

March 2005

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Huts Update

Alaska Mountain
and Wilderness
Huts Association



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- Kevin Lynch
- Dwayne Adams
- Sally Rothwell
- Roger Shaw
- Ray Burger
- Bev Lewanski
- Andre Keappele

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We're on the
Web!

See us at:

alaskahuts.org

AK Huts 2005 Annual Meeting

Dave Brann, a trail enthusiast from Homer, presented his enthusiasm for two big trail-related hobbies as guest speaker at our annual membership meeting in January. Brann began his talk by sharing background information on the first skiers in North America, including Alaska, as well as the Alaska Lost Ski Area Project, also known as ALSAP. It was news to us to hear that it was the Russians, and not the Scandinavians, who introduced skiing to North America. It calls into question years of assumptions about "Nordic" skiing! Brann said that the first documented skiing in North America by the Russians was utilitarian in nature, occurring on the Kenai Peninsula and the area around Lake Illiamna as early as the 1790s. Brann and Tim Kelly have collected historical anecdotes and stomped around in the field uncovering old downhill and cross-country ski areas. They have developed an ALSAP web site where you can learn about historic Alaska ski places that once existed here but are no longer used. The site will grow as people contribute stories, facts, leads and pictures. Please visit www.alsap.org to learn more about Alaska's ski history.

Through Brann's involvement with Homer area trails, including the Baycrest Trail system, he now is involved with the Great Baikal Trail project in Russia. The Homer Rotary Club has joined with a Rotary Club in Irkutsk, Russia to develop 60 miles of trail as a centennial project. At our meeting, Brann spent most of his time sharing stories and slides from his summer 2004 experience leading a crew in building a portion of the trail along Lake Baikal. This project, patterned after the Lake Tahoe Rim Trail, is expected to take 30 years to complete and will eventually encompass 1,200 miles of trail. The objective of this system is to encourage and develop eco-tourism as a way to supplement the subsistence lifestyle of numerous Native villages that skirt the lake's perimeter. Additionally, environmental education will be an important component in preserving the biodiversity at Lake Baikal. Brann spoke highly of the cultural richness, and said that the warmth of the people will bring him back for another summer of fieldwork in 2005. This is exactly the camaraderie that we hope the huts will facilitate. If you are interested in further information, please visit: www.baikal.eastsib.ru/gbt/index_en.html.

Other Annual Meeting Events

At our annual membership meeting we provided a spread of foods that we thought could be replicated as dishes to be served once our hut system is a reality. We hope to repeat this event next year, so if you have a good recipe to share, please let us know.

The band Mandolicious entertained the crowd during the first hour as people socialized and dined. It has become a hut tradition to host our general membership meeting the Tuesday evening between the two weekends of the Anchorage Folk Festival, and it is great to participate in a small way in Folk Week.

Another new event was our silent auction and raffle. We received wonderful donations and realized an increase in revenue, thanks to those who contributed. Participants took home some great items at good prices, from handcrafted jewelry to an expedition backpack. We look forward to this as part of our annual tradition!

Hiking Companions Wanted

Beginning with this issue, the Huts Association welcomes members who seek hiking partners to advertise their summer hikes. If you would like to have others join you in a day or overnight hike, please send your ad by mail to Bev Lewanski at 4717 Birdsong Drive, Eagle River, Alaska, 99577 or e-mail to: lewanski_bev@asdk12.org. Ads received by May 15th will appear in our June newsletter.

Kluane National Park. End of July through August 5th, 2005. Experienced hiker and backpacker looking for 2-3 others to join her as she hikes various trails within Kluane National Park. Overnight backpacking trips will begin off the Haines Highway. Trips could be from 3 days to 7 days in length. Interested please call: 696-8754 and ask for Bev. Or e-mail at lewanski_bev@asdk12.org

Chugach State Park. Summer 2005. Experienced hiker looking for others interested in hiking light but long during the summer of 2005. Day hikes in the Chugach using Shawn Lyons book A Walk-About Guide to Alaska as a source of day trips. Interested please call: 696-8754 and ask for Bev. Or e-mail at lewanski_bev@asdk12.org.

The Alaska Huts Association assumes, but cannot verify, that the persons above are truthfully representing themselves. Companions Wanted ads are free to Alaska Huts members – please follow contact instructions in the ads.

As Always, Thanks!

A big thanks to the following:

- ❖ **Andre Keappele**, board member and hut supporter, for hanging in there through thick and thin!
- ❖ **Alaska Conservation Foundation** for a grant of \$1000 to aid with outreach.
- ❖ **Dwayne Adams** for spearheading the ACF grant application.
- ❖ **Marion Vicary**, Polaris K-12 school teacher, for spearheading a class on the Huts proposal.
- ❖ **Roger Shaw**, for stepping up and filling the role of Treasurer.
- ❖ **Mandolicious**, for providing bluegrass music at our annual meeting, during Folk Week and the Anchorage Folk Festival.
- ❖ **Janet Sheldon**, for organizing Mandolicious and silent auction jewelry donors.
- ❖ **Donors** to our Raffle and Silent Auction:
 - **Lisa McCormick** – handmade silver jewelry
 - **Susan Stanford** – handmade glass jewelry
 - **The Sport Shop** – back pack and camelback
 - **ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.** - gift basket and binoculars/pedometer set
 - **Great Harvest Bread Co.** – 2 gift baskets
 - **Café Felix** – coffee punch card
 - **Kim Nielsen** – 2 pieces of handmade pottery
 - **Dwayne Adams and Sally Rothwell** – framed artwork
 - **Our Members** - for attending our annual meeting at Kincaid and supporting us!

Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association

3039 Alder Circle, Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Please join us! Your membership is critical for building the Association... *and the huts!*

• \$25* • \$40 • \$75 • \$100 • *you name it!* \$_____

Member name: _____	Today's date: _____	new renewal
Mailing address: _____	city: _____	state: _____ zip: _____
Phone (hm): _____	(wk): _____	e-mail: _____
Profession: _____	<u>Hut Interests:</u>	huts & trails/outdoor work board member
education	hut operations/planning social functions or mailings	fundraising or finance

Please make check payable to AK Huts

**We will gladly accept less than \$25 from members for whom another amount is more appropriate.*

Thank you!

We couldn't do it without you.

Our Mission:

Include Alaska's backcountry in a worldwide tradition of places in which hikers and skiers can travel hut to hut, and provide warm comfortable huts in inspiring settings to foster camaraderie and promote wilderness education and stewardship.

**Alaska Mountain and
Wilderness Huts Association, Inc.
3039 Alder Circle
Anchorage, AK 99508**

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Haven't Joined or Renewed? Please do!

Most readers of this newsletter received a letter in January encouraging them to join Alaska Huts or renew for 2005. The push is on and many new memberships have come in. Thank you! It is gratifying to know you are out there.

As noted in January, this year is an important one to ensure that all current members renew and new folks join our membership. While we certainly appreciate those who have donated in larger amounts, equally important is participation by more people and donations of any amount. We want to show a growing core of support as the Forest Service heads into its Environmental Impact Statement this year.

Membership in this organization is straightforward. There are no bells and whistles. What you get as a member is committed people working to establish a non-profit hut-to-hut system that will be there for you and your descendants as a backcountry recreation option and wilderness education venue. We expect huts to be a model of rural Alaska construction and to serve generations as they learn land stewardship. Once huts are in place, members *will* have benefits - either first shot at reservations, or lower costs, or both. Your support now will help make that happen.

So if that membership slip is sitting on your desk in a pile, please dig it out (or clip the one from this newsletter) and send it in. If you have questions, please use the contact information in this newsletter, and we will do our best to answer them. We plan to send another membership reminder soon. If you act now, it will save us the need to send another note, save some paper, and keep your mailbox less cluttered. Thanks so much!

Volunteers Needed

The Alaska Huts board authorized expansion of the board to 11. There are seats to fill. Do you have experience in business or finance? Construction or design? Fundraising? Just plain interested? Give a jingle to John, 279-4663.

Thank you for your on-going support.

Bev Lewanski, first-grade teacher and outdoor enthusiast, has served on our board of directors for the past year.



What Brought You On Board?

Prior to becoming a board member, Bev Lewanski attended monthly board meetings to get a feel for our organization. Bev first learned of the Huts Association when an article appeared in the Daily News that showed a group of people exploring the potential for developing a hut-to-hut site in the Peters Creek area. That goes back quite a few years! She later crossed paths with John Wolfe, an Alaska Huts founder, at an Anchorage Nordic Ski Club meeting. From that point she began her official involvement as a volunteer with the organization. Bev looks forward to the day when the first hut is realized. For her, like others, a hut-to-hut system offers a novel backcountry opportunity for Alaskans and others from around the world.