U P S L O P E

Newsletter of the Potomac Nordic Ski Club (PNSC)

Visit Us On the WEB at http://www.patcskitouring.us

April 2026

UpComing Attractions In Fall UPSLOPE

- Plans for Ski Fair
- 2026-27 Season Schedule

Inside this issue:

(blue links are live)

Your PNSC Officer Contacts	2
From the Slopes	2
Laurel Highlands MLK Weekend	3
STRIPE Membership Payment	3
Lake Placid (cont.)	4
Local Skiing All Over	8
Laurel Highlands MLK Weekend (cont).	9
BW Falls Skiing By A Beginner	9
When ULLR Says Jump	11
Snow Drought Punishes CO	12
White Grass Work Trip	14
John Caldwell, Father of U.S. Cross-Country Skiing	14

Lake Placid, Adirondacks, New York February 2026

by Jenny Plummer-Welker



Downtown Lake Placid and the Olympic complex
photo by Yvonne Thayer

What an awesome time to be in Lake Placid, New York! Whether Ralph Heimlich knew it or not, when he picked the location and dates for the Potomac Nordic Ski Club's trip to Lake Placid, it was awesome to be there during the 25th Winter Olympiad. Lake Placid has hosted the Winter Olympics twice, in 1932 and 1980. Lake Placid has facilities that are used for training current Winter Olympians. The Olympic spirit was running high. We saw signs wishing the 2026 Winter Olympians the best and followed the Milan-Cortina games on TV in the evening. Go USA!

Sixteen people traveled to Lake Placid for the trip: Ralph Heimlich, Nancy Doyle, Althea Johnston, Bela and Leigh Hall Mariassy, Sharon "Shae" Metcalf, Brian O'Konski, Rick Royer, Doug and Marcie Schubert, Yvonne Thayer, Sophie Troy, Ron and Jan Tucker, Jane Shey, and me. This was my second Ski Club trip since joining in January 2025. Some of the people this year were on the trip to Lapland Lake

(Continued on page 5)

APRES SKI PARTY Saturday, May 2, 2026

Meeting at 3:30 PM Potluck at 5:00 PM

This is a POT LUCK PARTY: Everyone is to bring a dish or edible contribution that others will enjoy, either beatifically healthful or sinfully rich—Your choice! The Section will provide beer and wine.



PATC HQ, 118 Park St, Vienna, VA 22180

Driving directions: Navigate to 118 Park St, Vienna, VA 22180. Park in back lot or at next door building. Look for the Ski Fair Sign out front.

PNSC Officers

Chair
Steve Jarvis
H: 703-282-6752
jarsnv7@msn.com

Vice-Chair
Dick Simmons
H: 410-409-5552 (cell)
dsimmons72@msn.com

Secretary
Stacey Dimaria
H: 301 908 7115 (cell)
staceydim@gmail.com

Treasurer (Acting)
Dick Simmons
H: 410-409-5552 (cell)
dsimmons72@msn.com

Trip Coordinator
Dave Jordahl
H: 301-491-1356 (cell)
westpatc@hotmail.com

Webmaster
Ralph Heimlich
H: 240-472-8825 (cell)
heimlichfamily@comcast.net

Membership Coordinator
Douglas Lesar
H: 301-520-9516 (cell)
dlesar@comcast.net

UPSLOPE Editor
Ralph Heimlich
H: 240-472-8825 (cell)
heimlichfamily@comcast.net

FROM THE SLOPES – Chair Notes

Hi Fellow Skiers and new members of the Potomac Nordic Ski Club!

It was a bit of an up and down season with the La Nina weather pattern but there were some great skiing opportunities to be had. Sometimes the weather does not line up with the scheduled trips and sometimes it does.

There was some great informal coordination on the groups I.O. during the January snow event, and a lot of folks got quite a bit of skiing out the back door and in the local area. I live in Northern Virginia and the hard freeze of the rain layer on top of the snow made for a firm ski. It appears the Maryland folks had a better snow/rain mix, especially the farther north you went.

Thanks to the trip leaders for helping navigate the changing weather for the formal trips and for the trip participants' patience and perseverance, especially when we had to cancel. Timing is everything, as you know, especially in the mid-Atlantic. Ralph led a wonderful excursion trip to Lake Placid, NY, and you'll hear about Greg's Laurel Highland adventures along with Al Larsen's adventures out West, and more in this edition of ***Upslope.***

Your Potomac Nordic Ski Club leadership has been active in our transition after PATC turned us loose as of December 31, 2025. Thanks to collaboration with Vice Chair Dick Simmons, and a legal team we hired, we have now incorporated in the state of Maryland and have registered with the IRS as a 501(c)7 non-profit sports club. We now have new articles of incorporation and have been updating the bylaws, website, and other documents to reflect our new independent Nordic identity.

While it feels good to be independent, we are still friends with PATC and their leadership team and will be coordinating on a Memorandum of Agreement to formalize our cooperation in the pursuit of adventure in the great outdoors. In fact, PATC is allowing us to hold our annual **Après Ski meeting and party** in the PATC Headquarters in Vienna on **Saturday, May 2, 2026**. We are trying something new this year and are meeting in the same location as the Ski Fair, the conference room in the back of PATC HQ. We'll start out with an officers meeting from 3:30 – 5:00 pm, which anyone can attend. The Potluck party starts at 5:00 pm and we will be showing pictures from the past season's trips. Please bring some food or beverages to share. The PATC Headquarter is located at 118 Park Street Vienna, VA, 22180-4609. There is ample parking behind the building and next door. We'll have the back door open for you! Bring a thumb drive with your photos to share, as well.

PNSC APRES SKI PARTY, May 2, 2026

118 Park Street Vienna, VA, 22180-4609

Officers Meeting: 3:30 – 5:00 pm

Potluck Party and Slide Show: 5:00 – 7:00 pm



Laurel Highlands PA XC Ski Trip Over MLK Weekend

by Greg Westernik

Our merry group of two couples and two single men drove up friday morning from the coastal plain past a sea of snow wasteland all the way until we passed out of the Allegheny Tunnel via PA Turnpike westward into Somerset county, PA. For me, the drive one way from my home in Woodbridge, Virginia, to Somerset, Pennsylvania, was 190 miles, some 98 percent interstate.

Entering Somerset county, the land opened to a covering of at least 4 inches of snowfall with no base. Somerset,



Participants on PNSC's MLK Laurel Highlands XC ski trip on the Laurel Ridge PA State Park trails Sunday morning 1/18 (l. to r. Adir Aronovish, Sam Assi, and Alena Rubtsova) ***photo by Greg Westernik***

being the highest county in PA, is around 2,200 feet elevation. There was much lower snow cover in downtown Somerset. The Laurel Highlands ridges where we skied range from 2,600 to 2,800 feet elevation and are 90 miles due north of Canaan Valley WV.

Each day of the weekend this section of trails in the Laurel Highlands was refreshed with lake-effect snow ....1 inch Friday daytime, 1-2 inches on Saturday, 1 inch overnight on Sunday...even overnight after sunset on Sunday. The snow was getting more and more powdery as the temps dropped from just below freezing Saturday morning to 15

(Continued on page 10)

STRIPE Membership Payment Option Modified for PNSC

The on-line membership application and renewal capability, enabled by the section's new STRIPE account, has been modified to reflect our new existence as Potomac Nordic Ski Club. This new capability reduces section postal mailing expenses, exposure of checks to mail theft, and saves PNSC volunteers much time and trouble.

Thanks are extended to all the section officers and PNSC web services contractor Gregg Banse who made implementation of this long-overdue service a reality.

Doug Lesar
Membership Coordinator

Lake Placid (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Nordic Center last year.

Our group was large enough that we needed two rental houses. Thankfully, Ralph was able to find a big house and a small house within walking distance of each other. Our dinners were prepared by Leigh and served in the big house. Both houses were within walking distance of Lake Placid's Main Street. This trip differed from last year's trip to Lapland Lake: We would need to drive to our skiing and snowshoeing destinations, while ice skating on the James C. Sheffield Speed Skating Oval, located adjacent to Main Street, was within walking distance.



Bridge onto the Mt Van Hoevenberg ski trails (l. to r. Ralph, Bela, Brian and Yvonne) ***photo by Jenny Plummer-Welker***

Our group was large and with diverse interests so not everyone went to the same places at the same time. Some took time to walk to downtown Lake Placid to go dog sledding on Mirror Lake (Shae, Leigh and Bela) or visit the Lake Placid Olympic Museum, others went ice skating in town (Nancy, Yvonne) or downhill skiing at Whiteface Mountain (Sophie), while another headed up the mountains, preferring to log elevation (Rick). Here are some of the places we visited.

Mount Van Hoevenberg—For our first full day in the Adirondacks, most of the group traveled to Mount Van Hoevenberg Olympic Sports Complex. Mt. Hoevenberg has hosted nordic events for two Olympic Winter Games (1932 and 1980) and continues as training and competition venue. Mt. Van Hoevenberg has Expert World Cup Trails and recreational trails. Members of our group who skied at Mt. Hoevenberg before were impressed with the new Mountain Pass Lodge. The lodge includes the reception area for paying for passes, a ski shop, a rental shop, a café, a dining area, and a climbing wall. While I was putting on my skis, standing on the bridge outside the lodge, I saw a man ski by with a biathlon rifle strapped to his back. The biathlon range is within sight of the lodge. I later learned that biathlon lessons are available, on skis in the winter and on mountain bicycles in the summer. The easy green trails are near the lodge. Several of us took a break in Josie's Cabin, after a teenager on winter break, took the lead into the cabin. We returned to the lodge for a lunch break – shorter than anticipated given that the emergency alarm sounded and we were directed to leave the building (a malfunctioning sprinkler in the lodge's food cooler box). In the afternoon some of us skied the green trails, crossed the bridge over the vehicle entrance, Bobsled Run Lane, and onto the blue trails. We passed the 1980 Biathlon Range and skied down to the Twin Bridges before making our way back. We passed a field of rectangular boxes, some metal, others wood. On several, we could see text and flags/shields: "THIS END UP" and "DO NOT STACK". The bobsleds! I was not sure if this was s storage field for the bobsleds or a bobsled graveyard.



Bridge on Paul Smith's VIC trails (l. to r. Bela, Jane, Jan, Yvonne and Althea) ***photo by Jenny Plummer-Welker***

Paul Smith's College Visitor Interpretative Center—Many of the group traveled to Paul Smith's College mid-week and then on the weekend. The trails are accessed via the college's Visitor Interpretative Center (VIC). I have hiked the VIC's trails in warmer months. I was now experiencing the trails in the winter and on skis. The VIC has groomed trails for traditional and skate skiing plus ungroomed trails and trails for snowshoeing. The VIC staff posted a report on February 18 at 7:21 AM *"The Piston Bully is out grooming and tracksetting all wide trails this AM. We have a frozen granular trail surface; skiing will be fast! Enjoy your ski or snowshoe!"* The Lodge was open for us to obtain color paper

(Continued on page 5)

Lake Placid (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

maps and our day passes. Later in the day we returned to warm up, rest, and eat lunch in the Lodge's west side, which has two stories of windows. Bela noticed that the VIC had a waterproof Lake Placid and Saranac Lake Winter Trails Map available for sale (Third Edition by Green Goat Maps, © 2024). Several of us bought the map. Perhaps Bela should have asked for a commission. When some of us returned on Saturday, I was pleasantly surprised that while there were more people on the trails, including participants in a collegiate snowshoe race, the trails were not crowded.



Crossing the spillway from Lake Placid on the Jack Rabbit trail (l. to r. Jenny, Ron, Jan) ***photo by Ralph Heimlich***

Brewster Peninsula Trails and Jackrabbit Ski Trail—The Brewster Peninsula Trails are located along the shore of Lake Placid. The 50 km Jackrabbit Ski Trail also passes near the Peninsula Trails. Over the course of the day, I cross country skied, hiked with micro spikes and poles, and snow shoed for the first time – thanks to Ralph for lending me a pair of snowshoes. At one point northeast of Lake Placid's lake outlet dam, the Lake Shore Trail climbs in elevation. I turned around here, skied back to the parking lot, and traded skis for micro spikes. Several of us hiked the Lake Shore Trail, west to east. Where the Lake Shore Trail intersects the Corridor Trail, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation has posted an "ATTENTION" sign. Perhaps it would be helpful to have similar attention signs posted in the parking lot and at the western side of the Lake Shore Trail where the trail begins to climb in elevation. The sign is dilapidated and text is missing. What is visible on the wood sign is the following text in yellow paint: *"ENTIO !", "CROSS-COUNTRY SKIERS", "ESHORE TRAIL NOT REC…", " / TRY SK ", and "COVER ROOTS, S S ONE"* and finally "S.D.E.C" in small font at the bottom.

After returning to the parking lot, Ralph, Ron, Jan, and I stayed for a tailgate lunch, while the others headed out on other ventures. We switched to snowshoes and snow shoed the Jackrabbit Trail. Part of the Jackrabbit Trail we traversed was across private property. We passed large houses, one with a fake topiary moose. After about a mile, we reached a crest, the trail had emerged alongside a golf course (Lake Placid Lodge's). We chose to pause here, apply sunscreen, and turn around. We took care to snowshoe to the side of the center of the trail, the ski track. The Jackrabbit Ski Trail was founded in 1986 by the Adirondack Ski Touring Council. About 10 years ago the council joined with the Barkeaters Trails Alliance (BETA), which is the steward of the trail. The trail connects Keene to Paul Smith's, traveling through Lake Placid and Saranac Lake along the way.

> *"The trail is named in honor of Herman "Jack Rabbit" Johannsen, who was a legendary skiing pioneer both in the Adirondacks and, later, in Canada. There he constructed the famous Maple Leaf Trail and helped to start the 100 mile, two-day Canadian Ski Marathon. While living and vacationing in Lake Placid between 1916 and 1928, Johannsen laid out some of the original routes used by today's trail. He was also famous for his one-day ascents of Marcy starting from Lake Placid—a round-trip of over 30 miles. "Jack Rabbit" died in 1987 in his native Norway at age 111, skiing nearly to the time of his death."*
>
> Barkeaters Trails Alliance website, https://www.betatrails.org/jackrabbit-ski-trail.html, accessed March 16, 2026



On the trails at John Brown's Farm (l. to r. Ralph, Brian and Bela) ***photo by Bela Mariassy***

John Brown's Farm and Henry's Woods—John Brown's Farm is the historic house and farm of fiery abolitionist John Brown, who lived here from 1849 to the mid-1850s. Rick visited Henry's Woods. There are about four miles of trails at each place. Rick saw what may have been a Pine Marten. Rick took an awesome photo of the marten in a tree looking down at him. On Sunday, Bela and I traveled to Henry's Woods to snow-

(Continued on page 6)

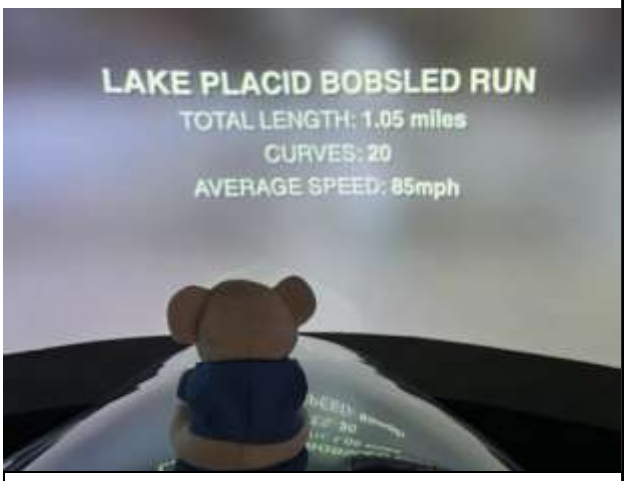
Lake Placid (cont.)



A curious pine marten checks out Rick on the trail at Henry's Woods *photo by Rick Royer*

(Continued from page 5)

shoe the trails. It snowed for most of our outing. We snowshoed the Connector Trail to the Loop Trail. We crossed the Bridge to Nowhere and back (with photographs to prove it). We saw blue lines connecting trees in the woods – tubes to collect sap. We took the interior Plateau Trail. There were two vista points along the Plateau Trail where we could see Wilmington Notch and the Sentinel Range. We were on the lookout for a marten, like Rick saw, but did not see any, just a few dogs that people brought with them as they skied or snowshoed. We snowshoed over three miles. I doubled my distance from my first snowshoeing outing!



Jenny's Koala Bear taking the virtual bobsled run *photo by Jenny Plummer-Welker*

Lake Placid Olympic Museum—The Lake Placid Olympic Museum is located on Main Street. A museum poster proclaimed: DESIGN, INSPIRATION, PASSION, HISTORY, CULTURAL. The letters were black except one letter in each word was in an Olympic color (blue, yellow, green, or red), which spelled SPORT. What a cool museum! On display is Olympic memorabilia dating back to the 1930s. Displays show the creation of the bobsled run and stadium for ice skating and hockey. There are interactive displays on eco-friendly practices to help protect winter, such as conserving water and walking or bicycling instead of driving. A video explained how artificial snow is made, featuring the snowmakers of Whiteface Mountain. There are magnified images of real and artificial snowflakes. Another exhibit features a red, white, and blue bobsled sporting stars and stripes nestled within a curved wall. Videos of two bobsled courses were available: St. Moritz-Celerina Olympia Bobrun and Mt. Van Hoevenberg Sliding Center. I chose the Mt. Van Hoevenberg run since I had been there earlier in the week. The run takes about 1 minute 20 seconds and is 1.05 miles long, has 20 curves, and averages 85 MPH. It was quite a ride! Also on display are USA uniforms for Winter Games over the years. Another place which had displays on the Lake Placid Winter Olympics was the Lake Placid Public Library, also located on Main Street.



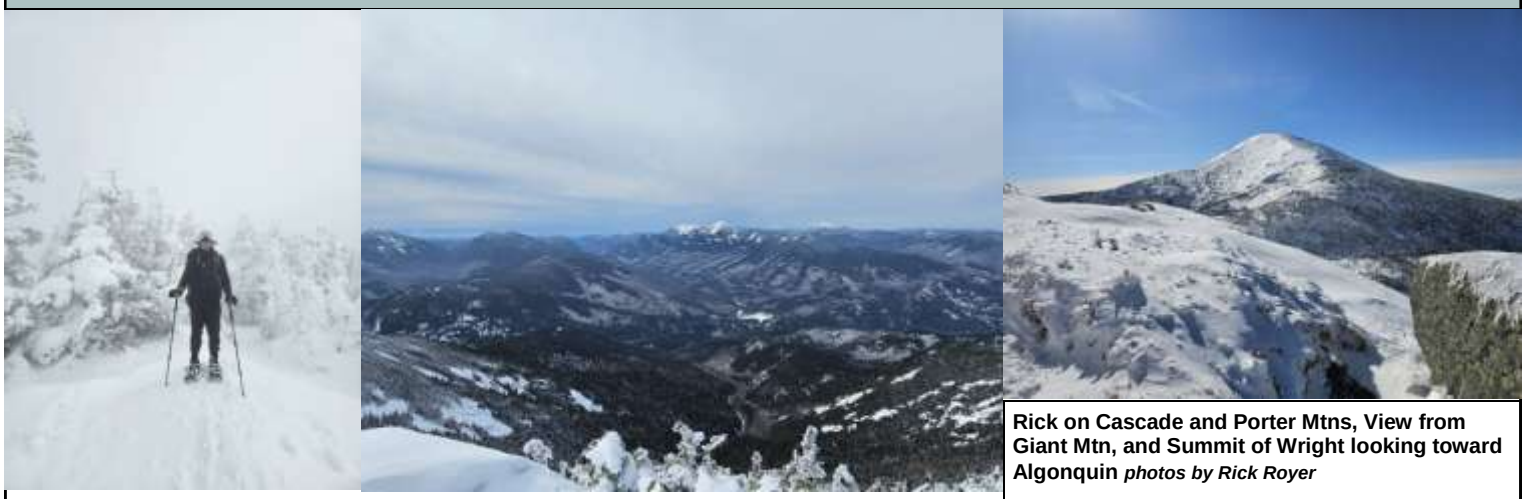
Sophie Troy and Doug Schubert at Dewey Mountain *photo by Marcie Schubert*

The Big Mountain Deli and Crêperie offers "46 of the Best Sandwiches in the High Peaks" (there are 46 peaks over 4,000 feet in altitude in the ADK and people who climb them all are known as 46ers) and lists the sandwiches on a chalkboard starting with #1 Marcy. It reminded me of the Annapolis deli, Chick & Ruth's with its list of sandwiches. With Annapolis being the state capital, the sandwiches are named for Maryland politicians.

Dewey Mountain Recreation Center—On Sunday, many of the group visited Dewey Mountain Recreation Center to ski the trails south of Saranac Lake. In the afternoon, Bela and Leigh took a dogsled ride on Lake Placid. I visited the stores on Main Street, on a mission to find a ski hat for my mother that met the specs she texted me on Saturday morning. I found the perfect hat, red, white, and blue with stars and stripes. Perfect for sporting the USA Olympic spirit.

(Continued on page 7)

Lake Placid (cont.)



Rick on Cascade and Porter Mtns, View from Giant Mtn, and Summit of Wright looking toward Algonquin ***photos by Rick Royer***

(Continued from page 6)

Forty-Six High Peaks of the Adirondack Mountains—Rick snow shoed and hiked several of the 46ers mountains: Cascade Mountain (4,098'), Porter Mountain (4,059'), Giant Mountain (4,627'), Wright Mountain (4,580'), and Algonquin Mountain (5,114', second highest in the Adirondacks).

On the last morning, Ralph made pancakes. What a treat to top the pancakes with maple syrup! It snowed on our way out of the Adirondacks.

During our trip to Lake Placid, we celebrated Bela's birthday. I hope I am as active as Bela when I reach his age. Althea continued her tradition of baking a cake for dessert, even making the icing from scratch. While we were in Lake Placid, PNSC member Jennifer Bine came to visit one evening. She moved from the D.C. area to the Adirondacks years ago. It was great to catch up with her.



Leigh and Bela taking a dog sled ride on Mirror Lake ***photo from Leigh Mariassy***

Some comments from participants—Shae, *"HUGE THANKS...to Ralph for the herculean task of organizing this trip and to Leigh for producing delicious dinners every night for 16 hungry folks!! And to all you intrepid Xcountry skiers...it was fun discovering new snowy trails with you. A terrific time had by all."*

Yvonne commented after arriving home: *"Thanks too to Ralph for making it happen and to Leigh and Ralph for keeping us well fed and cared for. As the pictures show, we fanned out well and found lots of things to do. Special kudos for those sunrise and sunset pictures. It was especially memorable to be there during the '26 Winter Olympics and relive the thrill of the Miracle on Ice."*

Jane noted, *"It was a fabulous week and we will always remember this Olympics."*

Thanks to Rick for creating a digital photo album, which he organized "with the list of participants, more text descriptions, web links to trail locations, and grouped photos by activity."

Thanks to each of the participants for making the trip a memorable one. Special thanks to Ralph for coordinating the trip and to Leigh for preparing the delicious appetizers and dinners. Being in a heritage Olympic Winter Games host town during the 2026 Olympics was truly special. I am looking forward to the 2030 Winter Olympics, perhaps returning to Lake Placid or visiting another Olympic heritage site.

A Cold Trip to Laurel Mountain

By Greg Westernik

Just back from enjoying the kind of cold injection air mass and dry snow showers typically found in Northeastern US border states, ideal for XC skiing in the PA Highlands under a huge packed powder base over 2+ feet.

PNSC trip participants included Greg Westernik, Mitch Grunes and new members Robin Hirshorn and Craig Olinger. We skied the northern part of Laurel Mountain State Park trails on Saturday 2/7 and at Laurel Ridge SP on Sunday 2/8. Since there was a 5km XC classical ski race at Laurel Mountain SP on Sunday morning, we skied there on Saturday. We found the polar and extra special green kick waxes may have been a bit too soft given the snow conditions and temps at times at Laurel Mountain. We kept to the forest to avoid the worst of the wind chill temps all weekend.

Some ask "Why XC ski when the frigid air hurts your Exposed Skin/Face?" I refer you to the next group selfie picture on the Bill Alberts trail at Laurel Mountain SP. Robin is leftmost with the ski goggles on, followed by Craig in the white surgical face mask [ASTM Level 3] and Greg with no mask in his green balaclava. A bunch of eager skiers indeed. Robin and Greg encountered some occasional fogging up issues with their goggles.



Three amigos in cold weather gear ***photo by Mitch Grunes***

The National Weather Service issued various hazardous weather conditions for the high ridges of Laurel Highlands during the PNSC Laurel Highlands trip 2/6-8/2026. They included:

For Fri 2/6 only: Hazardous Weather Outlook Winter Weather Advisory in effect from February 6, 10:00 AM EST until February 7, 07:00 AM EST Extreme Cold Warning in effect from February 7, 01:00 AM EST until February 8, 10:00 AM EST Wind Advisory in effect from February 7, 12:00 AM EST until February 7, 10:00 PM EST

In addition, the NWS issued the following detailed forecast for the entire Somerset County PA area, including favorite XC ski areas Laurel Mountain and Laurel Ridge SP:

✱ **Saturday 2/7—**Cloudy most of day. Windy and much colder with highs around 5 degrees F and blowing snow off the roofs and treetops. Northwest winds 20 to 30 mph with gusts up to 45 mph. Wind chill values as low as 28F below.

✱ **Sunday 2/8—**Partly sunny all day. Continued cold with highs around 18. West winds 10 to 15 mph with gusts up to 30 mph. Wind chill values as low as 20 below.



Saturday morning at the Summit Diner ***photo by Greg Westernik***

Snow Conditions Reported—A few inches of new snow fell on both Friday overnight and Saturday to refresh the trails for our winter gliding pleasure. If you fell outside the packed powder area of ski trails, it was challenging indeed to get back standing on top of your skis given the 2.5+ feet of unpacked snow waiting to swallow up you or your equipment! Greg almost lost a pole in the unpacked snow area after one fall, if not for efforts of Craig Olinger.

From Laurel Ridge SP—Cold temps barely above 5 deg F, perfectly packed surface with over 2' of snow. On Sat. 7 February 2026, they claimed 3-4" fell Friday night.

From Laurel Mountain SP—On Saturday 2/7 perfectly packed surface with over 2' of snow. We found 2-3" new snow fell overnight. Groomers tracked 9 km of trails on Saturday, in preparation for PACCSA Kinda-hard 5k classical ski race Sunday. Found high temps in mid-teens for Sunday.

On Saturday morning for breakfast, we visited the local Summit Diner for

(Continued on page 14)

Skiing All Over Our Area

Here are some reports by PNSC members trying to ski with the big snow we got locally in January.



1/25: Mitch Hyman—I am in upper northwest DC, we have about 5 inches of snow/ sleet, it is very dense and compact and very skiable, even the sidewalks that were shoveled an hour ago are skiable.



1/25: Alena Rubtsova—We put on our skis at 9 am and skied around the houses until the snowplow started clearing the snow. It was snowing with icy flakes, but that didn't stop us from enjoying our morning ski.

1/25: John Ausema—I skied at Greenbelt Lake this morning. Decent conditions, even with a sleet/snow mix coming down. About 6" fell overnight. Trail is wide and flat and encircles the lake, about 1.3 miles





1/25: Kathy Koutze—My ski tracks in falls church. Trails behind Providence Rec Center this afternoon 4-6 inches of snow and sleet combined. Great ski, but my back hurts from shoveling out the driveway.

1/29: Dick Simmons--I skied the Torrey Brown (NCR) trail north of Baltimore Tuesday afternoon. A few welcomed ski tracks and virtually no footprints. The sleet on top of snow made for pretty ideal glide. That's the Gunpowder River along the trail. Happy Skiing!



Update 1/31—I scouted the trail further north around Monkton Rd. There are no ski tracks there only hard pack ice or large chunks from foot traffic. It is not skiable. The section with track is north of Sparks Rd for 2-2.5 miles. The Torrey Brown Rail Trail (aka NCR) has been skiing well all week. Cold temps and deep crunchy snow have discouraged the normal foot traffic. And a few skiers have made nice tracks that glide well on the frosted surface. It is very flat which eliminates any fast downhills. The trail is north of Baltimore and follows the Gunpowder River along many sections. Great scenery. Enjoy!

2/11:Kathy Koutze—The Cross County Trail in Fairfax today was great —-Around 10 this morning. Able to glide on the softened snow Crete. I have metal edged skis and poles with metal tips.

2/14: Craig—2/14: CraigI skied at Burke Lake park golf course today. Conditions were very nice. Firm base with a little loose on top for turns/stops.

Laurel Highlands MLK (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)
degrees above zero Sunday morning. Some of us enjoyed an afternoon ski on Friday, a morning ski on Sunday, and full day on Saturday.

Temps never got above freezing on the ridges of the Highlands all weekend. All the trails were open at Laurel Ridge State Park Saturday and Sunday, with some 20km groomed and another total 10km ungroomed covering expert Black and Yellow trails. The ground seemed firm and the snow base was around 2 inches at Laurel Ridge after grooming excluding the snow refreshes. Since the Laurel Ridge SP trails are well graded with few snowsnakes (wet spots, protuding rocks, blowdowns), our glides did little zigzagging and were true. The parking lot was full and there were plenty of skiers on Saturday with PACCSA staff giving free XC ski lessons to some children.

On Sunday I went over to Laurel Mountain SP for a morning trip while the rest returned to Laurel Hill SP. The snowsnakes were out in force at Laurel Mountain at several spots on several trails. I decided to go to the non-machine groomed JE Miller trail at the south end of Laurel Mountain where the 2+ mile trail grade is smoothest and snowsnakes the least. I was rewarded with almost no ski tracks on this trail, almost no zigzagging and snowsnakes. I basically had the trail all to myself in the morning until lunchtime.

Here were latest trail condition reports from some favorite PA Highlands XC ski places published on the paccsa.org website, two on Saturday conditions and one on Monday MLK conditions:

North Woods—Snow continued beyond the forecasted window into Sunday evening and through the night freshening up the North Woods trails with a few more inches of dry powder - trails conditions should be pretty nice today! Temperatures will be colder today and especially cold tomorrow so be prepared with layers, stay hydrated and bring along some snacks for energy. Temperatures are forecast to moderate a little on Wednesday but still remain in the 30's before dropping again along with more snow in the forecast - trail conditions should be good thru the end of January if the current forecast holds true!

Laurel Mountain State Park—Skiing was very marginal on Saturday. There was about 3-4 inches on the ground, but you had to zigzag a lot to miss rocks and damp spots. Good news: The ground was starting to firm up. We just need snow! Do the dance!

Blackwater Falls Skiing Through the Eyes of a New Skier



Stargazing on a wintery night ***photo by Dee Slaughter***

By Dee Slaughter

This was our first trip with the Potomac Nordic Ski Club (PNSC). Prior to the trip, the leader (Ralph Heimlich) sent updates on what to expect weather wise (not a lot of snow), food menu for the duration and general housekeeping stuff (check-in, etc.).

Day 1—My husband Dave and I arrived early enough to fit in half a day of downhill skiing at Canaan Valley Ski Resort. A few things to note – age 60+ skiers get a dis-

(Continued on page 11)

Black Water Falls First Trip (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

count and on Tuesdays, if you donate food to their food pantry, there is an extra discount for all skiers!

We got to the cabin a little after 3 pm; Ralph was already there setting up. He made us feel very welcome from the start, and as others arrived, introductions were made. After settling in, Ralph started dinner prep for a delicious split pea soup with ham, sourdough bread and a salad.

At night, Ralph took a bunch of us on a stargazing trip—a short walk from the cabin. It was awesome to see the stars without any light pollution.



Frozen Blackwater Falls ***photo by Dee Slaughter***



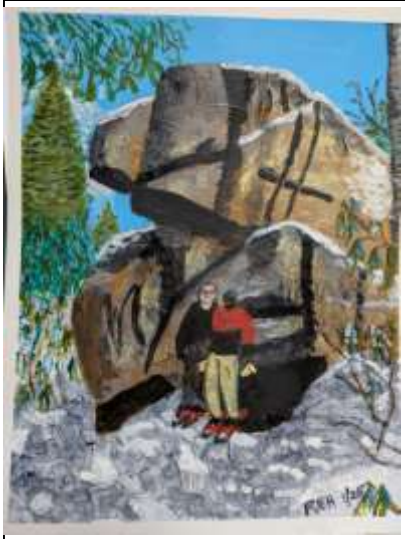
Althea baked a German Chocolate cake. Pineapple cole slaw, asparagus almandine and baked potatoes to go with the baked salmon ***photo by Ralph Heimlich***

Day 2—No additional snow had fallen so conditions for cross-country skiing weren't great but there were loads of trails to hike. Dave and I managed to do a little bit of both, but mainly explored the area around Blackwater falls. In the evening we all traded stories about what we did during the day, helped a little with prepping for dinner (Ralph had most of it well in hand). Althea baked a cake. Dinner was again delicious – asparagus almondine with baked salmon.

Day 3 (last full day)—A group of us decided to hike/snowshoe to Elakala falls in the morning after breakfast. That was a fun and challenging on snowshoes (due to very little snow coverage in spots). All said, it got the blood pumping! After lunch some of us went on another hike (sans snowshoes). It was great – Ralph is quite knowledgeable about the area's flora and fauna and made a fun guide. Dinner was spaghetti and meatballs, with a salad (both delicious)! We ended with a dip in the BW Lodge pool and hot tub.



Althea Johnston, Dave and Dee Slaughter, Ron and Jan Tucker, and Jane Shey on the Elakala Trail ***photo by Ralph Heimlich***



Dave and Dee Slaughter by Balanced Rock, BWF SP painting ***by Ralph Heimlich***

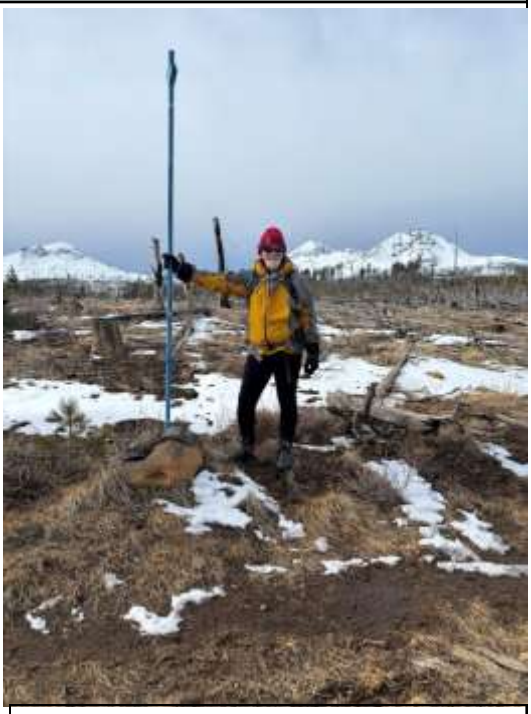
Day 4—Time to pack up an leave. Ralph made pancakes for those who wanted, which was very nice. We all pitched in to clear up the premises before leaving.

Side note: I lost my credit card, apparently it was in the bedclothes. Ralph was nice enough to go back to get it from the housekeeping staff, tip extra and contact me that he had the card. Even without him doing that, I would highly recommend going on a PNSC trip, especially one that he leads.

Overall, we had a really good time with Ralph and the other members of the group!

When Ullr Says "Jump", You Say "How High?"

by Al Larsen



No snow low ***photo by Anne Larsen***

The Cascade Mountains in Oregon are beautiful and a terrific venue for xc skiing of all types—groomed resorts, backcountry trails, steep meadow teli tracking, mountain passes, and summer dirt roads turned winter wonderland. There is always snow in the Cascades, even on the hottest day of summer. The question is always, how high in elevation to find it. Same question in winter: When a storm comes in, is it snowing at sea level, at 4,000' or at 8,000'? If the former, hot diggity. Snow even at the Coast and in Portland. If the latter, well darn, that means rain at many of the best venues, but still snow at the high spots. If 4,000', that means many options are open and awaiting.

Case in point: As I write this, My wife Anne and I are spending a month, straddling February and March in Sisters, Oregon. Sisters is in the foothills of the Central Oregon Cascade Mountains, about 20 miles east of the summit of the Cascades, at about 3,500' in elevation. Usually this time of year, there is a constant 6-12" of snow on the ground in town, with regular dumps occasionally raising that to several feet. This year, as we arrive, there is no snow at all in town, and hasn't been for much of the winter.



So so snow so high ***photo by Anne Larsen***

Half an hour outside of town, higher up toward the Three Sisters and Broken Top peaks, there are a series of xc ski trials starting out from 5,200'. Usually there are several feet of snow at that elevation. Photo #1 shows the current, um, snow level when we first arrived—an inch or so of melted and refrozen ice. That trail marker you see usually has to be that tall so it's looking at you at face level. Great hiking when we went up there the week we arrived: Skiing, not so much. Heading toward Mt. Bachelor the next day, the trails at 6,000' that usually have 3-5 feet of snow had 3-5 inches and weren't really skiable. But, a little further up the road, at 6,500-7000', there was plenty of snow (see Photo #2)—probably over 5', and great skiing conditions. So, how high? Whatever the current conditions require, but it's there somewhere.



New Snow, Snow Low, Snow High ***photo by Ed Johnson***

Breaking news: After weeks of no new snow in the Central Oregon Cascades, a series of new dumps are arriving. Yesterday at Santiam Pass at the summit of the mountains, the xc ski trails there had 1-2', pretty good, but in need of refreshing. Today, going back up, they were getting about 3" of new, with a similar amount forecasted each of the next four days, So, Thursday's "how high" answer becomes Monday's "much lower" answer.

Similarly, after several of those new 4-5" dumps, Swampy Lakes ski trails, part way up Century Drive toward Bachelor, which had only 2" of refrozen ice the previous week were now perfect. One of the nicest ski outings I've ever had—5

(Continued on page 14)

Snow Drought Pushes Colorado XC Areas to the Brink

Amid a record snow drought across the Western U.S., dirt is a common and unwanted sight at ski areas across the intermountain West this year. Due to high temperatures and low precipitation, snow coverage across the Western U.S. likely peaked in February at around 38% of average, according to a recent analysis by the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado Boulder. The percentage marks a record low since satellites started measuring snow coverage 26 years ago.

For example, at the Eldora Nordic Center in Colorado, access is limited to season or multiday pass holders. On a recent morning in February, dedicated skiers could only explore a fraction of the resort until 11 a.m. The remainder of the day was set aside for a backbreaking task: shoveling pockets of snow from the woods onto brown spots on the trails.



The Eldora Mountain Ski Resort Nordic Center is usually covered with more snow this time of year. Feb. 13, 2026 ***photo by Colorado Public Radio News***

Climate change increases the likelihood of similar conditions in the coming decades. That's an especially daunting prospect for cross-country areas, which could have an even tougher time adapting to a hotter, drier future than more popular downhill resorts.

For the full story, see https://www.cpr.org/2026/03/10/cross-country-skiing-drought-struggles/

From: Colorado Public Radio News

New Photo Galleries and Video on our Website

New photo galleries and video from this season's ski trips are online at our website. Albums from the Lake Placid, NY, and Blackwater Falls, WV trips are posted. There are also two new videos from Lake Placid and the Blackwater trip.

Check them out at https://patcskitouring.us/photo-gallery/

While you are there, check out the whole collection of photos and videos from past trips. I especially like the Go-Pro videos produced by Ed Johnson. Ed wears his Go-Pro right on his chest and captures a near-constant stream of action while he skis. His editing skills are impressive and the final product gives a very good idea of what it was like on the trail each day and the trip overall. Good armchair adventure, and very useful when planning a trip to a new area for skiing.

If you have photos or video from a recent trip, send a link to the downloadable source to Ralph Heimlich and I'll put it on the website.



Ed Johnson with his Go-Pro strapped on ***photo by Ralph Heimlich***

How High? (cont.)

(Continued from page 12)

inches of new fluffy stuff, blue bird sky, no 2 foot deep trail breaking required, which CAN happen in the Cascades, just gliding into the back country. I met up with former DC-area resident and STS member now relocated to Bend, Ed Johnson for a great outing. Two days later, Anne and I went to a different set of trails off Century Drive going toward Bachelor—an area that last week had absolutely zero snow, but now had terrific snow leading us to even more terrific views. See photo # 3.

Another aspect of the "how high" equation: Travel to your skiing spot. As noted, if there is little snow at lower elevations, you can drive as high up into the mountains as needed to reach the snow. The converse is also true. If they are getting hammered with two feet of new, and you really don't want, and shouldn't be trying, to drive into that mess, now, you can reach good snow at a much lower, and safer elevation. For example, Sisters has a terrific series of trails right at the edge of town, the Peterson Ridge trail system, that provides great mountain biking and hiking in non-snow months, and great xc skiing when there is snow. When we arrived in Sisters, with the no-snow situation, we took hikes on those trails on the days we didn't head to higher elevations for skiing. When the snow goes low, and drops 6 inches in town, you can ski without driving anywhere.

Finally, maybe the ultimate answer to the "how high" question doesn't even involve snow levels. Just sit on your patio in Sisters, or walk to the meadow at the edge of town, and watch the clouds roll in and fly away, the lighting on the Cascade peaks changes as the day progresses to sunset, with a beer or a hot chocolate, and you will discover "how high" this magical place can take you.

Cold Laurel Mountain (cont.)

(Continued from page 8)

a formal breakfast. As you can see from the next picture, walking up the stairs to enter the diner may add some ambiance to your meal!

When the going gets tough, we shortened our loops and headed for the warming hut. The next picture shows participant Mitchell Grunes thawing out with the rest of us in the Laurel Mountain warming hut:



Mitch thawing out at Laurel Mountain ***photo by Greg Westernik***

Our group enjoyed our group dinners at local restaurants in Somerset, PA, including the Pine Grill and Rey Azteca restaurants. At the Laurel Mountain warming hut, PACCSA folks were selling used XC ski and hiking equipment at big discounts. Pickings were slim, but Robin purchased a used pair of NNN BC boots for some $20.

No regrets missing the Super bowl, Puppy bowl, or whatever.

GROUPS.io Changed to Reflect PNSC

I have changed the Potomac Nordic Ski Club groups.io to PNSC@groups.io. The transition seems to have gone smoothly. Please change your bookmarks accordingly (simply replace PATC-STS with PNSC).

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any difficulties.

Doug Lesar
PNSC groups.io admin

White Grass Trail Work Trip November 14-16 2025

by Stacey DiMaria

We had a lot of fun clearing trails, repairing the many pallet bridges that you'd never even know were there and enjoying the food and friendship of White Grass. Some actually skied the snow farm Friday. Sunday the hail started biting at our faces, so we retired early to the lodge for food and hot drinks. It feels good to help and Chip is always very appreciative.



Out clipping brush from the trail



The whole work gang at the maintenance shed

John Caldwell, Father of American Cross-Country Skiing Dies

John Caldwell, widely revered as the "father of American cross-country skiing," died on February 27, 2026, at age 97 in Hanover, N.H.. A 1952 Olympian, coach of five Olympic teams, and author of "The Cross Country Ski Book," Caldwell was pivotal in transforming Nordic skiing into a popular sport in the U.S.

Key highlights of his life include:

- **Legacy and Impact:** Often called the godfather of U.S. skiing, he developed the sport's foundation in Vermont and across the country.
- **Coaching:** He served as the U.S. Olympic cross-country team head coach in 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1984, coaching at the Putney School in Vermont from the mid-50s until 1989.
- **"The Bible of the Sport":** His 1964 book, *The Cross-Country Ski Book*, was regarded as the definitive guide to the sport and was updated through eight editions.
- **Mentorship:** Caldwell trained athletes including Olympic medalist Bill Koch and helped build the New England Nordic Ski Association (NENSA).
- **Awards:** He was inducted into the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1983.

Source: NY Times.

See a video remembrance here.

Potomac Nordic Ski Club
c/o Doug Lesar
14 Bitterroot Court
Rockville, MD 20853



To:

Potomac Nordic Ski Club Membership Form

Potomac Nordic Ski Club Membership Form

The Potomac Nordic Ski Club (PNSC) provides quality services and benefits to its cross-country skiing members while promoting and supporting cross country skiing.

When you become a member, you receive all issues of the club's newsletter UPSLOPE and other useful information. UPSLOPE is published three to five times a year by PNSC, a non-profit, educational and recreational group of cross-country skiing enthusiasts based in the MD, DC, VA, PA and WV areas. UPSLOPE provides information about cross country skiing, trips, and events. You also may join our Groups.io online and email discussion group.

One year membership runs from October 1st through September 30th of the next year. If you join in April or later, your one year membership will run through September of the next year. To insure uninterrupted membership for more than one year, you may provide advance dues for up to three years. To join, you may pay electronically (preferred) through out website at https://pnski.org/about-patc-ski/membership// or select your desired membership category and term from the table below, complete this Form and mail it with a check payable to "Ski Touring Section" (our checking account has not been changed) to:

Potomac Nordic Ski Club, c/o Doug Lesar, 14 Bitterroot Ct, Rockville, MD 20853

	Membership Term		
Membership Category	**1 year only**	**2 years**	**3 years**
Individual	**$15**	**$29**	**$43**
Family	**$19**	**$36**	**$53**

PLEASE TYPE THE INFORMATION BELOW!!!!

Name(s)_____

Other Family Name(s)_____ **Today's Date:** _____

Address:_____ **NEW Membership**

City:_____ **State:**_____ **Zip:**_____ **Renewal**

Home phone:_____ **Cell phone:**_____ **email:**_____

Add me to the Member Directory but do not list my Home ph: Cell ph: email: Address:

If checked, add me to Groups.io so I can get ad hoc announcements of local XC ski activities.

PNSC is an all-volunteer organization. We cannot function without the efforts of our members. IF you are interested in volunteering to help in any of the following areas, please check the box and you will be contacted.

Officer/Coordinator	**Publicity**	**XC Ski Instructor**
Ski Fair	**Ski Trip Coordinator**	**General Volunteer**