

Huts Update

Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association



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Board Members:

- Kevin Lynch
- Suzanne Trimble
- Doug Van Etten
- Tim Jennings
- Ginny Fay
- Marion Vicary
- Michael Henrich
- Tom Brigham
- Janet Sheldon

*Executive Director/
Project Director*
John Wolfe

**We're on the
Web!**

See us at:
alaskahuts.org

'Not Just Bear Bait' (What's trail reconn without a little excitement?)

By Jen Jollif, Alaska Huts volunteer

"There are no recorded instances of a bear attacking a group of three or more people," John had claimed the night before. We had all laughed with the nervous bravado which helps us to enjoy our adventures in the backcountry despite the dangers that lie just out of sight, and we all slept soundly, buoyed by camaraderie.

The following day, as we strode single file down a lush ravine on the side of the Snow River Valley, my suspicions that I had been asked along on the trip to make up a predetermined quorum were confirmed. "Bear!" Ian was already holding his hands in the air, looking for a stick. John pulled out his bear spray and began yelling "Back off, bear!" I stayed close and fought the urge to take off my pack to get the camera out. After fifteen minutes of jaw cracking and bluff charges, our curious interloper (a black bear) melted back into the wild, and we continued what was for Ian and me the first of several reconnaissance trips for Alaska Huts.

When we did this first trip with John Wolfe (now executive director), more than eight years ago, the creation of a hut to hut hiking system seemed just around the corner. It felt as close to reality as a lot of hard work with a Pulaski and as certain as John's enthusiasm. My partner Ian Moore and I enjoyed the challenge of envisioning a trail through terrain which is at once breathtaking and daunting, weighing the advantages of alpine routes with spectacular views verses riverside routes with the double edged swords of shade and water.

Since then, we have been on four more recon trips, all in the Center Creek Valley proposed hut system area. We have flown, hiked and skied through the area, discovering the special features which we hone

these huts and trails will enable so many others to witness. Ian's role on these trips has always seemed more defined to me. He is an excellent orienteer with a 3-D photographic memory for land features. He is a professional map maker and GIS consultant and has helped the Huts Association to share its routes and hut locations with the public through development of numerous maps.

My role has been less concrete, but I would like to think I too have contributed my energy and enthusiasm for creating a path worth following. I've taken many photographs of routes and landmarks, provided my perspectives on safety and aesthetics of different route possibilities and tried to help mesh the big picture objectives with the step by step experience of traversing our beloved wilderness. I realize that we all have something we can contribute to the process, and none of us is just bear bait.



Jen Jollif (R) and Ian Moore work respectively as an artist and a Geographic Information Systems consultant (Alaska Map Science). They are active in orienteering and are building a timberframe home by hand on the edge of Anchorage.

For info on backcountry reconnaissance, see next page→



On the trail. In late May, after thrashing blindly for a while, board member Marion Vicary and volunteer Randy Steen found a great new route along the edge of Center Creek.

A Path Worth Following

Walk the Route this Fall. Alaska Huts is making plans now to walk portions of the Mills Creek-Iditarod Trail this fall (if it ever stops raining—and even if it doesn’t!). For more information on how you can be involved with reconnaissance or other aspects of “making a path worth following” (see cover story), call Michael Henrich at 345-3393 or John Wolfe at 279-4663.

As Always....,

A **big thanks** to the following people:

- Pilot **Larry Boyd**, for trips to see the backcountry routes from the air in his sparkling aircraft.
- **Suzanne Trimble**, accountant, and **Ginny Fay**, economist, for tackling an update of the Alaska Huts financial model.
- **Kit Persson**, UAA student intern, who completed volunteer work for us last spring.
- **Blaine Anderson** and **Kevin Meyer**, trails experts from the National Park Service, who have provided advice on sustainable trails design.
- Risk management consultant **Deb Anjango**, attorneys **Reb Gregg** and **Danielle Ryman**, and local insurance broker **Wally Cathcart**, for friendly free advice and a wealth of knowledge about liability insurance and bonds.
- **Ginny Fay**, **Tim Jennings**, **Tom Brigham**, **Doug Van Etten**, and **Michael Henrich** for joining the board and learning the ropes together.

Membership Reminder

Well, members, we have been easy on you this year. We sent out membership renewal and new-member encouragement back early in the year and had a great response and haven’t sent a bunch of reminders. But like always, there *are* folks who forget, or lose their membership slip, or never quite get around to it, or never saw the mailing in the first place. So we are encouraging you now, although it is getting on toward the end of the summer, to renew or join for 2006. It probably rings a little hollow to say (again) that your membership is important to the association. But truly it is. Not only does an “association” need “associates” to function (see the camaraderie clause in our mission statement on page 4), but those modest cash gifts each of you sends along add up to several thousand dollars per year to keep this organization afloat. So let us encourage you to join now for 2006, if you haven’t already. Clip or copy the form below and send it back to us (the address is on the membership slip). We will keep working for you to establish a hut system, a spectacular trail, and a new way for people from all walks of life to take a walk in the wild. Thank you.

- Kevin Lynch, President - John Wolfe, Executive Director/Project Director

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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 Assoc.

*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 back country in a world-wide 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 & Wilderness

Huts Association

**3039 Alder Circle
Anchorage, Alaska 99508**

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Inside:

- 'Bear bait' volunteer
- EIS hut alternatives
- Membership
- Map & Photo

Volunteers needed

Ouch! Formatting this newsletter in Word is like a porcupine quill in the rump. If you have better software and the skills to use it, would you consider volunteering to complete the newsletter package approximately once a quarter? We would appreciate it. Give John a jingle at 279-4663.

The Alaska Huts board has two vacant seats. Interested in finding out more? Please contact Tim Jennings at 278-4841.

**Thank you for your
on-going support.**

Board Retreat Looks to the Future

With several new board members trying to figure out what this whole Huts thing is all about, this year's fall retreat will be particularly important. The board will look at individual roles, fundraising strategies, and plans for 2007—and, if history is any guide—will chow down on some great cooperatively prepared food, take a hike, and may hang out by the fire while the prez plays his guitar. There are two board vacancies, and it would be great to fill them before the retreat (Oct. 27-28-29). Let us know your interest! We also need a comfortable space with room for 10-12 people. Let us know if you know of such a place.

What Brought You On Board?

Long Time Member Michael Henrich Joins the Board

My name is Michael Henrich. I am a massage therapist and outdoor enthusiast. I am originally from Iowa but have spent the last 21 years in Alaska. Prior to becoming a board member, I was a member and avid follower of the Huts Association. I remember reading about the Huts Association since its inception and thinking what a wonderful idea and concept.

I have spent many days backpacking Alaska's trails and would love to share my love of the outdoor's with hikers from all over the globe in a cozy hut set among the most breathtaking scenery in the world. I also like the idea of local, Alaskan folks designing and building the Huts system. I am an active member of the Nordic Ski Club and a backcountry telemark skier as well. I have spent many nights in the Manitoba cabin, near the proposed western trailhead, and would love to see it brought back to life through the efforts of the Huts Association. I became a board member because I feel I can play a role in seeing this project through to completion.

A big welcome to Michael!

Michael skiing at
Manitoba Mountain

