Greetings Fellow Park Enthusiasts:

Whether a xc skier, snowshoer, trail walker, nature explorer, inline skater, cyclist or camper we all find enjoyment through our Park. We hope, whatever your preferences, that you are doing well in this new environment. Putting together a newsletter in the current situation presents some unique challenges. We all have more questions than answers and the answers we think we have a handle on change frequently as the Covid crisis evolves. That said, this has been edited and re-edited and is the best we know at this time. The Park normally opens for camping for Victoria Day weekend; it did not. The best forecast was for a camping season starting around July 4th weekend, however the Park opened for those with prior reservations mid June and is now taking new reservations. Day use fees are in effect: $7.00 per car. Seniors are free weekdays and those with them. Campers may not have visitors. The beach is open. Higley is one of the rare campgrounds with plenty of elbow room between sites. Usage of common areas like the playground, beach, nature center and rest rooms will undoubtedly have restrictions. Updates to what the usage situation will look like will be posted on our website and Facebook page. In the meantime the trails, lodge bathrooms and the beach area for socially distant use are available.

A Look Back at the Previous Winter Season:

This was the inaugural year for the resurrection of the Ermines Bill Koch group. It was successful beyond all expectations. It was also the first year for the revised adult lesson program, reviews have been enthusiastic about the new approach. The school program included several classes each from Colton-Pierrepont, Parishville-Hopkinton and Edwards-Knox. In addition SUNY Potsdam and SLU brought groups. Many thanks to those skiers who volunteered their time to help the new skiers discover the joy of the sport.

Seven individuals stepped forward to show an interest in becoming trail groomers. The weather was fickle but three did get trained and participated in the grooming in the last month of the season. The intention is to train the remaining four early next season. Some will only be available on an occasional fill in basis while others want to be more involved. This is part of our ongoing efforts at succession planning to make sure the trails are available for generations to come.

Night skiing was a big hit, augmented by the installation of solar motion lights on the E-Z trail. Thank you Henry for making it happen! Also, thank you volunteers who manned the lodge for ski nights.

The ski teams of SLU and Clarkson continued to train at the Park. Early in the season SLU actually found Higley had better skiing than Van Hovenberg since our lightweight equipment makes grooming in marginal conditions, particularly those on unfrozen ground more possible.

Overall conditions stayed pretty good at the Park most of the season. As it turned out, our continual freeze, thaw cycles resulted in a very durable base while still mostly avoiding icy conditions.

The Higley Flow Ermines Take to the Trails in 2020

by Co-Organizer Liz Bollt

Five weeks this winter, when we had gorgeous weather, great snow, and a mission to get the Ermines Youth Ski Group started up again, the stars aligned. The joy Jenny Townsend and I felt in skiing with young people and their parents and showing them the gift that is Winter Skiing at Higley Flow State Park was immeasurable. Expecting 5-10 children to sign up to ski with the Ermines, and getting over 50 was quite the pleasant surprise!
We had over 30 families signed up, and many of them became new members of the Friends group as well. Those five weekends packed a punch, as we got started as soon as the idea came to fruition and the snow fell in late January. Coach Jennifer Townsend made quick work of planning great practices, and eliciting the help of her contacts at St. Lawrence University. We had two SLU student volunteer coaches, Eliza and Jordi, who had been NCAA Division I skiers and had lots of experience teaching cross-country skiing to children. Coach Jenny's husband Ethan promised and delivered a “Ski with the Saints” day that was such a thrill for the kids. Some of the children ended up with private ski lessons with NCAA Division I skiers on that day, while others played ski games with them. The Valentine’s Day scavenger hunt was a big hit, as were the fun games on snow and ski adventures. Map reading, classic and skate skiing, hill climbing, persisting, hydrating, and staying warm and cool enough when exercising in the winter were all lessons learned. And the snow was phenomenal. So were the children.

The Higley Flow facilities get their own accolades here. The lodge and the beginner trails were only a twinkle in our eyes when the first Ermines took to the trails. These new Ermines had grooming done especially for them, ski trails designed for beginners, and a beautiful gathering space to meet, share snacks, and use the restroom.

Parents, you made this a family club, and we cannot thank the parents enough for making this an epic first year. Being on the snow with your child makes all the difference in their experience. I also want to give an extra thank you to the parent leaders: David Sommerstein, Lisa Lanzenby, Stephanie Tartakoff, Emily Iverson, Dakota Casserly, Natalie Warpula, Casey Sukeforth, and Emily Shaw.

The biggest shout out needs to go to Coach Jenny Townsend though. Her knowledge, energy, creativity, personal time, and work she put in made the resurgence of the Higley Flow Ermines a “ski in the park”. Thank you also to Henry, and all of the Friends of Higley Flow State Park. The rental skis, the grooming, and the Ed and Judy Fuhr Gathering Room in the Higley Flow Lodge made the Ermines a youth ski club here to stay.

Some of the “Ski with a Saint” participants gather for a photo

News from the SLU Nordic Team Excerpted from Coach Townsend’s Team Newsletter

Life for the SLU Nordic Team changed very quickly in March as we left for NCAA Championships in Bozeman, Montana. At the time there was some small concern over the Covid Virus but pretty much life was normal. Leading up to the races we were primarily concerned with weather, wax and Lucy Hochschartner having the best races of her college career. Lucy had consistently placed in the top 15 throughout the season to earn her bid to the NCAA Championships.

By Tuesday we had the announcement that students were not to return after spring break. This of course caused much chaos on campus and quickly became all we talked about as all of the other schools were doing the same sort of thing. Senior Lucy performed well in the 5k free but was really looking forward to the mass start 15k classic. Within hours after the freestyle race on Thursday though the NCAA made the painful decision to cancel the remaining races as well as all other winter and spring championships. It took a few hours to absorb that blow but then it was time to make lemonade. After rescheduling our return trip to Saturday morning we decided it was adventure day Friday to Yellowstone National Park.

Fellow senior Jackie Garso had made the trip to Bozeman with us to support Lucy, so long with Assistant Coach Dana Hatton we struck out to hit hot springs, some spring skiing, and whatever else we could check out within close proximity to the North Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. We skied with Bison in the backdrop, took a soak in the Boiling River, and hiked around the Mammoth Hot Springs before heading back to Bozeman to pack up for our flight out the next morning. While it was certainly a disappointment to not do the classic mass start race, we still made some great memories for the trip.
Team Awards

Were announced via Zoom with Lucy Hochschartner taking the women’s MVP for the 4th consecutive year and also earning the Axtell Award. Men’s MVP was Brian Beyerbach with the Axtell Award going to Charlie Reinhardt.

Congratulations to the following graduating seniors: Kate Andy will be continuing her biology research along with recovering from knee surgery from an injury sustained in the fall; Jackie Garso plans to train and compete full time in biathlon; Lucy Hochschartner has moved to Bozeman, MT to begin training full time in Biathlon with the Crosscut Mountain Sports elite Team; Emily Siegel will be working as a coach for the Sun Valley Education Foundation and also working at her nearby hospital as she considers options for Medical School in the future.

![Image of team](image)

Ethan, Lucy Dana and Jackie getting in some crust skiing in Yellowstone

Fond memories of skiing 2019-2020 by Joan Trivilino

The skiing experience seems so so long ago. It is interesting how my perspective of time is warped by the Coronavirus. I have tears thinking of the beauty, fun, camaraderie and joy of skiing 2 months ago which, in my mind, seems like 2 years ago.

Many of us had a great ski season. One of many consolations I feel is that the virus did not interrupt THAT.

Another consolation is the many school groups that skied at the Park this season. They are the very definition of why the many volunteers and staff work so hard to maintain every aspect of the Park. Watching them struggle even to put on the boots (“I have never seen this kind of boot”), take their first few shuffles, take the first of many spills and then GET IT. They look triumphant. They feel proud, they have rosy cheeks and smiles. It is fun to be with them and watch their progress.

The process of working through the Coronavirus pandemic is not feeling rewarding right now so I drift in my mind to moments like those at the Park for a brief respite. Maybe you do, too.

I wish you all health and well being. As a reminder, the Park is open for hiking and walking. All plans for gatherings or group activities are on hold. Please enjoy the Park in a responsible way and join me in gratitude for Higley Flow State Park and all the staff and many volunteers that make this gorgeous place SPECIAL.
The winners for our first ever photo contest were selected in five categories by our judges: Jim Bullard, local and well respected nature photographer; Carolyn Dishaw, formerly of Chasm Falls, N.Y. and presently a retired Art Therapy Instructor from the Bronx, and Krystal Hewer, Colton-Pierrepont Art Teacher. Because of Covid 19 the judges each viewed the submitted pictures individually and provided us their choices. There was general agreement in the top three for each category, but different placings. We were able to determine placings by comparing which received the most votes. In the people category there was a three way tie for first. When selecting the top overall pick we ended up going with the only unanimous choice for a first place placing. There were forty four entries. The gathering room at the lodge is presently closed but when it opens the pictures will be displayed. Lorraine Gowings and Judy Fuhr are also working on some projects using the photos. Publicity, note cards and tee shirts are some of the ideas suggested. Below are some small reprints of the pictures but the quality of our printer does not begin to do them justice so please take a look at them in the lodge on your next opportunity.
We’ve asked some Board members to share reflections in this unique circumstance we have found ourselves in during the global pandemic. From a personal perspective it is a virus to be feared and has been a terrible situation for many infected. It has also had some positives as we give pause to reflect on what is important, slow our lives down and do thoroughly things we may have raced through before. Many projects we were always going to get to are now complete.

Reflecting on the Friends work at the Park, most of the goals set for the group have been attained: trails have been developed, maps at junctions provided, grooming equipment has been obtained and upgraded, a lodge has been built, rental equipment is available, an adult lesson program and a Bill Koch program have been established, as well as a school lesson one, an emergency response in conjunction with our local rescue squad has been set up. Through the generosity of the Park a lighted trail now exists, trails have been improved gradually each year. Most importantly, a good working relationship with an outstanding Park Superintendent has developed over the years which has allowed these things to happen.

I have been retired a few years now, but in my work life, a mentor I highly respected did imprint a lasting philosophy on me “If you are content to rest on what has been accomplished, once you stop moving forward, you are moving backward”. This has been a time to ponder, where do we go from here? Sometimes things just fall in your lap:

Park thoughts turned into Park actions. Circumstances and regulations delayed the opening of the Park, possibly until the end of June. With some Park staff already on site and preparations to open the Park complete, Henry saw an opportunity to devote time to trail work. Through the generosity of Pat Curran, Curran Logging, we were able to secure one hundred yards of woodchips at a greatly reduced cost. All one hundred yards were used on the E-Z and Overlook trails, improving them for all seasons. Vegetation was trimmed back and stumps removed from these trails as well, giving them the added bonus in winter months of being skiable with very little snow. The work crew moved on to the old and new Pine trail loop, giving this a complete rebuild, stumps and rocks were removed, side hills were leveled. Through a generous donation by Shawn Spellicy and Jim Sheehan, a load of cobbles was obtained to provide drainage to the one large muck hole. The Park was able to purchase an additional one hundred yards of chips, some of which were used to dress up the work done on this loop. If time permits work will move to the Warm Brook Trail dressing up with wood chips the work done last year, then on to Cedar Brook. This work improves the trail system for all users in all seasons.

**Bike Tour in Question**

The annual Higley Hundred Bike Tour is in question due to the Covid pandemic. A decision will be made on August 5th whether to proceed with the September 12th event. Updates will be e-mailed to all Friends’ members and former participants. We are all eager to be able to offer the tour, but must work within the health guidelines of the Park, state and country. We are watching other normally held events such as the IDIIDIARE to see if they have come up with a manageable plan to host their events.
The Park is home to a variety of wildlife, deer, coyotes, rarely a moose, bobcats; once, many years ago now, in the winter months a cougar was spotted on stump bay feasting on a deer carcass. DEC came and took castings of paw and tail imprints but only suggested that if it was one it was almost certainly one released. There are also a variety of song birds, eagles, owls and hawks. One variety of hawk that has not been seen recently has now taken up residence and has dive bombed a couple of different walkers. We have learned that it is the male who attacks to protect its young. We aren’t going to tell you where he is to protect his privacy but if you see a good sized bird swooping at you while you walk, you will have found him. Maybe by then the youngsters will be making test flights!

Please stay safe and healthy, and enjoy the Park trails as we look forward to better days.