

SNOWLANDS

Bulletin

We are human power in action

We promote wilderness values

We preserve and protect our public lands

for enjoyment by all muscle-powered winter recreationists

JOIN SNOWLANDS AT THESE WINTER and SPRING EVENTS!

March 15	Los Altos, Banff Film Festival
March 22	South Lake Tahoe, Spirit of Snow Film Fest Benefit at LTCC (details page 3)
April 19	Reno, Tony Rowell: Images of Adventure at the Patagonia Outlet (details on back page)
April 22	Reno, Earth Day at Idlewild Park
April 28	North Tahoe/Truckee, the Village at Squaw Valley Earth Day
May 4 & 5	Reno, REI Expo
May 5	South Lake Tahoe, Earth Day at Montbleu Casino

LATE BREAKING GOOD NEWS

CA Snowlands is pleased to see that the Carson Ranger District temporarily closed the meadow in Hope Valley due to low snow. This is a sign of good management.

As winter 2006/07 trends towards setting records for low precipitation, we are closely watching our Forests to insure that fragile Sierra landscapes are not damaged by unwise use. A highly popular recreation area below Carson Pass, Hope Valley has low lying wet meadowlands that are especially vulnerable when the snow blanket is thin or too weak (as with sugar snow) to protect the underlying vegetation from heavy impact.

On Feb 4 - Super Bowl Sunday - conditions were grim, with maybe 4 inches of snow on the flats above 7000' along Highway 88, south of Lake Tahoe. The Carson Ranger District posted one sign near the Blue Lakes Sno-Park access road: ATTENTION SNOWMOBILE ACCESS IN MEADOW IS CLOSED DUE TO INADEQUATE SNOW COVER. PLEASE STAY ON GROOMED ROAD UNTIL YOU REACH ADEQUATE SNOW.

Three days later, according to Snowlands volunteer Jeff Erdoes, "...most summits and slopes were generally void of snow cover in the AM, but the first flakes of a long-awaited weather disturbance appeared by noon. This (temporary closure) appears to me to be a significant move on the part of the Forest Service and I think this can be a good thing if ordinary snowmobile motorists voluntarily respect the closure."



Picketts Peak looms grandly over the snowmobile "low-snow" closure sign in Hope Valley

LEGISLATIVE CORNER

By Gail Ferrell

NEVADA ORV BILL - NO RESPONSIBILITY

NV The current Nevada Legislative session began in early February 2007 and motorized interests, including dealers of snowmobiles and other ORV's as well as ORV users, introduced a second Off Road Vehicle (ORV) bill. This follows on SB400, enacted without teeth (continued on page 8)

President's Precipice

by Ellen Lapham

"Life is nothing if not a leap of faith".

With the perspective of time, I now elect to call this column 'Precipice', not perspective. Many a time I have perched on rock, ice or snow, wondering what the next few seconds would bring. In all cases, I took the jump, placed the pick, or launched my skis into space- trusting for a good outcome (whiteout snowstorms will do that to you!).

Every time I reached bottom (or the top) I was OK. This has given me the perspective on why we take on such big projects that seem to have no bottom. Or any visible, reachable summit.

It is because we can and we must!

In this Bulletin you will read about Snowlands initiatives (e.g. stewardship, a Tahoe Meadows regional recreation center) and those long-term projects that have been over a decade in process (Forestdale Road, Hope Valley). I applaud all our volunteers, members and financial supporters for sticking with us, taking the leap of faith, that we can and will succeed to save our winter recreation lands - a meadow, a view, a trail, a quiet acre (or 10,000 of them) - for the long term.

I hope YOU will take that leap too!

Ellen

PS: We have a new staff member on our journey: Annette Glabe, who joined us last May. She learned about Snowlands by doing: in her first week she manned our booth at the REI store in Reno, and, as I write this, she is with snowshoe leader Cathy-Works in Nevada City at a demo night. Annette keeps our database up to date, handles our books, and runs our outreach events with aplomb (her professional expertise is event management). She is a former ski bum who is learning the delights of the backcountry on snowshoes. Please say hi to her when you call or email us!



Snowlands newest staff member Annette Glabe

Chairman's Corner

by Marcus Libkind

The death of Kelly James and the presumed deaths of friends Brian Hall and Jerry Cooke on 11,239-foot Mount Hood this past December are a tragic reminder of the dangers one faces when venturing into the backcountry in winter. Of course their objective was much more formidable than a several-mile ski or snowshoe trip close to a highway. Nevertheless, we should never forget that backcountry winter travel can be dangerous.

What got me thinking about this incident was a talk show host that posed the question, "why do people climb mountains?" I was not surprised at the called-in answers that ranged from "for the challenge" to "for the spiritual experience."

I, however, thought a more interesting question would be, "what is the value of climbing mountains, skiing or snowshoeing in the backcountry, or any other mountain sport?" Here's my short list of answers:

- Learn to plan.

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Hope Rings Out for Hope Valley

CA Snowlands Network chairman Marcus Libkind has good reason to hope for the Forestdale Creek area, southeast of Carson Pass on Highway 88! After 15 years of advocating for its return to its natural, quiet setting for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, this might just happen.

Snowlands was joined by Friends of Hope Valley, the California/Nevada Snowmobile Association and the Lake Tahoe Snowmobile Association in support of the Alpine County Winter Recreation Plan. It includes the greater Hope Valley and the much loved Forestdale Creek area.

On February 6, 2007, the Carson Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, released a Scoping Notice for the proposed Winter Recreation Plan. Snowlands Network mailed a special alert and hopes that you took the time to write in support of the Plan.

The proposed Plan embodies a balance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities. It creates non-motorized areas in the Forestdale Creek area and on the north side of Highway 88 in the vicinity of Crater Lake, Scotts Lake and Stevens Peak. To offset these limitations

on snowmobiles, motorized regions are created in the Monitor Pass area and on Highway 4. The Plan also proposes much needed parking improvements. See www.snowlands.org for additional details and our full ALERT.

"If adopted it will be a win-win situation," Marcus says. He also points out that we are here today because people like John Bowers, Debbie Waldear of the Friends of Hope Valley, John and Patty Brissenden of Sorensen's Resort, and he persevered for 15 years, including filing two successful lawsuits. "As a result, the Forest Service finally decided to work with the snowmobile community and us to create a workable winter recreation plan that all can consider a win."

Marcus, Debbie and the Brissendens were joined by Jeff Erdoes and Jim Donald at six meetings of the Alpine County Ad Hoc Winter Recreation Dialog. They met with their counterparts in the snowmobile community and representatives of the Forest Service, Alpine County and the California Department of Fish and Game.

UPDATE: ECHO SUMMIT SNO-PARK

CA After a season of letter writing and public concern for the Echo Summit and Echo Lake Sno-Parks, the issues of management, insurance and snow removal were dealt with in late 2006.

As in the past, the Echo Lakes Sno-Park, operated by California State Parks, is open for day and overnight trips into the Lakes and Desolation Wilderness. However, Echo Summit Sno-Park on Highway 50 is now a private operation. The Eldorado national Forest web site states (www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/documents/other/recreate.htm) "Echo Summit is no longer a part of the Sno-Park Program. A private company, Adventure Mountain, is currently operating, with a day-use charge of \$10.00 per passenger vehicle and \$50.00 for larger vehicles such as motor homes and trailers. The Echo Lake Sno-Park still requires a Sno-Park permit, obtained in advance."

The Sno-Park Program is administered by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division. Please call the Sno-Parks hotline at (916) 324 -1222 for more information or go to ohv.parks.ca.gov

The Spirit Of Snow Films Celebrating Our Winter Passion

**March 22
South Lake Tahoe**

The Tahoe Adventure Club and Lake Tahoe Community College present a film night dedicated to the wonders of being on snow, up high, in the mountains. FILMS that will delight, educate and excite to benefit Snowlands Network. Featuring The Lost

People of Mountain Village - a droll stroll through an abandoned mountain resort and a top film at Telluride Mountainfilm. Plus other exciting films starring snow, courage, snowsense, history and philosophy!

Thursday March 22, 2007 at 7 PM, LTCC Theater, South Lake Tahoe.

Tickets \$5.00 in advance at Sports LTD or at the door. For more info go to www.ltconline.net/tac/



UPDATE: TAHOE MEADOWS

NV As we go to press, the 770-acre Incline Lake property along Nevada's Mount Rose Highway has not yet been purchased for the public. Although many important steps have been accomplished in this involved deal, the final property price has not been agreed upon. When we know more, we will pass on this information.



Even in a snowstorm, Tahoe Meadows draws families!

Nevertheless, there are still tens of thousands of winter visitors to the Tahoe Meadows that is adjacent to the Incline Lake Property. Over 35,000 skiers, snowplayers and snowshoers will visit this wonderful and accessible area this winter.

Snowlands Network continues to work with the managing agency, the Tahoe Basin Forest Service (LTBMU), to provide a better quality experience for you in the Meadows. We continue to emphasize that the noise and air pollution from the handful of snowmobile users degrades the quality of the backcountry experience for 95% of the users: YOU. We are also very concerned about the safety



Cars line the highway alongside Tahoe Meadows every weekend

of all users when snowmobiles are ridden by young children and untrained driver. We believe it is irresponsible that drivers, without any speed limits or safety controls, infiltrate areas that are filled with pedestrians – families and kids, snowshoers and skiers.

UPDATE: HOOVER WILDERNESS ADDITIONS

CA Snowlands Network is in a holding pattern with respect to the 7,000 acres of the Proposed Hoover Wilderness Addition (Leavitt Bowl) that was opened to snowmobiles in October 2005. In the last issue of the Bulletin we reported that we were planning to file an Amicus Brief in support of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) lawsuit challenging the decision to open the area to snowmobiles.

Simultaneously, The Wilderness Society (TWS) was negotiating with local Representative McKeon on a wilderness bill that would expand the Hoover Wilderness. Two events then occurred. The Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act, a wilderness bill that would add 40,000 acres to the Wilderness, was introduced in the last session of Congress and NRDC put their lawsuit on hold.

No one is talking about these two occurrences and we leave it to you to draw your own conclusion. This put Snowlands Network in a delicate situation. Filing their own lawsuit would potentially derail the Wilderness Bill. The Board of Directors chose to postpone action and track progress of the bill.

The Wilderness Bill did not pass in the last session of Congress. That is not unusual in that it often takes two, three or even four years to pass a bill of this nature. However, a new bill has not been introduced into the current session of Congress.

There is speculation that some constituents in McKeon's district are not happy because the current bill does not specifically state that the 7,000 acres of Leavitt Bowl and an additional 4,000 acres of adjacent lands will remain open to snowmobiles.

FACTOIDS (from High Country News)

- 289** Calories burned by a 185-pound person who snowmobiles for 60 minutes.
- 955** Calories burned by the same person cross-country skiing for 60 minutes.

California Releases Fuel Tax Study Results

By Jim Gibson

CA The California Department of Parks and Recreation has released results of a study to estimate the amount of fuel used by off-highway vehicles for recreation. This study is an important one for all Californians, because part of the \$0.18 per gallon fuel tax paid at the pump is used to support off-highway vehicle recreation in California.

The study, over three years in the making, was carried out by ICF International, San Francisco, under contract to the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, who administers the State's OHV program. This program is also supported by vehicle registration fees - \$21 for two years - and entrance fees at six State Vehicular Recreation Areas. However, the fuel tax contribution represents 85-90% of the revenue for the program.

The fuel tax study was completed and submitted to the Division in September of last year, but not released to the public until December 20. The results are controversial, because they differ significantly from the results found in the previous study, completed in 1990 by another contractor using similar methodology.

Both studies used random telephone interviews to determine the number of vehicles used in off-highway recreation and fuel-use logs to determine how much fuel was used in recreation. The authors of the current study report have attempted to explain why two similar studies, done 15 years apart, should come to such different conclusions about the state of OHV recreational fuel use in California.

According to ICF, the main difference is because the previous study over-estimated the number of non-registered off-highway vehicles. Both studies estimated the ratio of non-registered to registered vehicles. This ratio is applied to registered vehicle counts from the Department of Motor Vehicles to estimate the number of unregistered and total number of off-highway vehicles operated by State residents.

Both studies also estimated the average number of gallons of fuel purchased for a vehicle on an annual basis. The number of vehicles and the average fuel use is used to estimate the total amount of fuel (and taxes paid) in off-highway vehicle recreation. These numbers determine the fuel tax revenue going into the OHV program.

The new study found many fewer unregistered vehicles compared to the 1990 study, which concluded that 64% of fuel used was for unregistered vehicles. The new survey finds that only 5% of fuel

purchased is attributable to unregistered vehicles. Thus, while the number of registered off-highway vehicles in the State has increased, the estimate of the total number, including non-registered, will be reduced by almost one-half. As a result, the revenue going into the OHV program from fuel taxes should decrease from \$56M per year to between \$22M and \$32M, a significant budgetary hit.

The results of the study were explained to the OHMVR Commissioners and the public at a Commission meeting in Sacramento on Jan 27. The Administration initially called the results "statistically flawed," but now seems to accept the accuracy of the results. The Division now faces an uncertain future with the possibility of severe budget cuts looming when the new fuel tax transfer rates go into effect later this year.

Both motorized and non-motorized interests support the OHV program, because it is responsible for managing OHV recreation, not just promoting it. OHV funds are used for law enforcement in OHV areas and for conservation projects such as rehabilitating OHV-damaged areas and studying the affect of OHV activity on wildlife.

Another purpose of the study was to determine why people drive off-highway for recreation and where they go. A new system for distributing part of the registration fees will allocate the funds to where the activity takes place, not where the vehicle owner lives. The study also found that more than half of OHV driving was done in the pursuit of other recreation, including camping, fishing, and hiking. This result would suggest that some of the fuel tax money should be spent supporting these other types of recreation. However, the law only permits the Fuel Tax revenue to be spent on OHV-related projects.

Snowlands feels that the law should be changed to allow OHV program money to be spent on non-motorized recreation to mitigate the adverse effects that off-highway vehicles can have on other public land users. Barring that, we think that more money should be spent on law-enforcement and conservation uses, as those activities benefit all California citizens who visit our public lands and less money should be spent building and maintaining OHV trails and staging areas.

You can find more information about the OHV program and the Fuel Tax Study, including a copy of the Report itself, at ohv.parks.ca.gov.

Great Happenings On Highway 88!

Trail Marking a Success

CA Local residents and Snowlands members volunteered over 500 man and woman-hours this past September to achieve a major expansion of the marked ski and snowshoe trail system along the Highway 88 corridor. Over five days volunteers marked 14 miles of new trails and re-marked 6 miles of existing trails.

Most of the trails marked were located in the Anderson Ridge area that lies between Foster Meadow Road and Mormon Emigrant Trail (road) on Highway 88, a short drive east of Pioneer. The area is now criss-crossed by a multitude of trails that can be linked to form a wide variety of loop and one-way tours.

The "Shealor Lakes and Silver Fork Ridge" to the north of Tragedy Spring on Highway 88 was also marked. This is an amazing place where beginner-intermediate skiers and snowshoers are treated to excellent terrain and panoramic views of the nearby red cliffs of Thunder Mountain and other peaks to the south and the peaks of Desolation Wilderness to the north. Best of all, you access the ridge without climbing - as you ski the lands on one side drop away into the Shealor Lakes drainage and on the other side drop away into the Silver Fork of the American River drainage.

This effort is another way in which Snowlands Network works to provide high quality backcountry muscle-powered winter recreation.

Trail Guide Gets Rave Reviews

The completion of the trail marking events on Highway 88 was marked with the publication of the free "Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe Trail Guide for Highway 88 west of Carson Pass." The guide includes maps showing routes in the Anderson Ridge, Trag-



Hard working trail markers take a lunch break.

edy Spring, Silver Lake, Martin Meadow, Caples Lake and Carson Pass areas. Trailhead and descriptive information is also provided.

We Celebrated with our Volunteers

Snowlands held a three-day event in late January to celebrate the completion of the trail marking and new guide, and to show our appreciation to all the Pioneer locals and others who support our efforts.

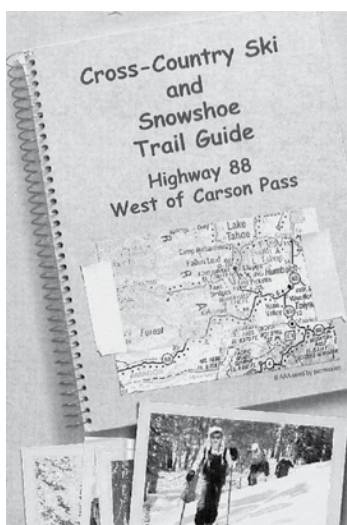
On Friday, January 26 we hosted a slide and movie show at the Pioneer Elementary School on Highway 88 east of Jackson. Thirty-five people showed up with appetizers and deserts to share, to socialize, and to enjoy an evening of entertainment.

Marcus Libkind presented his slide show *Best Ski Tours in the Sierra and Beyond*, which gave a glimpse of great day tours and multi-day trips in California. The movie *Sanctified*, which highlights backcountry telemark skiing while engaging the viewer in environmental concerns related to winter recreation capped off the evening.

Saturday brought 13 cross-country skiers out to enjoy a 4-mile loop ski on our newly marked trails in the Anderson Ridge area. On Sunday seven snowshoers ventured along the ridge north of Tragedy Spring enjoying crisp weather and cloud scattered panoramas. New friendships were made and all called the trips a success.

Many, Many Thanks

Snowlands Network could not have pulled all this off without the volunteers who pitched in to make it happen. Special thanks goes to REI for funding the trail marking and trail guide. We also want to express our appreciation the Eldorado National Forest for their cooperation.



You can get a copy of the free trail guide by sending a self-addressed stamped #10 business envelope to:

Snowlands Network
P.O. Box 2570
Nevada City, CA 95959

UPDATE: 4x4 CONFLICT AT LOON LAKE

by Monte Hendricks

CA In a past newsletter the issues surrounding the conflict with 4x4 vehicles traveling over the snow on an El Dorado County road through the USFS designated Loon Lake Non-motorized Winter Recreation Area were detailed. Snowlands is continuing to work toward getting a county ordinance enacted that would bring this one mile section of road under a winter closure for vehicles that matches the USFS non-motorized designation. Since this road leads to the Ellis Creek Trail, the main access for the world famous "Rubicon Trail", our efforts are tied to the current development of a Rubicon Trail Master Plan by El Dorado County and its public advisory group, The Rubicon Oversight Committee.

There is some good news to report. At the last ROC meeting the representative of the four wheel drive group "Friends Of The Rubicon" gave his consent for signs to be posted at Loon Lake but insisted that their name not be on the signs (as in the past) because there is not consensus in their group to support the signs. El Dorado County DOT and the Pacific District of the Eldorado National Forest got together on the wordage, and the signs went up on Saturday, 13 Jan 2007. There is no way the closure can be enforced, but we are very pleased with the "No" on the signs and the two agencies working together agreeing on and taking responsibility for the wording.



We will continue to monitor and photograph 4x4 use and the inherent conflicts on this road. The leadership of the 4x4 community has publicly stated that they support leaving this area to the muscle powered winter users. We hope that we can work with them toward united support for the much needed county ordinance to help end the public safety nightmare that exists when skiers and snowshoers encounter 4x4 vehicles churning through the snow and their trail-ruining ruts.

MAMMOTH LAKES MAKES WAVES

CA In fact, under the leadership of Brian Knox, Mammoth Nordic is making tracks!



After many years of meetings, planning, ingenious arguments, and creative coalition building, Mammoth Lakes cut the ribbon on January 24 for a permanent free XC ski trail in town.

Brian writes, "We envision the Mammoth Lakes Trail System (MLTS), our community walking and bicycle trail, as the backbone of a fantastic Municipal Nordic Trail System (MNTS). Preserving the year-round, non-motorized status of this community asset remains our highest priority. We are currently in negotiations with the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the Inyo National Forest to create an equitable, long-term solution that fairly provides for quiet winter sports and snowmobile recreation to enjoy a winter day in the Shady Rest area."

Brian has enlisted important local support. In January 2007, the Mammoth Community Water District Board approved an agreement with the Town of Mammoth Lakes where the District's snow cat will assist Mammoth Nordic in grooming cross-country ski trails in and around town.

According to the Town of Mammoth Lakes, "Another three miles of groomed trails in the Town will be available for use by all winter Nordic enthusiasts this season thanks to the fundraising efforts of Mammoth Nordic and the support of the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the United States Forest Service."

A popular bike and pedestrian path in summer, the trail from Mammoth Creek Park to the bridge under HWY 203 in winter is now part of the Mammoth Lakes Nordic Trail System. The trail is free and accessible for all Nordic pursuits including cross country skiing, snowshoeing, winter walkers and dog lovers.

The new Nordic trail from Mammoth Creek Park will join the existing 4.5 mile Shady Rest trail system totaling an impressive 7.4 miles (11.7 km) of groomed (beginner) trails for use by all winter Nordic enthusiasts.

This addition to the winter trail system is the result of a public-private partnership agreement between Mammoth Nordic and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. As part of the agreement, the Town will open and maintain the Mammoth Creek Park and Trails End restrooms, provide signage and oversee the pilot program, *(continued next page)*

Mammoth Nordic

(continued from previous page)

while Mammoth Nordic will groom the trail every day (weather and snow permitting) and maintain, repair and store its new and very impressive grooming equipment – affectionately called a “Nordoni”.

Snowlands congratulates all who have supported the vision and the building of the trail. When you are in Mammoth Lakes, check out the trail! Mammoth Nordic’s website is at www.mammothnordic.com.

NEVADA ORV LEGISLATION

Continued from page 1 for registration, in the 2005 session. The 2007 bill, like its predecessor, promotes ORV purchases and use in Nevada.

Nevada is one of a few “winter” states that do not have any form of official snowmobile registration. Snowlands Network works to improve any legislation dealing with snowmobiles by advocating for laws that require responsible use by the drivers of snowmobiles and other ORV’s. Responsibility includes following all laws, setting penalties for illegal behavior, setting age limits for drivers, and minimizing impacts on our natural environments and other users. We serve those desiring the natural quiet of the great out-of-doors. As this newsletter is mailed we are still in the initial stages of this legislative session in Nevada. We may need your letters in the next few months and if so, you will get an ALERT from Snowlands.

NATIONAL - THE BIG MOVE TO NATURAL

US Washington DC: (from the Wilderness Society) Now that the Democratic Party has majorities in Congress, key committees have announced their new rosters and priorities. “In the House, Congressman Nick Rahall (D-WV) has taken the helm of the House Resources Committee. As one of his first acts, Rahall reinserted the word “Natural” - removed in 1994 by then-Chairman Don Young (R-AK) - into the Committee’s name. Rahall, a 30-year veteran of the House, has long been a champion of wilderness and other public land protections.

Chairman Rahall has just released his “110th Congress Agenda of American Values”, which signals a new attitude toward public land management. The document states, “It is essential to strike a balance between our dependence on these lands and our responsibilities as citizens to properly steward these unique places. In doing so, our Nation is assured that our priceless public lands will continue to ... serve as a place for citizens to seek inspiration and renewal.”

SHARE-THE-DREAM TRAIL Yesterday’s Nightmare!

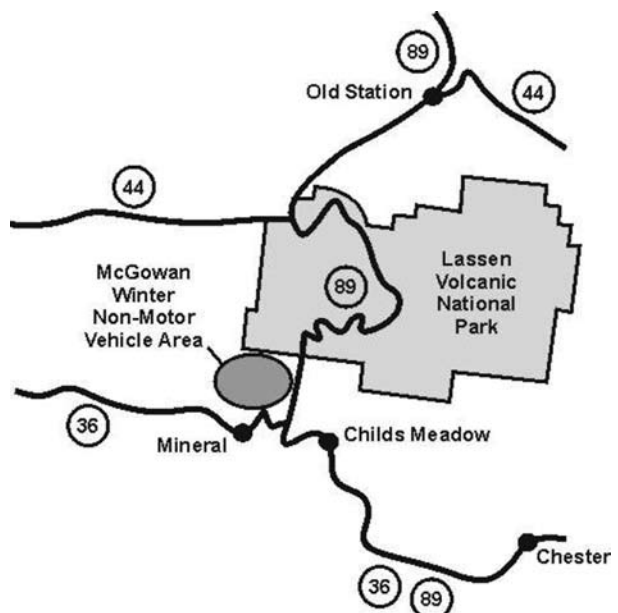
Forest Service responds to Snowlands ALERT

CA Skiers, snowshoers and environmentalists thwarted plans for the Share-the-Dream (Snowmobile) Trail that threatened to breach the McGowan winter non-motor vehicle area where skiers and snowshoers seek solitude.

Snowlands Network, which initiated a letter writing campaign opposing the motorized use in the McGowan area, received a letter from Forest Supervisor Laurie Tippin stating: “Unless there is concurrence by non-motorized users of the McGowan Lake Trail, we are not amending our current Forest Order that prohibits motor vehicle travel (including snowmobiles) on this route during the winter. ... The McGowan Lake Trail is a unique opportunity for human powered winter sports enthusiasts. We intend to continue to manage it as a non-motorized trail.”

The 140-mile snowmobile trail envisioned by the snowmobile community would circle Lassen Volcanic National Park and pass through the McGowan area. Snowlands went on record as opposing the trail entering the McGowan area, and garnered opposition support from the local Chico ski group and the Butte Environmental Council.

A well-deserved thank you goes to Larry Crisman for working the issue locally and to all who supported the campaign with letters and emails. Together we made a difference!



Ski Tour

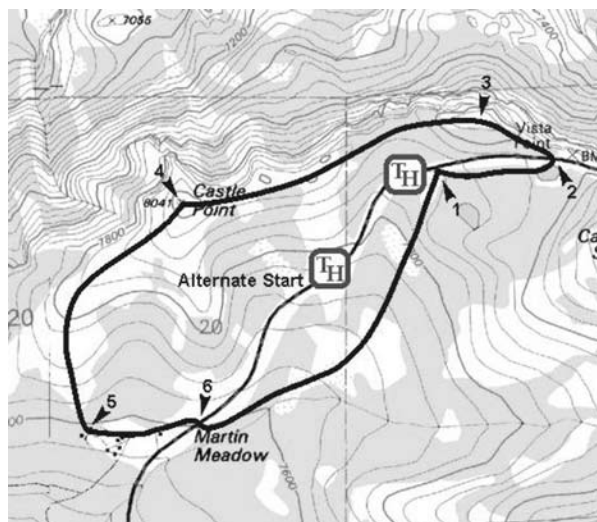
Castle Point

by Marcus Libkind

This is a real “sleeper” of a tour in that it has so many great things going for it although it certainly is not well known.

Difficulty:	Beginner-intermediate. Completing the described loop, as opposed to retracing ones route, requires considerably greater map reading skill.
Length:	2.6 miles round trip to Castle Point and 3.1 miles round trip via the loop.
Starting Elevation:	7900 feet
Cumulative Elevation Change:	+450, -450 feet round trip or +600, -600 feet round trip via the loop.
Navigation:	Map
Time:	Several hours to half day
Season:	Late December through early April [Note: at the time of this writing the January drought made this tour not skiable. Wait for new snow.]
Snowmobiles:	Not permitted.
USGS Topo:	7.5' series, Caples Lake
Start/End:	South side of Highway 88 at the summer trailhead for Thunder Mountain, 0.2 miles east of an eastbound passing lane and 0.3 mile west of the Carson Spur. Parking is in a small plowed area. Alternative parking on south side of Highway 88 along the eastbound passing lane in small cuts made by CalTrans. The passing lane is located between 0.5 and 1.2 miles west of the Carson Spur.

The tour to Castle Point comes in two flavors – a tour to the point and return via the same route or a tour to the point followed by a slightly longer return that creates a loop. You are rewarded with outrageously fine vistas to the north of Desolation



Valley and to the east of the peaks to the north of Carson Pass on both options.

The tour takes you to two peaks. Although the first is unnamed, it is slightly higher than Castle Point, the second. Between these two peaks the views north are continuous.

Especially noteworthy is Pyramid Peak to the north. You can barely see Pyramid Peak from the first peak, but as you ski west to Castle Point and beyond its prominence dominates the skyline.

You will also be treated to views of convoluted rock pillars scattered along the north side of the ridge that you traverse.

Navigation is straight forward on the tour to Castle Point and back via the same route. As an alternative you can create a loop that requires greater map reading skill, but adds a wonderful 450-foot descent in open, moderate terrain. This slightly longer tour ends by returning to the trailhead through meadows and woods.

The following route description assumes that you are beginning at the summer trailhead for Thunder Mountain. Adjustments to the described route are required if you park at the alternative location. The numbers in parentheses correspond to the mileage points on the map.

From the trailhead (1) ski east for 0.3 mile until you reach the highpoint on Highway 88 (2). Carefully cross to the north side of the highway and climb west for 0.3 mile until you reach the highest peak (3) on the tour. Continue by following the ridge west, first descending to a saddle before

climbing, for a total of 0.7 mile until you reach Castle Point (4).

Either return to the trailhead by retracing your route or continue by descending to the southwest and then south for a total of 0.7 mile until you reach the Martin Meadow Campground (5) that is closed in winter. Initially you descend on the ridge. About halfway down the open part of the ridge you gently turn south (left) down an open arm. At the bottom it is only a short distance through trees to the campground. Then ski east through the campground for 0.2 mile until you reach Highway 88 (6).

Carefully cross to the south side of the highway and then ski northeast through trees and meadows for a total of 0.9 mile until you reach the trailhead (1). Initially travel along the north side of the creek. This will lead you to a meadow. Then follow the meadow to the northeast. Finally you will enter the trees again and climb the steepest section back to the trailhead.



Pyramid Peak from Castle Point tour

LONG SKIS, MONEY, AND FAST WOMEN

by Mark McLaughlin, writer and Lake Tahoe resident

In the late 19th century (ski races), skiers stood four or six abreast and raced at full speed, shoulder-to-shoulder down a straight track more than 1,000 feet long. The winning purse at a northern Sierra ski contest could reach \$1,000... With so much money at stake, everyone wanted to compete.



At St. Louis in Sierra County, a 9-year-old girl blasted through 300 feet of windswept powder in seven seconds. At another event, one 14-year-old girl schussed down 1,230 feet in just 21 seconds. The sport made them the fastest humans on the planet at that time.

For more stories go to:

www.micmacmedia.com

Got Bumper Sticker?

Help support Snowlands and share our **WILD ABOUT SNOWLANDS** message with friends! Our bold sticker is popular with the snowboard set and is a standout on a school notebook cover. It measures 7½" x 3¾" and has a bright blue mountain slope with black lettering. One for \$5, five for \$15. I have enclosed a check for _____ stickers made out to Snowlands. Mail orders to Snowlands Network, P. O. Box 2570, Nevada City, CA 95959.



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Number of stickers _____

Amount enclosed _____

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Chairman's Corner *(from page 2)*

- Learn to solve problems.
- Challenge one's physical ability.
- Gain a greater appreciation for the beauty and grandness of nature.
- Learn that reaching a goal is best accomplished by a series of small steps. Each step is tractable. The sum of all the steps results in an accomplishment that at the beginning seemed impossible.

I can't think of a place where learning from mountain sports is more valuable than in the development of a child. In the mountains a child learns skills that will forever make them self-reliant. A child learns that success does not require that a task be easy; they learn that they can meet a challenge the size of a mountain.

I was surprised at how my daughter's interests slowly changed from the ease of downhill skiing to a love for the backcountry in winter. With that change came fewer comments like "that's too far" and "I can't do that." Today she can ski as far and as fast as me and I suspect that she may someday move mountains (figuratively) to make this a better world for everyone. Confidence in her strengths and skills are certainly a result in large part to her exposure of the challenges she found in the mountains.

The answers to the questions of "why" and "value" of a backcountry experience are not mutually exclusive. However, when searching "for the value" of such an experience you more often find yourself looking to the future. If we want to preserve the opportunity for our children to learn from what the mountains have to teach us we must stand up, speak out and invest some of our discretionary time and money into preserving the lands we love.

Our Affiliate Members

Snowlands Network is very proud to have the following organizations as affiliates. Through collaboration and communication we are better informed and more effective.

Backcountry Snowsports Alliance	High Sierra Hikers Association
Bluewater Network	Natural Trails and Waters Coalition
Carson Valley Trails Association	Planning and Conservation League
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation	Sierra Nevada Alliance
Friends of Hope Valley	Wildlands CPR
Friends of Kirkwood	Winter Wildlands Alliance

MT SHASTA'S GROWING GLACIER

(Ed note: this is useful to all of us who climb up and ski down Shasta)

The Western Regional Climate Center provides an analysis of why, in the face of worldwide glacier melting, the Whitney and a few other glaciers are not. When temperatures warm, the ice naturally melts away. This has resulted in the shrinkage of glaciers in the Sierra Nevada. But higher winter temperatures can also increase snow and fuel glacial growth in some areas, such as Mt. Shasta, by allowing the air to hold more moisture.



Whitney Glacier (Misery Hill in background, flank of Shastina to right) J. S. Diller, circa 1883

"The climate of these two places is different," said glaciologist Slawek Tulaczyk. Mt. Shasta, which he calls "a lonely mountain," sticks out and captures weather that is passing by. The Sierra Nevada, in contrast "makes its own weather." As warm, moist air rises up Mt. Shasta, it is released as snow in something Tulaczyk calls "the snow-gun effect." Such an effect has been recorded on some of Norway's glaciers, which are growing as well, he said.

Climate change computer models forecast temperature increases of 3 to 4 degrees Celsius, and Tulaczyk said snow precipitation at the higher levels would have to double to maintain the equilibrium. (Thus) increasing temperatures will "result in the loss of most of Mount Shasta's glacier volume over the next 50 years, with near total loss by the end of the century."

SNOW SCIENCE: NOISE ANNOYS

By Ellen Lapham

We need your help to lead and establish exceptional, achievable noise limits for machines both on urban snow trails and on wilderness acres. I am a member of the Pathway 2007 Forum; chartered to provide non-agency inputs to the next 20-year Tahoe Basin Plan and I serve on the Noise Technical Working Group. What we do, or don't do today, will have a decades-long impact.

The Problem

Our public agencies need field proven, affordable tests for noise. As part of our ongoing work at Snowlands we are asked to comment and assist on a core technical issue - the testing of snowmobile noise. Noise is not just subjective or annoying - it can be measured. Years ago the planners for the Lake Tahoe Basin, an exceptional place of beauty where nature predominates, set highly publicized goals for improved water quality. They have yet to set them for noise. It is time to change that.

You are most likely also familiar with the noise issues in Yellowstone. This battle has set the tone and pushed the Park Service to develop good practice. Now it is time for us in California and Nevada to advocate for the same level of science, scrutiny, and silence!

The Questions

The issue today is not what could the industry do to produce quieter snowmobiles - that is well established in the literature and in industry-underwritten contests at universities to develop and prove quieter (and cleaner running) machines. The questions today are 1) what sound level standard should be set? 2) How can we measure it in the field so that it is enforceable? And 3) are there any successful applications and enforcement of very strict noise standards for snowmobiles?

I am setting a challenge - can members of and advisors to of Snowlands Network come up with not only the answers to 1,2, & 3 above, but also the arguments that support strict standards adoption by public agencies?

Background

Today all snowmobiles manufactured must undergo factory testing that shows they do not exceed 78 dbA (SAE test J192) or 73 dB(A) (SAE test

J1161). These are procedures that require extensive facilities to be valid. Recently, the rulemaking for Yellowstone National Park regarding noise took a practical turn - the only snowmobiles allowed into the park had to be those that under formal testing protocol met the 73dbA requirement. The standard being set is "BAT" or Best Available Technology. That list of specific makes and models, updated in 2006, is available at www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/current_batlist.htm.

Sound levels for snowmobiles have been reduced 94% over time - the early snowmobiles were very noisy. At full throttle, late 60's models reached sound levels as high as 102 db from a distance of 50 feet. (Note, however, that early snowmobiles were essentially modified 25 HP garden tractors!)

Snowmobiles made since February 1, 1975 at the factory emit no more than 78 dB(A) from a distance of 50 feet while traveling at full throttle when tested under SAE J192. Those produced after June 30, 1976 emit no more than 73 dB(A) at 50 feet while traveling at 15 mph when tested under SAE J1161 procedures.

For comparison, normal conversation is 60 db, a vacuum cleaner at 10 feet is 70 db, and a garbage disposal at 3 feet is 80. As a rough rule of thumb, we perceive an increase of 10db to be twice as loud, so a 20 db gain would seem 4 times louder and a 40 db gain would seem 16 times as loud. Oddly enough, according to an aftermarket muffler manufacturer, the sound level of a snowmobile is typically lower from the rider's perspective than it is from a person who is within 50 feet of the trail! A useful sound resource is at trace.wisc.edu/docs/2004-About-dB.

Field Testing

Most agencies, including our local Forest Service, state and local parks, and municipalities do not have the technical or financial resources to do their own testing of snowmobiles in either urban or wilderness situations. This is true nationwide. To remedy this, the Wisconsin department of resources in conjunction with the snowmobile industry and the SAE came up with a new "field-friendly" test, the SAE J2567*, designed expressly for snowmobiles. (see www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/acts/05Act210.pdf).

Under this test, according to hardcoresledder.com, the engine and exhaust noise level maximum for sleds manufactured after July 2, 1975 is 88 db at

4 meters as measured by SAE standard J2567. In the test the snowmobile is stationary and revved up to 4,000 engine rpm.

How comparable is the perceived noise across these three SAE tests? Is 88 db the right standard given ongoing noise improvements and very likely in the future? Is 88 db at 13 feet setting the bar way too low? I'd like to hear from you - you can email me at elapham@snowlands.org.

*Jan. 2004 SAE J2567 stationary test overview: The sound meter microphone is placed 4 feet above the ground, inline with the exhaust outlet/center point of multiple exhaust outlets, on the side of the snowmobile toward which the exhaust is directed, 4 meters distance from the snowmobile longitudinal centerline. The operator holds the brake during the test, starts and runs the engine up to normal operating temperature, then slowly opens the throttle until a steady 3,750 to 4,000 rpm is achieved for not less than 4 seconds. The test is immediately repeated and the two readings averaged.

WINTER RECREATION BY THE NUMBERS

(From "Winter Recreation on Western National Forests" copyright July 2006 by the Winter Wildlands Alliance - www.winter-wildlands.org)

- 95% of California's winter recreation is in the Sierra Nevada
- 80% of California's winter visitors are muscle powered (over 1.36 million)
- 50% of the Sierra Nevada (over 10 million acres) is managed by the US Forest Service

THANK YOU!

To all our community volunteers supporters in 2006 for the Wild and Scenic Film Festival on Tour (presented on Tour by Patagonia) who helped us present an exciting and thought provoking set of films in Berkeley, Los Altos, Reno, Sacramento, Truckee, thank you!

patagonia presents the



The films shown ranged from the droll (Lost People of Mountain Village) to the thrilling (Bigger Than Rodeo) to the tender (Ride of the Mer-gansers) to the improbable (Flying Over Everest) to the thoughtful (Discover Hetch Hetchy). We saw many, many new faces in each city. We invented a 'mini' enviro-fest where advocacy and education organizations joined us to bring their inspiring projects to our audience. We want to thank Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Restore Hetch Hetchy, Sierra Nevada College, and Environmental Defense. Special thank you's go out to all employees at REI stores in Reno, Sacramento and the Bay Area who sold tickets, brought their friends, and volunteered. Kudos to the folks at the Truckee/Tahoe area Back Country Stores who did same. We could not host these Festivals without you!

OUR WONDERFUL FESTIVAL SPONSORS - PLEASE THANK THEM!

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MEET DIRECTOR RICH STEELE

It is hard to find a photo of Rich sitting still - besides hosting a great backcountry website - www.tahoebackcountry.net, getting on snow as often as he can, and contributing to Snowlands in his director role, he finds time to be an attorney and, most important, a father!

Rich joined the Snowlands board in December 2006 after working on legal issues relating to the Forest Service decision to allow snowmobiles in the West Hoover Wilderness Addition.

Rich has been a backcountry skier and mountaineer for nearly 20 years, having skied and climbed extensively throughout the Tahoe and Eastern Sierra.

Rich is an active member of the backcountry community and has published numerous skiing-related articles and photographs.

Rich is a corporate attorney in San Francisco and serves as general counsel to a global financial services company. After law school, he served as a judicial clerk to the Hon. David M. Ebel on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in Denver.

Rich has a JD from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, and a BA from the University of California, San Diego. He is a founding member of the Open Source Geospatial Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted to the open development of mapping and other geospatial software solutions. Rich lives in Marin County, CA.



Snowlands Director Rich Steele
(can you identify the peaks in the background?)

MEET VOLUNTEER MONTE HENDRICKS

Monte Hendricks recently joined Snowlands as our volunteer Regional Coordinator for Eldorado National Forest. We are fortunate to have his expertise and long term knowledge of the region and its issues and his experience in effective advocacy.

Monte and his wife Julie, both avid backcountry skiers, have been long term Snowlands members. He has been the leading voice for muscle-powered winter recreation in the Loon Lake area and participates in the Rubicon Oversight Committee, which is dealing with the 4WD use between the two dams at Loon Lake in winter.



Monte Hendricks

Monte was recently re-elected to the Eldorado Nordic Ski Patrol board, where since 1988 he has been active working with the local Sheriff's SAR.

He truly lives the life of "banjomaker hits the slopes". Since 1974, Monte has been building custom banjos, as well as restoring older models. Jazz and bluegrass banjo use is growing so he has a 3-years out backlog! Having discovered the delights of winter recreation along Highway 50, he divides his time between the sounds of the strings and the silence of the snow. When asked "How does music relate to skiing?" he laughed. I think he knows the answer.

Then I asked him why he was willing to volunteer with Snowlands. "If you don't step forward, nobody else will," he replied. "We love the outdoors - all it encompasses and the affect it has on us."

What should Snowlands be doing that we are not already doing?

"Develop. nurture more advocates. Develop and nurture relationships with the Forest Service, other agencies."

How can we people make a difference on Echo Summit and other issues?

"*Write.* Petition to save (lands) for backcountry users."

STEWARDSHIP FOR SNOW LANDS

We are formalizing our on-the-ground activities into a stewardship program that, over time, will help us secure more acres for natural winter recreation, introduce more people - including children - to the great snowy outdoors, and help them learn why winter is special and different from the other seasons. Through stewardship we build values and skills that lead to sustaining care for our winter wildlands.

Please consider joining the 2007 Snowlands Stewardship Program. Our goal for the this winter season is to provide accurate data to Federal, State and local agencies about winter recreation on public lands. We will also document damage by high impact users to the landscape and wilderness trespass. With that information, public land managers

can make more informed decisions. To find out more, please send an email to: issues@snowlands.org and ask about the Stewardship Program.



Join Us!

Our success depends on generous individuals like you who care about the future of the winter environment and backcountry winter sports. Through your support Snowlands Network will be effective in representing human-powered winter recreation enthusiasts who seek a wilderness-like experience on our public lands.

Please be as generous as you can. Snowlands is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and your membership contribution is tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Checks should be made payable to Snowlands Network, or you may pay by credit card.

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MISSION

The mission of Snowlands Network is to promote opportunities for quality human-powered winter recreation and to protect winter wildlands. We will educate the public and government agencies about winter recreation and environmental issues.

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PHOTO CREDITS

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Ellen Lapham	Atlas Snow-Shoe
Jeff Erdoes	

Tony Rowell *Images of Adventure*

Photographer Tony Rowell will show stunning images captured by his father Galen Rowell, followed by slides from Tony's travels including trips to the Arctic Circle, China, Tibet, and his recent climbs of Mount Whitney and Mount Hood.

Books and fine art prints will be available for purchase at this event. Tony's photos can be viewed at www.tonyrowell.com

RAFFLE! Win one of Tony's photographs.

Tickets are a \$15.00 donation in advance or at the door.
For more information & advance tickets go to
www.snowlands.org or call 530-265-6424.

**Thursday
April 19, '07
7 PM
Patagonia
Outlet, Reno**

**Doors open
at 6 PM**



Galen Rowell greets an Arctic Sunset ©Tony Rowell



A Benefit for Snowlands Network - Advocates for wilderness values and muscle powered winter recreation on our public lands.

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