

Avalon Nordic Ski Club



Five Year Strategic Plan (2009-14)

Issued for Membership Review

Written by: J. Holmes, Pres.

Approved by: Executive Committee

Introduction

The intent of this document is to detail the vision of the Avalon Nordic Ski Club and the proposed strategy through which this vision will be achieved. Although it is recognized that some of the items listed below are partially outside of our control and will require Government/Park approval, it is hoped that the mutually beneficial working relationship that has been developed will facilitate resolution of issues that may arise.

This document will remain a live document and form the primary working guideline for the club executive. Yearly results and updates to the plan will be presented at the annual general meeting.

Vision

- Create a full service Nordic Ski venue on par with the best facilities in Atlantic Canada;
- Promote and facilitate the growth of cross-country skiing on the Avalon Peninsula;
- Promote and increase the utilization of the Park for cross-country skiing and other compatible winter activities;
- Promote cross-country skiing as a means to maintain a healthy lifestyle;
- Develop and support future generations of competitive skiers from NL.

Club History

The Avalon Nordic Ski Club can trace its roots back to 1968, when a group of avid cross-country skiers within the St. John's Ski Club (c. 1965) decided to branch out and form a cross-country section. Instrumental in this development was Dr. E. R. W. Neale, who is also known for founding the Newfoundland Ski Marathon which was first held near Springdale between 1968-1972.

As interest in cross-country skiing grew during the 1970's, the club began to offer instruction to new skiers and hold club races. In 1978 trails were cut in Pippy Park. This began a long association between the Club and the Pippy Park Commission which continues today.

The following year, 1979 saw the first annual St. John's Invitational ski race, held at Butter Pot Provincial Park. Also in 1979, the cross-country section of the St. John's Ski Club passed a motion to become independent, resulting in formation of the St. John's Cross-country Ski Club.

In 1982, the St. John's Cross-country Ski Club began offering the nationally recognized Jackrabbit learn to ski program for children. The Club was officially incorporated in 1984. During this period, and up until 2000, the Club's primary base of skiing was Pippy Park.

In December 2000, the process to move the Club to Butter Pot Provincial Park was initiated. A snowmobile compatible groomer (JACA) was purchased by the Club through volunteer fund raising efforts. The skiing experience at Butter Pot Park was further enhanced through trail development and use of a heated clubhouse.

In 2004 the Club changed its name to the Avalon Nordic Ski Club in recognition of the fact that many of our members come from across the Avalon Peninsula and that our base of operations was outside St. John's.

During the following period to the present, the Club has embarked on an ambitious growth program. In 2005 the Club successfully hosted the Provincial Ski Marathon that brought nearly 100 skiers from all over the province to Butter Pot Provincial Park. In 2006 the Club also successfully hosted the Provincial Championships, again at Butter Pot Provincial Park. Trail grooming capabilities were significantly enhanced in the Park through the purchase by the Club of a Bombardier BR-160 specialized trail grooming machine.

Although Butter Pot Park is the primary base, the Club has remained active in Pippy Park through the relationship developed between The Outfitter's, a local outdoor store, the City of St. John's and the Pippy Park Commission. This relationship has greatly enhanced the opportunities to introduce new skiers to our sport, especially school aged children, due to the City instruction and rental program which was relocated from Bowring Park to Pippy Park.

Current Status

The Avalon Nordic Ski Club continues to operate as a volunteer based organization with its primary base located at Butter Pot Provincial Park. Due to the Club being located in the Park, all Park users can avail of our rental skis and adult lessons. A very successful skill development program, developed by Cross-country Canada is offered to young club members from the age of four to eighteen. This program focus's on skill development and having fun in order to develop a life long love of the sport. There is also a competitive racing program supporting youth in local, provincial and national level races.

The Club is also active in developing and maintaining trails and providing grooming equipment. In addition the Club through fees charged by Cross-country Canada provides insurance to all cross-country skiers (members and non-members) within the Park. These services and activities are predominantly supported by membership fees, corporate sponsors and volunteer work.

The Club has formed several key corporate partnerships. Capital Subaru provide annual financial support and is the title sponsor for the Capital Subaru Loppet. The Outfitter's provide in-kind and promotional support through various events such as the ski swap, members appreciation night, discount on Club equipment purchases, door prizes for races and our Annual Potluck and are the title sponsors of The Outfitter's Open Race. The

Outfitter's were also instrumental in the redevelopment of the Pippy Park Trailer Park as a skiing area.

Financial support that the corporate sponsors and members provide has enabled the Club to purchase and maintain modest selection of rental equipment (skis, boots and poles) a snowmobile towed groomer (Ginzu) and the BR-160 Bombardier groomer with renovator and packing mats for use at Butter Pot Provincial Park. Club funds and volunteers are also utilized in the development and maintenance of the Butter Pot Provincial Park ski trails.

The cooperative relationship that has been developed between the Club, the Provincial Government (Department of Environment and Conservation) and the Provincial Park Staff greatly benefits all winter users of the Park. Some of the benefits that the Club sees in particular are the provision of the clubhouse for winter use, the trail grooming services carried out by Park staff and the building to house the BR-160 groomer. This partnership, and the dedication of the Park Superintendent Keith Brown, has played a significant role in the development of cross-country skiing in the Park. The relationship is defined within the MOU between the Provincial Government and the Avalon Nordic Ski Club. Although the MOU has currently lapsed, meetings will be scheduled with the Government and Park to renegotiate this arrangement. It is hoped that the new MOU will be aligned with and support our vision to facilitate the development of skiing within the Park and the growth of cross-country skiing on the Avalon Peninsula.

The Club also continues to support skiing in Pippy Park Trailer Park, and in conjunction with the City and The Outfitter's has purchased another snowmobile towed groomer (Ginzu) exclusively for Pippy Park use. In the past the Club and The Outfitters have been very active in grooming the trails. A weekly sprint series of races are also held at this location.

Current Challenges

Although we see a bright future for cross-country skiing within the Park there are several challenges that will need to be addressed.

Historically the Park has charged cross-country skiers a minimal day fee and sold season passes. The Club was charged an annual fee to use the Park and therefore, Club members could ski for free. However, because of the low Park fees charged, the Club was put in the position of having to compete with the Park for funds to be able to support skiing in the Park. Snowshoers or walkers, although taking advantage of the groomed trails and equipment, were not charged a Park fee. The Club has been in discussion with the Provincial Government for several years to have day fees increased and season passes eliminated. Although members of the Government seemed to support this proposal, in 2007, as part of a larger initiative, all fees for skiing in Provincial Parks were removed. Several subsequent meetings were held with the Government explaining the negative impact that this has had on the Club. Although it appeared that headway was being made,

a letter from Minister Johnson (February 2009) re-iterated that there will be no change to the elimination of winter Park fees.

Although the Club is currently maintaining a healthy membership base, largely due to the programs offered (lessons, rentals, races, etc), the lack of Park fees raises uncertainty for the long term viability of the Club and for the growth of skiing within the Park.

Another significant challenge that we foresee is the limited inside facilities available for skiers within the Park.

Club members currently have access to a small day lodge (clubhouse) provided by the Park. For its part, the Club has significantly enhanced this building through the addition of indoor plumbing and cooking facilities. Due to the growth of the Club the current clubhouse is becoming inadequate. The current number of members, the activities run out of the day lodge such as child and adult lessons, as well as ski rentals all require additional space. Parking also needs to be expanded.

Because of the size of the existing day lodge, access has been limited to Club members. This has meant that there are no facilities for the general public. It is a logical conclusion that the lack of facilities decreases the number of skiers using the park, especially families and older skiers. A typical day user (non-member) tends to park in the main parking lot, change in the car, ski a few loops and head home. Warming, changing, eating and washroom facilities are not available. There is also no focus for socializing, which is a fundamental aspect of all successful clubs.

Addition of facilities for all users and a means to support the facility, is a significant aspect of the Strategic Plan. For without expanded facilities, growth of skiing in the Park will remain limited.

Strategic Outlook

The following points highlight major activities that the Club will undertake to achieve our vision:

Butter Pot Provincial Park

- Improve quality of Skier Facilities
 - Propose a new day lodge open to all Park users.
 - Washrooms and change rooms
 - Eating and meeting area
 - Canteen and concession stand
 - Membership/day pass sales
 - Rental shop
 - Jack Rabbit meeting area
 - Waxing facilities
 - Timing hut

- Promote sharing of the day lodge with the Provincial Park and other potential users such as the Royal Astronomical Society.
 - Consider building a backcountry warming hut.
- Build a healthy membership Base
 - Offer quality programs and services to entice new members and retain existing members.
 - Increase opportunities for social events during the ski season
 - Offer discounts for members for club events, rentals and lessons
 - Continue to work with the Provincial Government to address the lack of day fees and the impact that this may have on the Club and the ability to develop skiing within the Park.
- Expand the Youth Skill Development Program (ages 4 to 18)
 - Support the development of NCCP Certified coaches
 - Expand fall training session for young skiers
 - Support the development of provincially and nationally qualified competitors.
- Expand adult learn to ski and skier development programs
 - Offer group and private lessons by CANSI certified instructors
 - Create a Masters ski group
- Provide a full suite of XC Ski rentals (skate and classic) for adults and children, members and non-members
 - Staff rental office during operating hours
 - Eventually lead into snowshoe rentals and ski chariots for young children
- Extend Park winter operating hours
 - 7 days / week, longer evenings in the spring.
 - Provide operating status and trail condition reports
 - Increase existing club house access during weekdays.
- Focus on trail development and improvement
 - Develop a long term trail improvement plan including the addition of back-country trails.
 - Develop a ski stadium (open groomed area with multiple skate and classic lanes) to be used for races and lessons.
 - Develop children's ski park and a "Jungle Trail".
 - Consider the future development of snowshoe trails.
- Tourism and local benefits
 - Promote Butter Pot Provincial Park as a skiing destination
 - Host Provincial level races on a regular basis
 - Apply to host National events
 - Promote skiing in Butter Pot Provincial Park by school groups and other organizations from the surrounding communities.
- Grooming Equipment
 - Maintain quality grooming equipment
 - Develop a replacement plan for the BR-160 groomer.
 - Provide training opportunities for Park staff
 - Explore Club support for grooming activities.

Pippy Park

- Support development of Pippy Park as a beginner/feeder system to Butter Pot Provincial Park and as a weekday training area.
- Maintain working relationship and presence with the City, The Outfitter's and the Pippy Park Commission.
- Offer technical support for operation of skiing within Pippy Park.

Biathlon

- Support the initiative to grow the sport of biathlon on the Avalon Peninsula.
- Biathlon will be organized by the Avalon Biathlon Club – as a separate organization.
- Other synergy and supportive relationships will be determined on a case by case basis by the Club executive.

Five Year Strategic Plan

Fall 2008- Winter 2009 Update

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The MOU describes the relationship between the Club and Butter Pot Provincial Park. The MOU expired on Nov. 21st, 2008. In response to the Club's requests to renew the MOU, Minister Charlene Johnson in a letter dated Feb. 2009 responded as follows:

"The previous memorandum of understanding between the Club and the Province has proven to be a success in implementing a wide range of actions designed to enhance the experience of winter visitors to the park. I have directed officials within my Department to contact you in order to begin discussions on the renewal of the MOU."

Initial contact has been made with Government personnel but a meeting has yet to be held.

Our approach will be to renegotiate a MOU that aligns with the strategy objectives laid out in this document. Due considerations will have to be given to the lack of Park fees, including exploration of alternatives to ensure a healthy club base.

Membership benefits

Approximately 15 waxless classic skis (youth and adult sizes) were purchased for our rental program. Rentals were available for members and non-members, with members receiving a discount. Rentals were very well received and in high demand, especially during group lessons.

Adult group lessons for both classic and skate technique were held on a regular basis on Saturday mornings at the same time as the youth skill development program lessons. Lessons were 45 minutes long and available to members and non-members with members receiving a discount. By all accounts this program was very successful.

Day Lodge

Minor modifications were made to the existing clubhouse with the construction of a rental office to house skis, boots and poles.

A proposal for a new Day Lodge is in the preliminary stages. The proposed location is on the east side of the main winter parking lot by the kiosk. This area has central access to all of the trails and has suitable potential for a ski stadium. This location is also favoured as it has more potential to serve as a multi use building by the Park. A funding plan to support this initiative will be developed in the near future. Expected costs would be in the vicinity of \$500,000.

Trail Improvements

A volunteer position within the club was created to provide focus and a contact point for trail improvement activities. Staff at Butter Pot Park were also instrumental in trail

improvements, especially the removal of deadfall after several windstorms. Some of this year's accomplishments were:

- A Ski Park and Jungle Trail were developed, but due to the lack of snow this past winter in the wooded areas it was not possible for them to be utilized .
- Previously cut trees and stumps were pushed back from Taylor's Trail to avoid contact with the groomer.
- Stumps and deadfall were removed from the MEC trail
- Brush was trimmed from the side of the Jack Rabbit and Taylor's Trails

A proposal was also submitted to the Government to develop a bypass trail around the Parkway Hills. A response has not yet been received.

Youth Skill Development Program and coach development

A fall dryland training program was initiated for older Jack Rabbits and Track Attack kids. This program ran for two months with 8 to 10 participants. Roller skiing was also introduced. Popularity of the Challenge group continued to expand with a full compliment of activities including regular fall dryland and on-snow training.

The NCCP coaching modules – Introduction to Community Coaching (St. John's) and Community Coaching (Corner Brook) were each attended by four coaches, with fees and limited travel expenses paid by the Club. Finally, the Learning to Train Dryland course is being planned during the summer of 2009.

A formal travel policy for club sponsored trips has been created and will be located on the Club website.

Equipment Maintenance

\$6,000 of Club funds are being set aside on an annual basis for maintenance, repair and replacement of club owned grooming equipment.

A volunteer position was created to ensure the maintenance of Club owned equipment and assets is carried out. Pre-season maintenance and repairs were performed on the BR-160 groomer. Park personnel also contributed in the performance of preventative maintenance on the groomer.

Club Publicity

The Club again participated this year in the Christmas Parade. Other publicity centered around the St. John's Winter Recreation Guide and installation of a highway sign to indicate the location of the ski area.

The Publicity Chair was also assigned the responsibility for fundraising.

Pippy Park

The Club continues to support skiing in Pippy Park and sits as part of a working group overseeing the activities. Other representatives include: Pippy Park Commission; City of

St. John's and The Outfitter's. The major achievement this year was the provision of full time grooming through the support of the Grand Concourse.

Fall 2009 – Winter 2010 Plan

General

- Explore a working relationship with Katimavik.
- Explore opportunities to increase skier participation from the Conception Bay South Area.
- Modify the clubhouse plumbing to eliminate the possibility of winter freezing.
- Progress the new day lodge proposal and seek funding.
- Expand the ski equipment rental program through increasing the number of classic and skate skis available and expand rental availability to Sundays.
- Add a non-executive volunteer position to coordinate Adult Lessons (private and group).

Trail Improvements

- Continue trail improvement initiatives including excavation of trails.
 - Widen Taylor's trail to protect the groomer and allow for dual classic tracks.
 - Consider excavation of Caribou and parts of Taylor's Trails to remove large stumps and rocks in order to allow skiing w/lesser amounts of snow and to protect the groomer.
 - Upon approval develop a bypass trail around the Parkway hill from kiosk to bridge. Cut and excavate for grooming by BR-160

Club Events and Publicity

- Develop a plan to expand races to attract more individuals.
- Capital Subaru Loppet – change to a pursuit format
- Outfitter's Open – change to a multi-day event with clinics and demo skis. Encourage participation from skiers across the Province.
- Consider hosting the Provincials, bringing approximately 100 skiers to our area.
- Expand media coverage for club events.
- Create posters and pamphlets to advertize the Club and skiing at Butter Pot Provincial Park

Improve grooming capabilities

- Arrange for specialized groomer training by George Lefevre (Olympic qualified groomer).

Budget Stewardship

- Forecast expected expenditures and income over a five year period including generating or saving funds for capital projects and groomer maintenance.
- Create a corporate sponsor program identifying levels and benefits.

Fall 2010 – Winter 2011 Plan

- Construction of a new day lodge (fingers crossed)
- Start planning for hosting a major race. (Provincial / National)
- Develop a timeline and funding plan for replacement of existing Bombardier groomer and other equipment as necessary.
- Create a development proposal for a full winter centre – considering snowshoeing, skating and sliding.
- Cut brush and widen the back end of Big Otter Trail and excavate in order to level the trail and remove large rocks/stumps.
- Start development of backcountry ski trails

Fall 2011 – Winter 2012 Plan

- Continue trail improvements
- Purchase additional rental equipment (skis, snowshoes, chariot)

Fall 2012 – Winter 2013 Plan

- Continue trail improvements
- Build a back-country warming hut

Fall 2013 – Winter 2014 Plan

- Hold a national level race