

ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC TRAIL SYSTEM

Management Plan

Adopted July 2nd, 2026





ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC TRAIL SYSTEM

Management Plan

Adopted July 2nd, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trails System Management Plan is a product of the City of Aspen Open Space and Trails Nordic Staff. A special thank you to the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council (Nordic Council), who started the current Nordic Trail System in 1984 and has advised the evolution of the system from its inception through present day. Thank you to Austin Weiss and Matt Kuhn for their work on the 2008 and 2015 Management Plans respectively. Thank you to the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails program for continued support and funding of the trail system and its management.

Cover Photo: Nordic racing on the High School Loop 30. Credit: Nordic Program Staff



ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council works toward the preservation and enhancement of a high quality, climate resilient, seamless Nordic trail system connected to and within the community centers of Pitkin County.



PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board of Trustees is to acquire, preserve, maintain and manage open space properties for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, recreational, wildlife, agricultural, scenic and access purposes; and to acquire, preserve, develop, maintain and manage trails for similar purposes.

The Pitkin County Home Rule Charter provision authorizing the Open Space and Trails Program defines open space and trails as follows:

"Open Space" shall be defined as primarily undeveloped lands and waters which meet one or more of the following criteria: Within public scenic view planes; bounding or within urbanized areas; incorporating or protecting significant wildlife habitat; preserving historic agricultural and ranching activities; protecting riparian or wetlands areas; protecting other public lands from the impacts of development, and preserving cultural, historic and archaeological resources lying within properties which are otherwise acquired for their customary Open Space characteristics.

"Trails" shall be defined as access ways, either separate from or within County and State road rights-of-way, meeting one or more of the following criteria: preserving historic routes of ingress and egress to public lands and waterways; providing access to and from recreational or urban destinations; providing transportation or recreational opportunities throughout the Roaring Fork Watershed.



CITY OF ASPEN OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Open Space and Trails Board is to continually acquire, preserve, manage and maintain Open Space and Trails within the community for the benefit of current and future generations. The Board makes recommendations to City Council and Staff on the acquisition and management of open space.

MANAGEMENT PLAN PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The 2026 Nordic Trails Management Plan continues the foundational efforts of the 2008 and 2015 plans to maintain, enhance, and further develop the Nordic trail network in Pitkin County. The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System currently spans 106 kilometers of machine-groomed cross-country skiing throughout the mid and upper Roaring Fork Valley. Nordic skiing and our local trail network are deeply rooted in the valley's history and community identity, however the sport and the valley's trail network now faces a growing challenge of shorter, warmer, and drier winters. This plan update aims to build upon past achievements and prioritize the long-term viability of Nordic skiing in the Roaring Fork Valley by continuing to enhance the current trail system and charting a path toward quality climate-resilient skiing opportunities for the community.

PLAN GOALS

This management plan prioritizes the long-term operation and maintenance of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System to ensure Nordic Skiing for the community for years to come. The following goals have been identified by Open Space and Trails staff with input from the Nordic Council.

GOAL 1: Ensure high quality Nordic trails with easy user access throughout Pitkin County.

GOAL 2: Secure long-term or permanent access to existing and future trails through formalized easements and access agreements.

GOAL 3: Develop climate-resilient Nordic trail options and operational systems to mitigate effects of warmer and dryer winter weather fluctuations.

KEY 2026 UPDATES

- Updated vision and goals
- Complete program history
- Updated plan use and role specifications
- Updated program operations and trail system structure
- New management actions with increased focus on climate resiliency

ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC TRAIL SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

STAFF

Chris Petersen | [Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System Coordinator](#)
Scott Lacy | [Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System Assistant Coordinator](#)
Austin Weiss | [City of Aspen Director of Parks and Recreation](#)
Matt Kuhn | [City of Aspen Parks and Open Space Director](#)
John Spiess | [City of Aspen Senior Open Space and Natural Resource Manager](#)
Gary Tennenbaum | [Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Director](#)

ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC COUNCIL

John Wilkinson, **President**
Paul Perry, **Vice President**
Eric Peterson, **Secretary**
David Polovin, **Treasurer**
Rachel Bachman Perkins
Helen Carlsen
Ben Dodge
Howie Mallory
Bob Wade
Craig Ward
Aspen Valley Ski & Snowboard Club Representative
Aspen Skiing Company Representative
City of Aspen, City Council Representative
Town of Snowmass Village, Town Council Representative
Town of Basalt, Town Council Representative
Pitkin County, Board of County Commissioners Representative

PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD

Amy Barrow
Wayne Ives
Michael Kinsley
Howie Mallory
Graeme Means

CITY OF ASPEN OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD

Julie Hardman
Ted Mahon
Howie Mallory
Adam McCurdy
Ann Mullins
Dan Perl



A beautiful day skiing the Owl Creek Trail in the French Meadow



Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

Laying classic track while grooming the Moore Open Space

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREATION OF THE 2026 MANAGEMENT PLAN	1
Nordic Trails Plan in 2008	1
Nordic Trails Plan Revision Process in 2015.....	1
Notable Accomplishments of 2008 and 2015 Nordic Trails Plan.....	1
Creation of the 2026 Nordic Trail Management Plan	2
Adoption of the Nordic Trail Management Plan.....	2
NORDIC HISTORY IN THE ASPEN VALLEY	2
Overview	3
A Nordic Heritage in the Elk Mountains.....	4
The Inception of Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council	6
Pitkin County and the City of Aspen.....	8
The Present Day.....	9
Timeline of Nordic in the Aspen Valley	10
THE ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC TRAIL SYSTEM TODAY	12
Overview	12
The Users and Role of the Nordic Trail System in the Community.....	12
Trail System Structure	15
Nodes of the Nordic Trail System	15
Connectors and Point to Point Trails.....	15
Types of Nordic Trails	16
Trail System Infrastructure.....	17
Trail System Access.....	17
Existing Conditions and Trail Descriptions.....	18
Organizational Structure	19
Existing Partner Groups.....	20
The Nordic Program Beyond the Trails.....	21
Other Existing Trail Systems in Pitkin County.....	21
GOALS, MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, & SNOWMAKING STUDY	23
Overview	23
Vision and Goals	23
Management Actions	23
Quality and Access.....	25
Protection and Preservation	26
Climate Resiliency	27
Results of the 2018 Snowmaking Trial and 2025 Feasibility Study.....	29

CREATION OF THE 2026 MANAGEMENT PLAN

Nordic Trails Plan in 2008

The first Nordic Trails Plan was created to help guide the operations, growth and management of Nordic ski trails funded by the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails program. Obtaining public input was a very important part of the process, and meetings were held in Aspen, Snowmass Village and Basalt, as well as direct contact through mailing and email to over 800 people, to gather and recognize the community's interest.

At the public meetings there was enthusiastic support and praise for the existing Nordic Trail System and the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board. Each meeting group focused their attention on the trails closest to home. In 2008, the following points were highlighted by the community in the planning process:

- The system should grow to include more Nordic ski trails, accommodate more users, and extend to a wider geographic area, specifically mid-valley.
- Partnerships and increased communications among all the groups related to Nordic trails should be encouraged.
- Trails were identified on planning maps, both for improvement and future expansion opportunities.

Nordic Trails Plan Revision Process in 2015

A Nordic council subcommittee formed in 2014 to provide updates to the 2008 plan with the primary goals focused on overall operational priorities, as well as addressing new multi-use demands on the Nordic trail system, and most notably, the Nordic Council developed screening criteria to aid in trail expansion opportunities. Land use challenges and successes were also accounted for in the newly created vision section of the document. The plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on September 11th, 2015.

Notable Accomplishments of 2008 and 2015 Nordic Trails Plan

With a focused vision, strong advocacy, and steady leadership, many improvements and goals outlined in the 2008 and 2015 Nordic Trails Plans' have been accomplished. These are some of the most notable improvements and accomplishments:

- Increased number and kilometers of dog friendly and multi-use trails
- Uniform, thorough, industry standard signage across trail system
- Updated maps and kiosks at major entry points across system
- Strengthened relationship with the Mount Sopris Nordic Council (Spring Gulch Nordic Trails)
- Securing easements and licenses on portions Owl Creek Trail and Moore Open Space

- Addition of mid-valley trails including Roaring Fork Club and Grange Ranch
- Successful snowmaking trial near AVSC in 2018 and completion of formal snowmaking feasibility study in 2025
- Improved grooming reporting and website improvements
- Expanding strategies for low-snow/low-impact grooming equipment and methods

Creation of the 2026 Nordic Trail Management Plan

In summer of 2025, City of Aspen staff initiated an update and review of the existing plan. In coordination with Nordic Council, several review meetings took place identifying the need for contemporary goals, a stronger focus on climate resiliency, recognition of notable past goals accomplished, and updated future management actions for the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System. The 2026 plan builds off the 2015 Trails Plan and incorporates feedback from Nordic Council review meetings, the community, and aligns with current regional and national Nordic trends.

Adoption of the Nordic Trail Management Plan

Adoption of the Nordic Trails Plan establishes its use as a referral document, and the Nordic Council as a referral agency, in the review of any development applications that may have a nexus with current or future Nordic ski trails. The Plan provides Pitkin County, the City of Aspen, the Town of Snowmass Village, and the Town of Basalt, a document with goals for the continued presence and climate resiliency of the Nordic Trail System.



Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Skiing in front of the beautiful Maroon Valley views

NORDIC HISTORY IN THE ASPEN VALLEY

Overview

Nordic skiing in the Aspen area and Roaring Fork Valley has a rich and deep history. Starting in the 1880's, pioneers and miners exploring the area are widely believed to be the first modern age cross-country skiers in the area. Nordic skiing was used heavily for winter exploration in the silver mining boom days and as ranching later took over the area.



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

Ute City miners cross-country skiing in 1890

The 10th Mtn Division famously arrived in Aspen in 1942, having skied cross-country to Aspen from Camp Hale. The growth of the sport on the national and international stages inspired many local residents to grow the sport in the valley and Nordic skiing was a popular winter activity in the Ashcroft area by the late 1950's with regular Nordic races taking place in the Aspen area by the 1960's.

By 1970, a Nordic center had opened in Snowmass Village and the first Silverboom ski race took place in 1971 in Snowmass Village. By 1980, over 30

kilometers of trail were maintained in Snowmass Village with additional trails maintained on the Aspen Golf Course, near the Aspen High School, and near the Aspen Club.

In 1984, the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council was formed with the vision of creating a European-style Nordic trail network throughout the Aspen area. The concept took hold and within a few years of foundational work by the nascent Nordic Council, a connected set of ski trails was established and maintained by the City of Aspen Parks Department with conglomerate funding from the Town of Snowmass, City of Aspen, and Pitkin County.

In 2006, the Nordic program was moved under the funding umbrella of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, though operations remained under the City of Aspen.

Today, the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System spans 106 kilometers of machine-groomed trails and comprises the largest free Nordic ski trail network in North America. The Nordic trails have become a pillar of winter recreation in the community and are host to numerous iconic community and competitive events each season.

The trail system still embodies the original vision of a connected community trail network from Snowmass Village to Aspen to Woody Creek and Basalt. The trails have been the home training grounds of numerous Olympic and World Cup Nordic athletes.

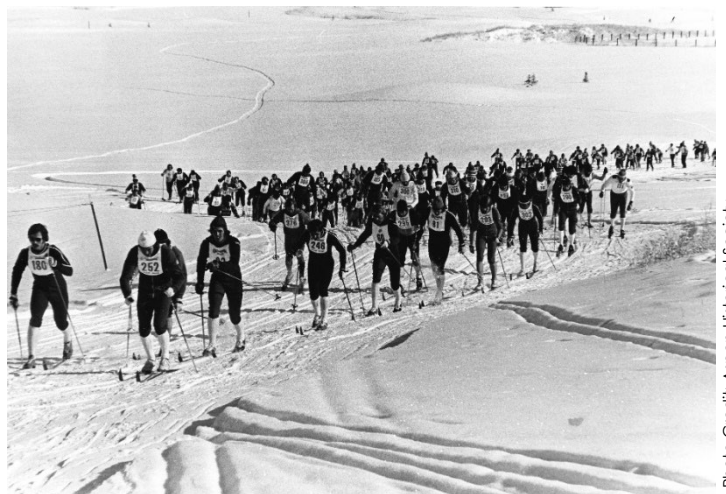


Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

The very popular Silverboom race in Snowmass in 1974

A Nordic Heritage in the Elk Mountains

Starting with the age of mining and mining exploration, many pioneers arrived in the Aspen area in the 1880's. Along with snowier winters and a wilder era in the mountains, these pioneers had no choice but to explore the mountains on skis. Most skiing took place across flat valley floors or up area side valleys. The equipment consisted of long, edgeless, wooden skis with leather strap bindings and a long singular pole used for balance.

This era of Nordic skiing remained in the valley without much change through the silver mining boom days and the quiet years following the silver crash. It wasn't until the arrival of the famed 10th Mountain Division troops in 1942 that modern Nordic skiing began to evolve and grow in the Aspen area.

The 10th Mountain Troops brought with them newer technology for skis including metal cable bindings and higher efficiency skis, more importantly, they brought with them the idea of skiing across the valleys and up the mountains for training, not merely a winter form of transportation from one point to another. With that came the increased use of "skiing in" a trail where the snow became firmer and easier for many skiers to use the same track, and with that the first Nordic "ski courses" were born in the valley.



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

Early Aspenites cross-country skiing where today's golf course sits, circa 1900

Soon after WWII, Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley saw the infamous boom in Alpine skiing and winter recreation at large. The growing winter sports economy brought with it better skis and grooming technology. By the late 1950's Nordic skiing in the Ashcroft area was popular. In the 1960's, dedicated

Nordic tracks were mapped and maintained each winter with Nordic races regularly taking place, including the popular annual Aspen Intercollegiate Christmas Ski Meet each December. By 1970, the valley's first known Nordic Touring Center had opened in Snowmass Village and Nordic skiing clinics hosted from the base of Highlands heading up Maroon Creek Valley were widely popular.

In 1971, the inaugural Silverboom Nordic ski race took place on the Snowmass Village trails



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

A Nordic race in Snowmass Village circa 1975

with hundreds of participants. The race is still happening today and has taken place annually since its inception. By the late 1970's, independent Nordic trails were operated in Snowmass Village, on the Aspen Golf Course, by the Aspen High School, at Highlands base area, and at the Aspen Club. With booming Nordic popularity, more events began to take place and better grooming technology was widely used including snowcats with classic track setters. By 1980 many athletes trained specifically for Nordic skiing in Aspen, including athletes who went on to compete for the United States on the World Cup and in the Olympics.



Elizabeth Paepcke and friends Nordic skiing in Ashcroft in 1956



The Aspen Intercollegiate Christmas Ski Meet in 1967



A Nordic ski clinic at the Highlands base area in 1970



Miggs and Dick Durrance Nordic skiing on the golf course in 1975

Photo Credits: Aspen Historical Society

The Inception of Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council

In 1984, Craig Ward, a former US Ski Team member, returned from racing in Europe to his childhood home of Aspen. He realized how similar Aspen was to Davos - a large valley heading out from town and another town, Snowmass Village, only 15 kilometers away. He thought "Why not connect the towns, as in Europe, with interesting Nordic trails weaving across fields, over rivers, and through valleys of aspen and pine trees?" With this vision, the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council was formed as an IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit entity. A Board of Nordic enthusiasts was assembled, representatives from Aspen, Pitkin County, Snowmass Village, and the Aspen Skiing Company, came together to guide and implement the original mission of maintaining, grooming, and growing a seamless Nordic trail network throughout the greater Aspen area.

The existing Nordic skiing areas in the upper Roaring Fork Valley consisted of separate and independently maintained pockets of ski trails in Snowmass Village, on the Aspen Golf Course, near the Aspen High School, and at the Aspen Club near today's North Star Nature Preserve. The Board approached private landowners and negotiated easements connecting these independent trails, and most notably connecting Aspen to Snowmass.



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

A ski clinic practicing the new-fangled Marathon Skate technique in 1985

Through generous support and community partnerships, the system quickly gained traction, and a more unified trail network came together the first season of 1984-85. Along with connecting the community, the inception of iconic events such as the Owl Creek Chase - a race from Snowmass Village to Aspen - and the Nordic Bonfire Dinner, which originally took place in both Aspen and Snowmass, happened in the first year.

The first season also saw the first municipal contribution of funding from Aspen City Council to lease a

Pisten Bully snowcat for grooming the trail system. At the time, all other funding for the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council came from community support and private donations. This model of funding continued for the first few years until 1987 when an Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) formed between the City of Aspen, Town of Snowmass Village, and Pitkin County to equally split the costs of operations. This shift moved the operations under the City of Aspen Parks Department, and the Nordic Council moved to an advisory role.



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

Mayor Bill Stirling at the grand opening of the Aspen Nordic Center in Dec 1985

1986 Trail Map of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System, operated by the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council



Map Credit: Nordic Program Archives

Pitkin County and the City of Aspen

Beginning in 1987, funding for the Nordic trails came from a new IGA and each year, the program approached each local government to secure necessary funding. Many special projects for the Nordic trail system received funding from the Nordic Council, in particular, summer trail improvements and new trail creation. Through the IGA's three-part funding, the Nordic program continued to grow and improve trail grooming quality each season.

In 1990, a public vote authorized a Pitkin County Open Space and Trails program mill levy on property tax within Pitkin County. In 1990, a newly created Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board was charged to advise Pitkin County on the use of the mill levy revenue. In 2006, the mill levy was reauthorized, and the addition of Nordic trail maintenance was placed solely in the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails fund.

The addition of Nordic funding within the County Open Space and Trails budget brought forth the present era of the Nordic Program. The three-party IGA was no longer needed and funding now fell under the umbrella of Pitkin County.

A new IGA was created in 2015 formalizing the long-standing agreement between Pitkin County and the City of Aspen for the operation of the Nordic program. In 2016, the mill levy was on the ballot again, this time for restructuring, renewal, and requesting a twenty-year renewal period over the previously passed ten-year period. The measure passed resulting in the renewal of the Open Space and Trails funding from 2020 to 2040, and funding of the Nordic program remains consistent.

With secure and reliable public funding, not only was a consistent trail product created each winter, the program was able to plan and budget for new trails, equipment upgrades, consistent staffing, and the creation and growth of community and competitive events. The Nordic Council remains committed to advising, advocating, and supporting the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System providing general recommendations to the Open Space and Trails Board regarding opportunities for expansion, changes to the trail system, and general operations functionality. As a nonprofit, the Nordic Council accepts donations that are used to augment the Pitkin County funding for the Nordic Trail System.



Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Nordic Program staff

The Present Day

Over time, with reliable resources, enthusiasm, and dedicated visionaries, the Nordic Trail System has become more “European” than ever with connected Nordic trails between the towns of Aspen, Snowmass Village, Woody Creek, and Basalt. Today’s Nordic trail system now spans 106 km of machine groomed trails, hosts an average of 12 community and competitive events each winter, sees thousands of skier days per season, and remains the largest, free Nordic trail system in North America. The program has 3 modern Pisten Bully Snowcats, several tracked 4x4 UTV’s and snowmobiles with specialized tow-behind grooming equipment. It is supported by 2 year-round staff, and 7 full-time personnel each winter. Community support for the Nordic trail system is strong, and the popularity of the sport is growing both regionally and nationally. Nordic skiing is a central winter recreation pillar for the Roaring Fork Valley.



Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

The new rubber tracks making quality trails on a low snowpack

Timeline of Nordic in the Aspen Valley



1880's – Documented cross-country skiing by miners to get around in winter

1943 – 10th Mtn Division arrived

1950's – Nordic trails first developed in Ashcroft

1960's – Nordic racing regularly takes place in the Aspen Area

Late 1960's – First Nordic tracks set near Aspen High School

1970 – The valley's 1st Nordic Center opens in Snowmass Village

1970 – Nordic clinics begin based out of Highlands base lodge headed up Maroon Valley

1971 – Ashcroft Touring Center Opens

1971 – The 1st Silverboom race in Snowmass Village



1976 – Bill Koch wins silver at the Innsbruck, Austria Olympic Games, the first American Olympic medal in Nordic skiing history

1982 – Skate skiing appeared in World Championships in Oslo, Norway

1984 – Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council Formed

1984 – Owl Creek Trail established

1984-85 – First season of a unified trail network

1984-85 – Nordic Council leased snowcat to improve grooming with funding from COA

1985 – First Owl Creek Chase Race



1985 – First Nordic Bonfire Dinner (one in Snowmass Village and Aspen)

1985 – Original Aspen Cross Country Center opens on Aspen Golf Course

1985-86 – Skate skiing officially becomes separate, unique event on World Cup circuit

1986 – Mount Sopris Nordic Council formed for Spring Gulch Nordic Trails

1987 – IGA Formed between Snowmass Village, Aspen, and Pitkin to equally fund grooming of Nordic Trails with operations take over by City of Aspen Parks Department

1987-88 – First season of Parks Department operations and government funding

1990 – Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board formed

1990 – First classic tracks regularly set up Maroon Creek Road



1997 – Today's 5 km race alignment created on Aspen High School Trails

1999 – 5 Trees Underpasses built on 5 km race loop as part of 5 Trees PUD build out

Late 1990's – Terminator trail built

2000 – Current AVSC Clubhouse and Moore Fields built

2003 – Rio Grande Trail grooming from Aspen Post Office to Emma School House begins

2002 – Snowmass Nordic Barn built, Snowmass Golf Course re-designed

2002 – Aspen Golf Clubhouse building and wintertime Aspen Cross Country Center open

2005 – Aspen hosts first Super Tour Races, including the Owl Creek Chase as a national race



2006 – Pitkin County Open Space and Trails brings Nordic Program under its funding umbrella

2008 – Roaring Fork Club trails expand in Basalt

2009 – Aspen hosts night sprints in Wagner Park as part of Super Tour Weekend

2012 – The 1st annual Ski for the Pass classic race up Independence Pass to Lincoln Creek Rd

2016 – Ballot measure passes renewing Pitkin County Open Space & Trails funding through 2040

2018 – Jessie Diggins and Kikkan Randall win gold at the PyeongChang, South Korea Olympic Games, the first female American Olympic Medal

2018 – Snowmaking trial on High School Trails

2020 – Covid lockdown results in boom in Nordic skiing; trail users doubled in March

2023 – Grange Ranch expansion to mid-valley trails

2025 – Feasibility study for Nordic Snowmaking in Aspen completed



2026 – US Biathlon sponsors official Biathlon trial program for AVSC and community

2026 – Record low snowpack renews focus on developing snowmaking for Nordic trails

THE ASPEN SNOWMASS NORDIC TRAIL SYSTEM TODAY

Overview

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic trail system distinguishes itself as the largest free, groomed cross-country ski system in North America. The system provides over 106 kilometers of groomed skiing, with the majority of the system maintained for both classic and skate skiing. The system has a diverse user population and hosts a number of popular community and competitive events. Trail grooming is done with either snowcats, tracked 4x4 UTV's or snowmobiles with specialized grooming equipment. The system is largely based on central nodes of activity with connected ski trails between nodes, and relies on many partner groups and agreements. The program is broken into three, interdependent branches of staff focus: Operations, Program Management, and Future Projects. This section dives deeper into the current state and coordination of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System.

The Users and Role of the Nordic Trail System in the Community

As an integral part of the community fabric, Nordic trails are a compliment to the summer trail system. The trails provide opportunities for winter recreation, tourism, competition, health and fitness, adventure, and alternative transportation. The Nordic trail system creates connections between the City of Aspen, the Town of Snowmass Village, Woody Creek, and the Town of Basalt acting as a physical community link in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Community: The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System (Nordic Trail System) and related events provide opportunities for exercising and social interaction. The systems' main nodes become focal points for community gathering, especially when trails for different but compatible uses are grouped together. Strategically located nodes such as the Aspen High School Loop 30 bring together a diverse set of users from the School District, Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club, 5 Trees neighborhood, and the Aspen Recreation Center. This shared resource builds community by connecting users through shared winter recreation.



Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Skate skiing on the High School Trails

Economics: The valley's strong economy is largely based on the resort town nature of the upper valley communities, especially Aspen and Snowmass Village. Nordic skiing seamlessly fits in with the recreational nature of the valley, and the Nordic Trail System is often called the "5th Mountain". The Aspen Cross Country Center is a full-service retail shop providing rental equipment as well as lessons to cross-country skiers. Free rental equipment is provided by the Town of Snowmass Village at the

Snowmass Recreation Center. Regional tourism is spurred with races and events such as the Ute Series town races and Owl Creek Chase, a point-to-point cross country ski race from Snowmass Village to Aspen, along with regional and national FIS racing. The pandemic boom in the outdoor industry had wide ranging impacts, including a noticeable rise in Nordic trail use in the Aspen Snowmass System. All these factors strongly contribute to the valley's economy.

Users: The Nordic Trail System is a winter trail system used by a wide variety of people and groups. Though the trail system was originally intended to provide platforms for cross-country skiing exclusively, the expanded Nordic Council mission now supports many multi-use trails. Designated dog-friendly trails are a popular and vibrant part of the Nordic Trail System allowing people to ski and walk with their dogs. Walkers, runners, and winter bicyclists are permitted on designated multi-use trails throughout the system as well. The majority of the system remains exclusively for Nordic skiing.



Since the inception of the trail system, the quality of the ski trails has continuously improved resulting in an increasingly diverse user group. The Nordic trails are utilized by individuals, families, local schools, the senior center, the recreation department, the Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club, and visitors to the valley. These groups enjoy different aspects of the ski trails from day tours and family excursions, to athlete training, to moonlight skis, and everything in between.

Dog friendly and multi-use trails are very popular

The primary uses of the groomed Nordic trails are as follows:

- Classic and skate skiers
- Walkers with and without dogs (on dog friendly and multi-use trails)
- Winter bikers (on the Rio Grande Trail)

The table below shows the approximate average weekly trail counts in the core season (January, February, and March) based on multiple seasons of data collection.

Aspen Golf Course Trails	Bernese Blvd.	Aspen High School Trails	Marolt Multi-use Trail	Owl Creek Trail	Snowmass GC & Lab Ln	Northstar Nature Trail
978	627	237	573	299	751	212



Local legend Jim Ward strides along



Laser Biathlon outside AVSC



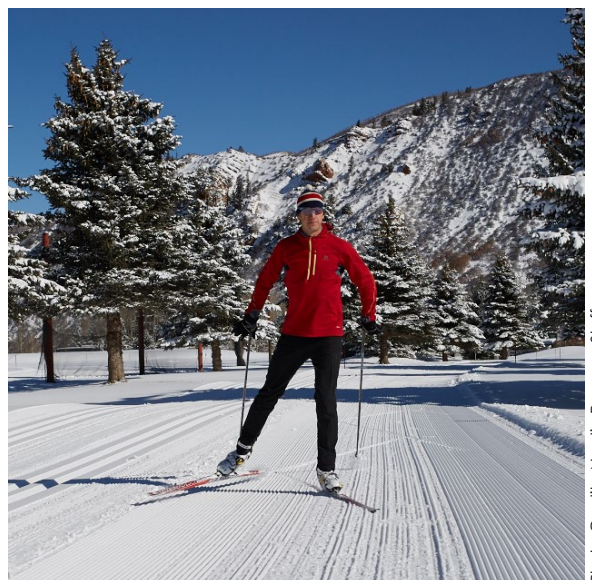
Elementary after school programming



Racing in the Ute Town Series



A masters clinic offered by the cross-country center



Skiing the Aspen Golf Course

Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

Trail System Structure

Nodes of the Nordic Trail System

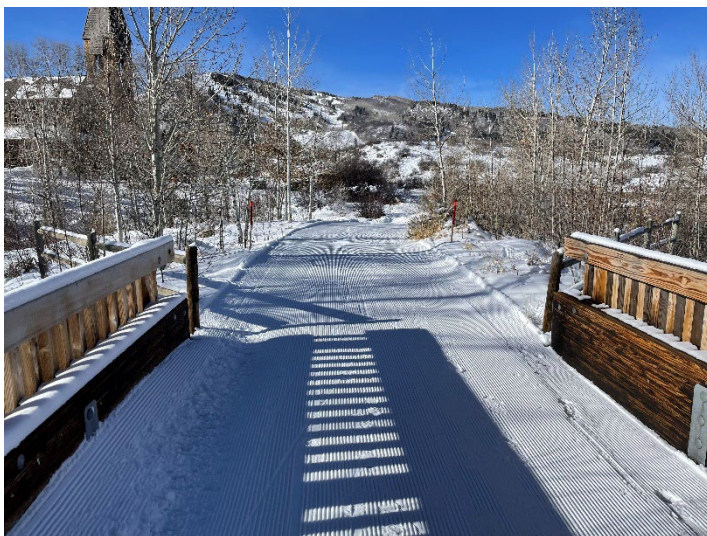
The Nordic Trail System currently has multiple nodes: The Aspen Cross Country Center on the Aspen Golf Course trails, the Snowmass Recreation Center near the Snowmass Golf Course trails, the Aspen Valley Ski Club race trails near the Aspen School District campus, and Basalt High School centering the mid-valley trails. While countless access points exist throughout the trail system, these nodes comprise the primary access points and where the highest user numbers are found. The Aspen Golf Course and Snowmass Recreation center offer a variety of facilities including ski rental, food and beverage, restrooms, and showers. The AVSC Clubhouse on the high school trails is the central hub for most youth ski programs and races. Basalt High School is the central point for mid-valley youth and recreationalist alike. The trails extending from these nodes are wide, snowcat groomed trails, providing classic and skate skiing with a range of easy to intermediate terrain.

Connectors and Point to Point Trails

In line with the original vision of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council, there continues to be connecting trails between central nodes of the trail system. These trails are more than just connectors, in some cases they are iconic trails themselves, and range from one to twenty-five kilometers long. Other connectors are simple yet meaningful trails using underpasses, bike paths, pedestrian bridges, neighborhood easements, and more. These trails and connectors are vital to the seamless and interconnected trail system envisioned at the inception of the ANSC.



The snow-filled and groomed HWY 82 underpass connector



The snow-covered Castle Creek pedestrian bridge and bike path

The most notable connector trails are the Owl Creek Trail connecting Snowmass Village to Aspen, the Moore Open Space trails connecting the Aspen Golf Course and Aspen High School trails, and the Rio Grande Trail connecting Aspen, Woody Creek, and Basalt.

Types of Nordic Trails

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System has a variety of Nordic skiing trails ranging from high-use, wide trails to rustic and remote non-groomed paths. The table below describes the types of trails.

	Full Width Trails	Medium Width Trails	Narrow Width Trails	Non-Groomed Trails
Width	20-24 feet	12-14 feet	4-8 feet	N/A
Track Type	Double classic tracks with 12-foot-wide skate lane	Single classic track with 9-foot-wide skate lane	Either skate only or single classic track only	Parallel track set by skiers
Typical Grooming Equipment	Snowcat, double pass	Snowcat or Tractor, single pass	Tracked 4x4's or snowmobiles with drag behind grooming equip.	No equipment used
Trail Examples	Aspen Golf Course, Moore Loop, Aspen High School Trails, The Owl Creek Trail	Rio Grande Trail, Terminator Trail, Bernese Blvd., Lab Lane	East of Aspen Trail, Cozy Pt North OS, Marolt Bridge	Benedict Trail, Maroon Crk. Gorge, Government Trail

The following photos are examples of each trail type:



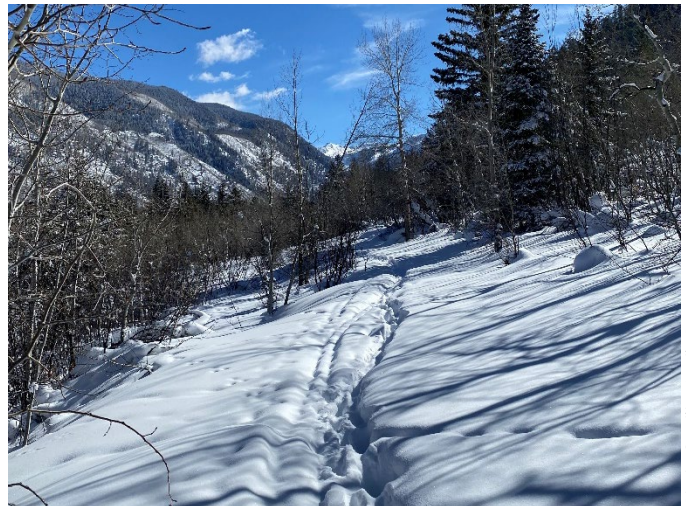
Full Width Trail: 2 Snowcat passes, pictured on Owl Creek Tr.



Med Width Trail: 1 Cat/Tractor Pass, pictured on Rio Grande Tr.



Narrow Width Trail: Snowmobile or 4x4, pictured at Cozy Pt. OS



Non-groomed Trail: Ski packed, pictured on Benedict Trail

Photo Credits: Nordic Program

Trail System Infrastructure

Despite spanning 106 kilometers of Nordic trail, today's system has zero permanent infrastructure with all elements of the trail system set-up each fall season and taken down each spring. This infrastructure includes reflective trail alignment stakes, signage, temporary culverts to cross ditches, underpass matting, large kiosk maps at major nodes, dog waste bins, and much more.

Along with fall season mowing, many sections of fences are removed and gates opened between parcels allowing the trail to connect for winter use. Multiple sections of shade fencing are placed in high sun or heat areas to minimize melt. When snow depth allows, the trails are “bladed” in using the snowcats to improve the levelness and grade of the trail and overall skiing quality.



A sampling of disc signage used on the trails

Image Credit: Nordic Program Staff

In addition to the Nordic specific infrastructure placed seasonally, the system uses benches, picnic tables, parking lots, bathroom facilities, and other year-round trail amenities. While this setup and removal can be cumbersome, the Nordic program prides itself on being low-impact, versatile, and a respectful steward of the land operated on.

The Nordic Program uses and maintains two year-round, permanent structures to house snowcats, light grooming equipment, and other infrastructure such as signage and stakes. One garage is located in Snowmass Village adjacent the Snowmass Golf Course trails and one in Lazy Glen along the Rio Grande Trail. In the winter season, equipment is also stored at the City of Aspen Parks department campus adjacent the Aspen Golf Course.

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System does not provide ski patrol, though it uses hazard and safety risk signage in the field and provides daily grooming updates online with any trail hazard information. While skiing on any trails in or near avalanche exposure (most of which are not maintained by the Nordic Program such as the Maroon Bells), users are advised to have the proper knowledge, equipment, and plan, and to ski at their own risk.

Trail System Access

A priority of the Nordic Trail system is providing cross-country skiing close to user concentrations including residential community centers, tourist lodging, event centers, and at critical trail junctions. Most major nodes of the system have maintained parking areas and are serviced by public transportation. Use of public transportation allows for one-way ski trips, increases access, and limits impacts on parking.

Existing Conditions and Trail Descriptions

The Nordic Trail System's different trail typologies offer distinct ski experiences. For example, the North Star Nature Preserve east of Aspen along the Roaring Fork River provides a mellow, contemplative ski, while the Aspen High School Trails are FIS certified race courses offering challenging terrain and are heavily used for training and racing purposes. The Owl Creek Trail provides a longer, rolling and scenic ski between Aspen and Snowmass Village connecting the varied terrain and trails of each town, while the Aspen Golf Course has many loop variations on flatter terrain.

Designated dog-friendly trails exist throughout the Nordic Trail System allowing people to walk or ski with their dogs. These trails include Labrador Lane and Village Way Trail in Snowmass Village, Bernese Boulevard on the Aspen Golf Course, the Marolt Open Space Loop, and The Rio Grande Trail. Maroon Creek Road and Independence Pass Roads are also dog-friendly walking and skiing routes (though these are not maintained by the Nordic Program).

See the Existing Trail Descriptions and Maps in Appendix A for further trail information and descriptions.



Image Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Example of a kiosk map placed at major access points throughout the trail system

Organizational Structure

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic program is funded through the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails mill levy and operated by the City of Aspen Parks Department via an intergovernmental agreement. The funds provided by Pitkin County are used primarily for base operations, trail maintenance, staffing, and equipment. Funding for additional proposed improvements to the Nordic Trail System are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council is a volunteer advisory board to the program, operates as an IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and receives private donations through community contributions. Funds from the Nordic Council are used for special projects to aid the greater Nordic program. The Nordic Council also assists in coordinating acquisitions of trail easements.

Positions related to operating the program include:

- *Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Director* oversees all programs related to Trails and Open Space, works closely with the Open Space and Trails Board as well as overseeing Nordic Trail System financial decisions, distribution of funds, and approving of budgets.
- *City of Aspen Parks and Open Space Director* oversees City of Aspen Parks staffing and operations related to Nordic Trails.
- *City of Aspen Senior Open Space and Natural Resource Manager* primary supervisor of year round Nordic staff, advises on operations, land use, administration, and natural area maintenance.
- *City of Aspen Nordic Coordinator* manages day-to-day operations of the Nordic Trail System and is involved in all decisions related to the management of the program.
- *City of Aspen Nordic Trails Staff* perform daily operation and maintenance of trail system in winter season.



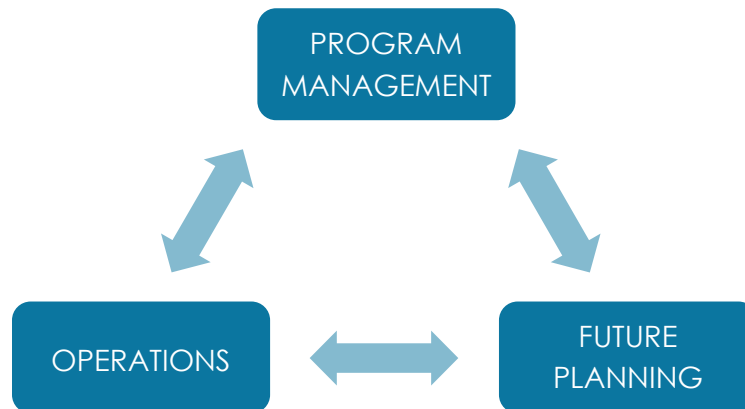
Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Autumn season mowing of the Nordic trail alignments

The City of Aspen and Pitkin County jointly and individually own a variety of specialized equipment for the operation and maintenance of the Nordic Ski Trail system. This equipment ranges from road vehicles and trailers, to snowcats, tracked 4x4's, snowmobiles, tractors, and other mechanized grooming equipment. Trails ownership, easements, and use agreements are held by the agencies that purchased or otherwise obtained them.

Within the Nordic program, the coordination of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System is divided into three main interconnected branches – Program Management, Operations, and Future Planning:

- *Program Management* is the year-round work to keep the Nordic trails maintained and functional (land use agreements, staffing, etc.).
- *Operations* are the winter season, physical and tangible work (mowing, grooming, shoveling, etc.).
- *Future Planning* is work done to ensure the Nordic program continues to provide a trail system into the future (event calendar, developing climate resiliency strategies, budget, etc.).



The three interconnected branches provide a framework to meet the goals of providing a resilient, high-quality, enduring Nordic skiing experience in the Roaring Fork Valley. It is through this lens that program maintenance and enhancement, and in particular, the goals of this document are viewed and accomplished.

Partner Groups

Due to the diverse locations of the trails and their close relationship with community infrastructure, many partnerships are necessary. Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and the Nordic Program coordinates with the following partners:

- City of Aspen, Town of Snowmass Village, and the Town of Basalt
- Aspen Skiing Company - access to the Government trail, crossing of both the Snowmass and Buttermilk ski areas, and parking
- Snowmass Club – Snowmass Golf Course
- Maroon Creek Club - Maroon Creek Club trails
- Roaring Fork Club – Roaring Fork Club trails in mid valley
- The Grange Family – Grange Ranch Trails by Basalt High School
- Ute Mountaineer and the Aspen XC Center
- Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club, host of most races and events
- Snowmass Recreation Center
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) - access, snowplows for parking, old Highway 82 Maroon Crk. Bridge permit
- Private landowners, Homeowners Associations and Metropolitan Districts
- United States Forest Service
- Roaring Fork Transit Agency (RFTA) – provide transit connections and historically groomed sections of the Rio Grande Trail near Carbondale

The Nordic Program Beyond the Trails



The 2025 Art Cart Rally race berms on Whoa Nelly Sledding Hill

Though the primary function of the Nordic program is the maintenance and upkeep of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System, the program is a part of winter recreation in other ways as well. Being the primary operator of snow grooming equipment in the valley outside of the Aspen Skiing Company, the Nordic program assists in a variety of other winter events and occasionally, unique, one-off special events.

Most notably, the Nordic Program works closely with AVSC and the Ute Mountaineer in hosting Nordic events of all kind, including the Bonfire Dinner, the Ute Town Series, Rocky Mountain Nordic and Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate races, The Ski for the Pass classic hill climb, and Colorado High School races. Outside of racing, the program staff build and groom the Art Cart Rally course on Whoa Nelly Sledding hill, a project involving large tubing berms and snow harvesting. The Nordic Program is also a steward of the Open Spaces it operates on being not just a presence and representative, but also by bringing users in a quiet and low impact way to places that are often difficult to access in winter.



The Moore Laser Biathlon range prepared by Nordic staff

Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

For an example of a full winters schedule of events supported by the Nordic Program, see Appendix E.

Other Existing Trail Systems in Pitkin County

- **Spring Gulch Nordic Trails**, outside of Carbondale, are managed by the Mt. Sopris Nordic Council and provide skiers with a 28 km network groomed for skate and classic. This free community funded trail system also receives funding from Pitkin County and is widely viewed as a sister organization to the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System, though it is managed and operated independently.

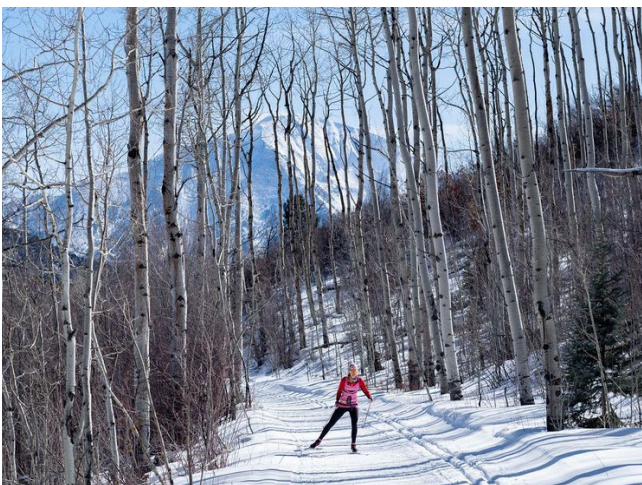


Photo Credit: Sarah Kuhn

Skiing with views of Mt. Sopris on the Spring Gulch Nordic Trails

- **Ashcroft Ski Touring**, privately operated on National Forest land, located in Castle Creek Valley south of Aspen. The ski area offers 35 kilometers of skiing and the Pine Creek Cookhouse restaurant.
- **Maroon Creek Road (USFS)** is snowcat groomed by a private snowmobile outfit located at the winter closure of Maroon Creek Road (T Lazy 7 Ranch). The road provides a multi-use trail for skate and classic skiing, as well as walkers and fat bikes. The Ranch does not run snowmobile tours on Sundays in an effort to provide a day for other users.



Classic skiing on the Snowmass Golf Course



The mass start of the Owl Creek Chase in Snowmass Village

Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

GOALS, MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, & SNOWMAKING STUDY

Overview

The goals of this document are summarized by quality and access, protection and preservation, and climate resiliency. Within these goals, actions have been identified via stakeholder input, consideration of operational capacity and constraints, and administrative and board direction. Within each action, tasks needed to accomplish the desired outcome are also specified. The 2018 snowmaking trial and 2025 snowmaking feasibility study have also guided actions toward climate resiliency and are summarized in this section.

Vision and Goals

The Pitkin County Nordic Trails Plan formalizes the vision of the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council and creates goals for the Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System. The following vision and goals have been developed for use over the next 10 years of the Nordic Program, at which time, the Nordic Trails Plan will be reviewed and updated if needed.

Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council Mission statement:

The Aspen Snowmass Nordic Council works toward the preservation and enhancement of a high quality, climate resilient, seamless Nordic trail system connected to and within the community centers of Pitkin County.

Aspen Snowmass Nordic Trail System Management Plan Goals:

GOAL 1: Ensure high quality Nordic trails with easy user access throughout Pitkin County.

GOAL 2: Secure long-term or permanent access to existing and future trails through formalized easements and access agreements.

GOAL 3: Develop climate-resilient Nordic trail options and operational systems to mitigate effects of warmer and dryer winter weather fluctuations.

Management Actions

The overall desired outcome is a continued and enhanced Nordic Trail System. Within each goal, multiple actions have been identified and placed under one of the three branches of the organizational structure: Program Management, Operations, and Future Planning. This provides a framework for implementing each action within the current Nordic Program.



Photo Credit: Nordic Program Staff

Grooming on Independence Pass for the annual Ski for the Pass Classic Race

QUALITY AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

QA.1	Maintain and strengthen partner relationships	Program Management
QA.2	Continued approval of County funding for Nordic Program	Program Management
QA.3	Operating the Nordic system based on user data & contemporary recreation trends	Operations
QA.4	Fall trail preparation: mowing, brushing, and lopping of all trails where allowed	Operations
QA.5	Proper base building of snowpack each season	Operations
QA.6	Trail summer surface and micro-grading work	Future Planning

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

PP.1	Confirm all existing easements	Program Management
PP.2	Secure new easements through land use process as development occurs	Program Management
PP.3	Operate within easement and agreement specifications	Operations
PP.4	Obtain easements on any existing trail segments not formalized	Future Planning

CLIMATE RESILIANCY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

CR.1	Research and continuing education into best practices, innovations, and current science for Nordic operations	Program Management
CR.2	Adjust grooming schedule for highest snowpack durability given precipitation and temperature forecasting	Operations
CR.3	Obtain & use equipment better suited for low-snow coverage	Operations
CR.4	Implement snowmaking where feasible and practical	Future Planning
CR.5	Implement insulated snow storage where feasible and practical	Future Planning
CR.6	Expansion into climate resilient microclimates such as Difficult Campground, Independence Pass and other areas conducive of holding snowpack in Pitkin County	Future Planning

Quality and Access

QA.1 Maintain & strengthen partner relationships

Desired Outcome:

Strong and stable relationships with all partners of the Nordic trail system.

Tasks:

- Regular communication, in particular, when any operations impact a partner.
- Acknowledgments and seasonal "Thank You's" for private landowners.
- Educate skiers on respectful trail use and private property crossing.

QA.2 Continued approval of County Funding for Nordic Program

Desired Outcome:

Annual Nordic Program budget approval by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board.

Tasks:

- Responsible program budget use and continued stewardship of public funding
- Timely and accurate delivery of budgeting information
- Maintain strong public support of Nordic Trail System

QA.3 Operating the Nordic System based on user data and contemporary recreation trends

Desired Outcome:

Matching our operations with the publics' use and desires of the Nordic Trail System.

Tasks:

- Prepared for early season grooming as soon as minimum workable snow falls based on early season interest.
- Prioritizing highest use trails for maintenance and grooming using trail counter data. (e.g. new or low)
- Provide both skate and classic grooming when snowpack allows.

QA.4 Fall trail preparation: mowing, brushing, and lopping of all trails where allowed

Desired Outcome:

Trails are able to capture early season snow and prevent accelerated melt out due to vegetation impacts in trail corridor.

Tasks:

- Mowing trails to create as smooth and thin a vegetation layer as possible for low snowpack grooming.*
- Lopping trail edge vegetation and continually cutting throughout winter season.*

*Degree of all trail preparation occurs within easement or agreement language



The Aspen Cross Country Center, a main access pt. to the trails

QA.5 Proper base building of snowpack each season

Desired Outcome:

A smooth, durable, and clean trail base built from the first workable amount of snow, creating a lasting layer to benefit users all season long.

Tasks:

- Use appropriate low snow equipment when packing thin snowpacks.
- Train operators on grooming techniques to reduce operating impact on trail base.
- Staying mindful of snowpack all season.

QA.6 Trail summer surface and micro-grading work

Desired Outcome:

Reduce minimum amount of snow required for opening a trail as well as reduce impacts of warm and dry spells.

Tasks:

- Remove rocks, high points, or other trail obstructions requiring deeper snowpacks.
- Slant trails a few degrees north facing to reduce solar gain and melt out, and if possible, re-route hot sections of trail to colder alignments.
- Add wood chips to trails where possible to smooth trail, aid in faster ground freezing and cleaner snowpack if any tear-up occurs.

Protection and Preservation

PP.1 Confirm all existing easements and use agreements

Desired Outcome:

Have a readily available inventory of all Nordic easements and use agreements in hand for review and record keeping.

Tasks:

- Work with county to identify documents in hand and those not readily available.
- Research and locate documents not in Nordic Program database and backups.
- Create record system for all documents.

PP.2 Secure new easements through land use process as development occurs

Desired Outcome:

Create Nordic easements for any new development occurring on or adjacent to any Nordic trail for ensuring trail access in perpetuity.

Tasks:

- Ensure City and County Community Development Departments are aware of the Nordic Trails Plan and its goals.
- Ensure landowners are aware of easement creation benefits and the community value of Nordic Trails.
- Have the Nordic Program staff be a part of land use discussions when appropriate.

PP.3 Operate within easement and agreement specifications

Desired Outcome:

Ensure the Nordic Program operations are in alignment with easement or agreement terms.

Tasks:

- Communication between Nordic staff and easement or agreement holders.
- Educating staff, users, and outside parties on easement language and allowances.
- Ensuring staff and users are within easement language for the entirety of operating season.
- Resolve conflicts expediently.

PP.4 Obtain easements on any existing trail segments not formalized

Desired Outcome:

All trails within the system are operating under formal and perpetual easements.

Tasks:

- Identify all trail segments currently operating under informal agreement.
- Work towards formal easements through appropriate County land use processes, Open Space acquisitions land owner negotiations.

Climate Resiliency

CR.1 Research and continuing education into best practices, innovations, and current science for Nordic Operations

Desired Outcome:

Nordic Program staff are informed and aware of all possible options to address climate fluctuations and maintain quality ski trails.

Tasks:

- Attend snow & ski industry conferences.
- Study/visit other Nordic areas addressing similar fluctuations in winter conditions.
- Experiment with or implement innovative technologies/techniques for winter trails.



Snowmaking on Loop 30 during the 2018 snowmaking trial.

CR.2 Adjust grooming schedule for highest snowpack durability given precipitation and temperature forecasting

Desired Outcome:

Grooming occurs when snowpack has time to “set-up” for higher durability during warm and/or dry spells is adjusted during precipitation events to capture all new snow.

Tasks:

- Schedule grooming such that snow has time to set (if above freezing during day, this must be in late evening to allow snow time to set during coldest part of night).
- Have flexible grooming options for precipitation events.
- Monitor forecasting and industry science.

CR.3 Obtain and use equipment better suited for low-snow coverage

Desired Outcome:

Nordic Program has equipment capable of grooming on thin snowpack with minimal impact.

Tasks:

- Identify equipment or equipment modifications suited for low snowpacks.
- Budget and schedule for purchasing.
- Train staff on using equipment.

CR.4 Implement snowmaking where feasible and practical

Desired Outcome:

Reliably open a Nordic trail(s) at the beginning of winter without relying on natural snow, and benefit from the artificial snows' durability against warm or dry spells in-season.

Tasks:

- Use the 2025 feasibility study to identify trail area & budget for snowmaking.
- Work with partners and stakeholders on development of plans.
- Install and implement snowmaking.

CR.5 Implement insulated snow storage where feasible and practical

Desired Outcome:

Reliably open a Nordic trail or trail section at the beginning of winter without relying on natural snow or snowmaking conditions and without the labor of early season snowmaking.

Tasks:

- Identify ideal location for snow storage.
- Install snowmaking at storage spot using information from feasibility study.
- Fill storage spot each winter and insulate.
- Spread stored snow onto trail each fall.

CR.6 Expansion into climate resilient microclimates such as Difficult Campground, Independence Pass and other areas conducive to holding snowpack in Pitkin County

Desired Outcome:

Establish Nordic trails in locations where warm and/or dry spells have less effect, or where in-season trail melt or damage is lessened by natural trail resilience to climate fluctuations.

Tasks:

- Identify areas in the valley with micro-climates conducive to maintaining winter snowpack including areas listed already.
- Work with partner organizations to obtain appropriate use permits and agreements.
- Configure staff and equipment scheduling to incorporate new trails.

For the new trail screening criteria and a complete list of new trail opportunities identified by this plan, see Appendix B, C, and D.



Durable man-made snow near AVSC, April 26, 2019



Natural snow melting on the Aspen Golf Course, February 27, 2024

Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

Results of the 2018 Snowmaking Trial and 2025 Feasibility Study



The Nordic snowmaking trial in 2018 on top of Clubhouse Hill

was successful in that it proved snowmaking could be done on the Nordic trails, though difficult to coordinate with Highlands snowmaking operating simultaneously, and the artificial snow provided quality Nordic skiing throughout the season.

The success of the trial year, and the intensifying climate fluctuations during the Nordic season, led to a more comprehensive snowmaking feasibility study. Completed in summer 2025, SE Group and Sno.Matic Engineering finished a year long study of snowmaking for Nordic trails in Aspen.

The study examined both the Aspen High School trails Loop 30 (known as the race loop) and a portion of the Aspen Golf Course Loop 00 and 10 (known as the recreation loop). While there is a need and use case for both areas, difficulties with water access and availability at the race loop make near-term implementation infeasible.



Photo Credits: Nordic Program Staff

A proposal of snowmaking trails on the Aspen Golf Course

Ultimately, the pursuit of snowmaking on the Aspen Golf Course has a strong use case (the highest user counts of all trails), could be installed in coordination with the Golf Course and driving range remodel (potential for cost sharing) and has available water. The Aspen High School trails, though having strong race and training value, is a better candidate for other snow solutions such as snow storage or farming.

Beyond the physical logistics of snowmaking examined during the feasibility study, the weather between 2025 and 2060 was modeled and analyzed using the Climate by Forest Tool created by the

BETWEEN 2025 AND 2060, THE ASPEN ECO REGION IS PROJECTED TO SEE A DECREASE IN SNOW WATER EQUIVILANT OF 65-80% AND SNOW RESIDENCY TIME OF 40-50%. – 2025 SE GROUP REPORT

USDA Forest Service using RCP scenarios based on greenhouse gas concentrations. In the model, it is very clear climate fluctuations and historic trends are likely to make snowmaking a valuable part of ensuring Nordic Skiing in the Aspen area as the natural snow season will become increasingly shorter over time with less precipitation.

For complete feasibility study, see Appendix F.

