

2007/2008 Season XC Ski Trail Year End Grooming Report



RASC Volunteer Ski Trail Grooming started this season on December 1, 2007 and concluded on March 16, 2008. This year was the best season in many years with good snow cover for greater than 100 days. During that time, a team of 7 volunteer groomers performed trail grooming on approximately 10km of trails at the Quarry Hill Nature Center. A 3.6km loop was also groomed on the fields of Schmidt Park. Grooming highlights are summarized below.

	Quarry Hill	Schmidt Park
Number of Ski Days	104	70
Number of Grooming Outings	47	20
Estimated Volunteer Grooming Hours	164.5	50
Snowmobile Mileage - Miles/Km	615/991	202/325

Grooming operations started off with difficult conditions consisting of a ½" thick layer of ice over 4" of snow. Repeated grooming soon brought it under control however we believe these tough conditions contributed to damage to the groomer comb and the need to have the snowmobile clutch repaired 2 weeks into the season. Fortunately repairs on all equipment were soon successful and grooming continued for the remainder of the season without incident, i.e. there was no further equipment damage, personal injury, or other unexpected events.

This past year we added an integrated track setter to the YTS Ginzu Groomer. It performed very well allowing us to set a quality classic track for the majority of the season even in low-snow conditions without adding to grooming time. We also added a packing drag to our equipment pool and re-acquired a scarifier from Chester Woods that had been in storage for a number of years. These both helped handle difficult conditions such as deep snow or frozen rutted hard-pack that are not well suited to the Ginzu. Grooming the Quarry Hill Trails took between 2.5 and 3 hours per outing. When extra packing was required, it added an additional 1-2 hours.

Trail conditions and grooming plans for all Rochester area ski trails were made available to area skiers at: http://www.rasc-mn.org/nordic/rasc_grooming.html throughout the ski season. We thank Dave Brudwick of the Rochester Park and Recreation Department, and Tom Eckdahl and Kevin Crilly of the Olmsted County Parks Department for taking time to provide trail information to us.

The following major observations are summarized below for each trail.

Quarry Hill Observations:

1. Ski trail use continued to be consistently high. Users consisted of a fairly even distribution of skate and classic skiers spanning all ability levels from novice to advanced. The trail also drew skiers from surrounding areas that had heard of it and were looking for a change of venue.
2. The east trails provided consistently good skiing even after freeze-thaw cycles due to their shelter and careful trail design and management.
3. No significant trail problems were identified throughout the season – surprisingly, they all worked well!
4. The temporary snow fence placed on the north loop did a good job providing a visual barrier for skiers and groomers alike to avoid the steep bank. This technique will continue to be used next season.
5. The park's sheltered valley provided an excellent venue for skiing, especially on cold, windy days.

Schmidt Park Observations:

1. Trail use was light to moderate the first half of the season. Use did decrease after the blizzard events when trail conditions were icy and less consistent.
2. The open field is exposed to wind and prone to drifting in windy, dry snow conditions. The two significant blizzard events this past season proved to be a challenge as they completely removed the snow from some areas and deposited it in 2 foot drifts in others.
3. There were at least 3 occasions of snowmobile and ATV damage to the trails this winter in spite of clearly marking them in 5 locations with XC Skier symbols.

Our thanks are extended to the following volunteer groomers: Dave Greymont, Brennan Kelly, John Resman, Jeff Robertson, Greg Rowley, Bruce Walk, and Henry Walker.

This year was unquestionably the best cross country ski season in recent memory. We'll continue to make trail improvements during the off season and be back ready to go next winter. We will also work with the Park and Recreation Department to explore better options for grooming on the northwest side of town with the hope of continuing this service next season.

Bruce Walk – April 3, 2008