



## Outdoor Update

### Great News from Lake Louise

By Alasdair Fergusson, Lake Louise Loppet Coordinator

#### Also in this issue:

Fish Creek Provincial Park: February Events	4
Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park: Up-Coming Events	5
Alberta Wilderness Association: Winter Hike	6
University of Calgary Outdoor Centre: General Information	7
Seniors Alpine Ski Club: General Announcement	7
Bow Valley WildSmart: Speaker Series	8
Banff National Park: Volunteer Opportunities	9
Bow Waters Canoe Club: Employment Opportunity	10

#### Plans Underway to Make Lake Louise a World Class Cross-Country Ski Destination in Five Years!

National Parks have taken a number of steps to improve the cross-country skiing experience at Lake Louise. Trail improvements over the past two years by National Parks followed eight years of Parks-approved volunteer trail improvements - using chainsaws, picks and shovels - by the Calgary Ski Club. There are now new by-passes of steeper hills, and new connectors to provide options for skiers of all abilities. These include two by-passes on Fairview Loop to avoid steep hills at the east end, two short connectors on Lower Telemark to offer easy shortcuts for skiers, new easy connectors on Upper Telemark to by-pass the "Big Hill" and "Big Bend," and a new beginner trail to Deer Lodge to avoid Chateau staff residences and maintenance yard.



Two kids on Lake Louise

- New maps, brochures, trail signage, map boards, information kiosks at trailheads, and "You Are Here" maps on the trails have also been introduced. These follow a new classification of ski trails based on measurements of slope and height difference as set out in the 2004 Trail Design Workshop by Cross Country Canada.
- New levels of service for tracksetting and grooming mean an increase in National Parks staff and equipment from November 1 to March 31, with plans to operate until mid-April based on an increased budget.
- The two closed roadways will be trackset when there is 10 – 15 cm of compacted snow, while the other trails will be trackset when snow compacts to 30 – 50 cm (to cover boulders and stumps).
- General priorities for grooming and tracksetting have been set. The first priority will be the popular trails with better snow pack at Upper Lake Louise (Fairview, Telemark, Tramline, the two roadways, and Lakeshore). This will be followed by the Village and Campground trails and lastly the Pipestone Trails.
- Grooming frequency will remain reactive to snowfall or snow

Additional undertakings include:

( . . . Continued on page 2, see Great News)

### Great News ( . . . Continued from page 1)

deterioration. Using all resources, it takes three days to groom the high priority trails in Upper Lake Louise.

- Trials of a narrow tracksetting snowcat are underway. This will hopefully increase the tracksetting efficiency compared to using two or three snowmobiles pulling tracksetting equipment.
- To quantify visitor usage and trail preferences a body of trail-use data will be collected during the winter of 2010/11.

There will be a meeting in February to develop a five-year plan to make Lake Louise a “world class XC ski destination” while retaining the “narrower, more intimate traditional ski trails” as befits a World Heritage Site and Canada’s first national park. This will include extending the length of the season to include the Easter holiday, and enhanced grooming to provide freshly groomed tracks prior to peak periods of visitations including weekends and holidays. Also planned are new trails suitable for beginner skiers (subject to environmental impact assessments). Additional plans will include better facilities for skiers such as warming huts and “Tea House destinations.”

This will NOT be similar to Canmore Nordic Centre with its “superhighway” trails. Instead, we plan to keep the narrower, more intimate traditional trails of three metres width on the flat areas and four to five metres on the hills to permit skiers to herringbone or snowplough.

A survey of cross-country ski area operations across North America, including Kananaskis Country, shows that visitors expected at Lake Louise will be within the estimates published in the 1996 Banff-Bow Valley Study: 10,000 visitors per month or roughly 50,000 skiers and snowshoers over a five-month season. This compares to 60,000 visitors at Peter Lougheed Park and 150,000 at Royal Gorge in Tahoe, the largest cross-country ski area in North America with over 200 kilometres of trails. These numbers were included in a comprehensive report presented at the request of the Parks Superintendent in November 2007.

Thanks are due to the Calgary Ski Club and Lake Louise Loppet volunteers over many years for:

- Having the vision to improve cross-country skiing at Lake Louise in Alberta’s snow-belt.

- Advocating at National Parks meetings over 8 years for cross-country skiing at Lake Louise.
- Fundraising to pay for the trail work and travel costs of the trail work volunteers.
- Seeking support of Lake Louise hotels and businesses as well as Banff-Lake Louise Tourism with knowledge gained from cross-country ski areas such as Aspen, Breckenridge, Yellowstone and many areas in B.C.
- Preparing comprehensive reports at the request of Banff National Park management on how to enhance the visitor experience for cross-country skiing in the National Park.
- Surveying the Lake Louise ski trails with GPS, altimeter and inclinometer to determine hill difficulty levels.
- Conducting a survey of signage from 75 cross-country ski areas in western Canada and U.S.
- Preparing operational and marketing reports based on 25 years of tracksetting experience and on membership and participation in Cross-Country Ski Areas Association meetings.

We estimate the Calgary Ski Club legacy to Lake Louise trails is valued \$185,000 including travel, equipment and other costs.

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( . . . Continued on page 3, see Great News)

## Great News ( . . . Continued from page 2)



Fairview Work Crew



Fairview Skiers



Crossover in Summer



Crossover in Winter