

History of Sugarbush Ski Trail System

The Sugarbush Ski Trails were built in the early 1980s as a result of the creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA).

Funding for the trail system, and similar trail systems on the Superior National Forest, came from the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act. The Act was the result of a long national debate in the mid 70s over logging, mining, and mechanized travel such as motor boats and snowmobiles, in the BWCA. The Act directed the United States Forest Service (USFS) to provide additional recreational opportunities outside the BWCA to help offset the economic impacts of designating areas non-motorized that previously allowed mechanized use.

Sugarbush Trail was built starting in 1981 and was laid out by USFS Employee Everest Dejno with help from Roger Pekuri. Pekuri was a civil engineer for USFS and top-20 member of the U.S. Ski Team in 1976 and 1980. He finished second in the 50 Km National Championships in 1976, and continued to compete successfully in many other regional and national events. Before forest service employment, he was involved in development of the Michigan Tech cross country ski trail system, and worked with local clubs in trail layout. Pekuri wrote a scientific paper in 1984 titled: Cross-Country Ski Trail Planning, Development, & Operation Considerations.

USFS employees Jerry Jaskowiak and Greg Vetter did much of the tree cutting for the trail. They worked 10-hour days and ran four tanks of gas through the chain saws per day, according to Jerry. It took two summers to clear the Picnic Loop and Homestead Loop. After the trees were cut, a bulldozer pushed the stumps out and smoothed the trail.

The Picnic Loop, our longest loop trail, was named, during design and layout, when USFS Recreation Technician Sharon Buckman, stated, " I would have to bring a picnic lunch along to make it around this trail". Homestead Loop was named after the Nelsons' former homestead, which was located in the middle of the loop. Moose Fence trails were named for the 12-foot high fence that was installed to protect white pine seedlings from browsing moose. The seedlings were part of an experimental tree plantation designed to be resistant to the disease, white pine blister rust.

Early grooming machines included a Polaris long-track snowmobile and SkiDoo double track. These machines pulled snow rollers or tracksetters designed and built by Lutsen Resident Charlie Nelson. Jerry Jaskowiak, Jan Horak, and Charlie Nelson were original groomer operators on Sugarbush trails.

When downhill skiing appeared to be declining, local resorts wanted to attract other people to the North Shore in the winter. Lutsen-Tofte Tourism Association (LTTA) spearheaded the creation of the North Shore Mountain Ski Trail System in 1982. Sugarbush Ski Trails were part of this system, which included other cross country ski trails from Temperance River State Park to Grand Marais. All of the trails were

eventually linked together and lodge to lodge skiing was promoted with car shuttles provided by area resorts.

Lutsen/Tofte Tourism Association (LTTA) purchased the large Pisten Bully grooming machine in the fall of 1995 for \$93,000. LTTA tasked Bluefin Bay Resort with the maintenance of the machine and grooming of the ski trails. With the addition of the Pisten Bully, much of the trail system was widened to accommodate the larger machine. This machine made it very easy to lay down perfect ski trails when deep snow fell.

In 2003, local residents Joe Stasney, Jeff Lynch, and Greg Fangel rallied supporters and formed the Sugarbush Trail Association (STA). The trails needed a focused effort from an organization to maintain, preserve, and protect the trails. Soon after incorporation, STA became a 501-C3 non-profit organization allowing it to apply for grants and receive donations as tax-deductible write-offs for donors.

In 2007, Sugarbush Trail Association purchased the Pisten Bully grooming machine from Bluefin Bay Resort. Prior to this, ownership of the grooming snowmobiles was transferred from Bluefin Bay Resort to STA.

In 2016, STA applied for a Federal Recreational Trail Program (FRTTP) grant for a new tractor with backhoe and brush cutter, an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), a utility vehicle (UTV), and new Ginzu groomer. The grant was awarded in the amount of \$72,000. Prior to this purchase, a 1948 Ford 8N tractor was used for brushing. Acquisition of the new equipment helps to maintain the trails in the non-snow season.

Sugarbush Ski Trails are one of the most premier ski trails in Minnesota. Many people come here to ski. Norwegian Skier Arne Roheim from Hamar, Norway has skied Sugarbush many times and stated, "Sugarbush trails remind me of my ski trails back home. I especially like the Picnic Loop".

Most of Sugarbush Trail Association's budget comes from donations from skiers like you. Please consider a tax-deductible donation, which you can perform on our website, www.sugarbushtrail.org. Thanks and please come back!

Thanks to the following people, who provided information:

Jerry Jaskowiak
Jan Horak
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