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## Resort Municipality Initiative

# **2021 - 2022 Report from the Fernie Nordic Society**

The Fernie Nordic Society has received some very appreciated funding from the Resort Municipality Initiative through the City of Fernie for the Society's operations during the 2021-2022 season.

## A word from the president of FNS

Another successful Nordic ski season has come to an end. After two years of uncertainty, the Fernie Nordic Society (FNS) was thrilled to resume programming, attend racing events and see patrons gather inside the warming hut at the Elk Valley Nordic Centre (EVNC); re-establishing the strong and welcoming community that the Society is known for.

Operating trails at the EVNC and the Fernie Golf Club, the FNS thanks the landowners that make access to the sport possible. Our organization welcomed 300 brand new members bringing our overall membership to nearly 1,400 members! Both grooming operations at the Elk Valley Nordic Centre and Golf Course had a challenging job navigating a variety of challenging conditions; however, produced some of the best skiing conditions this past year! While the skiing has ended, work behind the scenes never stops. Between the Board members and many dedicated volunteers, our organization works tirelessly year-round to provide the best Nordic skiing experience for both our locals and visitors alike. This work begins shortly after the grooming season ends. Thanks to Columbia Basin Trust, the FNS Volunteer Crew and East Kootenay Enterprises, numerous trail enhancement projects were completed at The Elk Valley Nordic Centre last summer. All of these improvements proved to enhance the

early season skiing experience for all of our members as grooming commenced when the snow started to fall in November, 2021.

After 2 years of no programming, our Skills Development Program resumed offering instruction to 61 young skiers by 15 volunteer coaches! Without all of our dedicated volunteers, this program would not be possible. In addition to youth programming, adult lessons were in high demand this winter as well. From private and semi-private lessons, to weekly group Masters skiing, Coach Tarah Leggott provided excellent coaching and skill development to adults every week through the winter. The Fernie Nordic Racers were happy to have races back on the schedule for 2022. The team had athletes participate in all four Kootenay Cup events (most events were 2-3 races both classic and skate), three BC Cup events, and the team's first Fernie Nordic Racer, Wes Robinson, attended the National Championships in Whistler!

In addition to offering top notch grooming, ski lessons and racing events, we were able to have an active presence out on the trails and inside the warming hut again at the EVNC through our Ambassador Program! This proved to be extra valuable as we saw overall increase of purchased day-trail passes this past season with visitors from the western provinces, Manitoba, Ontario, Yukon and Quebec.

Heading into the summer and next season, we are looking forward to undertaking the design and construction of a facility that will benefit the Fernie Nordic skiing community for decades to come thanks to the funding we received this past year from BC Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sports! We recognize that there remains questions and uncertainty around land ownership and access. We will continue to ensure that our priority of providing the best experience for our members is front and centre in our engagement around land use decisions.

And, as always, the biggest heartfelt thank you to our members, volunteers and Board of Directors for your support. Have a fun summer!

See you on the trails,

Megan Lohmann

## 1. Activities

The maintenance of the trails and the winter grooming is performed daily by a team of volunteer and paid part-time groomers during the season. Grooming started at the Nordic Centre at the end of November and continued until mid-

April. The grooming at the Golf Course started a little later in December and ended late in March.

The racing team of the club includes nineteen young skiers. Their regular physical training is scheduled three times a week during the winter season and continues for the remainder of the year. Many of the team members participated in several ski racing events in the Kootenays and elsewhere in B.C.

The children's ski lessons program resumed this year after its suspension last season due to COVID restrictions. Altogether 61 young skiers were enrolled in weekly ski lessons run by our volunteer coaches. Ski gear rentals were available at low cost.

Ski lessons for adults by a certified paid coach were also available between January and March.

The trail ambassador program was also running on weekends at the Nordic Centre. The volunteer ambassadors are on hand at the warming hut to welcome skiers to provide some information to visitors and new skiers to our trail system.

## 2. Budget Status

The \$16,000 funding from RMI was used for expenditures of trail grooming and also for maintenance of additional parking at trail heads under the Winter Trails Maintenance program. These expenditures include grooming and parking clearing at the Elk Valley Nordic Centre and the Fernie Golf Course during the winter season.

The total cost of grooming, fuel, and snow maintenance of parking lots is estimated at about \$62,477 for the entire season. The Hedonism parking lot within the Mt Fernie Provincial Park is kept open in winter for trail users other than nordic skiers. Its maintenance is estimated to \$10,000 for the entire winter season. The funding from RMI thus offers a great help to our operations.

FNS Trail Grooming	\$6,000
Hedonism Parking and Park Toilets	\$10,000

### 3. Statistics of 2021-2022 season

The membership of the Fernie Nordic Society in 2021-2022 was 1,337 members. This compares well with the 1,603 members of the previous season when the COVID measures stopped many of the indoor and outdoor activities.

Season	Memberships	Trail Passes
2021-2022	1337	882
2020-2021	1603	686
2019-2020	944	847

Club members from Alberta make up 20% of the club membership, a small decrease from last season (22%). Elk Valley residents represent about 80% of the total membership.

#### Trail passes

This year the majority of the 882 single and family trail passes were sold to visitors. 21% of these passes were purchased by residents of the Elk Valley, 45% by visitors from Alberta. Visitors from other locations in Canada accounted for the rest.

#### Trail counters

Counters were placed on the trails at the Nordic Centre and the Golf Course again this winter. The weekly usage numbers were in line with the ones from last season:

#### Weekly Trail Counts

Season	Golf Course	Elk Valley Nordic Centre
2021 - 2022	400	1200
2020 - 2021	473	1174

#### Events and activities

No events were held during the season although evening skiing was promoted on the nights of the full moon. One trail is lit on Saturday evenings for family skiing at

the Nordic Centre. The trail counters registered a 79% increase in traffic on the Full Moon nights at the Golf Course and 38% at the Nordic Centre as compared to an average evening.

## **Social Media**

Events, grooming updates and club announcements are done on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, our own website and through direct email to our membership and other subscribers on our email list of 1,400.

## **Survey**

The annual online survey was conducted from April 7 to 20, 2022. The survey was open to the general public and it was promoted through social media and the club website. In addition a message was sent to 1,802 email addresses of visitors and club members.

The survey included six questions plus an open area for comments. We received 247 submissions. Several highlights are shown below:

- 73% of respondents said that direct emails or website updates provided them with the latest info about trail grooming
- 41% did alpine skiing and 26% did other nordic activities beside nordic skiing while in Fernie
- Most replies were from Elk Valley residents (79%)
- 61% spent from 0 to 30 nights in Fernie

Most comments from the survey were very positive. The quality of the trail grooming at the Golf Course and Nordic Centre was highlighted. The work done by volunteers attracted many enthusiastic comments as well.

The complete results of this survey are included in the attached digital package.

# **4. Amenities**

## **Grooming Equipment**

The Bombardier snowcat had some regular maintenance done before the start of the season. It performed well during the winter. All four grooming snowmobiles and accessories were also kept in running condition.

## **Ski Trails**

Ten kilometres of trails are groomed at the Fernie Golf course. In addition a section of the Fernie dyke adjacent to the golf course is also maintained by the groomers. The Elk Valley Nordic Centre includes another ten kilometre network of groomed trails with a link to the Fernie Alpine Resort. This provides an easy access to both trail networks by visitors and local skiers alike during the winter season.

## **Stadium area**

This wide and flat area is located next to the warming hut of the Nordic Centre. It is used extensively for the weekly kids lessons and the adult lessons on weekdays.

## **Signage**

Some signage was added to three parking areas in the Mt. Fernie Provincial Park again this season to guide visitors to these areas. This is done in cooperation with Tourism Fernie as part of the additional RMI funding made available for the Winter Trails Maintenance program. Parking areas and public toilets are highlighted on these signs.

## **Portapotties**

A rental unit was placed in the parking areas at each of the Golf Course and Nordic Centre locations. The club has rented these units in all previous winter seasons.

## **Summary**

The 2021-2022 winter ski season was another successful one for the Fernie Nordic Society thanks to the great work done by volunteers and funding from the Resort Municipality Initiative. The popularity of the nordic skiing in Fernie has increased steadily in recent years. The good weather has made it possible to ski from late November well into April and to keep the trails busy with skiers.

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