



# Seward Nordic News

The quarterly newsletter of the Seward Nordic  
Ski Club

WINTER 2007-08 FIRST EDITION

## Announcements

- Our website is online! Check out <http://sewardnordicskiclub.org>
- Beginning December 1, trail updates will be available to current SNSC members only. All members will receive a weekly, compiled trail update via email. In addition, SNSC members will be invited to sign up for our email forum where they can post and receive real-time email trail updates. Watch for the email invitation to sign up for this forum. Our ability to keep on top of the changing ski conditions will depend on your input, so please email us after you are out on the trails!
- If we don't have your correct email, or you would like to add a spouse's email address to our mailing list, please notify us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).
- Interested in writing for the SNSC? We are looking for member volunteers to contribute to the newsletter. If interested, contact us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).

## Upcoming Events

- **General Membership meeting – Wed, Dec. 12, 6:30pm at The Legends Building**  
Please come and have input in the SNSC! We will be electing our '07-'08 Board Members, voting on the By-Laws, and discussing grooming equipment and upcoming events. Bring a dessert to share from 6:30 – 7pm. The meeting will follow, 7 – 8:30pm. The Legends building is located at 412 Washington Street downtown.
- **Winter Film Series-** Seward's *Winter Film Series*, featuring slide presentations and stories about outdoor adventure, will be on the third Tuesday of every month from 7-9pm at AVTEC's auditorium. Series creator Dano Michaud invites speakers sharing their exploits in climbing, mountaineering, and skiing. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, SNSC member Ray Robinson will present his experiences on the Eklutna Traverse.

## Year-at-a-Glance

- **Third Tuesday of every month- *Winter Film Series*, AVTEC auditorium, 7-9pm**
- **December 2- *AMH Anchorage Cup Sprint Relay***
- **February 2 - High School Boroughs Race, Seward**
- **February 3 – Alaska Ski for Women, <http://www.alaskaskiforwomen.org>**
- **February 2,3 – Iditarod Days, Seward**
- **March 2- *Tour of Anchorage*, <http://www.tourofanchorage.com>**
- **March 9- *Oosik Classic*, Talkeetna. Details TBA.**
- **March 22- *NSAA Ski Train to Curry***

## News

**GROOMING** - Our trail grooming efforts have begun, though thwarted by the recent warm weather and rain. We have a nice icy base at Mile 12, and with some fresh snow should be in good shape for the winter. Our new groomer will arrive in just a week or two, as it was shipped from Montana on November 28. This Ginzu Groomer will be our main groomer for Mile 12. The Club has maintained its Piston Bully groomer, as well, and recently purchased a new trailer to help move equipment from trailhead to trailhead. The trailer was purchased with funds obtained selling our five old snowmachines. In their place, we now have a very nice Bearcat snowmachine, generously donated by Craig Turnbull. Thanks to Craig for his generosity!! Our grooming team is excited to focus on actually grooming this year, as opposed to spending efforts repairing old equipment. The Club would also like to thank Carlile Transportation, which gave us a great deal on shipping the Ginzu Groomer from the Lower 48. We were able to save a substantial amount of money by using Carlile and appreciate their generosity.

**WEBSITE** - A big thanks to Britta Perry for volunteering her time and talents to create our website. Britta is a Seward native, having graduated from Seward High School in 1998. She then graduated from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, OR in 2002. After traveling and working in Anchorage, she moved to Honolulu in 2005. She now has her own graphics design company, Britta-Lis Design, and her work includes creating websites, ads, brochures, etc. Although she lives in Hawaii, she accepts clients from everywhere and is always happy to have Seward clients! Her website is [www.britta-lis.com](http://www.britta-lis.com) and her email is [bp@britta-lis.com](mailto:bp@britta-lis.com).

**MEMBERSHIP DRIVE** - Our fall membership events were a big success. The Ski Swap and Warren Miller movie raised almost \$2000 for the Club. There was a great turnout at the Yoly's Membership Social, and we now have 135 members signed up in the SNSC. Thanks for your support and participation!

## Seward Seahawks Nordic News

The Seward High School, Middle School, and Elementary School ski teams are gearing up for the season. Watch for news and event results in this column. If you have a high school student that is interested in contributing articles to this column, please contact [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).

The first meet for the Seward Seahawks will be the Lynx Loppett, Dec. 7 and 8 in Anchorage. Over 600 skiers from around the state will be competing. The Seahawks had a meet scheduled in Homer for Dec. 1, but that had to be cancelled because of warm weather. Hopefully the snow will fly in time for the Lynx Loppett. Good luck Seahawks!

## Trail Profile

### *Creativity and spontaneity are keys to finding snow in early season*

Snow... rain...snow...melt. The familiar weather pattern this time of year in Seward doesn't have to keep you off your skis. Being in the right place at the right time for good snow involves some careful analysis of weather phenomena and a "go when it's good" attitude. It also requires some thinking outside the box. Below are some tips for getting to the fluffy stuff.

## Weather analysis

Paying close attention to the storm cycle and understanding the relationship between elevation and temperature will help you choose the right day and location for snow. In general, storms coming from the Gulf of Alaska are most likely to produce snow the first day after clear, cold weather. On subsequent days, further warming by the heavy cloud cover may prompt a change to rain. Sunny day with cold winds from the north are suggestive of stable cold weather, but precipitation is less likely in these conditions.

Based on the temperature in Seward, use the table below to predict the elevation at which snow is falling (cut this out and hang it on your fridge or next to your thermometer!). A general guideline is 3 degrees Farenheit colder per 1000 feet of elevation gained.

		temperature °F										
elevation		32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
elevation	500	30.7	31.7	32.7	33.7	34.7	35.7	36.7	37.7	38.7	39.7	40.7
	1000	29.3	30.3	31.3	32.3	33.3	34.3	35.3	36.3	37.3	38.3	39.3
	1500	28.0	29.0	30.0	31.0	32.0	33.0	34.0	35.0	36.0	37.0	38.0
	2000	26.6	27.6	28.6	29.6	30.6	31.6	32.6	33.6	34.6	35.6	36.6
	2500	25.3	26.3	27.3	28.3	29.3	30.3	31.3	32.3	33.3	34.3	35.3
	3000	23.9	24.9	25.9	26.9	27.9	28.9	29.9	30.9	31.9	32.9	33.9
	3500	22.6	23.6	24.6	25.6	26.6	27.6	28.6	29.6	30.6	31.6	32.6
	4000	21.2	22.2	23.2	24.2	25.2	26.2	27.2	28.2	29.2	30.2	31.2
	4500	19.9	20.9	21.9	22.9	23.9	24.9	25.9	26.9	27.9	28.9	29.9
	5000	18.5	19.5	20.5	21.5	22.5	23.5	24.5	25.5	26.5	27.5	28.5
	5500	17.2	18.2	19.2	20.2	21.2	22.2	23.2	24.2	25.2	26.2	27.2
	6000	15.8	16.8	17.8	18.8	19.8	20.8	21.8	22.8	23.8	24.8	25.8

calculated using a moist adiabatic lapse rate of 2.7° F / 1000 feet

Table by Chuck Lindsay

Below are approximate reference elevations to begin as a general guide for finding snow.

Turnagain Pass roadside	1050ft.	Tincan summit	3700ft.
Summit Pass roadside	1350ft.	Johnson Pass trailhead	500ft.
Trail River Campground	500ft.	Ptarmigan Lake trailhead	500ft.
Grayling Lake trailhead	600ft.	Mile 12	750ft.
Lost Lake trailhead	500ft.	Lost Lake Dale Clemens cabin	1700ft.

## Local early season areas

For local classic and skate skiing, closed roads such as Exit Glacier Road and the Trail River Campground access road are accessible with minimal snow cover. They are also the first areas to be potentially groomed with a dragged grooming sled. Consider having a pair of “beater skis” that can take nicks and scrapes without remorse.

For early touring, consider hiking to the snowline with skis attached to your pack. Steeper trails such as Lost Lake, Mt. Alice, and Ptarmigan Lake will get you to snowline quicker, while more gradual trails such as Grayling Lake and Johnson Pass are better left for later in the season. The steeper trails all go into avalanche territory, so great caution must be exercised. Each area has a threshold of snow cover beyond which a beacon, probe, shovel, and ability to use them is necessary to safely proceed.



*Recommended gear for early season approach. Photo by Mark Luttrell.*

The Lost Lake summer trail is probably good for only a few weeks before travel becomes risky. The winter route succumbs to the motorized crowd not long thereafter, so Lost Lake is a gem best explored in early season.

The best choice of ski for early touring is probably “waxless” skis with scales. Skis that require kick wax will not perform well in the changing conditions at different elevations in early season. Climbing skins will work OK as long as they do not get too wet, which will cause them to ice up.

### **Drive to the snow**

If rain obliterates our precious snow cover, don't forget your skis when you make that Costco run up north! Due to their interior climates and more northern latitudes, several other locations predictably receive ski-able snow before the Kenai Peninsula.

Hatcher Pass is generally the first area in South Central Alaska to be groomed. Typically a 4km circuit with a gradual up and gradual down is in by late October. You can make a weekend trip out of it by renting one of the A-frame cabins, phone 745-1200. Hatcher Pass is also a great area for touring and backcountry skiing, although the avalanche risk in the area can be quite serious due to the dry snow and wind loading that favors slab avalanche formation.

The Sheep Mountain area on the Glenn Highway near the Matanuska Glacier is less predictable because the climate is drier. However, it is worth checking early in the year as well. There are 12 miles of groomed trails with classic tracks. Contact the Sheep Mountain Lodge, 745-5121, to inquire about conditions.

The Anchorage Bowl has several areas at different elevations, creating a predictable pattern of ski-able conditions. The Powerline Pass Trail at the Glen Alps trailhead is ready first in the year. This is followed by the Hillside area, then Russian Jack and the Chester Creek trails, and finally, the beloved Coastal Trail and Kincaid Park. Because these areas see such heavy traffic, they are often in good condition for skate skiing after a good snowfall even when they haven't been groomed. To inquire about grooming, contact the NSAA grooming hotline at 248-6667, option 1.

## **Coaches Corner**

### ***Tips for ski preparation in early season***

Whether dragging skis out of the garage or dragging a shiny new pair from the city, a few more steps in your first wax of the season will optimize your skis' lifetime and performance. For those of you interested in basic waxing technique, SNSC hopes to offer a waxing clinic to members

later in the season. If you are an experienced ski waxer, consider contributing to this column! Contact us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com) if you would like to write a waxing article.

All of the techniques described here use Swix products because the author is familiar with them. However, several other brands work just as well, and techniques vary. If you follow a few basic principles, the results will be about the same: 1) Clean the skis early and often; 2) Always progress from warmer to colder wax, brushing and polishing as you go; and 3) When in doubt, wax some more, because skis become faster over time the more they are waxed.

### **New skis**

Most new skis have a base that is ready for waxing without any further base preparation. Check with your ski manufacturer for brand-specific base instructions. “Rilling” ski bases is usually no longer necessary and is best left to the experts. Begin with a “cleaning wax” to remove debris trapped in the microfibers from shipping and storage. Apply 1-2 coats of a warm basewax such as Swix yellow CH10 and scrape away immediately while the wax is warm.

Multiple coats of wax should be applied to new skis, with at least 6-8 coats recommended. Begin by applying 3 heavy coats of basewax without any scraping between each layer. Brush with a brass brush with 5-10 long, linear, front to back strokes. Then apply a cooler wax such as Swix blue CH6, allow the wax to cool, scrape away, and brass brush again. At this point brush with a brillo such as Swix grey fibertex 20-25 times, back and forth. This whole process aligns the microfibers in the direction of travel while protecting them with the wax you have applied. The skis are now ready to accept your “travel wax”.

To apply travel wax, begin with basewax and progress through the colors to colder wax on subsequent layers, scraping after each application. Stop after applying and scraping 1-2 coats of the desired wax for current conditions.

### **Used skis**

Where to start depends on what you did last year. The optimal waxing technique throughout the season is removal of the upper layer by scraping and brushing, which removes debris before re-application of new wax. The optimal summer ski storage technique is a heavy coat of wax without any scraping, which protects the base from scratches and debris during storage. If these techniques were employed in the previous year and the bases are in good condition, the skis may simply be scraped in preparation. Apply one or two layers of warm wax and scrape completely to clean the skis. Then, multiple layers of wax can be applied and scraped, progressing from warm to cold.

If the above techniques were not employed, complete wax removal and re-application is the optimal strategy because old wax is often dirty and cobbled from multiple applications and the surface is oxidized, which will interfere with bonding of new wax. Scrape the skis clean with a metal scraper. Apply wax remover, scrape with a plastic scraper and wipe away, and allow 24 hours for the remover to evaporate completely before applying new wax. Apply and scrape 2-3 coats of warm wax to thoroughly remove debris from the base. Next, apply wax with the same strategy as for new skis.

If the bases have scratches, burrs, or nicks, the glide performance will be impaired. To repair, begin by removing all wax. Heavily scratched skis should be stoneground at a reputable shop. Make sure they use a grinder specific for nordic skis. Nicks and gouges should be repaired with P-tex. Wax may then be re-applied as for new skis.

If a surprise snowfall demands immediate results, remove the oxidized layer with the appropriate brillo pad (if Swix, the purple one), then apply and scrape 1-2 layers of new wax, with at least one heavy layer of the desired wax for the current conditions. After you get the skiing out of your system, be sure to go back and prepare your skis the right way!

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Any businesses interested in sponsoring the Ski Club, contact [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com).  
Thank you for your interest! Your donation is tax-deductible.

## Mission Statement

The Seward Nordic Ski Club is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting Nordic skiing for all ages, developing and maintaining a network of groomed trails, and sponsoring community ski activities and educational opportunities.

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