the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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Contents

MAY PICNIC: Wednesday, May 1, at 6:30 p.m. at the McHugh Creek Picnic Area at Milepost 111 on the Seward Highway.
Enjoy the picnic, go for a hike, rock climb, shoot photos, pick up trash along the Seward Highway, socialize ... Welcome to summer!

"In this setting the human imagination transcends nature."
– Fred Beckey

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

"To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering."

This issue brought to you by: ***Editor****—Steve Gruhn* ***assisted by*** *Dawn Munroe*

Cover Photo

Photo by Eric Parsons

Max Neale starting up the Northwest Couloir on Organ Mountain.

MAY PICNIC: Wednesday, May 1, at 6:30 p.m. at the McHugh Creek Picnic Area at Milepost 111 on the Seward Highway.

https://www.google.com/maps/place/61%C2%B000'53.4%22N+149%C2%B042'59.4%22W/@61.01484,-149.7186787,425m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x0!8m2!3d61.01484!4d-149.71649?hl=en

Enjoy the picnic, go for a hike, rock climb, shoot photos, pick up trash along the Seward Highway, socialize ... Welcome to summer!

Directions to rock climbing at Resolution Bluff: Milepost 111. McHugh Creek parking lot, Turnagain Arm. About a mile hike, take a right (toward Rainbow) on a trail near a rocky high point. Decent trail.

Picture courtesy of:

https://www.mountainproject.com/area/108158294/resolution-bluff

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

June 21: Flattop Mountain Sleepout. No leader

June 22: MCA campout. Location to be determined.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form.

Mountain Photography Workshop

There will be a mountain photography workshop with Andrew Holman on Tuesday, May 7, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Cottonwood Room at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. Contact Andrew Holman at andrew.s.holman@gmail.com for additional information.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high-resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video, or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

Contents

Online? Click me!

Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Geographic Names

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names released Review List 435 on April 5. The Review List contains four proposals to name mountains in Alaska: 1) a proposal to make official the previously published name Gorgon Spire for a 7150-foot peak in the Matthes Glacier and Vaughan Lewis Glacier drainages of the Coast Mountains in the City and Borough of Juneau; 2) a proposal to make official the previously published name Mount Mary for a 4883-foot peak in the Godwin Glacier and Shelf Glacier drainage of the Kenai Mountains east of Seward; 3) a proposal to make official the previously published name Santa Ana Peak for a 4754-foot peak in the Shelf Glacier and Bootleg Lagoon drainages of the Kenai Mountains east of Seward; and 4) a proposal to name a previously unnamed 815-meter (2674-foot) peak in the Salonie Creek and American River drainages on Kodiak Island south-southwest of Womens Bay as Taquka'aq Mountain.

The MCA has already submitted proposals to the Alaska Historical Commission on the second and third proposals. If you're interested in commenting on any of the proposals, either email Steve Gruhn at geographicnames@mtnclubak.org or contact the U.S. Board on Geographic Names directly.

A hiker descending the Wolverine Ridge, shot from Knoya Peak.
Photo by Wayne Todd

Groaner by Tom Choate

The Scree editor named Steve
Really knew how to peeve
He took Tom's lines
And punned at times
So the old goat had to leave.

Organ Mountain (6980 feet), Polar Bear Peak (6614 feet), and Compass Butte (5390 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text by Eric Parsons

South Fork of the Eagle River to the Eagle River Nature Center

Max Neale skiing across Eagle Lake.
Photo by Eric Parsons

The idea for this trip had been on my mind for a long time. To traverse from the South Fork of the Eagle River to the North Fork of the Eagle River via the Flute and Organ Glaciers, trying to ski and summit the big peaks back there, Flute Peak, Organ Mountain, and Polar Bear Peak (FOP). In spring of 2009, Dan Boccia and I hiked in, heavily laden, over snowless tundra, kicking up plumes of ash from the recent eruption of Redoubt Volcano. We didn't make it too far and maybe that was for the better. After stumbling around Eagle Lake and camping in the back of the valley, we awoke to heavy, wet snow falling. We ate breakfast and bailed without discussion and I never got to find out how well La Sportiva Nepal's work in splitboard plate bindings. Likely for the better.

Later that summer Billy Finley, Yvonne Lamoureux, and I did a one-day June climb of Flute Peak, but the FOP traverse stayed on my mind.

The bust in the Wilderness Classic left a bunch of us with pent-up ambition, so as soon as the weather forecast showed solid high pressure, and conditions in the high peaks looked promising, Max Neale and I started skiing into the South Fork at 7:00 p.m. on a Thursday night.

We got lucky with evening supportable crust in the South Fork; the only problem was there was not much of it left. We linked patches together and skied tundra all over the valley until we hit Eagle Lake.

The night was somewhat eventful: we saw a bear right as we camped; we slept badly because we were too lazy to set up the tent; and then I left my headlamp in some rocks as we left. After climbing some bulletproof crust with crampons, we were skinning up the Flute Glacier and I was just wishing I had more coffee.

Organ

Once over the Flute-Organ pass, we contoured around and started the approach to the northeast glacier route on Organ Mountain. Neither of us, however, could stop staring at the huge gash on the northwest face that is a defining line on the

The Flute Glacier.
Photo by Eric Parsons

peak. I had had stared at the line many times in the past from different peaks and angles and secretly schemed, but assumed it was above my pay grade. Skiing under it with Max, we could not ignore how good it looked and we had all the gear we might need for the top of Polar Bear. As we discussed giving it a shot, I mentally took some time to switch gears from what was to be a straightforward ski-snow climb of the glacier route, to what looked like a real mixed alpine route. Eventually I figured the trifecta of conditions, place, and partner were never going to get any better. So, I put my faith in Max being a far-more-experienced technical climber, and with his confidence we dumped our overnight gear and skied up the apron to have a look. As we got closer my anxiety changed to excitement at a chance to see what was up there and give it a shot.

Max Neale ascending the northwest-facing couloir on Organ Mountain.
Photo by Eric Parsons

The couloir had two access routes. The direct line appeared to climb skinnier and more mixed rock right off the glacier. The way we went ascended a steep snow couloir behind a rock thumb. I figured Max would lead the upper part, so I set off booting to an airy stance where the top of the thumb enters the main gully. Given the exposure down the main chute, we roped up and Max took off with me following simul-climbing.

The gully narrowed to shoulder width in spots and gently traversed back and forth over some thin sugar-snow-covered rock bits. Overall, it stayed a true, steep, snow climb and not before long, Max was sending down all sorts of debris as he tried to get up the final bit to the col, which was very steep. The loose-rock, 80-degree (?), sugar-snow exit was short, but exciting. At the col we went left to what we learned was a false summit. Climbing up it was not a total loss, as it gave us a bomber rappel anchor that we left in place to descend the top of the couloir after visiting the true summit.

After Organ we skied down, dumped our stuff again and hiked up the south ridge of Compass Butte. From that high on the glacier it was a quick jaunt to the summit; we took our time, enjoyed the views, and took a lot of photos.

It was a civilized hour, and we had nothing left to do but find a nice spot to make camp with some dry rocks and find out how an ultra-light summer HMG tent would do in the snow.

Max Neale at camp below the Organ Glacier.
Photo by Eric Parsons

Polar Bear

Temperatures were in the high teens overnight, which felt cold for the spring we'd been having. After packing up, we started up the lower slopes to access the main glacier snowfield of Polar Bear. There were tracks from a group that had skied it a few days earlier, but they were blown in. The lower steep face was tiring, punchy booting; once on the glacier, Max took off setting a hero skin track, making minimal kick turns on the huge upper face that brought us to the climby bit.

I got to lead the top bit and went to the right, up Sassara's Chimney. It was awesome to be up there, having heard quite a

few stories about the top of the peak. The climbing was mostly sugar snow on rock with little to no ice in the chimney itself. I took my time and zippered the thing up with a small cam, nuts, and an angle. Max flew up the pitch and we warmed up on the sunny summit.

We rappelled off a big rock to get back to our skis. Being a noob on skis this year, I often forget that I'm not on my splitboard when looking at things ... until my heels are locked and reality hits. It took me three or four steep turns to remember how to ski; then I enjoyed shin-deep powder all the way to the lower section. The steeper lower bit was equally as humorous for me, as the snow was hard crust and I had to make jump turns. It was one way to learn quickly, I suppose.

This trip report is getting long ... down, down, down, transition back to summer. Ffity-degree hike out in ski boots. No bears ... North Fork of the Eagle River running gin clear from snow melt. Just beautiful. Awesome outing.

Max Neale climbing the steep lower slopes on Polar Bear Peak.
Photo by Eric Parsons

Max Neale rappelling Sassara's Chimney.
Photo by Eric Parsons

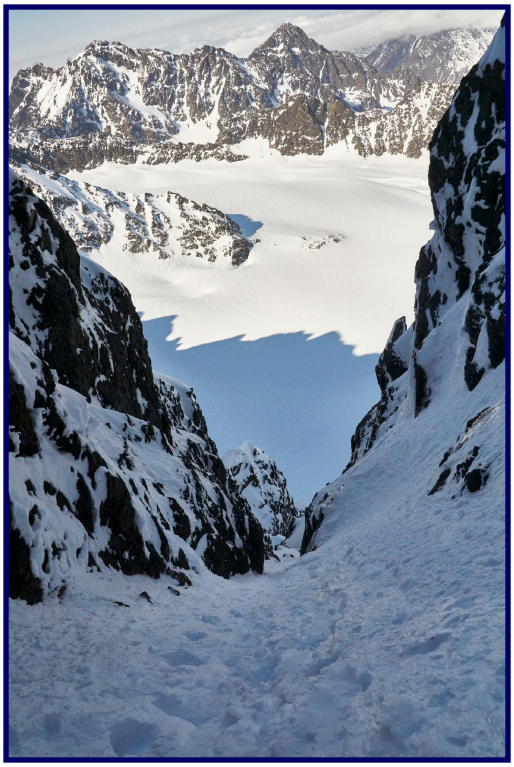
Max Neale on the summit of Polar Bear Peak. The team's approach route was via the low pass in the distance to the right of Flute Peak.
Photo by Eric Parsons

Eric Parsons on the summit of Polar Bear Peak.
Photo by Max Neale

Max Neale skiing perfect powder on the upper Bearskin Glacier on Polar Bear Peak. Organ Mountain is in the distance.
Photo by Eric Parsons

Max Neale nearing the crux top out on the Northwest Couloir on Organ Mountain.

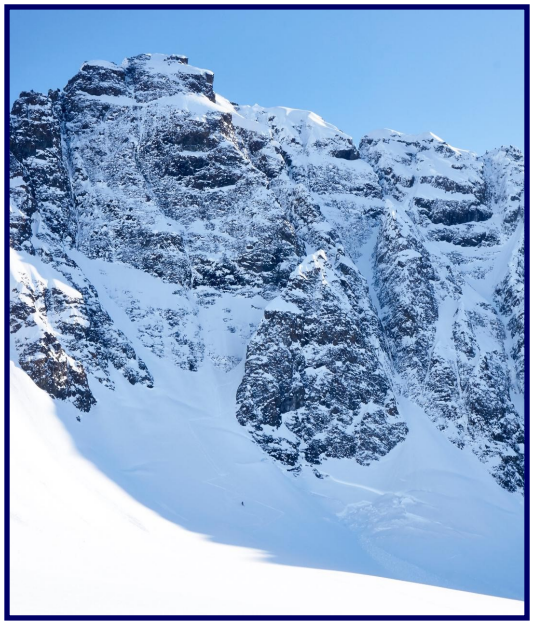
Looking down at the Organ Glacier from Organ Mountain.



All photos on this page by Eric Parsons.

Max nearing Organ Mountain's Summit.

Rappelling into the Northwest Couloir on Organ Mountain.



Organ Mountain's Northwest Face.

Views southwest from Compass Butte.

North Couloir of Goat Rock (5282 feet), Twin Peaks

(Alaska Grade 2, M4R, WI3+ 1,400 feet)

Text by Luke Bird

North aspect of Goat Rock.
Photo by Luke Bird

Forrest Voss and I started hiking up the Mount POW/MIA trail at 4:30 p.m. Friday, March 1st. We hiked all the way to the top, followed its ridge, and then dropped down the northeast side into the small valley that sits in front of West Twin Peak and Goat Rock, where I had stashed gear the previous Sunday via the north drainage that rises from the Old Glenn Highway.

It was a little slow because we brought snowshoes for the deeper sections and it turned out those things were a joke (more likely I just suck at snowshoeing); however, we couldn't justify bringing skis because of how much we would have had to pack them. Forrest was plagued with foot problems the whole way. Frostbite acquired a month earlier and then blisters from his boots were causing a lot of pain. We still made decent time, considering all things, and arrived at the cache at 8:00 p.m.

We set up camp and started making dinner. I somehow managed to pop open a lasagna Mountain House inside my puffy (a trick Forrest had just taught me to scrounge heat). So that was lame; however the smell turned out to be a nice addition to my natural climbing musk that the jacket was already saturated in. By the time we finished dinner, it was pretty late, so we had some tea and went to sleep.

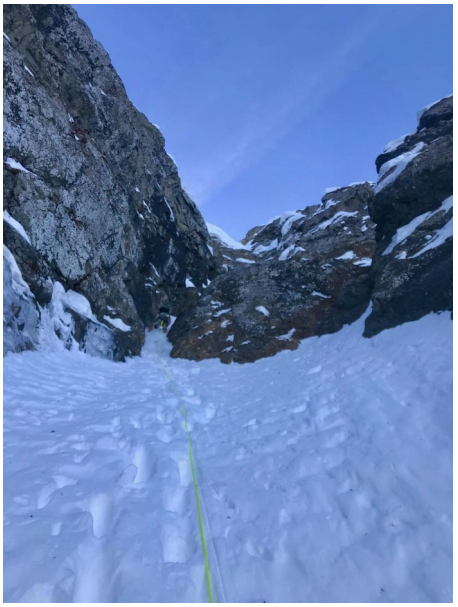
We were awake at 5:00 a.m. and started getting our packs ready. We brewed up a liter of water each for the day, ate some breakfast, drank some tea, and set off in the dark at 6:30 a.m. We slogged up the snow slope that led to the couloir, trying our best without much success, to stay on hard-packed snow. After 1,000 vertical feet and about an hour, we reached the right fork in the couloir that marked the beginning of the route and the first technical climbing.

Luke Bird nearing the base of the North Couloir route.
Photo by Forrest Voss

The alpine ice looked to be in good shape and not too steep, so I thought we shouldn't rope up just yet to try and save some time. Forrest humored me and set off up the first 35 meters (that was the only pitch we could see while standing directly at the base). He made it up with no issues, put a screw in, and waited for me on the nice low-angle step below the next bulge. I followed up

Forrest Voss climbing up the last bit of the initial 100-meter technical section. Photo by Luke Bird

Partway up the mid-route 50-meter technical section. Photo by Forrest Voss



Forrest Voss climbing to the base of the "headwall," which made up the last pitch before gaining the west ridge. Photo by Luke Bird

with no issues as well, but we both wished we had tied in for it. But instead of doing that for the next section, which only looked to be about 15 meters, I suggested we climb it really quickly to see if it would dump us out on the long, chill, snow section we knew was coming. Forrest humored me again and started climbing, unroped, up the step. He started encountering very hollow, layered alpine ice, that if kicked too hard broke through to grainy snow. After a bit, though, he made it past and paused so I could come up. He said it sucked and offered to throw a rope down, but I wanted to give it a quick try. I started up and got into what was still left of the bulgy, crappy spot that held him up for a bit and decided I wasn't loving it, so I backed off. He threw a line down and belayed me up. It turned out to be a surprisingly fun section when I knew a fall wouldn't be expensive. We agreed we would definitely pitch out anything else technical we encountered. I lead the next 40 meters, which was more alpine ice through a very narrow section. It felt really secure and I think I only placed one or two screws.

We were now at the lower-angle snow section we had been expecting and we simul-climbed it quickly. That brought us to the second fork and also the second technical section.

Forrest belayed me off of a snow picket and I led out left across some low-angle rock that I made look way too awkward. I got myself back onto some ice and started up the left fork. That was a fun 50-meter pitch that had a challenging mix of marginal rock and ice pro. That put me at the base of the second snow section where I found someone's nice rappel anchor on the left wall of the couloir. It consisted of a knifeblade piton and a small stopper equalized with yellow cord. I gave the piton a couple whacks, threw in a cam to back it all up and brought Forrest up on it.

From there we began simuling again. That snow section was a little steeper and about twice as long as the first, with three 3- to 5-meter rock/ice/snow bulges. I fell off one of those back into soft snow, but thankfully had just clipped a sketchy looking Dyneema sling someone had choked around a point where two boulders made contact. So it just made for an annoying, but funny, mistake. Once I made it over, I put in a snow fluke and gave Forrest a quick belay through the weird spot. The other bulges were uneventful, with quick hip belays through anything funky. At the top of, I believe, the second bulge, we found a small stopper in the right wall of the couloir. That was the last sign of other climbers we saw.

Forrest's foot issues had gotten steadily worse. It didn't seem to slow him down much, but caused significant pain, which probably took a lot of the fun out of the climb. He didn't let it show, though.

We arrived at the "headwall" where the couloir dissipated and the angle sharply increased just before gaining the ridge. Forrest made a solid anchor at the base and we started sorting gear. That had been our biggest question mark. I snapped a picture of it from the ridge on the north side of the small valley at the base of the mountain when I did the Sunday gear-stashing mission. From my photo, it looked like it had substantially less snow on it then the Google Earth images led me to believe there would be. We didn't know if that was good or bad, but it gave us the impression that it was steep.

I put most of the rack on my loops and set off. Thankfully the angle was pretty moderate, but there was no ice and the rock quality was much worse than in the lower sections. Anything with cracks was too shattered and loose to take good gear. I felt very run-out between the occasional solid piton or cam. I put filler pieces in for my psychological wellbeing, but most of them were just for looks. I had been slowly working my way up and right, choosing not to shoot for the lowest point on the ridge directly above us because of a cornice that looked like a chore to get through. But I got stuck at a steep spot where I had to try and traverse farther right over a snow arête to get to easier terrain. I was 10 feet above a Spectre I had driven into some loose dirt. It had a screamer, but I had no confidence of it holding. I searched for about 20 minutes, trying to find a placement, scratching snow off of rock as far out as I could reach. I ended up uncovered a small dirt shelf and I drove two pitons between it and the rock. They were both loose, but I equalized and clipped them anyway with another screamer. I tried to reach over the arête and cut the rope through it so it might help catch a fall. Once I finally made it around, I sawed it in even deeper and set off across steep, snow covered rock to a left-leaning ramp that led directly to the ridge. I put a piton in at the bottom of that ramp and cruised up it to a large block at the top. I slung the block and belayed up Forrest.

That last pitch took me about a hour to lead and I consider it to be the crux of the climb (at least in the conditions we found). I believe an easier way might exist if you started a few meters below the headwall and went up and right over a series of ramps. I wanted to bail off my line and try it, but got too committed and would have had to leave a lot of gear.

After getting sorted and sitting in the sun for a bit (the first we'd had all day), we did a quick 10-meter rap to the east that put us on the saddle with the cornice we had avoided. There we left the packs and made the quick scramble to the summit.

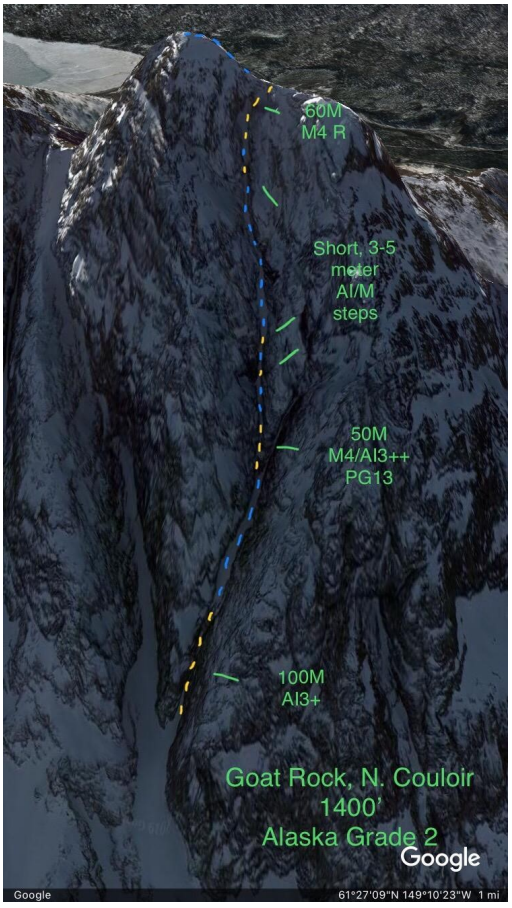
We descended the west ridge route until we hit our descent couloir at 4600 feet. A quick glissade down it dumped us directly back at our camp at 5:30 p.m. From tent to tent, we took 11 hours to complete the route.

We still had an hour of usable light left, so we packed everything up and followed the boot track I left on Sunday, down the north drainage to the small neighborhood off the Old Glenn, where we had left my vehicle.

We got to my pickup at 8:30 p.m., drove up to Eklutna to retrieve Forrest's car and parted ways. All in all, a really fun time with the worst experiences being Forrest's foot issues, and of course, the slogs from and back to the cars.

Luke Bird on top of Goat Rock with the Twin Peaks in the background. Photo by Forrest Voss

Right: North aspect of Goat Rock showing the North Couloir route. Photo courtesy of Google Earth



Below: Forrest Voss on the summit of Goat Rock with the Twin Peaks behind him. Photo by Luke Bird

A Long Journey on the Matanuska Glacier

Text and photos by Colten Moore

Scandinavian Peaks Hut.

I work all summer long as an ice-climbing guide on the Matanuska Glacier with NOVA Alaska Guides. All summer long I stare at the surrounding Chugach Mountains, daydreaming about climbing or skiing or traversing or adventuring. The Matanuska Glacier itself is roughly 27 miles long and during my work day I get asked quite often, "Has anyone ever hiked the whole thing?" My answer is usually something to the extent of, "Eh, I'm not sure, but probably." Whenever someone asked me this my mind wandered about how someday maybe I would attempt to navigate the whole length of the glacier. After expressing my interest to my friend and co-worker David Hixenbaugh, and him sharing my stoke, a climbing trip was born!

We contacted a local pilot and we had our one-way ticket into the range. Because he was doing us a favor with the flight, we just had to play it by ear for a departure date. So one morning the weather looked good and I called him up and he told us to be ready in an hour! Shame on us for not packing ahead of time, so a whirlwind of shouting and gear ensued. In just over an hour we were waiting on his personal airstrip next to his Piper Super Cub. The Super Cub only had one passenger seat, so I hopped in and off we went. Since I was the first one to get dropped off, when the plane flew away I was really, really alone. I began shuttling loads up the roughly 800 feet of elevation gain from the airstrip to the Scandinavian Peaks Hut. I got about halfway up the trail and decided to drop my gear and go back down to the airstrip to meet David. Once David arrived safe and sound, we started up again. We were pretty stoked to reach the hut and get our base camp all set up. When we opened up the door of the hut, we realized just how lucky we were.

The hut was so spacious inside and we knew right away we were in for a luxurious backcountry experience. We laid out our gear and made ourselves at home, knowing that even if we didn't get to summit anything, just being in that beautiful location would be a special trip. We spent the rest of the day relaxing and trundling rocks of a huge moraine cliff and watching

The sleeping area in the loft of the Scandinavian Peaks Hut.

David Hixenbaugh enjoying what would be home base for a few nights.

them explode (a.k.a. being terrible stewards of the Earth, but hey, it was fun – ha ha!). We ended the day with fajitas for dinner and an amazing sunset overlooking the vast Matanuska Glacier. As we were packing our gear that night for our mission the next day, the aurora showed up for an awe-inspiring red-and-green lightshow. Day One at the hut was a pretty spectacular one!

When our alarm went off at 4:30 a.m., I crawled out of my sleeping bag and peaked my head out the front door of the hut and the skies appeared to be fairly clear. After the usual internal battle about wanting to sleep more and how ridiculous it was to wake up so early to go climbing, we decided to get up and give Norway Peak a go. Putting my mountain boots and pack on at the breakfast table was an extra special treat. In the early dawn light we navigated a large talus field for about an hour to reach the edge of the North Fork of the Scandinavian Glacier.

Sunset during the first night at the Scandinavian Peaks Hut.

David Hixenbaugh on the Scandinavian Glacier in the early dawn light.

The initial glacier travel went incredibly smoothly. It was a mellow grade on flat, gray, alpine ice for a few hours. As we continued to gain elevation, the glacier continually got more broken up. Eventually we stopped to put on our crampons and rope up. We relentlessly dodged huge crevasses and navigated very thin snow bridges for what felt like a while. Sometimes we would belay each other across a gap as the leader jumped for his life to the other side. Other times we would have to get an ice axe out and sort of down-climb to the other side of a crevasse. At some point the clouds came in and it began to lightly rain and visibility was slightly compromised.

We reached a point where the snow line was covering the glacial ice so much that we questioned the ground we were standing on. It seemed that we were in the wrong season for glacial travel in that particular area and the probability of taking a crevasse fall seemed incredibly high. So we turned around and sent it back to the safety of the hut, in a total round trip of

David Hixenbaugh on the incredibly broken-up North Fork of the Scandinavian Glacier.

David Hixenbaugh at the turn-around point below the north face of Norway Peak.

about six hours.

We slept in the next day as we awoke in the "ping-pong ball." The clouds and rained had stuck around and we couldn't see 15 feet from the hut.

In the afternoon the weather cleared and we attempted to look for some mythical hot springs we found scribbled on a topographic map in the hut. After hours of searching, we decided someone had played a real sick joke on us. We gave up on locating them, but started scrambling up a pretty chossy ridge just for the sake of adventure. After a few hours of scrambling, we reached a high point on the ridge with some pretty neat views and decided to call it a day and head back to the hut.

A real change of scenery at the Scandinavian Peaks Hut.

The following day we awoke to clear, sunny skies. We debated about our day's plan, but ruled that we would take a rest day. The next day's mission was to pack up and hike the entire length of the Matanuska Glacier all the way to the trailhead at its toe. That was a big unknown for us in terms of terrain, route finding, and length, so we decided that it was best to just relax and prepare for the big day ahead of us. That was hard for us, though, as the weather was just splitter.

David Hixenbaugh on Ya Sure, the high point of the ridge traverse.

We spent the day finishing off our food, reading, and relaxing. We had had a long summer season of work and it was truly nice to chill and have some peaceful nature time without any obligations.

Our alarms went off the next day at 3:30 and we bolted out of bed, excited to the big grand adventure ahead of us! David and I got all packed up and ate a big breakfast. Soon we were walking away from the hut. A little nervous for the unknowns ahead, excited to cover a lot of ground, and maybe a bit sad to leave that amazing location. I felt like with enough food and fuel I

David Hixenbaugh frolicking through the tundra.

could have easily spent the next month at the hut, climbing and relaxing. Nonetheless, though, we began our descent down to the glacier. We began in the lateral moraine (dirt and rocks on the side of a glacier) on the east side of the glacier, which involved lots of boulder hopping and talus fields. The boulders were conveniently covered in a thin layer of ice from the cold fall night before; it was quite annoying travel. We decided to make our way to the glacier after about a mile of travel in the moraine. When we hit the glacier initially, it was amazing, very flat ground and no crevasses. Looking back it was some of the quickest travel we experienced over the course of the day. It unfortunately didn't last long and soon we found ourselves running into huge crevasses and either having to jump them or traverse sideways for a bit. From our flight over the glacier we knew there was a large icefall coming up, so we headed toward the center of the glacier to avoid it. We eventually reached the medial moraine (a stripe of dirt and rocks at the center of the glacier). For a while we flip-flopped, walking on the ice on either side of the medial moraine with relative ease. Roughly nine miles into our journey, we came to what I considered the most technical part of our day. We were in a section of glacier with roughly a-quarter-mile-wide ice bordered on both sides by huge moraine walls, and horizontal crevasses as far as the eye could see. We were trapped like rats in a giant icy maze, forced to zig and zag around crevasses that threatened to swallow us whole. Boy, were we psyched when it finally ended and we had safe ground to walk on. From there we stayed in the moraine for quite a few miles. It wasn't the worst travel, but it wasn't the best, either, just endless walking on lots of loose rocks. I started to feel the effects of our long hike at around that time. My shoulders began hurting from the heavy pack and my feet were starting to bark at me for being in mountain boots for so many hours on uneven ground.

We stopped to eat a snack and drink some water and I decided to take my boots off and soak my feet in a glacial meltwater creek. It was a glorious relief and just a few minutes in the water did wonders for my swollen feet. Time dragged on as we endlessly wandered toward the end of the glacier. Our phones died, so we had no music to keep us psyched, and our shoulders and legs were aching. Soon enough, though, we started seeing familiar terrain, and before we knew it, we staggered up the final hills to the trailhead. I felt pretty wrecked and immediately lay down and enjoyed sitting still for a few moments. After almost 12 hours and 22 miles, our journey was complete!

Even though we didn't get to do any climbing, it was still a grand adventure. For both David and me it was the farthest we had even walked in a day, on uneven, complex terrain nonetheless. We both felt very accomplished with the distance we had traveled and how we dealt with the route finding. Combining our journey home with seeing the northern lights dance across the sky, a multi-color sunset, and being surrounded by complete, raw, natural beauty and we were incredibly stoked. It's not always about the summits and the crux pitches. It's about getting out into the backcountry with your good friends and having a grand adventure, and that's sure what we did on this trip into the Chugach Mountains. And now while I'm at work and a client asks me if anyone has hiked the whole glacier, I can proudly answer, "YES."

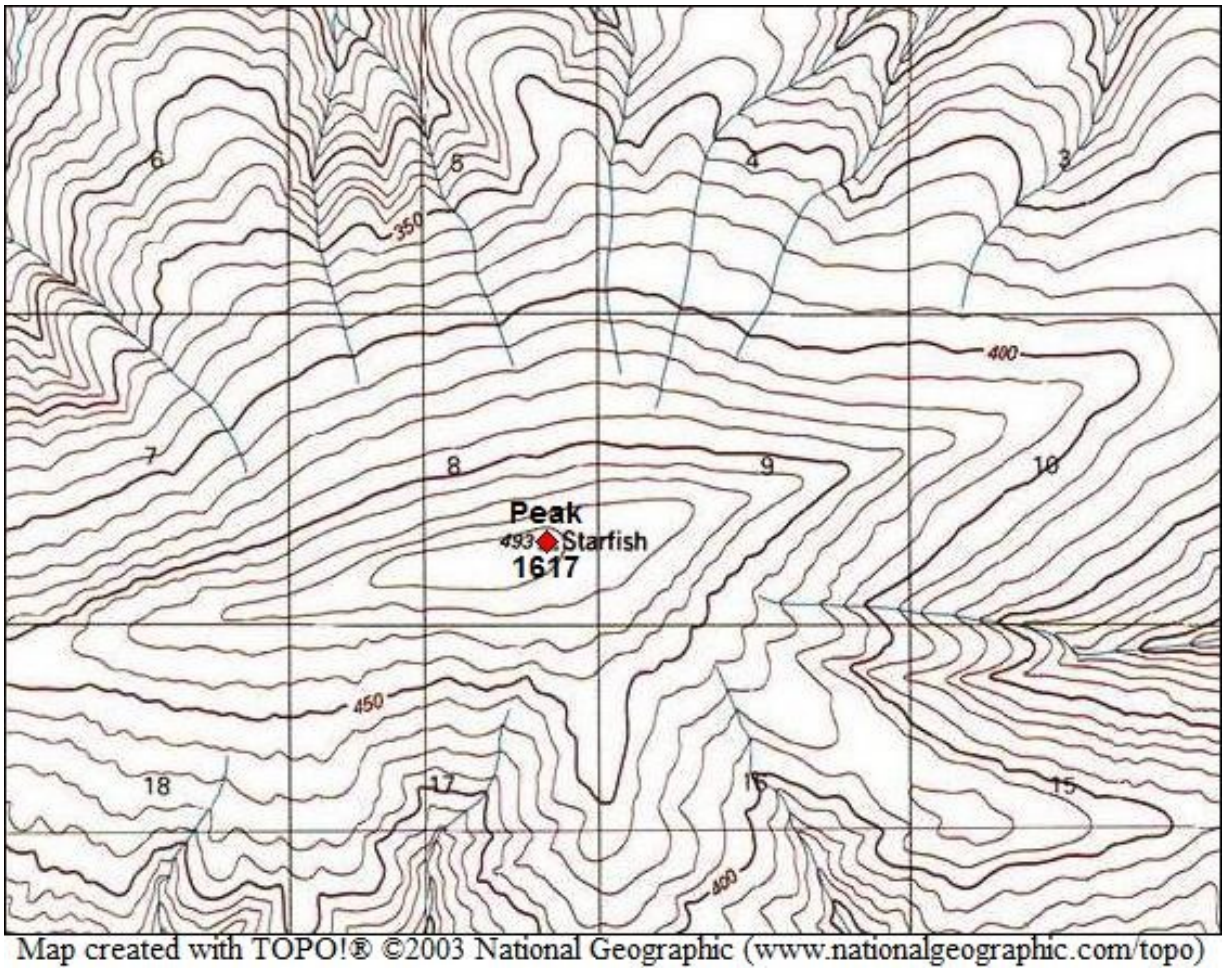
David Hixenbaugh hiking out down the Matanuska Glacier in the early dawn with the moon in the background.

One of many cool glacial features encountered on the way out the Matanuska Glacier.

David Hixenbaugh on the long journey out the Matanuska Glacier.

Peak of the Month: Peak 1617, Endicott Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn



Mountain Range: Brooks Range; Endicott Mountains

Borough: North Slope Borough

Drainage: Ninuluk Creek and Killik River

Latitude/Longitude: 69° 1' 13" North, 153° 21' 33" West

Elevation: 1617 feet (493 meters)

Adjacent Peak: Peak 2185 in the Coal Creek and Ayiyak River drainages

Distinctness: 526 feet from Peak 2185

Prominence: 526 feet from Peak 2185

USGS Map: 1:63,360: Ikpikpuk River (A-1); 1:25,000: Ikpikpuk River A-1 SW

First Recorded Visit: 1955 by a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey party

Peak 1617 is an east-west-trending, tundra-covered ridge about 15 miles east of the confluence of the Killik River and Colville River.

While conducting a survey of a portion of the Colville River drainage, a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey (USC&GS) party flew a helicopter 39 miles southwest from Umiat to Peak 1617. The survey team installed a triangulation station disk stamped "Starfish 1955," a likely reference to Starfish Bluff, which is about 7 miles northwest of Peak 1617 and so named in 1949 because of several well-preserved fossil starfish collected from the rocks of the bluff.

In 1980 a Bureau of Land Management survey party visited Peak 1617.

I don't know of any other visits to Peak 1617.

The information for this column came from a transcription of USC&GS field notes available at https://www.geocaching.com/mark/details.aspx?PID=TT7966 and from U.S. Board on Geographic Names Case Brief for Starfish Bluff, completed on February 24, 1949, by Charles F. Fuechsel.

Your input is requested on this DRAFT Master Plan.

Come discuss ideas at the May meeting and/or email comments and suggestions to jonathan.rupp@gmail.com

DRAFT Ten-Year Hut System Master Plan

2019-2029

Purpose

This plan was created by and for Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) members for the purpose of maintaining and further developing a best-in-class alpine hut system in Southcentral Alaska.

State of the Hut System

MCA's eight huts have been constructed between 1964 and 2018. They are simple structures designed to provide safety and comfort during human-powered wilderness travel. Our huts support challenging personal trips, casual outings with friends and family, and serve as a venue for MCA trainings.

Planning Process

In 2018, the MCA Board of Directors developed a 2023 Strategic Plan to guide the Club toward its core purpose of strengthening Alaska's mountaineering community. Strategic Plan Objective 2.5 ("Reactivate Huts Committee, guided by a 10-year master plan, to ensure MCA huts are the best in their class") was identified by the Board of Directors as a high priority action. The process to develop the Huts Master Plan was:

1. Late 2018 - Interviewed hut users, volunteers, and current and past Board members, to develop a summary of current needs for each hut.
2. February 26th, 2019 - Hosted a two-hour workshop with 14 longtime huts volunteers and Board members to prioritize plan items.
3. Spring 2019 - Created a financial forecast for huts expenditures from 2019 to 2029. Extrapolated from the financial analysis presented May 15th, 2018, of huts expenditures from 2013 to 2017.
4. Hosting follow up focus group meeting, for refining the plan. April 2019.
5. Presenting draft plan to general membership for feedback. May 2019.
6. Recruit Hutmeisters for finalizing and implementing goals for each hut.

Current hut needs

Status reports at the start of the master planning process can be found in appendix 1.

1) Mint:

Mint is the most popular MCA hut and consequently has the most pressing issues.Overcrowding is common, as is overuse or misuse. Waste fly out is a significant expense for the club, and much of the waste is generated by non-members. There is no single easy fix for these issues. A task force was convened to evaluate options. Their report is viewable in appendix 2. Management strategies being considered include appointing a summer caretaker, and renovating/expanding the hut. If expansion is pursued, an avenue to offset cost is grants. Matsu Trails Foundation has encouraged the club to apply for a $25,000 grant, since the hut benefits Matsu trail users. Additionally, signage updates and user surveys are being developed to help educate users on hut use, and encourage engagement in the club.

Mint Hut 10-Year Plan				
Priority	**Description**	**Lead**	**Cost**	**Timeline**
1	Summer caretaker (June 1, 2019 - September 1, 2019) to address overcrowding. Educate new visitors on hut etiquette, waste system, and ways to get engaged with MCA	TBD	$0?	Need to ID a lead soon
2	Mint Hut Task Force researches feasibility of long-term solutions	Galen Flint, Vicky Lytle, Stan Olsen	$0 due to volunteer labor	ASAP
2.5	Renovate, remodel, move. (Task force outcome)		$10,000+	
3	Front door. The door is beginning to delaminate, and should be replaced	TBD	TBD	2020-2022
4	Apply for Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation grant for hut renovation project. Including reskin of outer walls, refurbish interior and possible extension/expansion of hut.	Max, with support from Huts Committee	$0 due to volunteer labor and supplies	August - September, 2019
5	Reskinning. The current skin is older generation material. It may last with basic upkeep, or it may allow issues such as that seen at Dnigi. If the hut is kept in its current configuration, a reskin could be worthwhile. Continue to monitor.		$12,000	2025 or beyond

2) Bomber:

Bomber continues to function well. One weak point is the door. Water is sometimes able to enter, either through normal use (wet users entering), or door not closing properly. Adding a foyer would improve the hut's functionality and longevity.

Bomber Hut 10-Year Plan				
Priority	**Description**	**Lead**	**Cost**	**Timeline**
1	Windows- two kitchen windows are scheduled for replacement. The new windows are on site.	TBD	< $100	2019 or 2020
2	Foyer addition	TBD	~$8,000	~2024
3	Re-skinning. The current skin is older generation material. It may last with basic upkeep, or it may allow issues such as that seen at Dnigi. Continue to monitor.		$12,000	With foyer?

3) Rosie's

Rosie's is the last of the three Eklutna Traverse huts to be reskinned. April 2019 visitors noted growing holes in the roof. This work should be scheduled as soon as possible, either 2019 or 2020. Cost estimate $12,000

4) Dnigi:

A leak in the siding circa 2010 has allowed for rot/degradation of the wood beneath. The west wall is the most affected, but the extent of the damage is not fully known. In 2013 a maintenance trip was executed to mitigate the damage and prevent further decay. Details can be found in the maintenance trip report in appendix 3. Subsequent informal inspections have found that the 2013 maintenance has prevented further degradation. However the initial damage has not been fully repaired. If this hut is to be maintained long term, a more extensive repair should be performed.

Dnigi is the least visited MCA hut. The addition of Holden to the system may increase its use, and thus its value to the membership. If this proves to be the case, a more expensive repair option would be better justified.

Dnigi repair options:		
	Description	Cost estimate
1	Do nothing. At least short term, the hut is not degrading further.	$0
2	Do minimal repairs. Human powered inspections. Open siding, replace rotted members.	$5,000
3	Restore to original. Helicopter out tools and skilled carpenters for an inspection. Plan the repair. 2nd fly out for repair.	$10,000
4	Replace skin with newer generation material, and replace all damaged wood. Perhaps possible without a separate inspection trip.	$15,000

Scandinavian Peaks

Need more detail about any maintenance problems. Schedule an inspection.

Pichler's

Re-skinned in 2015. No current issues.

Hans'

Re-skinned in 2013. No current issues.

Holden

New build 2018. Monitor for any wear-in issues.

Volunteers and Organizational Structure

With no paid positions within the MCA, the success of the hut system over the next decade will depend on thousands of hours of volunteer support and extensive coordination and collaboration. To enable a high-functioning Huts Committee, Task Forces, and volunteer system, the MCA uses the following organizational structure:

Board of Directors

Huts Committee

Task Forces, Hutmeisters

Overuse/Abuse

1. Begin discussions with land managers to determine if there are any options for restricting visitors numbers. Can we require advance bookings? Can we reserve huts for club trips? Any available options for future sustainable use should be understood, even if not implemented.

Funding

1. Recruit a task force focused on identifying potential funding sources and obtaining outside funds for larger hut projects.

Volunteers

In addition to the above capital projects, we have identified the following structural changes to the MCA operations that would support the hut system:

1. Actively recruit volunteer hutmeisters for each hut, and define roles and responsibilities:
    a. Coordinating planned and emergency maintenance
    b. Ensuring signage meets current MCA standards
    c. Annual inspection and visitor count, which is reported to the Huts Committee Chairperson. Compile historical visitor numbers based on logbooks.

Financial Forecast

Annual huts maintenance expenditures from the five year period 2013 to 2017 average $8,600 per year. This includes re-skinning two huts and an air supported maintenance trip on a third. Details are viewable in appendix 4. Future maintenance expenditures are anticipated to be similar. Annual maintenance costs should average between $5,000 and $8,000.

New hut construction is an additional expense. The Holden Hut construction resulted in approximately $63,000 in cash outlays. This includes over $37,000 of grants and donations. If a similar new construction is made in the next ten years, the club should plan on saving at least $3,000 a year.

Summary of high dollar maintenance and renovations:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
	$13,000		$11,000		$8,000		$12,000		
(Dnigi eval)	Rosie's Re-skin	(Bomber win-dows)	Mint reno-vate		Bomber foyer		Dnigi wall		

Detailed forecast year-by-year and hut-by-hut numbers are presented in appendix 5. Grants and hut-specific donations should be pursued to reduce hut burden on general club finances, particularly for new hut construction, and possibly Mint hut management expenses such as renovation and waste fly out.

Waste Management

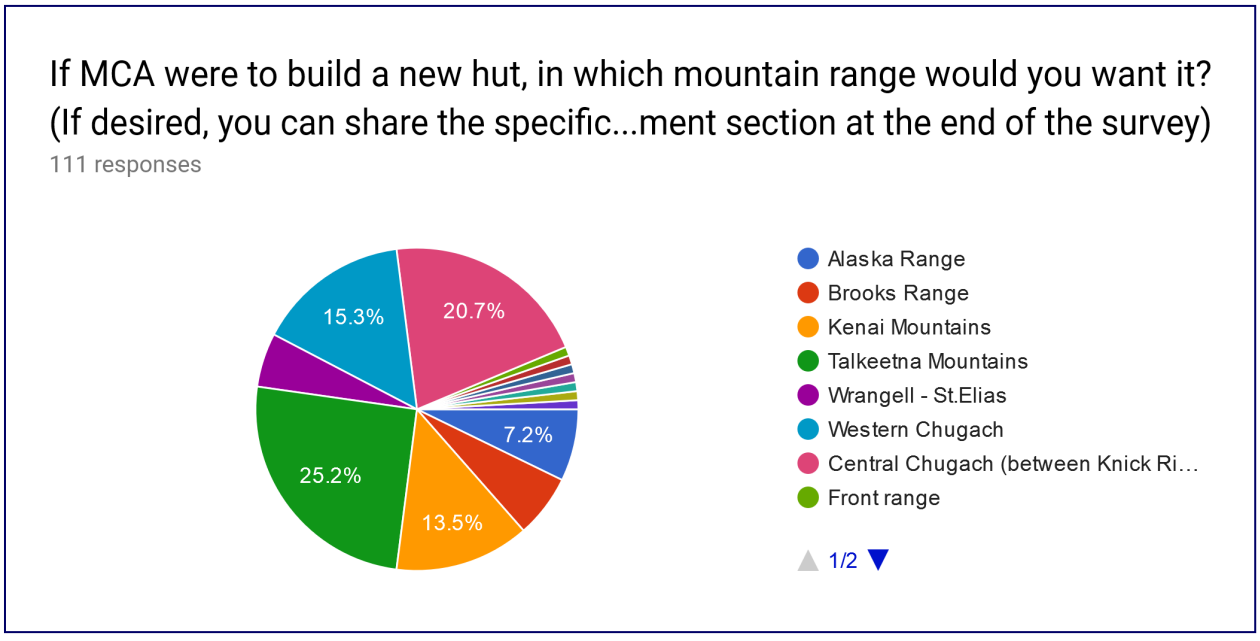
Different waste management systems are used at different huts. Most are functioning well. The Mint outhouse is often not well cared for. Different outhouse systems have been discussed. An evaluation of the Mint waste system was performed, and can be viewed in appendix 6. No alternative systems are readily available, and the existing system is robust. Therefore the best management available is to educate users, and encourage all users to take ownership. Additionally, scheduling barrel fly-outs will allow for financial planning and effort coordination. A urine diverter was installed in 2018, and a new sign has been developed to inform users of its operation. Additional educational/inspirational signage options are being explored.

New Hut possibilities

The club has continued to evaluate options for expanding the hut system. As the Holden Hut was recently completed, the club does not plan to undertake any new construction prior to 2025 and likely longer than that. However, planning ahead grants can be secured, locations evaluated, and savings stored.

Previous search. From 2006 to 2012 the club undertook a search for a new hut site. The site chosen was near the Powell Glacier, on what was once the East Fork of the Powell, a.k.a. Mike's Glacier. This construction has not taken place.

The 2018 survey asked where members would choose for a new hut, and found opinion to be divided. The most popular choice was an additional Talkeetna range hut, but only 25% of respondents chose this option.



Communications, user engagement, and collaborations

Users are the custodians of the huts. To encourage and empower us to do the best jobs we can, educational materials and communication tools should be developed. Collaborations with other organizations should be cultivated for achieving shared goals (e.g. AAC's Snowbird hut on the bomber traverse)

Item	Description	Lead
Website updates	Evaluate user-to-user communication options	Jonathan Strong
Usage numbers	Develop a mechanism to track visits to the hut	TBD
Signs	Update signs to reflect current systems, and encourage responsible use	Jonathan Strong
User manual	SOPs for hut systems; housekeeping, kitchen use, maintenance, outhouse use, etiquette	TBD
Hutmeisters	Recruit volunteers to oversee and coordinate plan for each hut	TBD
Landowners	Communicate with State of Alaska to ensure we are compliant and our goals are facilitated	Greg Bragiel is coordinating with CSP superintendent
Other organizations	Coordinate with American Alpine Club (Snowbird Hut) and Alaska Huts (Manitoba Yurt)	TBD

Appendices

Appendix 1

Recent details are available in the 2018 huts chairman report, viewable here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Ud7Jhvk33uyU-43kRt1wT1ytZVSMlsF-YEaBvDH4TMA

Status of the hut sheetmetal jackets can be viewed here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CE3VR9bJ0SKnxWtZ80aMkRfgBp-bpXn2EoEMmeRxUbk

Appendix 2

Mint task force report is viewable here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Uq61VQJ7SJhJyg3G6hdm-TOTrN0Ok1andAo_Md8p2hs

Appendix 3

Dnigi maintenance trip, 2013, report viewable here (begins middle of page 1): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BIXOwNX7qrVFgvMLmMs-q4X5vxWNn_rq/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 4

Financial analysis by Charlie Sink, presented May 2018:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QMpn3tXWNfvcCBsZFjciQC80T2Q3CHDa8WdfNnprsfQ

Appendix 5

Spreadsheet of the huts financial forecast for 2019 to 2029 can be viewed here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ued_535Lqc9X1IkG8BGJNEwLhXL4eQYwNqhI2jwkqko

Appendix 6

Mint outhouse evaluation:

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2019

6:00 p.m. @ UAA 105A CPISB

Roll Call

Michael Meyers (President) - Present
Charlie Sink (Past President) - Present
Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present
Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Present
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) -Present
Max Neale (Director) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Absent
Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present
Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Absent
Visitors: None

Scribe: Jen Aschoff

Committee Reports

President (Mike Meyers)

- Club's Core Purpose – Strengthen Alaska's Mountaineering Community
- Core Values – Camaraderie, Education, Adventure, Volunteerism.

Vice-President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Moose Creek access to Dnigi Hut has been challenged by a landowner. Directions on the MCA's website have been removed.
- Need to have events scheduled for general meeting May, July, and August.
- MCA's summer solstice campout will be on June 22.

Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

- Nothing to report.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Membership cards and information cards are available if needed.
- Eventbrite training available for board members April 12 and June 12.

Training (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Training committee needs volunteers.
- Training needs a new mentorship coordinator.
- Motion to spend $800 to train 10 people in first aid/CPR so that they can lead or co-lead trips was passed.
- Crevasse rescue class - pursuing Old Knik River truss bridge. Putting together a permit application on the Department of Transportation's recommendation. Also contacting Chugach State Park.
- Photography class coming soon - Andrew Holman (Max Neale)
- Greg Bragiel had a successful Mountaineering Trip on the Eklutna Traverse.

Strategic Plan Task Force (Max Neale)

- Mat-Su Trails and Parks would consider a grant proposal for paid support for a staff position that included activities to sustain that position after the grant project period ends. The board discussed this subject and determined it is not in the best interest of the club at this time.
- Mat-Su Trails and Parks would also consider a grant proposal for a huts-related project. The board will look into the grant to see if it can pay for refurbishments and/or additions to pre-existing huts.

Trips (Needs Chair)

- Arctic to Indian trip will defer to alternate trip.
- Committee chair needed. Jen Aschoff stepped down.
- Kelly Willett is a new committee member.

Huts Committee

(Jonathan Rupp Strong, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- Meeting in April will review a draft 10-year plan with projected spending.
- Grants are available in order to get funding for new huts, improving huts, etc. (Mat-Su Trails and Parks). Board is considering applying for a grant to address one of the highest capital expenditure needs identified in the forthcoming 10-year hut system master plan.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Delays with website updates, but they are in the works.
- We have a donate button on the MCA website for those who would like to give more than a membership fee. You can find it clicking the "About Us" tab at the top of the page and then find the "Donate" tab on the left about halfway down.
- Reviewed and approved media release form and the promotional guidelines checklist.

Mentorship (Needs Chair)

- Looking for a volunteer to take over as a Mentorship Coordinator.

New Business

- Gerrit will check into the land-access issue in Moose Creek with Tom and Lila.

General Meeting Minutes

April 3, 2019

6:30 p.m. @ BPEC

News and Recent Events

MCA Board voted to sponsor 10 members in First Aid/CPR training for those members who wish to be MCA Sanctioned Trip Leaders. The intent is to encourage more trip leaders to participate and make our trips safer. Members should contact Vice-President Gerrit Verbeek to sign up or get details.

MCA Website now has a "Donate" button that will allow individuals to make lump-sum donations if they wish. Billy Finley, Lila Hobbs, and Katherine Cooper worked together to make this happen.

February 13 "Big Mountain Alpinism Part 2" viewing at local MCA member's home was well attended.

March 9-10 "Ship Lake Pass Denali Prep" (Winter Camping and Sled Drag) led by Gerrit Verbeek was a success. Gerrit reported high winds, blowing snow, and an excellent team of mountaineers who attended.

March 31 "Arctic to Indian Traverse" trip was deferred to an alternate traverse from Powerline to Ship Lake Pass. The trip was led by Jen Aschoff. She reported excellent crust-skiing, snow climbing, hiking, and stunning views in bluebird conditions.

April 2019 Winter Mountaineering Course on the Eklutna Traverse, led by Greg Bragiel, was a success. Greg reports that conditions were challenging, but the team was fantastic.

Upcoming Events Reminder

April 10, 2019, 7:30 p.m. "Ski Base Repair Workshop" by Jordan Couture, 1020 Tyonek Drive, Anchorage, AK

May 7, 2019, 7 p.m. "Climb and Shoot: An Introduction to Alpine Photography" by Andrew Holman, BP Energy Center Cottonwood Room, Anchorage, AK

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	mcmeyers24@msn.com	Director 1 (term expires in 2019)	Tom Meacham	346-1077
Vice-President	Gerrit Verbeek	903-512-4286	Director 2 (term expires in 2019)	Max Neale	207-712-1355
Secretary	Jen Aschoff	jlaschoff@gmail.com	Director 3 (term expires in 2020)	Jonathan Rupp Strong	202-6484
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	209-253-8489	Director 4 (term expires in 2020)	Lila Hobbs	229-3754
			Past President	Charlie Sink	529-7910

Annual membership dues: Single $20, Family $30

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtnclubak.org.

***The Scree* is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes, and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.**

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Katherine Cooper—209-253-8489 or membership@mtnclubak.org
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Mike Meyers—mcmeyers24@msn.com, Jen Aschoff— jlaschoff@gmail.com or hcc@mtnclubak.org
Huts: Greg Bragiel—569-3008 or huts@mtnclubak.org
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Find MCAK listserv at https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info.

Max Neale skiing up the upper Bearskin Glacier on Polar Bear Peak. Photo by Eric Parsons

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