

2008/2009 Season XC Ski Trail Year End Grooming Report



RASC Volunteer Ski Trail Grooming started this season on December 3, 2008 and concluded on March 4, 2009. This year exhibited a lot of variation. December was one of the snowiest on record, while January and early February saw little snowfall. Three freeze/thaw cycles eroded December's deep trail base however good grooming practices and the sheltered trails resulted in area skiing for 84 days this season. The season wound down quickly due to warm temperatures in mid February and again in early March. This year saw our efforts broadened to include Essex Park. A team of 12 volunteer groomers performed trail grooming on approximately 10km of trails at the Quarry Hill Nature Center and 8 km of trails at Essex Park. Grooming highlights are summarized below.

| | Quarry Hill | Essex Park |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Number of Ski Days | 84 | 84 |
| Number of Grooming Outings | 41 | 40 |
| Estimated Volunteer Grooming Hours | 143.5 | 120 |
| Snowmobile Mileage – Miles/KM | 591/951 | 526/851 |

We obtained a second set of grooming equipment this year consisting of another YTS Ginzu Groomer and a Skidoo Skandic V800 4-stroke snowmobile. The new snowmobile performed well with much less exhaust emissions and used significantly less gas. We're very fortunate that all equipment at both locations performed well without any significant equipment failures. We've continued to fine tune our processes to make the job go more smoothly and have now added jacks for the groomers and covers for the electrical connectors to prevent snow buildup.

This year we used Otter sleds with sandbags to help pack deeper snowfalls and also made extensive use of the scarifier drags after the major thaw cycles. We're presently sharing one scarifier between Quarry Hill and Eastwood. We'll explore building an additional scarifier to avoid the need to transport equipment from site to site during the winter.

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 high all season long.
2. We continued to employ the practices we've developed during the previous 2 seasons with the result that we received many compliments, no complaints, and were able to provide a consistently high quality ski trail for the season, weather permitting.

Essex Park Observations:

1. Trails use gradually increased as the season progressed and their presence became known. Toward the later half of the season, the parking lot could be quite full on a sunny weekend day.
2. We packed walking paths adjacent to the bike paths. While not everyone used them, they definitely helped divert traffic from the freshly groomed trails. One subjective observation is that overall winter park use seemed to dramatically increase this season with many more walkers out than has been observed in previous years.
3. Applying snow fence to the west bridge definitely increased its' ability to hold snow.
4. We experienced significant drifting in the 55th St. field and should investigate ways to shelter the trails. Snow fence was used in two areas with good results. No other trail problem areas were noted.

Our sincere thanks go to the following volunteer groomers: Eric Counselman, Dave Greymont, Matt Hawkins, Brennan Kelly, Joey Keillor, John Resman, Jeff Robertson, Greg Rowley, Al Schmidt, Bruce Walk, Henry Walker, and Andy Wood.

This year also saw a lot of publicity in the Post Bulletin for area trails and Cross Country skiing in general. There were several articles in the Post Bulletin on the Rochester Nordic Ski Team, XC Skiing featuring Quarry Hill, and Ski Trails and Grooming practices highlighting Essex Park. Another good ski season has now come to a close. The spring, summer, and fall will focus on trail enhancements for the coming year and we look forward to grooming both trail systems again next winter.

Bruce Walk – April 8, 2009