HIGHLIGHTS

- JUNIOR NATIONALS: Big success! Mother Nature cooperated – barely
- TRAILS: No major snow or rain events, but a long season
- JUNIOR NORDICS: First season with a Middle School Program
- FXC: More than 60 skiers in three programs
- FXC Masters: Yoga for Skiers added to classes
- COMPETITION: Normal schedule; preparing for Junior Nationals
- ADULT LESSONS: Season started with a bang, extra coaches needed
- BIATHLON: Spring race drew biathletes from Fairbanks, Galena, and Nenana
- SONOT KKAAZOOT: 165 skiers finished one of three official courses
- TOURS AND EVENTS: Several tours; Ski Your Age; 12 Ornaments of Christmas
- SPONSORSHIP: Many events, many sponsors; many trail fund donors and sponsors
- MEMBERSHIP: Just over 1,000 current members (about 300 new members)
- OTHER CLUB ITEMS OF INTEREST: Interviews; Fairbanks Trail Plan; Steese tunnel
- NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL: Norris at Birkie, UAF ties best finish; Frost dominates

Eric Engman photo: Skiers battle it out in the sprint races at Birch Hill in March as the NSCF hosted the Junior National Cross Country Ski Championships for the fifth time.
NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks Members!

Below this note please find a summary of the club’s programs and activities for the past season (FY ending September 20, 2023). Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks (NSCF) programs have returned to a normal schedule of skiing, training, and racing post-COVID. The highlight of the season was the successful hosting of the US Ski and Snowboard Cross Country Ski Junior National Championships, thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and sponsors.

For many years the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks has held an annual general membership meeting at the Sonot Kkaazoot banquet. This meeting was used to update club members on significant happenings over the past year and/or plans for the year to come. In addition, the meeting is used to elect new board members; NSCF bylaws allow the Board to appoint new directors, to be approved by a vote of membership at the next meeting. Due to the pandemic the club has not held a general membership meeting since the spring of 2019. This year we will have a general membership meeting in conjunction with a club picnic on July 16 at 6 pm at Birch Hill. At that meeting club members present will be asked to approve those board members appointed by the Board since the last general membership meeting (Table 1).

Table 1: Current NSCF Board of Directors members.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFICERS</th>
<th>MEMBERS AT LARGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris Puchner -- President</td>
<td>Dan Darrow*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Karns* -- Secretary</td>
<td>Pam Laker*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Jamieson* -- Treasurer</td>
<td>Peter Delamere</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jon Denton*</td>
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* sitting by appointment of the Board

The Board of Directors is actively seeking two new members; if you are interested in joining the Board, or in becoming involved in the club in any other volunteer capacity, please reach out to me by email: president@nscfairbanks.org.

Audited Income and Expenses for the last fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2022, follow (Tables 2 and 3). On paper the NSCF finished the fiscal year showing a loss of $28,641.58 which is attributable to unrealized losses totaling $72,501.93 in investment accounts with Vanguard (Equipment Replacement Fund) and the Alaska Community Foundation (Endowment). On a cash basis, excluding these paper losses, the club ended the fiscal year with cash income of
$566,920.41, $43,860.35 in the black after expenses, and remains in good financial condition. Additionally, investment market indices have recovered in the +20% range since last September when the indices were at or near their lowest valuations since late 2020.

Table 2: Audited income for the Fiscal Year ending Sept. 30, 2022, of $494,418 allocated by category percentage including unrealized gains and losses (7006) and Alaska Community Foundation income and expenses (8000) are given in dollar amounts.

Table 3: Audited expense for the Fiscal Year ending Sept. 30, 2022, of $523,060.06 allocated by category percentages.

I hope to see you at the meeting or out on the trails!

Respectfully,
Chris Puchner, NSCF Board President
INTRO

This was a season of new normal, normal, and exceptional.

The signs were flipped to “Skiing Only” at Birch Hill Recreation Area on October 21. But before that our trail crew was dealing with our climate change-driven “new normal”: Later regular snowfall and more wet events. Rain mixed with snow in October took down a lot of trees that had to be cleared from the trails before they could get groomed. And then November had minimal snowfall. Fortunately, some Birch Hill trails were skiable due to the impeccable summer care of our trail crew.

We had a normal season for most club activities including races, junior and adult classes, tours, and a few events. Fortunately, we had no big mid-winter storms or long deep-freezes, and no new pandemics (knock on wood, preferably skis)!

Many in our club were focused on preparing for the 2023 Junior Nationals, the first we had hosted since 2013. Despite some chilly temps (and some wind on sprint day), the races went off beautifully. Then we turned around and put on our flagship race, the Sonot Kkaazoot just a week after the Junior Nationals ended. Whew!

Finally, we could rest. Well, except for our reliable (and exhausted) groomers. Cold temperatures and more snow in March and early April made for an extended ski season.

Read below for reports on how our programs dealt with this season of normal and not-so-normal.

JUNIOR NATIONALS

By John Estle, Competition Events Director; Steve Taylor, JN Organizing Committee Chair; and Eric Troyer, Alaska Nordic Skier Fairbanks Editor

The NSCF hosted the US Ski and Snowboard Cross Country Ski Junior National Championships at Birch Hill Recreation Area for the fifth time; NSCF had also hosted the JNs in 1977, 1995, 2003 and 2013. Birch Hill Recreation Area was alive with action from March 13 to 16 with 411 skiers, 105 coaches and a large, uncounted number of parents and spectators in attendance.
Mother Nature cooperated, just barely. The first race – a classic technique 7.5km – was held under perfect snow conditions, but temperatures that were only slightly above the FIS threshold of -20C/-4F. The next day was sprint day – always a crazy and long day made crazier this time with continued cold temperatures and a brisk breeze that sprang up mid-day and continued through the heats. Fortunately, the temperatures stayed legal.

The last day of racing also proved to be chilly. The first race was moved from 10 a.m. to noon and the other races were compressed, making for a complicated and busy day for the volunteers. Often two races were going at the same time. That day also saw the high point for Fairbanks skiers as Lathrop High’s Wells Wappett was the winner, in a sprint finish, of the day’s first race – the U16 boys 5Km. Former Fairbanksan Olivia Soderstrom was the winner of the U16 girls sprint on Tuesday.

Throughout the week, visiting skiers, coaches, spectators, and officials were effusive in their praise for the NSCF race organization and the JN Organizing Committee. Many comments were heard about how the courses were “really fun to ski,” this along with comments about the high difficulty of the courses. Several people were so impressed they said they wanted to come back to Fairbanks to ski at Birch Hill.

This Junior Nationals was more complicated than the last that the NSCF had hosted 10 years earlier. This time we had live streaming with commentary, chip timing, and live results. Even the trail grooming was high tech with the club’s new PistenBully. Other improvements included an upgraded PA system, improvements to Rikke’s Roadhouse (our bib distribution center), more radios for the race jury crew, and more and better crowd control materials. We want to thank the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage for lending us more crucial gear and personnel.

Besides the high-tech aspect, the Birch Hill trails had also changed significantly since 2013. The club, working with the Fairbanks North Star Borough, made several changes to the courses to make them “ski better,” improve safety, and ensure they would be challenging. To help make the event a success, all our regular events and activities for 2022-23 were held with a focus on using them as preparation for the JNs. As has long been the case, the courses are spectator friendly. For example, in the first 7.5K race, they could see the skiers five times in the first 3Km.
Junior National Sponsors and Supporters

We are utterly grateful for all the support we received for this event. ConocoPhillips Alaska was presenting sponsor (for the third time since 2003) providing a strong foundation for a successful event. The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department provided critical event support prior to and during Junior Nationals. The University of Alaska Fairbanks provided facilities to host all the off-snow events. There were three race sponsors: Usibelli Coal Mine, 3-Tier Alaska, and Summit Logistics.

Race volunteers once again looked sharp in their blue Patagonia jackets courtesy of the Golden Heart Emergency Physicians and Goldstream Sports. Two transportation sponsors, Tote Maritime and Fairbanks Youth Sports, provided funds to offset the cost of shuttling skiers and spectators. Bear Lodge and Sophie Station sponsored the amazing opening ceremonies. The wax trailer facilities were sponsored by GVEA Goodcents, IBEW local 1547, Denali State Bank, SBS Financial, Dr. Stan Fuller, Hale & Associates, Radiology Consultants Inc., and Alaska529. Stepping up a second time, Alaska529 also sponsored the selfie station. First National Bank Alaska sponsored our closing speaker, Reese Hanneman. Podiumwear, a company conceived at Fairbanks’ 2003 Junior Nationals, sponsored the coaches function.

The NSCF appreciates our many other Junior Nationals financial and in-kind sponsors: Solomon, Runner’s Edge Alaska, Lynden, Advance Printing, Mt. McKinley Bank, Bettisworth North, Golden Heart Utilities, Alaska Fuel Services, Arctic Fire and Safety, Alaska Pacific University, and Big Ray’s. Additionally, we would like to give thanks to our many in-kind sponsors: Rainer Trucking, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Alaska Feed, Happy Trails, FortyNine Designs, Trax Outdoor Center, Roaming Root, Beaver Sports, Lulus, REI, Play It Again Sports, Groundhogs, Carpenters Local Union 1243, and The Cookie Jar.

Dinah Design created the 2023 Junior Nationals logo. She also recreated the 2013 logo. And the 2003 logo. We are indebted to her fabulous raven theme that has stood the test of time and provided a unique brand for our events.

Finally, during the summer of 2022, the GHEMM Company and its subcontractors Uresco Construction Materials, AllSteel, and A&A Roofing donated time and materials to complete a long overdue repair and insulation project on Rikke’s Roadhouse.

For a more detailed look at how the Fairbanks community pulled together to put on these Junior Nationals, please see this article: https://tinyurl.com/mpd4tm53
TRAILS

By Tom Helmers, Head Groomer

As of mid-April, the 2022/23 ski season had been blissfully uneventful for the most part. We had no major snow or rain events, and it was generally warm by Fairbanks standards.

We started packing trails on October 22. And, in what appears to be the new normal, November had minimal snowfall, which limited what we could do. We didn’t get enough snow for the PistenBully until second week of December.

The main drama this season was that the first couple of snows in early October were a mix of snow and freezing rain, which caused lots of trees to fall on to the trails. All the groomers spent a few hours clearing trees, but skiers all owe Groomer Ken Coe a big thanks for keeping the trails open. Meanwhile, the other groomers concentrated on grooming and maintaining equipment. Thank you also to Jon Underwood and his gas-powered pole saw for spending a long day helping Ken get the outer part of the White Bear opened.

The PistenBully 100 that the Fairbanks Borough purchased for Birch Hill arrived a week before Christmas. The machine is much bigger than the club's 2012 PB100. With the right amount of fresh snow, the new one can groom a lot of the trails with just one pass.

Our only stressful event was Junior Nationals. We had to get the trails ready and then groom and assist with course marking and course changes during all the training and racing days. But we had little rest since the following weekend the Sonot Kkaazoot was held.

We were looking forward to the season wrapping up normally after all that activity, but Mother Nature had other plans. More snow in March and early April along with a cold spring meant we were able to groom into May. We were happy to provide grooming for some wonderful spring skiing, but we were also happy to finally have the season end so that we could rest a bit!

The groomers would like to thank all the volunteers who helped pick up hundreds of V-boards after all the events throughout the season. The grooming crew wishes John Estle a great retirement, we enjoyed the years of collaborating with him on events and trail improvement projects.
Lastly, thank you to all who donated to the Trail Fund this season. Without your generous donations we would not have the great trails or equipment to take care of them! (It’s never too late to donate, the club does most of the summer trail repairs: [https://tinyurl.com/m8ud5ku8](https://tinyurl.com/m8ud5ku8).)

Have a great summer. See you in the fall of 2023 for another great ski season.

Here are some season numbers:

- 1723 hours of work (four groomers, from May to May, 2022-2023)
- Used 221.3 gallons of gasoline
- Used 1693.5 gallons of diesel
- Put in 6032 kilometers on the grooming equipment

The last day of grooming from the last few seasons.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>April 8</td>
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JUNIOR NORDICS

By Susan Schwartz, Junior Nordics Coordinator

We had our first season with the Middle School Program, which focused on getting sixth- to eighth-graders on skis for the first time. Our head coach was an FXC skier, and his assistant was a UAF grad student. They met on Tuesday / Thursday evenings for 13 weeks. The 12 skiers learned how to classic and skate ski. Six continued for an additional three weeks during spring session.

Our typical program had 250 skiers participate in the 2022/23 winter session. Most (196) skied one day a week, while 52 skied twice a week, and two skied three times a week. For my volunteer staff, I had 29 Head Coaches, 16 Assistant Coaches and numerous Parent Helpers. Classes were held at Birch Hill Recreation Area on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons, and at the University of Alaska Fairbanks on Monday nights and Wednesday afternoons.

A Junior Nordic skier from a Green Group tackles a downhill during a lesson this past season. Jana Ross photo.
Spring Session began after spring break and continued for three weeks with lessons on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We had 54 skiers with 14 volunteer coaches guiding them. With the abundance of snow and, for the most part, warm-enough weather, the season went very smoothly.

For the Candy Cane Romp, held on Dec 20, Junior Nordics kids got a nice 45-minute ski with their group leaders then came in to watch a holiday movie and enjoy snacks and hot chocolate. We had 78 children and 8 volunteer group leaders.

**FXC**

*By Jesse Wilkins, FXC Head Coach*

This season, we had 61 skiers participating in winter or year-round FXC Devo, Prep, and Comp programs.

The FXC team started skiing in mid-October. The FXC Comp program worked with all Fairbanks high school teams so that all FXC athletes got to train together with FXC coaches during high school practices. FXC coaches also offered race support to FXC racers at many high school races, as well.

FXC competed at the first two Besh Cup races at Anchorage’s Kincaid Park just before the holiday break. Besh Cup races 3 and 4 took place at Government Peak in the Mat-Su Valley in early January. NSCF hosted Besh 5 and 6 at Birch Hill Recreation Area in February.

Through the Besh Cup series, 10 FXC athletes qualified for the 2023 Junior National Championships, hosted by the NSCF. FXC ended up the 15th-ranked club in the nation across all events, gender, and age groups. Our U16 boys, including Wells Wappett and Kieran Kaufman, were ranked second in the nation. Wells got three podium finishes: a third, a second, and a first. Kieran made the top 10 in one race and finished third in the sprint qualifier.

In early April FXC hosted the Interior Youth Festival at Birch Hill, which introduces ski racing to grade-school skiers. It is staffed entirely by FXC comp and prep athletes. More than 70 kids participated in the sprint, ski cross, and tennis ball biathlon races.
This great season wouldn’t have been possible without Christina Turman, our program director, our amazing assistant coaches—Jordan Laker-Morris, Warren Rosholt, and Paige Ripley—and our many volunteers, especially Pam Laker (parent volunteer coordinator) and Max Kaufman (help with race waxing and many practices).

**FXC MASTERS**

By Christina Turman, Head Coach, FXC Masters

FXC Masters continues its goal of creating a fun team environment for ALL Fairbanks adult skiers to continue developing cross-country ski skills, improve fitness and strength, and build community. This season we added a new class: Yoga for Skiers. We also saw lots of new faces, ordered team jackets, and didn’t have to cancel a single practice this winter due to cold weather!

Our weekly schedule included Women’s Strength Training; On-snow Strength, Agility, and Speed; Power Hour lunch workouts; Intro to Interval Training; Intermediate & Advanced Intervals; Advanced Technique; and Yoga for Skiers.

We are working on our summer program and will offer a larger menu than last year. Our summer classes will include ski walking, strength training, and an Equinox training class!

FXC Masters 2022-23 Winter by the numbers: We had 113 participants in seven classes.

**COMPETITION**

By John Estle, Competition Events Director

With Junior Nationals in March, we had a clear purpose this winter: Produce a Junior Nationals that all participants would go home and tell their friends about.

Over the winter, we worked on three primary areas: 1) Mastering the Zone4 timing system; 2) Figuring the best way to integrate new materials into our stadium and course setup, and 3) Making sure we could effectively use the club’s new PB100.
We had started working with the Zone4 timing system the season prior. Still, NSCF Chief of Timing Anna Sorensen spent hours improving her already-high levels of skills and experience. The Birch Hill race courses require an effective form of control to make sure spectators don’t inadvertently interfere with racers. Thanks to an Alaska Ski Education Foundation grant, we bought more crowd control equipment, which co-chiefs of stadium Susan Faulkner and Gary Knuepfer effectively integrated into our system to keep spectators and skiers from interfering with each other.

Head groomer Tom Helmers quickly mastered the new PistenBully PB100. His expertise produced excellent course conditions for Junior Nationals. All our prep work with the timing, course materials, and PistenBully helped the NSCF produce a superb Junior National experience.

Our regular season was also successful. The Town Series, Distance Series, Turkey Day Relays, Region 6 Championships, Sonot Kkaazoot, and Besh Cup races went well and were critical as test events for the Junior Nationals. They allowed us to experiment to see what would work best.

Huge kudos go out to our volunteer race crew, with a core of a few dozen, who make the regular season club races high quality events. More than 70 people, including the “regulars”, worked all three race days at Junior Nationals. Dozens more worked one or two days or helped with tasks away from Birch Hill. Steve Taylor did a superb job leading the 2023 Junior National Organizing Committee.

Next year, the races will be held under new leadership, as long-time Chief of Competition John Estle retires. Also retiring is Norma Haubenstock, John’s wife, who has been the NSCF’s ski race volunteer coordinator for more than 20 years.

Excerpted from a longer report by John. Download the full report here: [https://tinyurl.com/4vn9rf3e](https://tinyurl.com/4vn9rf3e)

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**ADULT LESSONS**

*By Susan Schwartz, Adult Lessons Coordinator*

The ski season started out with a bang. We offered six classes. All filled and I had to hire extra coaches to cover three of the classes. The enthusiasm from both the skiers (77) and coaches (6) was outstanding.
Session 2 began after the holiday break, and I offered four classes. Three of the four classes filled, and we had a total of 45 skiers and four coaches.

Session 3 saw the number of participants drastically drop. We offered five classes, but none were filled. We had a total of 28 skiers and 4 coaches.

Session 4, Spring Session, I offered three classes, but only seven skiers signed up. I considered cancelling, but the weather was so beautiful, I held the classes with three coaches.

I am optimistic that we can increase participation even more next season.

**BIATHLON**

*By Jim Pasek, Biathlon Director*

Biathlon had a great season. We now have six biathletes who have been in the program for three years straight and are beginning to race. We also had three regular masters this year. One, from Galena, is attending UAF. She races and helps with our other biathletes. Six to 10 new biathletes attended sessions this season!

We hosted a weekend clinic last summer and had six- to eight-week sessions in the fall, winter, and spring. Biathlon met Sunday afternoons from noon to 4:30 p.m. In January and early February, we moved indoors at Tanana Valley Sportsmen’s Association (TVSA) and enjoyed warm fingers and computer scoring.

Thank you, TVSA!
Warren Rosholt continues as our head coach. He was assistant coach at the big Anchorage clinic last June with former French Olympic biathlete and Anchorage Biathlon Club Head Coach Jean Paquet.

This season’s highlight was our spring race, held the day after the Sonot Kkaazoot. This year, Galena and Nenana biathletes joined the Fairbanks crew. We had 23 biathletes racing. More experienced racers took on the 5.75k course with four shooting bouts (two prone, two standing). Younger biathletes raced a 3.75k course with four shooting bouts, all prone.

You can keep up with us on the Fairbanks Biathlon Facebook page. Thank you to all the parents and volunteers who walk and ski to the range in the cold to help!

SONOT KKAAZOOT

By Susan Sugai, Mother SCUM and Sonot super-volunteer

On a beautiful morning where the temperatures dropped to low single digits in the Birch Hill stadium at race time, 165 skiers successfully completed one of three official Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot courses.

The 10 km course was the most popular, where 78 skiers finished, while six skiers DNF (did not finish) and four DNS (did not start).

The statistics for the 30 and 50 km events were very similar. Forty-three skiers finished the 30 km and 44 finished the 50 km. In each event, four skiers did not finish. In the 30 km, there were three DNS while two were DNS for the 50 km.

These numbers attest to the difficulty of the new courses. In 2018, the last time the Sonot Kkaazoot was held on the Chena River, 103 skiers completed the 20 km, 38 finished the 40 km, and 74 finished the 50 km. (The Sonot was moved entirely to Birch Hill due to climate change making the Chena River ice unpredictable.)

And a sincere thanks to the nearly 90 volunteers for Sonot Kkaazoot. Even after the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks hosted the Junior National Championships a week earlier, we were fortunate to have enthusiastic volunteers step up and help with the Sonot. A special thanks goes out to Denali State Bank, who was again our Major Race Sponsor.
TOURS AND EVENTS

By Eric Troyer, Tour Coordinator

We held several tours and events this season, many old favorites and a couple of new ones. The touring season kicked off when Stan Justice groomed and signed the self-guided Rat Ponds Tour. A regular tour before the pandemic, the self-guided version has proven so popular that Stan has continued with it.

The popular Moose Mountain Sunrise Ski Tour once again kicked off the in-person tour season. Put on by Sharon and Bad Bob Baker, this was its sixth season. This year 26 attended.

Phil Marshall again put on several challenging tours. He led five, most in the Cleary Summit-Fox area, and most included at least one big descent and one big climb.

Also held were the popular Skarland 12-Mile and Rosie Creek Ramble tours. And, of course, the UAF Skiathon (live this year!), which some race, some tour, and some do something in-between. For the season, we had 5 tour leaders, 10 tours, and at least 51 participants (not counting those who did the Rat Ponds and Skiathon tours).

Besides tours, several other skiing events were held. Unfortunately, we couldn’t host the Backcountry Film Festival this year. But Ski Your Age in Kilometers was held at Birch Hill the day after Christmas. More than 100 participants, from ages age 4 to 73, skied 1,839 kilometers. Ski for Women was also held at Birch Hill for the first time in several years. And the Ladies of Leisure again put on their do-it-yourself 12 Ornaments of Christmas, challenging anyone to find the 12 numbered ornaments hung on trees along 12 different trails at Birch Hill.

SPONSORSHIP

Thanks to our competition season sponsors, we were able to host the full Town Race Series, Distance Series, and annual events such as the Golden Heart Trail Run, Turkey Day Relays, Ski
Your Age in Kilometers, Interior Youth Festival, and Sonot Kkaazoot. Sponsorship for major events helps to offset the costs for the quality grooming, staging, and timing.

Town Series Race Sponsors: Kinross Fort Knox (series sponsor), Interior Women’s Health, and Fountainhead Hotels. Frank Soos Memorial Distance Series: Chris Puchner, Bruce Jamieson, Owen Hanley, and Eric Buetow. One-day event sponsors: Golden Heart Trail Run (Dr. Kate Carey), Turkey Day Relays (Beaver Sports), Interior Youth Festival (ConocoPhillips), and the Sonot Kkaazoot (Denali State Bank).

Trail donors and program donors contributed more than $55,000 throughout the season. These individual and business donations help cover programming costs for Junior Nordics, Biathlon, Adult Lessons, FXC, and trail grooming. Thank you to the local businesses who donate to the programs and trail grooming fund: North Pole Physical Therapy; The Woodway; North Pole Veterinary Clinic; Dr. Andrea Earnest, DDS; ESI; Black Gold Trucking; A&A Roofing; Ear, Nose & Throat Clinic; Usibelli Coal; Metropolitan Garage; Subway; CSG, Inc.; Dr. Phyllis Pendergrast and The Folk School. Thank you to the Fairbanks Carpenters Local 1243 for providing supplies and labor for repairing our ski racks last summer.

And thank you to all the individual donors who help make our activities a big success.

MEMBERSHIP

By Rebecca Heaton, Membership Coordinator

As of mid-April, we had 1001 active members in the NSCF. As Fairbanks continues to recover from the pandemic and combat economic instability and population decline, support for the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks remains strong and vibrant. We had about 300 new members this season (including families and children) and continue to provide a wide range of opportunities for a diverse population in the Interior.
OTHER CLUB ITEMS OF INTEREST

By Eric Troyer, Alaska Nordic Skier Fairbanks Editor

In addition to the program reports above, several other things happened this past season that club members might be interested to know.

LONG-TIME NSCF PERSONNEL GET INTERVIEWED
In case you missed these interviews when they first came around, you can still listen.

John Estle
KUAC's Dan Bross had a wrap-up of the Junior Nationals, including an interview with retiring Competition Director John Estle. [https://fm.kuac.org/2023-03-19/john-estle-leaves-ski-event-legacy](https://fm.kuac.org/2023-03-19/john-estle-leaves-ski-event-legacy)

Tom Helmers
Robert Hannon, radio host and SCUM member, interviewed NSCF Head Groomer Tom Helmers on Northern Soundings. Hear the interview, along with a 2016 interview Hannon did with Bad Bob Baker, founder of the Sonot. [https://northernsoundings.com/2023/03/14/grooming-for-success-tom-helmers/](https://northernsoundings.com/2023/03/14/grooming-for-success-tom-helmers/)

FAIRBANKS TRAILS PLAN UPDATE
As of this writing, the Fairbanks Borough Assembly has not yet passed the borough’s Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan update. The update, the first major overhaul of the plan since its inception in the late 1980s, would add many existing trails to the plan. It would also add future potential trails. Adoption of the plan was delayed in November when several members of the Borough Assembly expressed strong reservations about one aspect of the plan: borough code requires easements be granted to certain trails on the plan when land is subdivided. That requirement is in Title 17, the borough code’s section on subdivisions. An attempt to remove that requirement from Title 17 failed, but the overall plan update is still in limbo. STORY UPDATE: The Trails Plan update was passed on June 20 with relatively minor changes. The trail that will include the Steese Expressway tunnel (see story below) was included. Read about it here: [https://tinyurl.com/24kzyww6r](https://tinyurl.com/24kzyww6r)
STESEE EXPRESSWAY TRAIL TUNNEL

Among other things in the trails plan update, included is a trail plan that would connect Birch Hill Recreation Area to the ADMA/Creamer’s Field trails. For that to truly succeed, it requires the construction of a trail tunnel under the Steese Expressway.

NSCF volunteers and others have been working hard to make that tunnel a reality. The tunnel would be just north of the Steese-Johansen intersection. That intersection is getting a major overhaul so now is the time for installing a tunnel. The effort has been supported by a variety of organizations including the Fairbanks Borough Assembly, the Fairbanks City Council, FAST Planning, and the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce.

However, the tunnel can’t necessarily just be included in the intersection rebuild. A proper funding source has yet to be identified, so the vigilance must continue. If you would like to help work on this project, please contact Bruce Jamieson (brucejamieson52@gmail.com).

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

By Eric Troyer, Alaska Nordic Skier Fairbanks editor

While not part of club events and programs, we do like to keep track of Fairbanksans on the state, national, and international stages. Here’s a recap:

- Former Fairbanksan David Norris, now of Steamboat Springs, CO, had an outstanding season. He again won the American Birkbeiner 50K skate, finished 17th in the World Cup Holmenkollen 50k, took 22nd at the World Championships in the 50k classic, and won the silver medal in the 10k freestyle race at Nationals.
- The University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks finished the 2023 NCAA Skiing Championships at Lake Placid, N.Y., in seventh place, tying the best finish ever in program history, and took third in the NCAA Nordic ski team standings. (UAF has no alpine team, which are included in overall standings.) ‘Nook Joe Davies became the third NCAA champion in UAF Nordic skiing history, winning the 10-kilometer interval-start race. Earlier at the World University Games at Lake Placid, ‘Nook Mariel Pulles won gold and two silvers. In the race where Pulles took gold, the 15-kilometer skate race, Fairbanks-born-and-raised Kendall Kramer took silver.
• FXC Masters Head Coach Christina Turman won the 40K freestyle of the Tour of Anchorage.
• NSCF member Shalane Frost continued to dominate the Fairbanks-area backcountry ski races. She won the White Mountains 100 ski division outright (her seventh win in the female category) and won the Chena River to Ridge 55-Miler and the Tanana River Challenge 45-miler all in just over three weeks.
• Down in northern Wisconsin, former Fairbanksan Brian Atkinson won the Tuscobia Winter Ultra, shattering the previous record in the 160-mile ski race.

That’s it! See you on the ski trails next season!