



Annual Report

November 2014

This is a first attempt to put out an annual report for the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks (NSCF). Although NSCF has been in existence since the late 1960s, many people don't know much about it. How many or what types of programs does the group support? What activities go on behind the scenes? How much effort goes into maintaining the level of programs we offer? So hang on for a quick ride through a year with the NSCF.

Fundraising

Fundraising occurs on many levels for the NSCF. Fundraisers are great events and also serve a vital purpose to support the operation of our club. Through these events along with fees, we are able to raise the funds necessary to keep the lights on, provide races, and produce the quality on-snow programs and events the community has come to expect. Through our fundraisers, we keep tuition for FXC as affordable as possible, so any child who has the desire can be on skis. We encourage our community to join in on these celebrations. We appreciate your support!

Have you ever been gliding along blissfully looking at the moon or wondering at the frost on the trees, or maybe you are racing hard up South Tower or getting an early October ski under your belt. In any of these scenarios you are probably not considering how the trails get to this state of bliss. Welcome to the world of the trails fund. Currently we offer a

Typical Outside XC Ski Area Charges

- Day Pass - \$15 to \$25
- Individual Season Pass / Youth (<13) - \$90
- Individual Season Pass / Jr-Student - \$150
- Individual Season Pass / Adult - \$200
- Family Season Pass - \$400

volunteer payment for trails maintenance. Unfortunately, the trails fund fell short of the \$100,000 needed to keep the trails groomed in 2013-2014. If you ski in many places Outside, you have to buy a daily or yearly pass and the price necessarily reflects the cost of hiring a person to patrol the trails. Last year daily pass prices at Mount Bachelor in Bend,

Oregon were \$17/day, Breckenridge, Colorado, \$20/day, and at Bohart Ranch in Bozeman, Montana, \$15/day. We hope that people understand this and donate generously to the trails fund today! (See the online form at www.nscfairbanks.org, Join > Trail Donation.)

Trails

Great trails underpin all the programs provided at Birch Hill. Last summer, the approximately 350-meter Black Baron was put in to link the North 40 to Black Hole as part an effort to mellow out the upper two loops of the North 40 and make them just a little more fun to ski for the average skier, not just the hard core. In addition, work was completed on taking the superelevation out of most of the corners on many trails to help the PistenBully get around the curves without the machine's tracks digging down to dirt and roots. Finally, a group from UAF has been helping us plant new trees on some of the abandoned trails.

Winter came in like a lamb but as usual the snow piled up slowly and steadily. What early snow we did have on our over



Clearing trees on the Outhouse Loop after the November 2013 storm.

40 kilometers of trails at Birch Hill were well maintained through several warm wet spells by Tom Helmers and his grooming crew with the help of the recently purchased (2010) PistenBully. In addition to minimal snow, a November windstorm knocked a dozen or more trees across the trails. Tom directed more than 70 volunteers during two work parties and the trails were cleared just a few days later. Thanks to all for that incredible effort!

Although great care is taken grooming for all of the races, the biggest event this past winter was the Arctic Winter Games (more on this later). By the time the games rolled around in March, Tom appeared to have exceeded himself in the science of snow maintenance, and the trails were in superb condition as the coaches from many nations attested to.

Projects this summer included the addition of 4 new trails geared to the younger set (or the young at heart!) funded by money generously donated by Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI). Wide trails are sometimes a bit boring to the

younger set, so the NSCF board opted to snake two narrow trails through the woods on either side of the stadium ramp. The other two short trails loop down from the east side of the stadium toward White Bear Access then back up to the stadium. These trails are designed to help with technique. Like the much-loved Terrain Garden, they have small fun bumps to get over and generally appeal to our traditionally largest Junior Nordics group, the 6-10 year olds. Short sections off the stadium were already in use this summer by the FXC summer program as sprint hills. A special thanks to REI for supporting Fairbanks kids!



Trails personnel

Tom Helmers, head groomer

Ken Coe, groomer

Bill Husby, groomer

Junior Nordics

Junior Nordics is a winter-only program. As usual, the all-volunteer coaching crew for Junior Nordics put their best ski forward. Three sessions of ski lessons were again offered in the 2013-2014 season. We reached over 147 kids in the first and second session combined (November to early March), and 92 skiers in the third session (in later March).

In the past, the Junior Nordics classes ran from November through March. Several years ago we switched to a three-



A younger Junior Nordics class.

session season to provide flexibility for families who might be traveling or are otherwise busy in certain months. However if there were cancellations due to cold temperatures, it was hard to make the lessons up. This season we are going to offer two sessions, one long, November to March session and a shorter, hopefully warmer, March to early April session.

The NSCF Junior Nordics program has seen a dip in student numbers in the last couple of years. Getting kids involved in skiing and making it fun is one of the reasons NSCF came into existence and the board sees this as the core mission of our

group. Eric Troyer and members of the Skier Development Oversight Committee have been trying to find out what has caused the lag in signups in recent years. They are working with newly hired coordinator Sally Endestad to get the program back on track.

Junior Nordics personnel
Sally Endestad, coordinator

FXC

The goal of Fairbanks Cross Country (FXC) is to provide U12-U20 (ages 10-19) skiers with the training, support and knowledge they need to excel in the sport of cross-country skiing. Starting with only 15 students in the combined Competition (Comp) and Preparation (Prep) groups in 2006, the FXC program has steadily increased to 46 skiers in those groups combined in the 2013-2014 season. When you add in the youngest athletes, the Development group (Devo), 91 total skiers benefited from the program this past year as compared to 90 the year before. If this year's summer dry-land program is any indication, however, it should be a busy winter for head coach Pete Leonard and assistant coach Rebecca Konieczny.



Jr Devos skiing on the Chena River in March in to prepare for the Sonot Kkaazoot 20-kilometer race.

In the FXC competition arena, the Besh Cups were well-attended last winter by both Comp and Prep team members giving them experience in racing at different ski areas with very different snow conditions. Each year the Besh Cup races (6 total) are held in Anchorage, the Kenai Peninsula, and Fairbanks. Pete, Rebecca and a cadre of parent volunteers set up, take down, and wax and test skis for all the races. Six FXC athletes qualified for the U.S. Junior Nationals while 3 qualified for the Arctic Winter games with many leaps



In Idaho getting altitude training for Senior Nationals in Utah.

to various positions on the podium for the latter. Finally, one athlete qualified for the Nordic Nations Cup USA Team and had a top ten finish.

Also from the FXC ranks, 10 athletes qualified for the High School State teams and 5 athletes placed in the top 10 at those races, while 2 made the All-State Team. One of two Alaska 'Skimeisters' came from the ranks of the Comp group.

But FXC isn't all about competition. It's also just about helping people get outside and be healthy. One way FXC does that is to sponsor the annual 'Ski Your Age in Kilometers' competition held just after Christmas. The first 'Ski Your Age' had 86 skiers in 2006. In 2013, more than 120 skiers cumulatively logged 2,600 kilometers.

FXC personnel

Pete Leonard, head coach and director of skier development

Rebecca Konieczny, assistant coach

Hanna Gillis, assistant coach (newly hired)

Adult Lessons

The NSCF adult winter ski lessons program provides training to both new skiers and those seeking to improve their skills. Lessons meet once per week in two sessions, autumn (November-December) and winter (February-March) and times often coincide with Junior Nordics so that parents can learn at the same time as their kids.

Kathy Bue was hired this summer as the Adult Lessons coordinator. She takes over from Peggy Dargan, who was coordinator for both Adult Lessons and Junior Nordics during the 2013-14 season. Thank you, Peggy, for all your work.

Adult Lessons personnel

Kathy Bue, coordinator

Biathlon

Biathlon has been in town for a long time but only officially part of the NSCF for about 6 years. This group meets both summer and winter. Since its inception, the group has seen some peaks and valleys in attendance by athletes, generally coinciding with the Arctic Winter Games. This year, two biathletes tried but did not make the Alaska team for the AWG held here in Fairbanks in 2014.

In addition to the once a week practices at the University of Alaska Fairbanks biathlon range in summer, and

practice on snow at Birch Hill in winter, for the past 3 years the NSCF biathlon group in conjunction with Watershed School has hosted a race with Nenana and Galena at Birch Hill. This past spring the NSCF biathlon group also helped make possible a Western Interior Ski Association (WISA) biathlon race at Birch Hill in late March.



Summer biathlon training at Birch Hill.

This summer, in an effort to generate interest, the group also sponsored an excellent three-day biathlon clinic attended by 15 young athletes and seven adults. The session was taught by two-time Olympic biathlete Sarah Studebaker and 4-year National Team biathlete Zach Hall, both from Anchorage. All the participants deemed the clinic a great success.

Biathlon personnel

Helena Rueter, volunteer coordinator

Touring

The Touring Program was in hiatus this past year because no one was willing to be the coordinator, a volunteer position. Fortunately, Mike Schmoker has stepped up and the program will again be offered in the 2014-2015 season. The program offers tours by volunteer leaders of different trails away from the Birch Hill system.

Touring personnel

Mike Schmoker, volunteer coordinator

Competition Events

Not everyone likes to compete, but for those who do we offer high-quality, well-attended races. The first two Town Series races this past season had about 150 racers each, while the third race, on a very cold day, dropped to 22 athletes. The final race of the season brought out 115 skiers. Thanks to great sponsors, the Town Series races continue to allow free race entries for all elementary through high-school students through their respective school coaches.



Racing hard at the ConocoPhillips Interior Youth Championships in March.

The three Distance Series Races had about 50 participants in each race, while 60 young athletes competed in the ConocoPhillips Interior Youth Championships. The Sonot Kkaazoot was not as well attended as in previous years, 242 finishers, but the weather was stunning! Finally, just over 200 athletes from Fairbanks and across Alaska competed in the final two Besh Cup races held at Birch Hill,

vying to qualify for the Junior Nationals and the Arctic Winter Games.

Our biggest event this year was helping to organize and providing the venue for the Arctic Winter Games cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and biathlon events. More than 120 athletes competed in these events at Birch Hill. True to its roots, this event brought camaraderie among the athletes with a lot of pin trading and even clothing trading at the end. Having volunteered to help clean up at one of the schools, I can also tell you from seeing errant price tags and cleaning up garbage, that the athletes took the time to shop, which helped the bottom line of many merchants in Fairbanks.



Goofing around between races at the ConocoPhillips Interior Youth Championships in March.

Competition Events personnel
John Estle, director

Partnerships and Volunteers

This past year we lost a long-time partner when the Flint Hills Refinery plant in North Pole closed down. It is hard to fully appreciate the depth of support they provided for many years of Town Series races in Fairbanks. However, the title sponsorship for the Town Series was immediately picked up by Kinross-Fort Knox. Thank you Kinross-Fort Knox!

Our other major cash sponsors include (in alphabetical order): Alaska Coffee Roasting Company, Banner Health / Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, ConocoPhillips, Fairbanks Youth Sports, Kendall Subaru, Woolly Rhino, Dental Office of Dr. Eric Buetow, Denali State Bank, Rasmuson Foundation, Raven

Cross Country, REI, and Stoltz Dental. We have many other in-kind sponsors, as well.

Volunteers are at the core of the races and fundraisers, and we lost several long-term volunteers this year who have moved on. A big thank you to John Carlson, Chief of Course and Stadium Control; Bob Wilkinson, Chief of Stadium, and Carol Haas, Chief of Timing (who was paid but worked far more time than required). Your years of supporting skiing and racing in Fairbanks have been invaluable. You will be missed.

Member Services

Member services helps keep the club running smoothly and coordinates with the community at large. Services include maintaining a relationship with the FNSB Parks and Recreation Department to jointly manage Birch Hill Recreation Area for our members' benefit and working with the U.S. Army, as the White Bear Loop is on Fort Wainwright. Events sponsored or co-sponsored by the club include SkiFest, Fast and Female, Ski for Women, and the BackCountry Film Festival. The club also maintains a website (with online registration), a Facebook page, a listserv, and a section of the statewide Alaska Nordic Skier. And, of course, there's all the insurance, accounting, and other paperwork that keeps our programs running.

Member Services personnel
John Estle, club administrator

Board and Committees

We have a Board of Directors and a Skier Development Oversight Committee. The SDOC oversees FXC, Junior Nordics, and Adult Lessons. The Board oversees all else.

Board

Pat Reinhard, co-president
Bruce Jamieson, co-president
Dave Bloom, treasurer
Liz Pawelko, secretary
Jerome Jackson
Lisa Druckenmiller
Eric Troyer

SDOC

Eric Troyer, chairman
Cathy Donaldson
Sue Faulkner
Kristan Kelly
Helena Rueter

This report was produced by board member Lisa Druckenmiller with help from board member Eric Troyer.