



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

October, 2005



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

September 17 was snowy and rainy but 35 to 40 club members came to Chief Joe and had a great time. We moved over three cords of firewood to the basement. Another crew had split the wood the previous week. We also piled a little brush and gave the Hut a thorough cleaning. We had a short business meeting where we decided to purchase the 2002 Chevrolet Silverado from Karl Tyler Chevrolet in Missoula. We had about nine proposals and the truck committee narrowed those to two and then took those two pickups to the Cheese Factory garage in Corvallis. After a thorough inspection the choice was quite easy and we are the owner of a very nice pickup that will meet our needs for many years. The purchase price was \$16,900 which is \$2,300 below the NADA trade-in value and we decided to place magnetic signs on the pickup recognizing Karl Tyler as a partner as well as the organizations that gave us grants, and the Bitterroot RC&D as our financial management sponsor.

We also decided to purchase new trail junction maps and get them installed this fall. Remember, we received a grant from the Bitterroot Resource Advisory Committee that will almost pay for the maps. The new maps will be larger than the old ones and have some color.

We need to thank the truck committee, grant writers, grantors, Club members that donated to the truck fund and the Bitterroot RC&D for helping to make our purchase possible. I want to personally thank everyone that came to Chief Joe Sat. the 17th. We had fun and the potluck lunch was excellent.

Another topic – October 13 will be our first meeting at the Church this fall. We have an excellent program and we will have Arlee Staley from the Wisdom Ranger District with her calendar for the Hut reservations. Our procedure will be the same as last year – you will get a number as you come in the room and that will be the order in which you work with Arlee to select one night to host the Hut. Each couple or family will get one number which equates to one night. To get more nights you will have to call the Wisdom Ranger District after the reservation period opens.

See you the 13th. Sonny LaSalle
P.S. Don't forget your non-perishable items for Haven House. Thanks, Sonny

OCTOBER MEETING

The Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club will hold its monthly meeting Thursday, October 13 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Presbyterian Church, 1220 West Main St. in Hamilton. The program will feature a slide show of "Charming Chile" presented by Bill McCrum, Bill and Linda Stoudt, and Don and Mary Shaughnessy who visited there this past year.

ANNUAL DUES EXPIRE OCTOBER 31

This is a reminder that annual memberships expire on October 31 for those who paid dues for the November 1, 2004 to October 31, 2005 year. Membership renewal applications are in this newsletter. By renewing now, you will continue to receive the monthly Ski Club newsletter.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Please excuse the slightly different format of the bulletin for this month only. Peg Hampton normally lays out the print in a more professional way, but I have to do it on my own this time. Please note that I am pleased to include your announcements, questions, etc. that you would like included in these bulletins, but there is a time limit. You must get your material to me by the last day of the month in order for me to get it to I.b.i.d. for laying out, then to the printer, then to Leo to mail out, deadline the first Thursday of the month, to reach you before the second Thursday, our meeting date. Thanks for your cooperation

In this bulletin are comments by Art Seifert in relation to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan Revisions. Please read them and consider any responses you may have.



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: _____

(Listed above)

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Newsletter preference: (Check all that apply)

Send by USPS _____; Send by e-mail _____

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Warming Hut Reservations (USFS Wisdom)		689-3371

BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE FOREST PLAN REVISION

By Art Seifert

Since 2002 the USFS has been working on updating the 19 year old management plans for the Beaverhead and Deerlodge National Forests. In June, the USFS released for public comment a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and a draft Management Plan (sometimes referred to as the "Preferred Alternative") for the now combined Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The "Preferred Alternative" is one of five courses of action that are on the table. The five alternatives are:

1. Continue the 1986 and 1987 plans (in effect, the "No Action" plan.)
2. The USFS "2003 Proposed Action" (in effect, a "Trial Balloon".)
3. Alternative 3: Emphasize primitive recreation / little development of natural resources (in effect, the "Let Nature Take Its Course" plan.)
4. Alternative 4: Emphasize motorized recreation and active development of natural resources (I call this the "ATV / Snowmobile" plan.)
5. Alternative 5: The USFS has designated this the "Preferred Alternative." It includes a mix of uses, including both motorized and non-motorized recreation.

The Regional Forester has the responsibility and the authority to decide what revisions to make to the Forest Plan, but public comments are an important influence on that decision. As members of the BRXC Ski Club and beneficiaries of certain of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge natural resources, it is in our interest, individually and collectively, to assert our interest through the public comment process. In its announcement of the Forest Plan revision the USFS has (I think, pointedly) stated:

The draft plan and DEIS also deal with the following subjects:

Recreation (Unregulated Motorized Use): Currently 41% (1,385,800 acres) of the forest is without travel management direction and 84% (2,839,200 acres) is open to snowmobiles during the winter. Winter use was not addressed in the current forest plans. Use and technology have increased dramatically on the forest in these 19 years. Currently, all recommended wilderness areas allow motorized winter and summer use. The draft plan calls for prohibiting motorized use in recommended wilderness and in other areas, some of which have little use.

The comment period is set to expire October 31. Comments can be sent regular US mail to: Forest Plan Revision, Forest Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725. Send comments by e-mail to: comments-northern-beaverhead-deerlodge@fs.fed.us.

Following is the comment I have sent. Feel free to use or adapt any of it for your own use. You may also refer to the official BRXC Ski Club comment written by Sonny LaSalle; it is in the September 2005 Newsletter.

To: comments-northern-beaverhead-deerlodge@fs.fed.us
From: ajseifert@earthlink.net
Subj: Response to invitation for public comment on the Draft Forest Plan for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

I want to comment on that portion of the Draft Forest Plan that deals with the "Big Hole Landscape" / "Trail Creek Niche," an area that includes the Chief Joseph Cross-Country Ski Area.

The description of the Trail Creek Niche (p. 95) correctly sets the context for management objectives as uniqueness. This area is indeed unique due to the presence of the nationally designated trails (Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNSC); Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LCNHT); Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT) and also the presence or proximity of the USFS rental cabins Hogan, May Creek and Gordon Reese.

I support the Management Emphasis priorities (p. 95), especially "Non-motorized areas for quiet recreation." As a member of the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club I have personally expended time and (through the Club) money in helping to create and maintain the Chief Joseph Ski Area and the Gordon Reese cabin. I feel I have a stake in the preservation of the character and quality of this recreational area.

However, under the heading, "**Objectives in addition to Forestwide Objectives**" I do not believe that management of the May Creek National Recreation Trail as a winter snowmobile route is consistent with the rest of the Management Emphasis.

As I interpret the Trail Creek Management Area Map (p. 94) the Draft Plan would make the entire Trail Creek area non-motorized in winter, but in the summer, the area encompassed by the CDNST, Montana Highway 43, and the LCNHT would be open to motorized travel. I think that is a mistake. Motorized travel is inconsistent with the CDNST and LCNHT. The USFS, as well as the BRXC Ski Club and non-club members who have contributed to the ski area infrastructure including the Gordon Reese cabin have made a considerable investment that would be subjected to an increased risk of theft and vandalism. Summer motorized travel would complicate the USFS's administrative and law enforcement responsibilities and would likely create additional environmental degradation such as soils erosion on roads and trails not engineered to handle it. The problem of logistical support for the Gordon Reese cabin can easily be handled by amending the first paragraph under the heading, "**Standards in addition to Forestwide Standards**" to read, "The Chief Joseph ski area is closed to snowmobiling as a recreation use; however, snowmobiles in winter and wheeled, motorized vehicles in summer may be used for grooming and other administrative activities." I urge the USFS to close the entire Trail Creek Niche to motorized travel year around. I believe that action is essential to achieve the results sought by the Management Emphasis.