

OIL CREEK NORDIC FOCUS

GROUP NAME: Oil Creek Nordic (as sub group of the Friends of Oil Creek State Park)

FOCUS: To develop an outdoor recreation strategy for cross country skiing at Oil Creek State Park.

TASK: In order to provide a model cross country skiing destination for the tri-state area, we need to focus on maintaining, improving, and creating the cross country ski trail system in Oil Creek State Park.

PURPOSE: To provide a winter cross country skiing experience for the community and to increase visitors to the park in winter, thereby promoting tourism and economic opportunity to the area.

SHORT TERM GOALS: (1-3 years)

A. Improve current trail system by widening bridges, or replacing with culverts, eliminating wet spots, digging ditches, preventing erosion, trimming brush, cutting trees, and general maintenance.

B. Establish consistent and high quality track setting and grooming during the course of the entire ski season, thus enhancing the ski experience and drawing visitors to the ski trails.

C. Replace grooming equipment.

D. Standardize the trail markings with appropriate level of difficulty, trail use, and install appropriate warning signs.

E. Replace worn trail map (layout) signs.

F. Develop shared use policies to eliminate user conflict

(1) Groom and widen shared Red Trail and Girard Hiking Trail and mark with signs

(2) Develop and groom a specific ski trail for dog use

(3) Develop a specific trail for snow shoeing.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: (short term)

Challenge 1: Establishment of a group of dedicated volunteers to do trail improvement, development, and projects and conduct routine trail maintenance.

Opportunity 1: To create a relationship with the skiing community and Friends Group.

Challenge 2: Oil Creek State Park currently lacks sufficient staff, time, and funds to make grooming and track setting the priority it needs to be to establish a model site and enhance the cross country skiing experience throughout the entire ski season.

Opportunity 2: To seek an outside source to take over the grooming and track setting for the Park for the winter ski season.

LONG TERM GOALS (3–5+ years): As the numbers of users and visitors to the ski trail system grows we need to consider the following:

- A. Make ski equipment rentals available in Oil Creek State Park
- B. Improvement and expansion of the ski warming hut may be needed
- C. Provide food and drink concession
- D. Programming– lessons, races, special events
- E. Develop overnight shelter area near ski trail system
- F. Future development and expansion of ski trail system

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: (long term)

Challenge 1: Lack of ski equipment and staff to operate ski equipment rentals necessary for increasing user numbers and developing programming.

Opportunity 1: Seek outside sources for providing ski equipment rentals and programming.

Challenge 2: Lack of funds and personnel for construction of ski hut improvement or expansion and development of shelter site.

Opportunity 2: Seek grant money, fund raising, or corporate sponsorship to provide funding.

THEMATIC ELEMENTS:

1. Through ski trail improvements and development, participants will develop an appreciation for cross country skiing in Oil Creek State Park.
2. Consistent high quality grooming and track setting will enhance the cross country ski experience for all levels of visitors thus drawing more usage of the trail system.
3. Cross country skiing is a great way to access winter forests and view wildlife in the winter at Oil Creek State Park.
4. Cross Country skiing is an excellent way for visitors to stay physically fit and get outdoors in winter.
5. Oil Creek State Park will be appreciated as a high quality recreational destination for winter activity.

STEWARDSHIP:

- A. The Oil Creek Nordic group will support Oil Creek State Park through sustaining the ski trail system.
- B. The Oil Creek Nordic group will advocate cross country skiing as a viable winter activity in Oil Creek State Park.
- C. The Oil Creek Nordic group hopes to develop a connection with and pride in Oil Creek State Park in local communities in the Venango County area.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE:

- A. Collect statistics on user numbers
- B. Solicit information on user experience
- C. Use findings to plan for future focus and goals

EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

- A. Develop relationship and cooperation with Oil and Gas Companies
- B. Develop corporate sponsorships
- C. Work with Boy Scouts, Vision Quest, and Community Service hours for trail projects
- D. Other community organizations

INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS:

Park Staff
Friends Group/PPFF
Over the Hill Gang

MARKETING:

1. Improve relationship with local newspapers
2. Advertise in larger areas such as in Pittsburgh, Erie, and Cleveland
3. Provide articles and information for the Friends newsletter and website
4. Develop an email contact list for Nordic group
5. Develop a pamphlet with ski area information for distribution

OIL CREEK NORDIC
ACTION PLAN FOR THE YEAR 2011

1. Establish a sub-group of the Friends to be called: **Oil Creek Nordic**
2. Appointment of group chairman (John Sims)
3. Seek buy-in from the Friends group, Park Staff, and community to support focus and goals of the Nordic group
4. Establish a core committee
5. Establish a volunteer contact and email list
6. Identify and prioritize specific ski trail projects to be completed with time lines before Dec. 2011
7. Decide future of grooming and track setting for the 2011-2012 ski season
8. Begin plans for the building and development of a ski trail for dog use to eliminate user conflicts
9. Complete standardization of trail markings and signage, including replacing worn trail map signs before Dec 2011

Respectfully Submitted,

Peg and John Sims