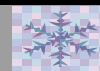




The Pennsylvania Nordic Skier

The Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers Association

January 2019



The 2019 PA Nordic Championships Are This Weekend!

Snow conditions are looking promising for the 2019 Pennsylvania Nordic Championship races. This year's event is scheduled for Sunday, February 3rd at **Wilderness Lodge** in Wattsburg, PA. A foot of new snow is expected in the Erie region this week and the trails are in awesome shape. Now is a great time to register for the races!

This is PACCSA's fourth year to hold the races on Wilderness Lodge's challenging and expertly groomed trail system. This year's event promises both fun and demanding courses for every level of expertise. **Awards** will be given to top finishers, and all participants will be eligible to win **terrific prizes** donated by sponsors such as Fischer Sports, Fast Wax, Hazelbaker's Canoe Adventures, and more!

Adult events will include a 5k classic race, a 10k skate race and a 20k skate race. There will also be 5k classic and skate events for youth racers, as well as fun races for the kids (1.2k classic and 2.4k freestyle). As always, the male and female winners of the 20k event will be crowned the 2018 Pennsylvania Nordic Champions!

Online registration is currently available at **SkiReg.com**. In addition, if you need lodging, the Erie **Wingate by Wyndham** is offering a special rate of \$79/night for all racers and spectators. Just call (814) 860-3050 and mention the Pennsylvania Nordic Championships to get this rate.

Complete information about this year's races – including start times, course maps, directions to Wilderness, and a list of sponsors – can be found at **PACCSA.org**. See you at the races!

Pennsylvania Youth Skiers make Junior Nationals Two Years in a Row!

PACCSA congratulates **Colton Martin** who earned a trip to the 2018 XC Junior National Championships as part of the Mid-Atlantic team! Colton, who was a member of the Wilderness Wildcats youth skiing program, competed in the Junior Nationals U18 division in Soldier Hollow last March.

Remarkably, 2018 was the second consecutive year that a Pennsylvania youth skier made the Mid-Atlantic Junior National team! In 2017, Wilderness Wildcat **Tony Mathie** earned this honor, competing in the Junior National Championships at Lake Placid, NY. PACCSA recognizes the hard work and dedication that is required to achieve this level of success and thanks Colton for representing Pennsylvania at the highest levels of the sport!



Vermont native *Sophie Caldwell* skiing in the 2014 Winter Olympics. You can watch this year's Nordic Skiing and Biathlon World Cup races on the Olympic Channel. Set your DVR's!!

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To view our Webcams and find information about skiing in our region, check out our website!

www.paccca.org

Letter from the President

This is usually the best and busiest time of the year for PACCSA members! We're finally able to see how all of that off-season trail work benefits our favorite skiing areas. Winter arrives, spirits run high, and we can't wait to get out on our skis. This particular winter started off in promising fashion with cold temperatures and decent snowfall. However, it's been another up-and-down winter in Southwestern Pennsylvania, which is nothing new. Every week we follow the weather closely, hoping there will be enough weekend snow to enjoy the sport we love.

Much of the work that PACCSA does is focused on preserving the region's ski trails from the wrath of Mother Nature. We spend countless hours diverting the flow of water through the construction of drains, trenches and culverts. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, Mother Nature wins, forcing PACCSA volunteers to restore and armor washed out trails. When winter finally arrives, we battle ice and wind storms that drop debris all over the trails. Even then, despite our best efforts to maintain and improve the trail system, a thin snow can batter our grooming equipment. It's not easy being a Nordic skiing lover in Pennsylvania.

In this edition of The Pennsylvania Nordic Skier, you'll see several stories related to PACCSA's fight with the elements. I hope you enjoy the stories about trail improvements at Laurel Mountain, emergency repairs of broken grooming equipment, and our volunteers' efforts to clear trails at Laurel Ridge after a devastating ice storm. You'll also find stories about recent internet and webcam upgrades and fun new ways that PACCSA members train during the off-season. As you review this Newsletter, you'll see how PACCSA volunteers and your donations make skiing in our region as good as it can be. Thanks for your ongoing support, and I'll see you out on the trails!



PACCSA extends a big THANK YOU to the sponsors of the 2019 Pennsylvania Nordic Championships!



Laurel Mountain Trail Improvements

When Seven Springs reopened the Alpine area at Laurel Mountain, it had the unintended side-effect of creating problems for cross-country skiers. The big snow-cats that groom the snowmobile trails could no longer travel on the Alpine area's road to access DCNR's Maintenance Facility (where they are stored). As a result, the snowmobile trail groomers had to start using what is commonly referred to as "Interstate," the wide trail that acts as a connector between the Laurel Mountain Cross-Country warming hut and the "Loop" trail.

PACCSA anticipated that this arrangement might cause safety and trail access issues for Nordic skiers and has been working with DCNR Forest Manager Ed Callahan and his crews on possible solutions since 2016. During the 2016/2017 ski season, DCNR suggested sharing "Interstate" to see how things would work out. Unfortunately, the big snowmobile trail groomers tended to pack to snow to solid ice, making "Interstate" a hazard to ski on. Also, during low-snow conditions, the big tracked snow-cats tended to tear up the snow, creating an unskiable mess. Needless to say, we received many complaints from skiers about the situation.

To remedy this, with PACCSA's input, DCNR began widening "Interstate" to provide room for both the snowmobile trail groomer and the cross-country ski trail. Widening "Interstate" basically created a new trail exclusively for XC skiing that at times meanders into and out of the woods. Some areas remain unfinished and should be completed in the future, but the work has already resulted in a huge improvement.

PACCSA would like to thank DCNR and Ed Callahan for working closely with us to make sure that the cross-country ski trails at Laurel Mountain remain a top destination for skiers!



Young skiers learn Ski-Orienteering at Laurel Ridge



A PACCSA volunteer cleans a drainage pipe at a recent trail clear

Nordic Skiing Etiquette

At PACCSA, we regularly receive questions on skiing etiquette. “Who has the right of way on a hill?” “Can I ski on groomed trails with my dog?” “Why do people yell ‘TRACK’ at me when they’re passing?” Many years ago, PACCSA compiled a list of rules from various cross-country skiing venues. The list, which we called the *Cross Country Skiers’ Code of Responsibility*, remains just as relevant today. As part of our mission to educate skiers, below you’ll find an updated *Code of Responsibility* which will be posted on PACCSA.org for public view:

1. **Always check posted trail conditions and obey all signs and posted warnings** – This is common sense aimed at keeping you safe. If a trail is designated as being one-way, please only ski in the proper direction. Otherwise you risk a collision with another skier or a dangerous 90 degree turn at the bottom of a gnarly downhill.
2. **Always maintain control of your speed and direction** – Yes, this can be difficult to do if you’re a beginner. However, once you’re sharing trails with other skiers, please make sure you ski in a manner that permits you to stop or avoid other skiers and hazards.
3. **Ski within your abilities and time allowances** – If it’s getting dark and it takes you an hour to ski 5k, it’s probably not a good idea to do that 10k loop without a headlamp. Otherwise, you’ll likely get lost in the dark and become a ski patrol rescue statistic!
4. **Pets must be under control and are USUALLY not permitted on groomed trails** – We all love dogs! They’re cute, cuddly and full of energy. They also have a mind of their own. Don’t let them chase people, jump out in front of other skiers, or enthusiastically knock over old folks and toddlers. In Pennsylvania, dogs on public lands must be leashed. Also, check to make sure your ski area allows dogs on groomed trails. Most don’t because paws can poke holes that damage the trails, ruin classical tracks and increase the rate of snow thaw. Finally, PLEASE don’t leave brown klister (doggie poop) behind!
5. **Do not walk or snowshoe on groomed trails** – Maintaining and grooming ski trails is hard work, and in many places, the groomers are volunteers doing their best to keep the trails nice. If you’re forced to walk on the trail (say you broke a ski), stay out of groomed classic tracks and walk as far to the side of the trail as possible. Also, if you’re skating, do your best to avoid skiing over the classic tracks.
6. **Always yield to faster skiers and skiers going downhill** – Downhill skiers on two-way trails always have the right of way. That’s because they aren’t able to stop on a dime. While going uphill, do your best to keep as far to the right as possible. Also, the universal signal for overtaking another skier is to firmly yell “TRACK.” Please don’t think the faster skier is being rude. If you hear “TRACK,” simply pull to the far right of the trail or yield the tracks to the faster skier.
7. **Don’t block the trail, avoid stopping on hills, and fill in “sitz” marks** – Never stop where you’re obstructing the trail or are not visible to others. If you need a rest, keep to the side of the trail. There’s nothing worse than a group of skiers socializing obliviously while blocking the trail. Also, if you fall and make a mess of the trail, do your best to fill in your “sitz” marks.
8. **Always ski to the right on two-way trails when meeting on-coming skiers** – This one is self-explanatory and no different than driving a car on a road.
9. **Don’t litter** – Always pack out what you bring in. And if you see that someone accidentally dropped their energy bar wrapper on the trail, be a good citizen. Pick it up and dispose of it at the warming hut.
10. **Always pay trail fees when applicable** – Few owners of cross-country skiing centers got into the business to strike it rich. In many cases, the trail fee barely covers the costs associated with grooming the trails. Do the right thing and pay the trail fee.
11. **Accidents and injuries** – place a pair of skis in an “X” position near the fallen skier to make them more visible to rescuers and other skiers. Do not attempt to move them, but do whatever you can to keep them warm. Make note of nearby landmarks to aid in pin-pointing the injured skier’s location. Call for help if possible or enlist the aid of a fellow skier to get help. If you’re skiing alone, make sure others know your whereabouts and plans before hitting the trail.

PACCSA Volunteers Help Clean Up Laurel Ridge Ice Storm Damage

Last weekend, meteorologists in the Pittsburgh region had us looking forward to a winter storm that had the potential to drop a lot of snow. Unfortunately, as the storm moved closer, warm air from the south pushed into the region. Instead of snow, Pittsburgh and points south mostly received rain.

Due to the unique elevation of the Laurel Ridge XC Ski Center, it was one of the few areas south of Pittsburgh to be hit with freezing rain. This caused several inches of ice to accumulate on trees. The weight of the ice caused hundreds of trees and thousands of branches to crash down and block the trails at Laurel Ridge. Below you'll see photos taken by Jim Sota showing just a tiny fraction of the damage.

Beginning on the Sunday after the storm, the Ski Concession at Laurel Ridge and several PACCSA volunteers started the tedious task of clearing the trails. Dozens of skiers who arrived at Laurel Ridge that day hoping for good skiing also pitched in after seeing the devastation. It took 24 hours of hard work just to make the Red Loop passable and work continues on many of the side trails. PACCSA salutes everyone who joined the effort to clear Mother Nature's mess.



Webcam and Internet Updates

PACCSA's webcams help us see snow conditions at our favorite ski areas when we are hours away. Without internet service, the webcams would not be possible.

At Laurel Ridge, recent improvements in internet speed have made webcam downloads more reliable and credit card transactions at the Ski Concession speedier. An added benefit has been improved Wi-Fi speeds for the free internet access provided in the warming huts by PACCSA.

At Laurel Mountain, the local phone company suffered an equipment malfunction that robbed the warming hut of reliable internet access. After being informed that there were no plans to repair the system, PACCSA was forced to invest in cellular-based internet access for the Laurel Mountain webcam. There have been growing pains, including a quirky router that only works properly if we download webcam photos at 5-minute intervals. However, as we gain more experience with the new system, we hope to eventually restore 30-minute intervals between webcam photos.

Rollerskiing with Fred

by Naomi Jarvis

The Pittsburgh rollerski bunch are a group of skiers living in or near Pittsburgh who like to rollerski together through the snowless seasons. This year we were joined by Fred.

He's a bit different from the rest of us. For a start, he doesn't complain about the sweltering damp heat of summer, nor does he look forward to refueling with ice-cream after a long, hot workout. He is rather short and rotund (don't worry, he wouldn't be offended by this) and he doesn't look like he would be much good at skiing, although he is gradually losing weight. He doesn't talk much - maybe he's too tired, he does follow us around a lot so we'd understand if he was getting a bit worn down.



Naomi Jarvis posing with her rollerskiing partner, Fred !

Fred can be quite tiring, really hard work sometimes, and on the uphill any one of us would admit that he's a real drag. In fact, he can be so tiresome that he gets left at the trailside for a while. However, his smooth pace is quite relaxing on the downhill and we all appreciate his calm and steady company if we have to ski down anything steep. Someone suggested that he might like to carry a supply of cool beverages but so far, no luck with that one.

Avid readers of Master Skier or NordicSkiRacer might have recognized the characteristics of our new training partner - Fred does really help with our training. He provides resistance to ski against, which is great for simulating hills on flat land, makes us stronger on the uphill, and slower on the downhill.

New PACCSA Jackets, Hats and 2-Piece Ski Suits Available!

Have you noticed people skiing in the latest PACCSA gear this winter? Pretty cool, huh? You can also show off your PACCSA pride with professionally designed gear from Borah! New for 2018/2019 is an awesome 2-Piece racing suit that matches the ski jackets and tassel hats pictured below. For pricing and ordering information, call Borah customer service at (800) 354-2825. Make sure to let them know you want to order the PACCSA design!



Laurel Mountain Groomer Repairs

Last January, disaster struck at Laurel Mountain. PACCSA Groom-master Bob Mazur was beautifying the trails in anticipation of a forecasted snow storm. Suddenly and without warning, PACCSA's Tidd-Tech grooming sled broke in two halves! Despite significant trail improvements at Laurel Mountain over the past several years, a patch of bumpy terrain caused a pair of bolts holding the grooming sled together to sheer away, resulting in the mishap. To make matters worse, when the grooming sled fell to the ground, a number of parts designed to pack and smooth the snow were mangled. The damage exceeded \$300.

Bob, assisted by PACCSA grooming team members Bruce Cox and Mike Blessington, quickly got to work repairing the grooming sled. New parts were ordered from Tidd-Tech, and after many evening hours working in the cold, the repairs were completed before the next snowstorm hit. Most of the folks who ski at Laurel Mountain had no idea this even happened. Nonetheless, due to your generous donations and the tireless volunteer hours of our grooming crew, PACCSA was able to get the grooming sled back in service in just a few days. PACCSA salutes the Laurel Mountain Grooming Project crew members for their dedication and support.



*PACCSA's Tidd-Tech Grooming Sled at Laurel Mountain,
Repaired and Ready to Go!*

PACCSA's Webcams are Famous!

When it snows in Western Pennsylvania, the mountain ridges almost always have the greatest accumulations. For instance, during one particular storm In 2018, while much of the Pittsburgh region received 2 inches of snow from a clipper, Laurel Ridge and Laurel Mountain received more than 6 inches. PACCSA's webcams at Laurel Ridge and Laurel Mountain provide the skiing community with up-to-date information so people know how much snow is at our favorite ski areas, even when there's nothing but grass in our front yards!

Remarkably, the National Weather Service requested permission from PACCSA to use our webcams for their weather reporting service. To the right is their report from January 30, 2018 showing the Laurel Ridge webcam!

**US National Weather Service State College PA**
44 mins · 🌐

30 JAN 2018 @ 12:00 PM EST: A general 1 to 3 inches of snow fell across central Pennsylvania today. Higher elevations received 4 to 7 inches as evidenced by the webcam image from Laurel Ridge State Park. Additional snow showers will continue over the higher elevations with scattered flurries elsewhere.

Winds will continue to increase with gusts around 30 mph this afternoon with blowing snow possible.



Laurel Ridge State Park Webcam (in Center webcam). Courtesy of the PA Cross Country Sales Association, www.PACCSA.org
Tue Jan 30 2018 12:00 am Temperature 32°F Humidity 87%



**Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers
Association**

PACCSA
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Munhall, PA 15120

Find us on



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You can also renew your membership online! Visit www.paccca.org

Name _____ Phone _____

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Membership Information

_____ Single \$6/yr _____ Family \$9/yr _____ Donation Only

Number of Adults: _____ Number of Children : _____

Please indicate if you are interested in volunteering any of your skills:

- ☐ Mail Newsletters (they will be sent via e-mail unless this box is checked).
☐ Please add me to PACCSA's e-mail chat group!