO LOST TRAIL.

As you probably know, in recent years, one of the goals of our Club's Board has been to do everything conceivable to make the job of grooming as easy as possible on our volunteers. Therefore, we will enter the next ski season with an agreement in place for Lost Trail to groom the Chief Joseph Ski Trail System using their new PistenBully machine. Of course, there will still be times when our Club's volunteers will be riding snowmobiles over the trails, but the number of hours spent riding snowmobiles under inclement conditions should be just about zero.

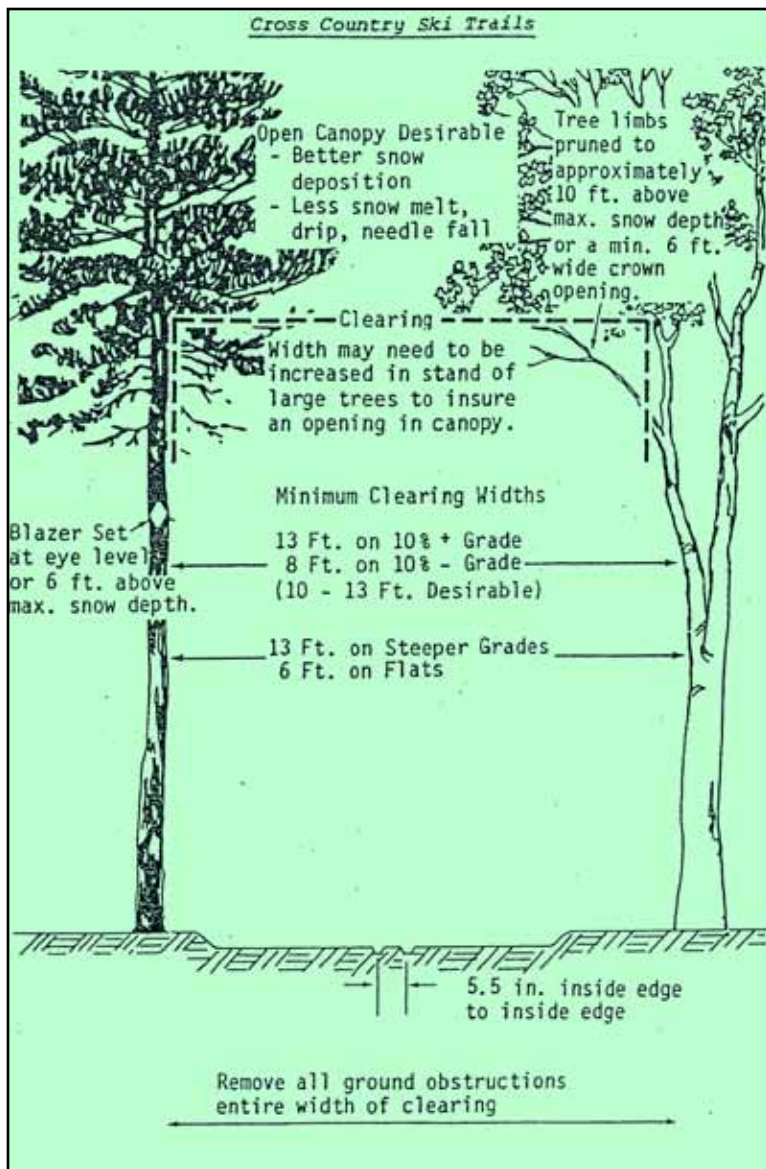
Last winter's PistenBully "test" proved that such a machine can easily cope with gigantic snowfalls leaving a perfectly groomed ski surface behind. Asking our volunteers to ride in Lost Trail's newly-acquired PistenBully's warm, enclosed cab over the ski trails (*even several days in a row*) is not even necessary. There is already a waiting list!

To reiterate the points covered in last month's newsletter, using a PistenBully to groom the trails has several advantages other than 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 with snowmobiles.

As most of you already know, some work needs to be done on the existing trail system during the off season to make sure the new machine will fit. Most of the work will consist of branch trimming and debris removal, something our Club's volunteer members have done almost yearly since the trail system was first established.

There are also certain trails which have gotten overgrown over the years and have especially narrow sections—part of the downhill section of Vista View comes to mind. Those trail sections will need to be widened by removing the new-growth trees which are now making grooming (*even with snowmobiles*) and skiing hazardous.



TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEW PISTENBULLY AND TO MEET "DESIRABLE" FOREST SERVICE STANDARDS, TRAILS WILL BE WIDENED (12' - 13').

To maximize our volunteer trail work efforts, beginning in mid-August (*the third weekend of the month*), we will organize multi-day work parties. Those wishing to participate will be able to 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—something which will save several hours a day of travel time. Volunteers who can help only one 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.

A couple of years ago, the Forest Service (Sula and Beaverhead) gave us 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 wildfire. The wood is perfectly dry and will 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. The work is scheduled for the third weekend of August, Friday 15th through Sunday 17th.

We're also looking forward to having members of the Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists (www.bitterrootbackcountrycyclists.org) join us on some of the work days. Their members who ride fat-tired bikes on snow were delighted to use the multi-use trails (*Gibbons Pass and Trail Creek Roads*) last winter and will likely join us to get even more multi-use trails ready to accept the new PistenBully groomer.

A lot of people like to ski on the Chief Joseph Trail System, a set of trails that requires yearly 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 that 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 Trails, 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 additional work-party scheduling.

Mike Hoyt
Michael.hoyt@gmail.com

Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club
and Como Trails Ski Club present:

Our Annual

POTLUCK

Last Meeting of the Season

**Come share your
stories and celebrate
the end of another
memorable year of
skiing the trails at
Chief Joe and Como
Trails**

Bring your favorite dish to share!

Grilled Chicken and Apple Juice provided

Bring plates, utensils, cups and preferred beverage

Chairs available but bring your favorite lounging chair for the deck

Potluck starts at 6:00 - Thursday - May 8, 2014 - Woods Cabin at Como Lake

The public is encouraged and welcomed to attend.

Photo by Jack Cooley

MAP SUGGESTIONS?

With the 2013-14 cross-country ski season melting away and the memories beginning to fade, now is the time to share your thoughts and comments about the CHIEF JOSEPH PASS CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS map we distribute free each year. Although we have some changes, upgrades, and corrections in the works for next season's map, your input is valuable for this very popular reference. We are open to any suggestions from layout, informational data, legends, etc. to the sponsors represented.

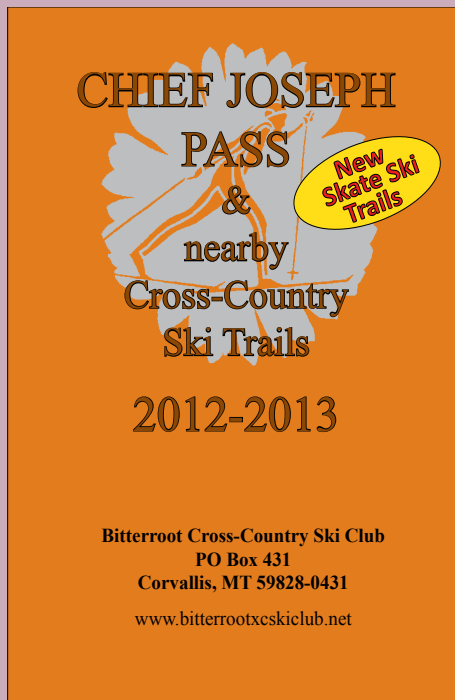
A few years back we were fortunate to have Debbie Leick set the bar high with her creation of our first color map using the most sophisticated GIS software in the industry while she was a student at UM. Hill shading, contour lines, precise GPS tracks for trails are only a few of the software capabilities that make our map a state-of-the-art creation. Unfortunately, Debbie graduated and became too busy to continue. Fortunately, as a non-profit, we were able to arrange full use of the software for a nominal administrative fee. Last season's map

was a complete overhaul which added many trails, changed the map extent and scale, used insets, and generally re-created many of the fine elements Debbie originated.

From the advertisements sponsors purchase, we net about \$5,000 to be used in grooming expenses. Although this successful fundraiser is reason enough for generating needed funds, the greatest benefit to our Club is the positive exposure we enjoy by providing this free map. We distributed almost 4,000 maps at about 100 locations from Seeley Lake to Salmon and east to Butte and Dillon. Locally you can thank members Richard Stone, Bettie Rhodes, Dave Spildie Rich Raines, Bill Peters, and Cliff Keene from Salmon for personally delivering almost 3,000 maps to 75 of the locations. They did a great job this year and deserve your thanks for a job well-done!

We have a strong following among the many repeat sponsors. Currently the map can handle 50 advertisements. We solicit their help with an appeal for Club support for the public multi-use area we groom for everyone with the understanding all funds are for grooming expenses. The incidental advertisement provides a mutual benefit at a comparatively low cost. Sponsors know they are getting good exposure and helping a worthy cause. Remember to patronize and THANK them when you visit their places of business. We value their support.

Regardless of whether you reside in Missoula or Salmon, if you enjoy gliding through pristine forests on the best ski tracks around, you realize we have the groomers to thank. If you want to show your appreciation for the many hours it takes them, helping with the map is one way of giving back. There are several facets to the map project, so if you enjoy cartography, or soliciting a few sponsors, or ad creation, or helping with distribution, email me at jkgreenfield@q.com. Remember also those suggestions for helping to make next year's map the best ever. Thank you, Jim Greenfield.



Do you have a program suggestion for next season?

With each monthly Club meeting we host a speaker, organization, or event as our program for the evening. Typically it has been something to do with outdoor activity, whether the adventures of an individual, a group or the current mission of a small or large organization. Others are educational, instructive or inspiring. With all, we hope to learn about activity we would not otherwise be aware of, meet new people and be entertained. Just the thing for a dark cold winter evening after an adventure of our own at Chief Joe!

Our next program season starts with the October meeting and although that seems a long way off, when was it you had a summer season go slowly? I'll bet you have most of your summer planned and hoping you can get at least half of it done. In the Bitterroot summer and fall always end too soon. Of course we are fortunate to have SKI SEASON then start. Woo Hoo!

WooHoo!

So, do YOU have an adventure planned this summer that the Club would enjoy hearing about in the fall or winter? Do you know of someone else also careening near the edge that would also make a great program (if they survive)?

What are your preferences and how can we work them in? Perhaps you know an author, an adventurer, a guide, a world traveler. Have you recently seen, or remember from your past, a program you know other Club members would enjoy? Among your acquaintances has someone recently moved into the Valley that has adventures to share?

Is there a workshop on equipment, technique, waxing, racing, snowshoeing or other winter sports activity you are ready to learn about? Are you tired of your old skis and want something flashier, faster that you can beat your ski buddies with? Or maybe you just need a wax and technique lesson to show them up. Everyone enjoys a clinic, so name your pleasure...

Call or email today so we can get started! Thanks for sharing.
Jim Greenfield 363-2110 or jkgreenfield@q.com



Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday March 13, 2014

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

Call to order: 6:30 pm.

Season Ending Club Meeting: The meeting opened with discussion of organizing a volunteer work crew in exchange for the use of Lake Como Woods Cabin for the May 8 club meeting.

Gifts for the groomers: Reine will pick up debit cards for a total of \$640 to be divided based on the hours each volunteered.

PistenBully: Scott of Lost Trail will own the PistenBully and use it to groom Lost Trail as well as Chief Joseph. He will train some of our groomers to drive it. Scott believes the cost of the grooming will be similar what the grant is written to cover (*\$60/hour*). This was compared to the expenses of the club purchasing its own PistenBully and providing storage, travel and maintenance. There was a request for the club to remember to groom for use by families and avoid becoming known solely for skate skiing.

Treasurer Report: Membership is about the same as last year. Total income is down from last year by about \$3,000. This is due to loss of the income from the silent auction, raffle and the sale of equipment. Expenses compared to income is down about \$1,000. Once the grooming expenses are reimbursed, the balance will improve.

Other Business:

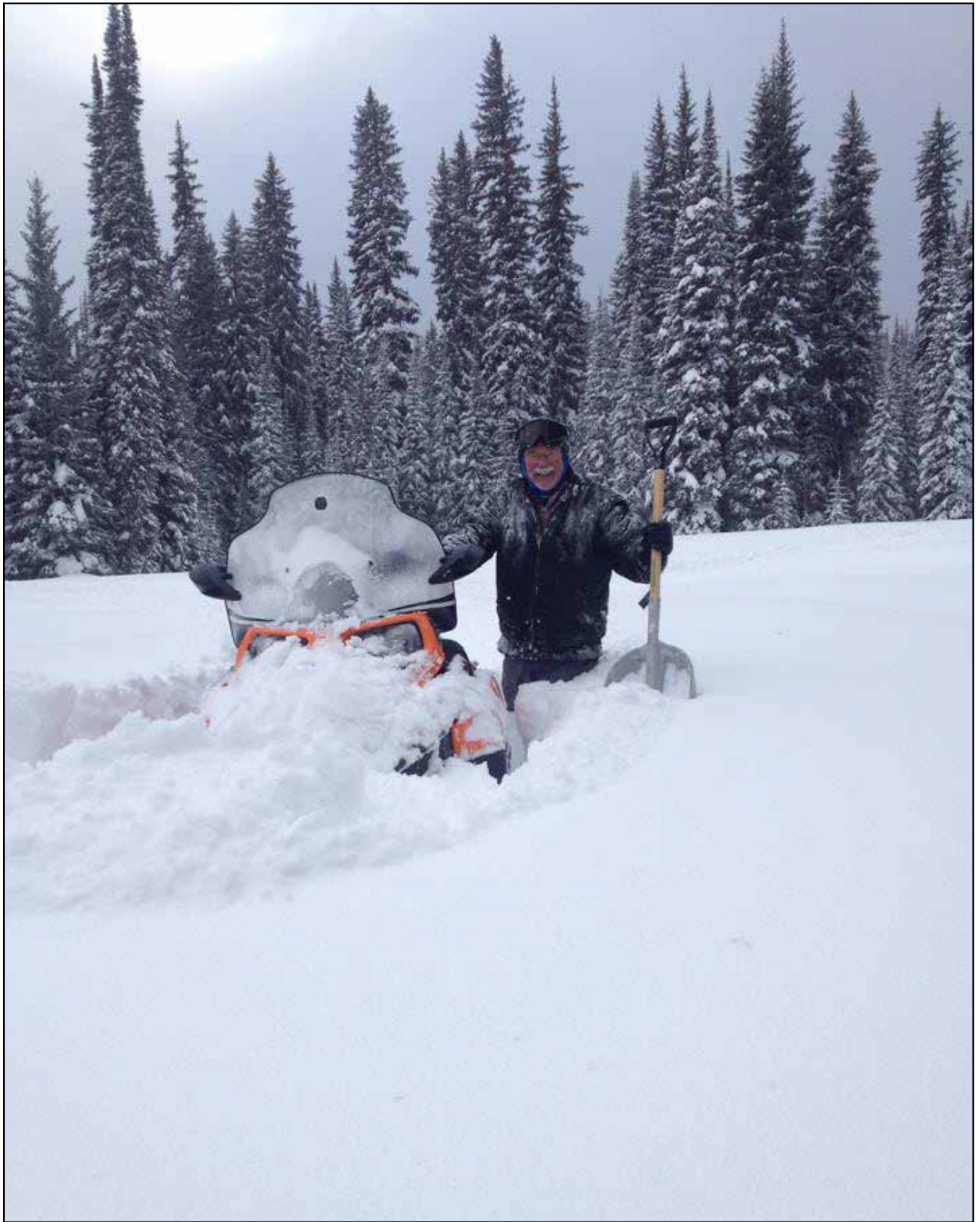
- Mike will begin a list for summer trail maintenance. The Como Trails Club and the Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists Club will also be invited to provide help. The Bitterroot Back Country Horsemen have already agreed to help.
- We need to reemphasis to people that the most up-to-date trail information is always available on the Club website, our Facebook page, and the MSO Nordic Club website.
- Mike met with the Forest Service to discuss next winter use of Chief Joseph Ski area. They seem pleased with the rental of the cabin. Permission was granted to proceed with grooming using a 12' wide PistenBully. The trails Overlook, Vista View, Solitude, Sentinel, Gold Metal, and Middle Fork will need some widening in places. The Forest Service would like the Club to route snowmobiles onto a rerouted Sunshine Trail.

The meeting closed: 6:45 pm.

These minutes were prepared by: Marrea Mathews

BARB AND JIM CLEANING A
FIRE RING AT LAKE COMO





FEBRUARY 2014 WAS A MONTH MOST OF US WILL NOT SOON FORGET

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday April 10, 2014

Call to order: 7:16 pm.

Number attending: about 20

Membership: 240 members which is about the same as last year at this time

Linda Stoudt has club bandanas for sale.

Treasurer Report: Membership is about the same. Total income is down from last year by about \$3,000. This is due to loss of the silent auction, raffle and the sale of equipment. Expenses compared to income is down about \$1,000. Once the grooming expenses are reimbursed from RTP, *(about \$10,000 even after paying Scott for the PistenBully)* the balance will improve. Currently there is about \$21,000 in the bank.

- May 8th Meeting will be held at the Lake Como Woods Cabin. The forest service will allow the club use of the cabin in exchange for some upkeep *(washing windows, raking needles, cleaning fire rings, etc.)*. This meeting will be a potluck event.
- Mike met with the forest service to discuss readying the trails for grooming with a PistenBully next year. This was approved. Volunteers will be greatly appreciated for trail work this summer. Some will be multi-day with overnight camping or use of the cabin. Dates and details will be released in the news letter. The forest service will consider an additional outhouse to be located in the Beaver Head portion of the Chief Joseph parking lot.

Program: “Grooming at Chief Joseph” by Mel Holloway. Mel showed many slides of the equipment used for compressing, conserving, leveling, and setting tracks. This revealed the difficulty of using the snowmobiles for tackling the snow during 2013-2014. There was a hearty applause for all the hard work performed by the team of groomers.

The meeting closed: 8:15 pm.

These minutes were prepared by: Marrea Matthews

The Club Newsletter will be published over the summer months on an as-needed basis. No hard copies will be mailed. Email notifications will be sent to everyone for whom we have a current email address. Remember, newsletters are always available on our website, <http://bitterrootxskiclub.net/>.

Fourteen volunteers, people who are members of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club, made it possible for the Annual Spring Potluck to be held at Lake Como’s Woods Cabin. Windows were washed, floors swept, and fire rings cleaned. The volunteers were Lee, Jim, Terry, Edna, three women referred to as “Barb”, Ginny, Linda, Kelly, Bettie, Wendy, Sharon, and Mike. A special thanks to Jim and Ginny for rallying the troops.

After an hour of easy work, several volunteers stayed to hike to the falls at the west end of Lake Como before a terrific lunch at Naps.

Thank you all!



CREW MEMBERS WHO DECIDED TO HIKE PAST THE LAKE TO THE ROCK CREEK FALLS



LAKE COMO FROM THE BRIDGE OVER THE ROCK CREEK FALLS

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 restonel@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: \$ _____