

SKI TRACKS

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

November 2014 — Volume 12 — Number 11



Mel learns gear jamming

Inside:

Pisten Bully Arrives!

President's Message

Snowshoeing Hole In The Wall

President's Message

For over 25 years, the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club has groomed ski trails at Chief Joseph Pass. During those years, club volunteers worked diligently to provide the public with an excellent free-of-charge cross-country skiing experience. That endeavor included thousands of hours spent improving and maintaining the trail system during the off season. And, it meant a small group of dedicated groomers had to rise before dawn to put in long days – some days requiring more than 12 hours during inclement weather – on snowmobiles dragging grooming equipment to prepare the trails for skiing.

As is always the case, at some point things change. So for the first time, the Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club has contracted with the Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area to groom the cross-country ski trails at Chief Joseph Pass this winter (2014-15). To fulfill contract obligations, Lost Trail purchased a PistenBully snow cat which is exactly the right size for grooming cross-country ski trails.

As a test, last winter Lost Trail groomed our multi-use (*ski*) trails with a large machine designed for grooming downhill ski slopes. The trial proved successful and, during last February's heavy snowfalls, demonstrated beyond question that such a machine is able to handle even the largest dumps of snow with ease.

The PistenBully, which Lost Trail ordered last spring to enable the grooming of all Chief Joseph Ski Trails, has finally arrived! The machine includes a front-mounted leveling blade and a rear-mounted snow tiller/compactor equipped with two track-setters, everything hydraulically controlled from within a heated cab.

This winter our all-volunteer groomers will not need to get out of bed in the wee hours, drive up to Chief Joseph Pass, then spend hours working themselves half to death while attempting to beat the snow into submission so the rest of us can enjoy skiing over groomed trails. Instead, this winter, the snow at Chief Joseph Pass will succumb to a single pass of a machine specifically designed to groom snow into a perfect skiing surface. Our volunteer groomers will sometimes ride shotgun in the PistenBully or, when required, use club snowmobiles to place benches and emergency caches—there may be a time or two when snowmobiles will be used

to touch up trails after snowfalls of an inch or two, but those times are expected to be few and far between.

Each week Lost Trail will groom the trails either late Thursday or early Friday, depending upon the then-current weather forecast. And, if significantly more snow should fall after grooming is completed, the trails will be worked again to help ensure they remain skiable all weekend.

The trail system at Chief Joseph Ski Area has been significantly expanded over the past few years, to include not only the 13+ miles (*22.3 kilometers*) of traditional classic-style trails, but 19+ miles (*30.6 kilometers*) of multi-use trails appropriate for skate skiing, dog sledding, snow shoeing, fat-tire biking, and snowmobiling. Employing the services of Lost Trail's PistenBully to groom the trails will ensure that, as long as the pass receives snow, the entire system will remain in the best condition possible during the entire season, December 1st to April 15th.

Enjoy!



AT LAST!
THE MACHINE OUR GROOMERS
HAVE BEEN LUSTING AFTER

The election of officers will also take place during the December meeting. Reine Hilton has agreed to stand again for Club Treasurer. Michael Hoyt also agreed to continue as Club President if re-elected. If you wish to run for either of those offices, please let one of the Club's current officers know so your name can be added to the ballot.

Our Club has gone through many changes over the past four years. During that period, the Club succeeded in acquiring grants totaling more than \$72,000. Those grants enabled the Club to:

- Increase its bank balance from \$16,692 (*December 31, 2010*) to \$30,938 (*June 30, 2014*) thereby making the Club better able to withstand emergencies;
- Upgrade its snowmobiles and grooming tools to state-of-the-art equipment (*December 31, 2010 equipment value was \$10,598 and on June 30, 2014, \$33,817*) ;
- Upgrade the annual production of trail maps to a full-color process;
- Expand the Chief Joseph Ski System to make it more inclusive, including trails for skate skiing and various other winter recreation; and
- Enter into a contractual agreement with the Lost Trail Downhill Ski Area for a PistenBully to groom the ski trails.

Reine Hilton's tenure as Club Treasurer coincided with that period of change. Her math expertise and financial advice helped the Club progress smoothly.

Michael Hoyt served as Club President during the same four-year period. He retains his vision of helping the Club make the Chief Joseph Ski Area the best cross-country ski destination in western Montana.

DON'T FORGET !

The December 11th meeting is a potluck dinner. We usually have a larger-than-normal turnout for that event, so begin planning your favorite dish now.

Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club
presents

Inaccessible

Book One of the Continental Divide trips

The story of four trips to plan and navigate a Continental Divide winter route through Glacier National Park via Brown's Pass and Hole In The Wall. Nearly costing his life, Richard Layne tells of these and other extreme winter adventures in his continuing quest to travel the 990 miles of Continental Divide from Yellowstone to the Canadian Border.



Born in Arkansas and raised in Montana's Bitterroot Valley where by 1965 Richard Layne cemented a lifetime love for the backcountry. After a 10-year sabbatical, in 1993 he returned to the backcountry, this time bringing his wife who, except for the winter expedition trips, continues to travel with him. As an all-season adventurer-photographer he has also published short stories and photographs for *Montana Magazine*, *Distinctly Montana* and *Montana Headwall*.

7:00 - Thursday - November 13 - Everyone welcome
Presbyterian Church - 1220 West Main

Club Meeting – October 9, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:15.

Twenty-three people were in attendance

Mike thanked everyone for attending the first meeting of the new ski season. He encouraged everyone to help themselves to the snacks during the meeting.

Mike pointed out that membership payments were beginning to roll in.

Mike announced that Kersten Seifert, a long-time Club member who moved from the Valley, asked that he let Club Members know she kept up with the goings on of the Club through the Newsletter, Club Website and FaceBook page.

Reine reported that the Club was in good financial health and so far this fiscal year had taken in \$3,295 while spending only \$1,540.

Mike reported he was working with Scott Grasser to get a contract in place to cover this season's grooming by Lost Trail.

Mike announced that all off-season trail work was finished and the trails were ready for winter. He stated that volunteers invested 375 hours of trail work and 175 hours of travel time to complete the task. He also told those in attendance that members of the Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen and Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists provided invaluable help in opening the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile extension of the Overlook Trail to Gibbons Pass Road.

Mike showed a short series of slides which included maps of the Complete Chief Joseph Trail System and pictures taken during the trail work days.

Mike explained that the Lower Loop Trail and the short cut between the bench at the top of the Joseph Creek Trail and Timber Trail would not be groomed this winter because of insufficient time to cut them out. He reminded the attendees that neither trail receives much traffic, but that they would be open during subsequent years.

In response to questions from the audience, Mike explained what work had been done on the trails to prepare them for grooming by a PistenBully

(with 2 automatic track-setters), and to expect some experimentation during the early part of the season while Lost Trail employees learn the trail system. He asked that people provide him or other Board Members with suggestions for where tracks should be set *(or not)*.

Jim Greenfield asked for volunteers to help distribute the new trail maps during November.

Tony Neaves and Randy Leavell gave a very instructive presentation of when and how many types of skis should be waxed. Included were specific instructions for waxing both wax and no-wax cross-country skis.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15.

In the absence of the Club Secretary, Marrea Mathews, these minutes were by Michael Hoyt.



**CHECK OUT THE PISTENBULLY'S
DUAL TRACK-SETTERS.**



A FEW REMINDERS
OF JUST HOW DEEP
THE SNOW GOT
LAST WINTER.



Board Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2014

In attendance: Michael Hoyt, Reine Hilton, Kelly Zeiler, Jim Greenfield, and Richard Stone.

Call to order: 6:30

Mike went over upcoming grooming related topics.

1. The use of Lost Trail's PistenBully to groom all trails;
2. Snowmobiles will be used for backup and incidentals only;
3. A couple of groomers may be trained to use operate the PistenBully (*as backup operators*); and
4. At the beginning of the season, groomers will ride shotgun in PistenBully until Lost Trail employees learn the trail system.

Off-season trail work was discussed.

1. Work on the lower trails was finished on October 8th;
2. The Lower Loop Trail was not cut out so will not be open this winter;
3. Off-season trail work required over 375 hours of volunteer work plus 175 hours of travel time; and
4. The **Back Country Horsemen** and **Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists** provided substantial help.

Mike requested that Bill Sweet be reimbursed for his saw and travel expenses and providing his expert help while clearing trails. The request was agreed to by all present.

Mike suggested that, because of the time required to prepare newsletters for mailing through the Post Office, newsletters no longer be mailed except to life-time members. Board Members recommended that efforts be continued to reduce the number of newsletters that are mailed and increase delivery by email, but that mailing should not be stopped.

Mike pointed out the need to replace the Trail Map Signs at trail intersections. He is currently working toward that goal and will report back to the Board when the cost is determined. He expects the cost to be in the \$1,000 range.

Mike is working with the Forest Service's Nate Gassman, to get the

required paperwork in place for the upcoming ski season. There will be a Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the Forest Service and Lost Trail (*to which the Ski Club will be a signee*) to cover liability for use of the PistenBully, and a separate Volunteer Agreement to cover the incidental work the Club's grooming crew will perform.

Jim Greenfield reported that the new 2014-15 Ski Maps are almost finished and hopes to have the finished product in hand during the first week of November.

Richard Stone requested a contact name and number for handling changes to the schedule of visitation to the Chief Joseph Ski Trails by the local schools.

No other business was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10

In the absence of the Club Secretary, Marrea Mathews, these minutes were by Michael Hoyt.



TWO VIEWS FROM THE OVERLOOK TRAIL





NO MORE !

