



# ***Alaska Huts*** *Concept for Huts & the Whistle Stop Project*

Spring 2009

see also: [www.alaskahuts.org](http://www.alaskahuts.org)

**What is a Hut?** “Hut” is a term used for mountain shelters around the world, in the Alps, New Zealand, Canada, and the Lower 48. The term encompasses buildings from the small and humble to large and polished. Typically, they have in common access by human power and hostel-like accommodations. Some offer food, some do not. While cabins, huts, lodges, and hotels all serve the needs of travelers, huts are unique. When we at Alaska Huts uses the term “Hut,” we mean:

- **Huts are non-profit.** Huts are designed to serve the public interest at the lowest cost for minimal services.
- **Huts are likely to have only one hut keeper** on site in summer. That person will be on duty only a portion of the day. For much of the year there will be no ‘staff.’
- **Huts are rustic.** No standard plumbing or electricity. No linens. A sleeping space may not have its own door. A hut user sleeps in a sheet sleep sack or sleeping bag.
- **Huts depend on hut users** to help make the operation run smoothly. There are no waiters or dishwashers.
- **Hut food is simple,** self-serve meal, if available at all. At some times, food would be prepared ahead and stocked in coolers for reheating by hut users or by a hut keeper, or non-perishables would be for sale. At other times, no food would be stocked, but a kitchen with burners, oven, and cookware would be available.
- **Hut amenities, services, and costs fall well below** high-end ecotourism/fishing/hunting lodges or roadside B&Bs in Alaska, but above Forest Service recreation cabins. Costs and service levels are unique.
- **A hut is consciously meant to mix Alaskans and people from around the world,** build community, and accommodate education groups. A hut is like a public use cabin but for two or more parties at a time.

Meeting new people, swapping small-world experiences, and learning from each other are the strongest elements of multi-party huts in other states and countries. Backcountry huts build a community of people who care for public lands. Huts provide a way for Alaskans to meet people from elsewhere and for visitors to meet ‘real Alaskans’ in a way that is not contrived or ‘touristy.’

The huts proposed may sleep up to 16. And Alaska huts will be priced for a broad cross section of the public, from low cost to moderately high costs, with different levels of self-sufficiency required at each level. In all cases, the experience is rustic, and outdoor self-sufficiency is required.

**Huts at the Whistle Stop Project.** Chugach National Forest and the Alaska Railroad have begun an ambitious project to build 30 miles of trail and several backcountry train platforms. Cabins were approved as part of the project, and Alaska Huts would like to build huts on some sites and leave others for traditional Forest recreation cabins. Alaska Huts is committed to making its huts work within the approximate building “footprint” assumed in the approval for the recreation cabin:

- Spencer Bench site. The hut would have 8 bunks.
- Spencer Flats site. Here, a cluster of three traditional cabins was approved. Two of the three would be combined into one hut (16 bunks), leaving the third as a traditional cabin.
- Grandview site. This site, on state land, would have a 16-bunk hut.

Elsewhere, at Trail Glacier and Bartlett Glacier, cabins would be traditional, as approved by the Forest Service. The end result would be several options for overnight stays associated with the

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### *Alaska Huts Mission:*

*Include Alaska’s back country 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.*

Whistle Stop project: camping off-trail, camping in a Forest Service ‘dispersed’ campground or group campground, staying in any of three traditional recreation cabins, or staying in any of three multi-party huts (two huts on Forest land and one on state land). Alaska Huts proposes to own and operate the huts and could manage other overnight options on behalf of the Forest Service as well.

**Features of Huts.** The huts are meant to offer basic necessities of a secure place to sleep, cook, and eat out of the elements, providing a measure of rustic comfort absent in camping but still a notch below roadside lodgings or most ecotourism camps. The table below defines some basic provisions. Traditional cabins are listed for comparison.

Huts would be reservable by individual Alaskans or visitors, small parties expecting to use part of a hut, or larger education groups that might use the entire hut. Some organized education courses would be available, and independent learning materials would be on hand at huts to enhance the experience.

	<b>Spencer Flats Hut Grandview Hut (state land)</b>	<b>Spencer Bench Hut</b>	<b>Trail Glacier Cabin Bartlett Glacier Cabin Spencer Flats Cabin</b>
<b>Prime Use Periods &amp; ‘shoulder’</b>	‘Prime use’: June 1-Aug. 31 Shoulder season: 5/15-6/1 & 9/1-9/15	Prime use: 6/1-8/31 Shoulder: 9/1-9/15	Likely open all summer.
<b>Winter** (no train access likely)</b>	Spencer Flats Hut open frequently during certain periods in winter. Others huts open occasionally unless train service is available.	Spencer Bench Hut closed except for special occasions.	Likely open in winter.
<b>Bunks</b>	16 in semi private sleeping bays. Mattress & blanket available; carry own sleep sack or sheets.	8 in common area. Mattress & blanket available; carry own sleep sack or sheets.	6-8 in common area. Bare wood bunk.
<b>Hut keeper room</b>	Yes	No. Hut keeper may use tent platform at times.	No
<b>Kitchen</b>	Propane stove with oven. Well-equipped cookware/tableware. Drain.	Propane burners. Basic cookware/tableware. Drain	Bare counter. No stove, fuel, cookware, or drain.
<b>Food Options* (Prime Periods)</b>	-Stocked Pantry -Cooler Service at specified times -Hut Keeper Service at specified times & by request	-Basic Stocked Pantry -Hut Keeper Service by request	No food.
<b>Drinking water</b>	Well or treated surface water.	Surface water/rainfall catchment. Haul and treat.	Surface water. Haul and treat.
<b>Wastewater</b>	Pipe to French drain.	Disperse over surface.	Disperse over surface.
<b>Solid waste</b>	Burn paper. Compost organics. Pack out recyclables and trash.	Pack out.	Pack out.
<b>Human waste</b>	Composting toilet	Pit privy	Pit privy

\* Stocked Pantry: Non-perishable stocked pantry foods available for breakfast, trail lunch, and dinners. Breakfast included in basic fee. Payment on Norwegian honor system overseen by hut keeper. Anyone may bring their own food instead of purchasing lunch and dinner.

Cooler Service: Heat-and-eat fresh foods provided in large coolers for simple preparation by those at the hut. Group meal cleanup.

Hut Keeper Service: Food preparation and meal cleanup by hut keepers.

\*\*When a hut is open but outside a “prime use period,” hut users typically provide their own food.

