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# Summit Huts Association HUTMASTERS' JOURNAL

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Spring/Summer 2006 • Volume 15, Issue 2

*A Newsletter & Update for Friends of Summit Huts*

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## SHA EXPLORES NEW HUT SITES

BRAD SAWTELL, SHA ADVISORY BOARD

At the annual meeting of the Summit Huts Association in September, 2005, the SHA Executive Board approved the formation of a Hut Development Committee (HDC) to look into the future of the hut system, including identifying and visiting potential future hut sites around Summit County. The HDC is comprised of seven members of the Summit Huts Executive and Advisory Boards.

Throughout the 2005/2006 winter season, members of the HDC went into the field to look at six possible hut site locations and met with land managers from the White River National Forest to talk about our intent. There were at least three committee members present for each site visit and we were joined on several visits by Forest Service personnel.

The HDC carefully documented each visited site utilizing GPS, digital photos and by completing a form rating each location. By this coming summer, all of the information on each location will be compiled into a working document.

The criteria the HDC is using to identify suitable hut sites are seclusion and experience, building site, natural hazards, accessibility, land ownership or management, social impacts, summer use, and wildlife issues. Each of these criteria was rated on a scale of 1-4 by each site visitor in order to obtain an overall site score (complete check list on page 3). So far, we have found some sites to score quite well, while others have not scored as well as originally hoped.

The goals of adding a hut to the SHA system are to meet the growing need of the user and to continue to create connections for hut to hut trips. Our current huts are booked almost to capacity, which demonstrates the commitment of our users. Adding a new hut will increase the experience for the user and help reduce the impact on current huts.

If you have any comments or ideas, please contact us.



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*cityWILD Hut Trip p. 4/photo: Christi Stafford*



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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy Spring/Summer to you all! It was a great winter with abundant snow and sunshine. I was fortunate to visit six potential hut sites this winter and spend 10 nights out in huts.

Summit Huts Association had a very good year as well. We had 75% occupancy, no major injuries, and some successful snowmobile intervention. Fortunately, SHA has the happy problem of contemplating increased demand in occupancy while at the same time attempting to understand the expense side of our organization. Therefore, I would urge you to study our Treasurer's (Bill Souba) thoughtful analysis of the revenue/expense picture when we approach 100% occupancy. Much of what Bill presents underscores the need for 1-2 additional huts in the SHA system. For these reasons, and our desire to provide a premier experience for our guests, I urge you to also study the soon to be released analysis of the six hut sites which the hut development committee visited.

As always, I remain committed to Summit Huts Association.

Sincerely,

## TREASURER'S REPORT

BILL SOUBA, SHA TREASURER

Plentiful snowfall and an abundance of backcountry enthusiasts has contributed to what is shaping up to be a record year for Summit Huts. As we approach the end of our fiscal year (June 30), we are on track to exceed all previous year's hut nights in the Summit Huts system. Through May 31<sup>st</sup>, reservations for nights in the Summit Huts has totaled 7396 which is better than the previous high of 6938 nights set in 2004. We are grateful to all of you that took advantage of this great high country resource and contributed to the continued success of Summit Huts.

As we look to the future, your association remains committed to keeping access to the backcountry through the Summit Huts system within financial reach of as many people as possible. However, just like you, Summit Huts is subject to the vagaries of the economy. At some point in the not so distant future, we will reach practical hut capacity which means revenue will level off. Unfortunately, the costs to maintain the huts and to provide the experience that we are committed to will continue to rise. To offset the gap created by this imbalance, we are continually looking at ways to augment revenue. Expanding the season at Janet's Cabin by opening this facility to summer use is one way we can increase revenue. On a long term basis, the addition of new huts to the system will help to increase capacity. And, as always, we appreciate the continued support in the form of donations from our members to assist us in keeping the association strong. Please keep us in mind when making decisions regarding your charitable contributions.

*(continued on p. 3)*

# HUT SITE SELECTION CHECKLIST

These are the criteria that the Hut Development Committee is using to evaluate potential hut sites. For every site visited, each reviewer filled out this checklist, giving each section a score (1-4) and ranking each consideration with a +, √ or Δ. For the overall site score, all section scores are averaged.

## Rating Guidelines:

1=Fails to meet SHA mission. Site eliminated from further consideration.

2=Marginally meets the SHA mission. Consider location only if other criteria exceed expectations.

3=Meets the SHA mission requirements for the criteria.

Adequately address criteria for the location.

4=Exceeds the SHA mission requirements for the criteria. Overall favorably

addresses all required criteria. Continue to pursue this site.

+ =Exceeds SHA mission for this criteria.

√ =Meets SHA mission for this criteria.

Δ =Fails to meet SHA mission for this criteria. Consider removing this site from the list.

## SECLUSION/EXPERIENCE (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Hut not seen from other use areas, or if visible it blends in with surroundings

+ √ Δ Views from hut – natural, few if any human structures in view

+ √ Δ Low contact with other backcountry users, less than 30 encounters per day within ½ mile radius of site.

+ √ Δ Low incident of contact with motorized winter uses

+ √ Δ Distance from trailhead or other hut recommended being 2-4 hours traveling time

+ √ Δ Availability of backcountry skiing, potential hazards, route difficult

+ √ Δ Ski-able terrain (focus on telemark or alpine touring skiing)

+ √ Δ Location and relative remoteness of trailhead does play a part in defining remoteness of the hut site.

## SUITABLE BUILDING SITE (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Adequate slope, soils, leach field site, etc.

+ √ Δ Solar Aspect, amount of sunlight hut would receive

+ √ Δ Views from sites and other visuals

+ √ Δ Nearness to water; seasonal availability, amount, and quality

+ √ Δ Vehicle access for construction and maintenance not necessary through desirable

+ √ Δ Ability to operate and maintain in economically viable manner relative to its location (recommended size is 12 to 16 people)

+ √ Δ Adequate nearby off-site areas for outdoor educational

activities

## NATURAL HAZARDS (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Awareness/avoidance of avalanche features, unstable soils, etc.

## ACCESSIBILITY:TRAILHEAD/ TRAILS (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ “Reasonable” distance between hut sites and from sites to trailheads

+ √ Δ Availability of sufficient parking for types and number of users

+ √ Δ Connection to other huts in the SHA /10th system

+ √ Δ Use existing trails/roads where possible

## LAND OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Compatibility with local land use plans and FS management prescription and travel management plans (White River NF Forest Plan)

+ √ Δ If NF land is involved, as a minimum, a site specific environmental analysis is required

+ √ Δ Private land is preferred over public

## SOCIAL IMPACTS (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Potential variety of different non-motorized users, extent of hut and trail use

+ √ Δ Potential for alteration of historical resources located near hut sites

## SUMMER USE (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Opportunities for summer recreation and compatibility to surroundings

## WILDLIFE (score: 1 2 3 4)

+ √ Δ Wildlife/Wetlands/General Environmental Impacts will be assessed

+ √ Δ Review and consultation of federal tests of “No known threatened or endangered resources” and “No irreversible resource commitments” by reviewing agencies, including: CDOW, USFS, USF&W, Colorado Natural Resource Heritage Program, Corp of Engineers, state and local resource agencies.

## **SCORE AVERAGE (1 2 3 4 use decimal points)**

Additional Comments (gut feeling):

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*(Treasurer's Report continued from p. 2)*

With the end of the 2005 season in sight, I am happy to report that Summit Huts Association is in as strong a financial condition as ever. The board and staff remain committed to ensuring the you receive the best possible backcountry experience. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

# OPERATIONS

## UPDATE

MIKE ZOBBE, OPERATIONS MANAGER

### Winter 2005/2006 Wrap Up

Another winter season is in the books and 05-06 was a doozy from the point of view of snowfall. At the snow stake at Francie's Cabin we were neck in neck with the winter of '96-'97 and '97-'98 for the snowiest winter since 1994 until late February. All that snow made for some of the best early season skiing at the huts in a long time. From an operations standpoint, a lot of snow means a lot of extra work for the maintenance staff. We spent many hours shoveling snow off of the decks and stairs. The lack of sunlight meant the batteries that run the lights and toilet fans didn't get sufficiently charged to store enough electricity to operate the system through the long, dark midwinter nights. We ran through 15 gallons of gasoline running the generators at the huts in an effort to keep the batteries charged. Even so, we had several black outs that lasted several days at Janet's this January. But that is a trade-off, and it is difficult to argue against endless powder days.

### Janet's Cabin Summer Use

In other news, SHA is very near getting approval from the Forest Service to open Janet's Cabin for summer use. We hope to open the hut for the 2007 summer season, mid July through early September, with the reduced capacity of 14 spaces per night available. This will provide an experience that no other hut in Colorado offers – a completely non-motorized summer hut experience. Right now, all the huts in the Tenth Mountain system and Francie's Cabin all have road access very near to the hut and many people opt to drive to the huts. Janet's is accessible either by foot or mountain bike via a five mile section of the Colorado Trail from Copper Mountain. Modifications to the hut will be minimal - installing screens on the windows, a screen door and bear proof containers for food. We will also be constructing a short spur trail from the Colorado Trail to the hut this summer. We hope folks will take advantage of this unique hut experience.

### Hut Site Visits

Perhaps the most fun part of my job this past winter was participating in Hut Development Committee field trips. We explored many areas and evaluated them for suitability for huts. This way, if and when SHA has donors for a new hut, we will have a couple of sites that have some sort of process that has the participation of the Forest service in an objective, evaluative manner. Plus of course, there was some great skiing as a side benefit!

# YOUTH EDUCATION FUND

## IN ACTION

JOHN WARNER, SHA PRESIDENT

Summit Huts Association has a long history of providing a venue for educational groups to explore the wonder of the backcountry. This began with Maggie Lifland, Sharon Jefferson, and company taking Upper Blue Elementary 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to Francie's Cabin for overnight educational adventures.

This year we were pleased to create an opportunity for a fledgling non-profit group named *cityWILD*. *CityWILD* has a dedicated staff with 25 years of outdoor education experience including Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). They are located at 36<sup>th</sup> and Franklin in Denver.

I was fortunate to meet two of the staff and several kids they had with them on the first weekend in May at Francie's Cabin. *CityWILD* is a year round program which offers opportunities for positive youth development through an experiential education framework. I enjoyed meeting the staff and youth who ranged in ages from 12 to 16 years old. These kids were having a lot of fun while paying attention to the details of coexisting in Francie's. They each did their pre-assigned tasks with a lot of cooperation and enthusiasm. The cabin was spotless, the dishes done, and the wood stacked before I left the group at 11:00 am! Not many of our regular paid adult groups do this well.

I am personally enthusiastic about this new Front Range alliance serving youth-at-risk. I hope you will join me in welcoming *cityWILD*'s participation in the future!



Photos of *cityWILD* Francie's Cabin Trip by John Warner & Christi Stafford

# FRIENDS OF SUMMIT HUTS

JUNE 1, 2005 - JUNE 1, 2006

The generosity of all our contributors is key to the success of our organization. We apologize if we missed anyone. Please notify us of any errors or omissions.

## Life Hut Tripper (\$1000 or more)

Charles & Kathleen Cannon  
John & Neide Cooley  
Jack & Wendy Wolfe

## \$500-\$999

Breckenridge Lands, LLC  
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# Summit Huts Association Spring/Summer 2006 Newsletter



PO Box 2830  
524 Wellington Rd..  
Breckenridge, CO 80424

Phone: 970-453-8583  
Fax: 970-453-9860  
Website: [www.summithuts.org](http://www.summithuts.org)  
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\$20.00 each

## Hut Reservation Information

**Availability: [www.summithuts.org](http://www.summithuts.org) Hut Reservations: 970-925-5775**

Check out the web page for hut availability, volunteer opportunities, photo albums, and other good information. Hut rates for the 2006/2007 season will not change at Summit Huts. Rates are \$28/person/night at Janet's & Francie's cabins, \$26/person/night at the Section House, and \$69/night (up to 3 people) for Ken's Cabin. Rates at the 10th Mountain Division Huts are \$28/person/night. Rates at other hut systems range from \$26-\$36/person/night.

## SUMMIT HUTS CALENDAR JUNE - DECEMBER 2006

JULY 1- SEPTEMBER 30  
FRANCIE'S CABIN SUMMER SEASON

AUGUST 25 & 26  
FRANCIE'S VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

SEPTEMBER TBA  
JANET'S VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

OCTOBER TBA  
SECTION HOUSE & KEN'S CABIN  
VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

OCTOBER 21  
BACKCOUNTRY BALL

NOVEMBER 22  
HUTS OPEN FOR WINTER SEASON



Summit Huts Association operates Janet's Cabin, Francie's Cabin, The Section House & Ken's Cabin under special use permit with the Forest Service, USDA. SHA is an equal opportunity provider.

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