



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

MARCH, 2006



EDITOR'S NOTES

Disaster Avoidance: If you decide to stop on a downhill trail, give some thought to stepping clear. There may be someone coming behind you. Also, since Joseph Creek has become a two-way trail, the same caution is advised when stopping coming up on a portion that is also a down trail. This is the season when the trails are getting faster, so be alert. Thanks, Mel Mooers

Special Olympic Aid: Anyone having adult cross-country skiing equipment; skis, poles, boots or snow shoes they would like to donate to the Special Olympic athletes please call Carl Russ at 777-5132.

Extravaganza: Thanks to everyone that bought Extravaganza tickets and especially to Katya and Linda for all the work they did to make this fund raiser and the dinner a smashing success. The food that they brought in to the cabin and set up for us was truly wonderful. A copy of the menu was placed in the log at the cabin. A most memorable experience. Thank you all. Mel

FEBRUARY, 2006 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

February 9, 2006

By Kay Fulton

President, Sonny LaSalle, called the meeting to order at 7:05. There were approximately 65 people in attendance.

Membership: Jack Losensky, new chairperson, reported that there are 385 members. Jack also addressed the transition process from Leo to the new people. He asked that you let him know if there is a problem in getting your newsletters. The e-mail address may be incorrect or a security program may not let it come through. Barbara Losensky is handling the mailing of the newsletters. They are usually stuffed into envelopes Thursday or Friday before mailing. She prefers Thursday mornings at 10:00 A.M. at Allegro Printing. It only takes 3 or 4 people for one hour. Please let Barb know if you can help. Thanks again to Leo for assisting with the transition.

Treasurer's Report by Jeane Lippert: Income, \$856; Expenses, \$1,552.48; Net Income, -\$696.48; Checking, \$2390.61; Savings, \$305.86.

Upcoming Events and Items of Interest:

The Drawing for the Extravaganza was scheduled for after this meeting. Katya was still selling tickets during the meeting and reported that so far they had \$455. The lucky winner is MEL MOOERS! CONGRATULATIONS, MEL!

Julie Schreck, Conservation Education Coordinator for the Bitterroot National Forest, told us about a new national

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MARCH PROGRAM

Thursday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m

First Presbyterian Church

1220 West Main St. in Hamilton

As we go to press, the planned program has had to cancel out, and we have not as yet determined what our program will be. Because of February's short number of days, it is necessary to get the rest of the bulletin in for printing so the mailing can be done the previous week.

Remember, as a group we have agreed to help the cause of Haven House by donating non-perishable food items when we can. If you feel generous, please bring them to the March meeting and we will see that they are delivered to Haven House.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Skiers.

Can you believe the ski year we are having? I asked for help at the February meeting to shovel snow off the roof at the Hut and the response was excellent. A special thanks to Jim Anderson, Jim Aronsen, Bill McCrum, Bill Stoudt, Mike ?, Jim ?, and Mel ? for all your hard work. We moved a lot of snow from the roof and around the Hut and toilet. Hopefully we will not have to do that again this year. The snow is wonderful and the toilet cleaning is not that bad. Judy and I cleaned both toilets Feb. 24 and Pat Hastings and Kay Fulton cleaned them the week before and we all agree that it didn't take much time and was not that distasteful soooo how about some more volunteers?

Another of our long time volunteers is stepping down after about 15 years of valuable service to the Club. Mary Ellen Reese has been in charge of our trail map since the beginning of our Club and has decided it is time for someone else to take over. Mary Ellen's effort has produced a quality map at no cost to the Club and in fact we make a little money from the sale of advertising. Her work starts in May or June by contacting our sponsors by phone or in person. By September the up to date info goes to IBID for layout and design and then to the printer by November. Mary Ellen has volunteered to help someone get started to become our new trail map coordinator. We all owe Mary Ellen a debt of gratitude for her years of service so please take the time to thank her for all she has done for the Club. Now we need to find someone to take over her duties. This is the way volunteer organizations are run successfully. We have a lot of talented members in our Club and it is time for someone to step up and contribute. We need this position filled by May of this year.

We had a discussion at the last meeting about the Club taking a position on the proposed County ordinance that would

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government program to help people get healthy, called "Get Fit With Us", as an effort to encourage healthy lifestyles. It is a cooperative effort with BLM, Bureau of Recreation and Outdoor Living. Locally the Forest Service is sponsoring a "Be Active Bitterroot" program to encourage residents to participate in outdoor recreation activities which will connect them to their natural and physical heritage. Julie was asking the club to consider sponsoring one or two activities which could be listed in a brochure that will be published. Various clubs, organizations, etc are partnering on this project which will begin on Earth Day and continue through December. We are to let her know what we would like included. Her number is 375-2606.

It was announced that there will be a "Ski-Jor Clinic" Wednesday, February 15th at 7:00P.M. This will introduce you to a fast growing sled dog sport. Contact Nicki Arndt at 369-0707 for more information.

Sonny reported that Russ Lawrence, of the Chapter One Bookstore, asked him to introduce the issue of the "Big Box Store" and ask the membership if it is interested in taking a position on the concern about a super large store such as Wal-Mart coming into the Valley. A committee has been established which has proposed zoning and limiting the size of such businesses to not more than 60,000 feet (Quality Supply is 20,000 ft). There are many issues to be considered with such a business. There was discussion about whether the Club wanted to get involved as an organization or on an individual basis. There have been articles in the paper and presentations have and will be made to the County

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place restrictions on big "box" stores in Ravalli County. There was a spirited discussion on whether it was the role of the Club to get involved in this issue and finally someone made a motion to not take a position at this time without more information on the proposed ordinance. The motion was seconded and passed. I asked Russ Lawrence to write an article for this newsletter explaining the proposed ordinance and I also invited him to the March meeting to answer questions that you may have. All of those in attendance agreed that we should encourage all members to get involved in the ordinance issue, but there was not agreement on official involvement by the Club. Your views on this will be appreciated.

We have a situation developing with our two Ski Doo Alpines. Parts are either not available or difficult to find and we have experienced three breakdowns in the past two weeks. One of those required the machine to remain on the trail overnight and a lot of extra effort by the groomers to get it fixed. The two breakdowns with the other Alpine required extra long days to get the grooming completed with just two machines. We ask a lot from our groomers as it is, and to ask them to put up with old and unreliable equipment is too much. It is time to start looking for funding to replace the two Alpines. Your ideas and help are most welcome. Replacements will cost around \$7,000 each.

I look forward to seeing you March 9th.

Sonny

Membership Renewals / DUES

Annual Memberships EXPIRE November 1!

Renew your membership now!

INDIVIDUAL - \$15 • FAMILY - \$25

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL - \$30

SUPPORTING FAMILY - \$40

LIFE MEMBER - \$500

Membership Dues

Nov. 1, 2005 - Oct. 31, 2006

MAIL TO: Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

P.O. Box 431, Corvallis, MT 59828

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Type of Membership: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Listed above)

Newsletter preference: (Check all that apply)

Send by USPS _____; Send by e-mail _____

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Commissioners. The point was made that a store such as Wal-Mart could have negative effects on the small businesses in the valley as well as impact the structure and nature of the communities. Several people expressed a need for more information. After some discussion, Art Seifert moved that the Club should not take a position on the matter but that the Club newsletter should provide more information about the issues. The motion was seconded and passed, 32 in favor and 18 opposed.

Trails Report:

Sonny encouraged everyone to help with keeping the facilities and people safe at the ski area by discouraging any activity that could be a safety issue, such as snowball fights, building jumps, building snowforts near the cabin, etc.

Ed Hastings reported that we need to remember that when hosting, you should park on the "toilet side" on even days and on the opposite side on odd days. This is to assist the Highway Dept. with clearing the parking lot.

Grooming machines are becoming a bigger and bigger problem. Two of the machines are 12 years old and continue to break down. This last week with 32" of new snow, it was extremely frustrating to have one of them break down. It needs a new fuel pump and parts are becoming harder to get. They groomed the area with two machines and it is ok for the weekend but we need to get busy on getting grants, etc. for new machines.

Snow at the Hut: Ed also said that the trench to the outhouse is getting way too high and needs to be filled in. He suggested getting a group up there to fill it in and dig steps. Also to clear the snow off the roof since as the snow melts, ice is damming up and will cause leaks. There is also a need for help in shoveling at the parking lot. Sonny said that he would go up tomorrow and asked for volunteers to help him.

Mel encouraged members to carry membership forms with them when skiing at the area to make a personal invitation to the many non-member skiers to join the club. He told us the Leo always used to do this and he thought it would be a great thing for all of us to do.

Cleaning Toilets: Kay suggested establishing a "BCCSC Sanitation Engineering Service" to clean the toilets at the parking lot and the cabin, rather than have the groomers responsible for doing it since they already have so much to do. She passed around a sign up sheet: Currently there are 4 dates left to be filled, March 17, March 24, April 7, and April 14. Please let Kay know which of these dates you are willing to be responsible for and she will fill you in on the how-tos. Thanks to Judy LaSalle, Michael McEachern, Pat Hastings, and Bill Stoudt, who have stepped up to help out.

Program: Art and Kirsten Seifert presented an absolutely fantastic slide program on their November trip to Antarctica. Kirsten's slides were beautiful and her presentation was very educational. Apparently over 250,000 people have visited there over the last 100 years but now there is an annual rate of between 15,000 and 16,000. They went with Len Bladt (sp) Expositions who collaborates with National Geographic. Thanks, Art and Kirsten, it was great.

THE "BIG BOX" ISSUE

By Art Seifert

At the February meeting, Sonny advised the members that the Club had been asked to support the efforts of a group of citizens to lobby the County Commissioners to enact an ordinance limiting the physical size of so-called "Big Box" stores in Ravalli County. Ultimately, the discussion resulted in adoption of the resolution that is reported in the minutes of the meeting. It seems likely that the issue will come before the membership again. It is an important issue for the Club. I think it is desirable that all members, and especially those who may be asked at a future meeting to vote on the question, have more of an opportunity to reflect on the issues than would be afforded by a relatively brief oral discussion followed immediately by an up or down vote. Therefore, I offer my thoughts here.

There are two questions: first, the substantive issues (a) whether Big Box stores have an adverse impact and (b) whether enactment of an ordinance restricting their size would be desirable policy, and second, the procedural issue whether the Club should take a position in the controversy. At the February meeting I thought there was a tendency to fail to make a sharp distinction between them. For example, following a discussion of the asserted adverse effect on local businesses and the essentials of the proposed ordinance (limit square footage to 60,000) the question was raised whether "it" would have any adverse effect on the Club and the consensus answer seemed to be "probably not." I thought that in the context, both the question and the answer related to the substantive issues. But the meeting never really grappled with the issue of the effect on the Club of the Club taking a position in the controversy.

I think it would be a mistake for the Club to take a position as an advocate on either side, because such action would itself have adverse consequences to the Club, regardless of the outcome of the substantive controversy. I am not, in this piece, addressing the substantive issue. I merely want to set forth the reasons why I think the Club should stay out of this fight. Those reasons apply not only to this case, but also to other, similar situations, which seem to crop up with some frequency, so I think it is worthwhile to take a moment and consider the issues carefully, not only for this instance, but also for future reference.

The matter came before the February meeting characterized as not a political issue. I agree that it is not a political issue, in the sense of party politics - it is not a Democrat / Republican issue. But in a broader sense, this is a classic political issue, because the objective of the proponents is to get a government entity, the County Commission, to exercise its legislative powers to enact an ordinance. And presumably the objective of opponents will be to convince the elected officeholders - County Commissioners - to refrain from exercising those legislative powers. And in between, there will be any number of proposals, alternatives and compromises as to how the legislative power might be exercised short of the full extent sought by the proponents.

There is no question that the Club, as a voluntary association, has the power and the right to become an advocate in this matter. I think the Club should refrain from assuming any such role, for the following reasons:

1. Club advocacy could weaken the membership bond. As a voluntary association, the Club is comprised of individuals who have voluntarily associated themselves together to pursue common interests and objectives related to cross-country skiing and outdoor recreation. These interests and

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objectives have nothing to do with Big Box policy issues. People who joined the Club to foster and improve recreational opportunities may feel that Club resources are being misdirected away from its central purpose.

2. Club advocacy could hurt recruitment of new members. Lots of people support the "motherhood and apple pie" values of a recreation oriented organization like the Club. Lots of people simply don't like controversy and confrontation, and they shy away from organizations that embroil themselves in policy (i.e., political) disputes. One must assume that in the course of advocacy activities the Club's participation and position would become widely known, which would invite members of the public to characterize the Club's activities according to their own predilections, and the Club would lose a measure of control over its own reputation.
3. For the Club to get involved, it would have to satisfy the requirements of its own internal governance rules. That is, a vote of the membership would doubtless be required. Assuming that a majority supported the Club's involvement, a minority would oppose it. We would have created a reason for divisiveness and discord that could have been avoided. Of course, the same thing might be said of a Club decision not to become involved, but at least such a decision would be more consistent with the reasonable expectations of members who, as noted above, joined a skiing club.
4. If the Club were to get involved, it would set a bad precedent. Public policy issues come up all the time, and if the

Club helps out one group today, it becomes more difficult to say no to the next group that asks for help. In that connection, remember that the Club has been asked, by one side in the budding controversy, for help. We have not been asked to form a study committee to advise the County Commissioners amicus curiae.

5. Listening to the discussion at the February meeting, I concluded that the arguments made by proponents of Club involvement were results oriented. That is, they simply favored the substantive result - the requested legislative action, and overlooked or ignored the procedural and internal Club issues. In my opinion, to ignore or reject these important internal considerations would convert the Club to a sort of political action committee, responsive in the future to whatever special interest could garner a majority vote at a given meeting.
6. The Club has been giving consideration to qualifying as tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. That section defines a qualifying organization as one, "...no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation ... and which does not participate in ... any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office." Doubtless this would never be a real problem for the Club, because of the "substantial part" threshold, but the principle is clear, and perhaps the Club would prefer to avoid having to make the argument that it is not "substantially" political.

