



*We are human power in action.
We promote wilderness values.
We preserve and protect our public lands.*

Winter Travel Management **By Bob Rowen**

This is an exciting time! In response to years of Snowlands' efforts, five forests in the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades have commenced reviews of their snowmobile restrictions. Snowlands' lawsuits not only helped start this process but earned us the right to submit an alternative that the Forest Service must formally consider. We have submitted an alternative to each of the five forests and have had several meetings and discussions with Forest Service personnel to explain our proposals.

In commencing each of the reviews, the Forest Service issued a scoping notice that set forth its preliminary proposed action. We did not expect these notices to propose much in the way of new OSV restrictions – that is the purpose of the review, after all – but the Forest Service did propose new closures in several areas. So we already have established momentum for positive change!

Each of our alternatives was submitted jointly with Winter Wildlands Alliance and contains hundreds of pages of documentary evidence and more than a dozen pages outlining and supporting each specific proposal. The full text of our alternatives became public as soon as they were submitted to the Forest Service and now may also be accessed through our website.

A sixth forest, and the most important to some members, will be commencing its formal review in 2016. This is the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, which was formerly part of the Tahoe National Forest but for many years has been an independent national forest. We have devoted substantial efforts to advocacy in the LTBMU for many years and look forward to seeing some progress here as well. In many respects, the LTBMU started its review first, but will be the last of the six to make its review formal.

Your voice is extremely important during this process. The Forest Service does listen to users and often is unaware of the extent that change is important to the public. Backcountry nonmotorized users are generally a quiet group and access the backcountry with little fanfare. Thus, it is particularly important that we speak up in the course of these reviews. We will keep you informed of opportunities to comment through web alerts and on our Facebook page. Please tell the Forest Service that preservation of lands for nonmotorized winter recreation is important to you, both in general and with regard to specific areas. You thereby speak not only for yourself, but for future generations as well. Thank you!

Uphill Ski Area Access **By Colin Wood**

For some time, Snowlands has been planning to address the growing issue of uphill travel within ski resort permit areas. Skinning uphill at ski areas is popular with folks earning their first turns of the season before resorts have opened and backcountry areas are well-covered. It is also popular with nearby residents who want to exercise before or after work, or perhaps taking a new skier to a familiar area. Some people just want to skin at ski areas, even during operating hours. With the recent explosion in backcountry winter recreation, ski areas have been hit-and-miss in their handling of this access issue. Some areas have policies that are quite favorable to the non-paying public and have reasonable rules in place to protect public safety. Other areas appear to be quite hostile to skimmers. Others are somewhere in between.

So far, the Forest Service has taken a largely hands-off approach to this issue. However, Snowlands believes that the

Forest Service will be receptive to suggested improvements in ski area policies toward inbounds skinning. The Forest Service has substantial leverage over ski areas to maintain public access and has updated the Forest Service Manual to provide guidelines on this issue. So far, we have yet to see any obvious changes emerge from that update. One thing we have done is forced Sugar Bowl Ski Area to admit that they cannot charge people crossing their land to access the PCT, Benson Hut, and other areas along the crest to the south.

At this time we are still in the information gathering stage, including a FOIA request. If you have any input on this issue, a suggestion for a skinning route, or an anecdotal experience to share about your inbounds skinning experience, please send an email to Director Colin Wood at colin.wood@snowlands.org.

President's Corner

By Marcus Libkind, President

I'm happy as can be as we approach the 2015-2016 winter season. Early rains make me think that the predictions for a bumper snow season due to El Nino will be a reality. On top of that, Snowlands is in the midst of major winter recreation travel planning processes that are the result of our earlier efforts, and we have an amazing group of volunteers working on them.

Beyond winter recreation travel planning on the Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, Lassen and Plumas national forests, we are engaged in a similar process in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. We are also working on access to the backcountry through downhill ski areas and trying to improve parking around Lake Tahoe.

Five years ago I would not have imagined that we would be where we are today. Getting here was a monumental effort, and our volunteers continue to donate untold hours on behalf of backcountry skiers, snowshoers, and boarders like you. They are the epitome of unsung heroes.

I urge you to support their efforts with your letters when we write that they are needed. And think of Snowlands Network when you are making your end of year donations.

End of the Year Giving

Many of us have been or will be receiving end-of-the-year giving requests from many organizations. It is the traditional season of giving, of course, so they come flooding in. Snowlands Network is no exception. We will be sending out requests in the next couple of weeks.

We realize that deciding whom to give to is a tough decision. As you can see from the articles in this newsletter, we have had a very busy year with much travel, many meetings, and hours of discussion and pouring over maps to arrive at what we think are workable proposals for winter land use in five of our national forests. Much of this work is done on a volunteer basis.

Snowlands Network operates as a barebones operation with only one part-time employee. However, there are still travel costs and other ongoing expenses just to maintain our presence as an organization. We hope that you, our supporters, will consider our work important enough to make an end of the year donation to keep our organization going. We will continue to work hard to protect winter wildlands for both the wildlife that live there and for future generations of human-powered users.

Desolation Wilderness Public Access By Bob Rowen

Many Tahoe-area skiers became involved this fall when they learned that a Cal Trans project to remediate sedimentary runoff into Lake Tahoe was eliminating a number of unpaved turnouts that for years have been used to access the backcountry. These turnouts have provided the only access to such popular spots as Jake's, Maggie's and Bliss Peaks in the Desolation Wilderness above the southwest shore of Lake Tahoe. Also, in recent years local authorities have increased the general enforcement against winter off-road parking due to concerns over traffic congestion and snow removal, which eliminated access to spots such as Rubicon Peak. In addition, the Forest Service has gated the Spring Creek road, which provides access to Mt Tallac.

All this reached a *perfect storm* this fall when many area skiers realized that their favorite access points were being eliminated. Credit especially goes to Mike Schwartz of the Backcountry outdoor store in Truckee who sounded the alarm on the consequences of the Cal Trans project. Mike has led the effort to convince the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and State Assemblywoman Sue Novasell of the need to maintain winter backcountry access at several locations. However, other agencies and leaders still need to be convinced! A group of skiers also formed a new organization called the *Tahoe Backcountry Alliance* to address this specific issue.

Snowlands has for years advocated for greater public access, including more and better Sno-Parks. It is worth noting that, in the past, some skiers had not supported this effort because the presence of semi-secret parking spots worked for them.

The public outcry about the loss of the turnouts led to Cal Trans agreeing to pave and keep the turnout situated across from the entrance to D.L. Bliss State Park, and the park agreed to plow its entrance lot for skier use, at least this winter. However, long term improvements are needed, especially to improve access to Mt. Tallac and Rubicon Peak.

A solution to this problem will require involvement of a number of agencies, including the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Forest Service, and California State Parks. This may also be an appropriate time for the State to review the effectiveness of the Sno-Park program, especially in the Lake Tahoe basin. The current variety of parking schemes, such as State Parks requiring a separate parking fee from holders of Sno-Park permits, is conducive neither to access nor to compliance.

Through our membership on California's Sno-Park Advisory Committee and our relationship with the LTBMU, we are developing and will be advocating for long term solutions that increase access to Desolation Wilderness and other public lands for all nonmotorized users.

Snow Camping Classes

Have you ever wanted to backpack into areas that are inaccessible in a day-long ski or snowshoe tour? If the idea of spending more time in the solitude of the winter backcountry sounds enticing, then this series of classes can teach you the skills that you need to prepare for such a trip. Even if you never plan on spending a night in the snow, knowing snow-camping skills could save your life if you engage in any activities in snow country.

The San Francisco Bay Area Sierra Club Snow-camping Section offers an annual snow-camping training series. Over the last 47 years, their volunteer instructors have taught thousands of people the skills for winter navigation, shelter construction, how to stay warm, and other winter tips and tricks.

The training series teaches groups of either adults or families with a full-day classroom session in Emeryville, followed by two weekend trips (one two-day and one three-day) in the Sierra to practice what you've learned. Each group has at least two experienced co-leaders with years of experience and multiple assistant leaders to guarantee a small student to leader ratio.

Kids and snow are a natural match for big fun, so there is a special group for families with children 8 and older. These sessions focus on the unique challenges and joys of taking kids into the winter backcountry.

There are also many alumni trips for graduates of the training series, since people bitten by the snow-camping bug can't seem to stop. Youth groups may also be accommodated as space and staffing allow.



This training is not for the complete rookie. All applicants should be in good physical shape and have prior backpacking experience. Application information may be found on the web at www.snowcamping.org or by calling Anne at (510)526-6792.

The early bird application due date is November 30, and the final due date is December 20. The full day classroom training is January 9.

Trip dates vary by group. Sign up fast to select dates that work for you and get the early bird discount. A limited number of scholarships are also available.

BELA G. VADASZ

June 13, 1953 – September 15, 2015

With passions for mountains, oceans and music, you are bound to have a connection with just about everyone in our community, and that was certainly the case for Bela Vadasz, who we lost suddenly and unexpectedly on September 15. Bela was well known as a mountain guide, a shaper of surfboards, and a percussionist. He is survived by his sons Tobin and Logan and by his best friend, life partner, and cofounder of Alpine Skills International, Mimi Maki Vadasz.

Bela was born in Hungary and, with his parents, escaped the communist takeover and immigrated to the United States, ultimately settling in San Francisco. His parents introduced him to the Sierra Nevada in all seasons at a young age. Bela met Mimi at San Francisco State. They climbed and skied together and formed ASI, a Truckee-based mountain guiding service and climbing and ski school. ASI operated a lodge on Donner Summit - the Donner Spitzhütte - for nearly 25 years. Through ASI, Bela guided and taught thousands of climbers and skiers to be not only competent mountaineers, but to love the mountains and carry that spirit with them in all aspects of their lives.

Bela had a long list of impressive accomplishments in the mountains, both personally and particularly as a guide and a mentor of other guides. Bela also used his talents for teaching mountain skills to serve his country by training mountain leaders and assault climbers for the US Marine Corps and special operations forces. He received numerous awards and recognition of his achievements and contributions.

Throughout his life, Bela also pursued his passions in both surfing and music. He was a founder and percussionist with the Truckee-based band Montaña, and in recent years he formed Vadasz Surfboards, in Oceanside, California, which manufactures surfboards designed and tested by his sons Tobin and Logan.

But it was not accomplishment that drove Bela. It was the experience, the adventure, and sharing it with others, especially his sons, that gave him fulfillment and joy. As Mimi has so beautifully said, "Bela did not do things to advance himself, he didn't have a tick list. He loved to share his passion, whether it was skiing, climbing, surfing, music, communicating, encouraging, believing in people more than they believed in themselves."

- Dave Riggs

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Mission

We promote opportunities for quality human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands. We educate the public and government agencies about winter recreation and environmental issues.