
Summit Huts Association

HUTMASTERS' JOURNAL

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A Newsletter & Update for Friends of Summit Huts

OPERATIONS UPDATE DECEMBER 2007

As I write this, a blanket of snow covers the ground. I just returned from a regular maintenance trip to Francie's Cabin and conditions are excellent for early December. This is quite a turn around from opening day three weeks ago when hiking shoes were a better choice of footwear than ski boots for accessing the huts. A heartfelt thank you to all of you who prayed and made offerings to Ullr! Now that I don't have to worry about the implications of how to manage backcountry ski huts with no snow, I can reflect back on the past summer and autumn at Summit Huts.

We had an excellent first summer season at Janet's Cabin: the hut opened on July 14th and despite an intentional lack of promotion, we had a very successful season with 254 reservations. The response from the folks who made the hike up the Colorado Trail from Copper Mountain was very positive. Comments in the log book rave about the incredible wildflowers, great hiking, and the beauty of Guller Creek drainage in the summer. The biggest problem we had with the first few guests was providing the best directions for folks to get from the parking area of Copper Mountain to Guller Creek. Keeping folks on the Colorado Trail through the network of bike and horse trails at Copper Mountain via the written word proved to be a bit of a challenge, but after receiving a few phone calls and e-mails, Hannah and I came up with directions that seemed to work.



Janet's Heli Day
Photo Terry Stinnette

Other than Janet's summer season, we were kept busy with the normal workload of routine maintenance. We devoted several days to repairing windows that were either broken or had fallen out of adjustment. After almost twenty years at Janet's without a broken window, there were three during the past year, go figure! We found that porcupines have been busy chewing on the deck at Francie's and we will have to do a major repair job on it next summer. Hutmaster Dan Munyon put many hours into upgrading the doors at Section House and Ken's Cabin in an effort to make the old buildings more weather tight. Preliminary observations indicate a good improvement.

We had a fine helicopter day at Janet's Cabin, and once again were able to make use of a K-max heavy lift helicopter owned by a company out of Idaho. This ship is able to lift up to 3500 pounds and makes quick work of all the wood, propane, and other supplies that have to go into the hut. It's always a great relief when heli day is finished!

Once again, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers, Hannah, and our hutmasters who make it possible for Summit Huts to offer such wonderful refuges to the public. Without all of your dedication and hard work, Summit Huts could not exist.

-Mike Zobbe



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MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR HUT TRIPS

I have thought long and hard about why hut trips are so memorable. For some, it's about getting away from everyday life and living simply; for others, it's about touring in the backcountry and finding fresh lines to descend and for most everybody it's at least partly about spending quality time with family and/or friends in a beautiful, peaceful, rustic setting.

I enjoy hut trips for all those reasons, but what I enjoy most is being able to spend multiple days and nights at a hut. As a forecaster for the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC), I really appreciate the having the time for a second day of touring. The reason is because the second (or third or fourth) day allows me to make the most of my time around the hut. The first day, I probably didn't have the time to both adequately assess the stability of the snowpack and ski much. Barring an overnight storm or major weather changes, I can be confident the second day that I know what is going on with the snow and have more time to ski tour.

All of the Summit Huts are located with access to nearby slopes that are appealing to most and easily done in a morning or afternoon of a one night hut stay. There are, however, plenty of other lines that one might wish to ride "next trip". By staying more than one night, you are provided the opportunity to poke around on day one and assess the snowpack. The evening can be spent eating good food with friendly folks and looking at maps, preparing for the next day's objective, that line that might have otherwise been left for "next trip".

The idea here is to do your homework, which should have begun prior to leaving the trailhead. Homework in this case would include checking in daily with the avalanche advisory, calling the avalanche hotline, familiarizing yourself with the snowpack structure and coming up with a list of potential objectives. Then, using your first day to investigate the snowpack stability, the added information will help set you up for success on your second day. It all comes down to making sound, educated decisions without guessing or by saying, "It looks good!". Snow always looks good, especially when it's untracked. Even a small avalanche can ruin your day.

My number one goal every time I am in the backcountry is to start and finish at the trailhead, not to bag a peak or descend a particular line or whatever. It's to make it home with style. The snowpack stability will either allow you to travel through particular terrain or it will not.

The bottom line is to really make the most of your hut trip, do your homework and try to spend more than one night. Trust me, it's worth it!

For avalanche advisory information, check out <http://avalanche.state.co.us/> and call the Summit County avalanche hotline at (970)668-0600.



*A Good Day on Red Mountain Pass
Photo: Brad Sawtell*

-Brad Sawtell

CAIC Forecaster/SHA Advisory Board

BEACON BASINS AT SUMMIT HUTS

Growing up in New Hampshire, the hike into Tuckerman Ravine to ski or watch the skiers was an annual spring rite, but no one I knew was ever very concerned about avalanches there or elsewhere. My first experience with a beacon, probe and shovel was just before Thanksgiving 2002. I graduated from college in Vermont that spring, having raced my Nordic skis a whole lot and managed a respectable GPA, which left very little time for other winter activities. Being a college graduate meant I was now free to pursue my lofty goal being a ski bum for a winter or two and then getting on with real life. The only problem with this plan was that I only Nordic skied and it would be very hard to be a Nordic ski bum. I set my sights for that first winter on learning how to telemark ski, preferably in the west where I'd heard rumors of powder, whatever that was.

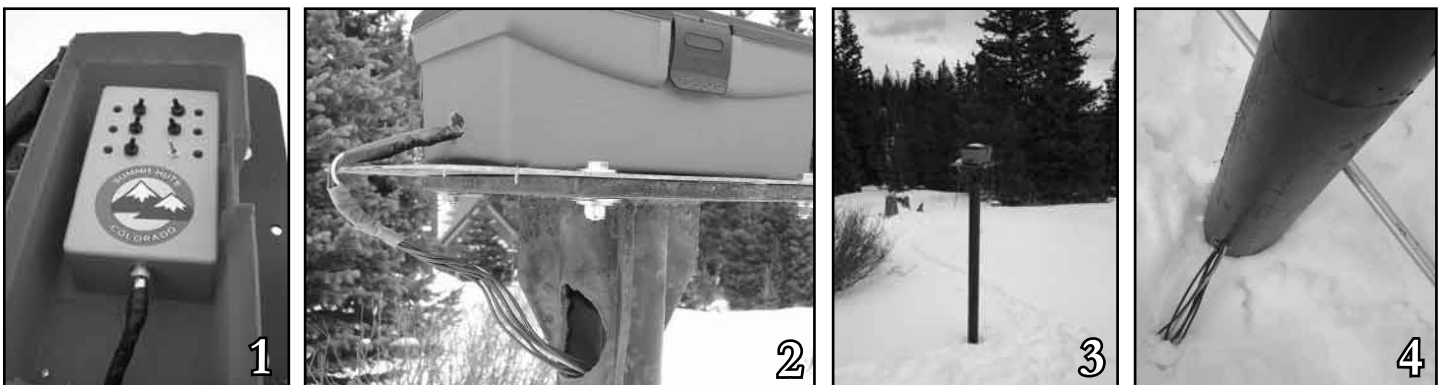
I caught a ride across the country with a friend heading from New England to Bozeman, Montana. The early season snow around Bozeman that year was pretty much nonexistent but around the middle of November, Teton Pass, just a few hours south, started to get dumped on. After being cajoled by my housemates into almost believing that I'd do fine (with the skiing at least), I piled borrowed skis, boots, poles, skins and a backpack containing the mysterious (and to me slightly alarming) beacon, shovel and probe into someone's truck and we were off.

More than a couple of hours later, we arrived. We all suited up and I was shown how to "use" the borrowed beacon. My tutorial consisted of, "This is how you put it on. It's turned on. You probably won't need to know how to use it because there are a lot of us here." I knew this wasn't a great introduction, but it was a powder day and no one seemed interested in (or concerned about) going into more detail than that. I took a few nervous looks at the device and tucked it in under my plentiful layers and worried about the business of skiing in this much snow, hoping that I wouldn't need to know how to use the beacon.

I have no idea how many people have a similar introduction; I suspect I am not the only one. I also suspect that even if their introduction was long ago and more satisfactory, a substantial number of casual backcountry users could benefit from more practice with all of their avalanche gear. At Summit Huts we suspect that many of these people, whether heading into the backcountry for the first time or seasoned backcountry veterans, are often hut users. It is the hope of installing Beacon Basins at Janet's and Francie's Cabins that everyone who stays at either of these huts will take the opportunity to practice and become more familiar with their beacon. We know it isn't enough to simply carry the right gear with you, but are we as comfortable using it all as we could be?

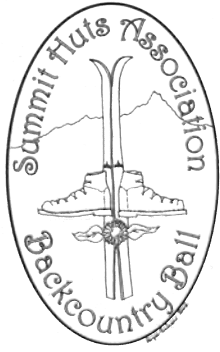
-Hannah Taylor

When reporting last year at this time that we'd have the Beacon Basins up and running for the second half of the 2006/2007 winter season at the huts, we were optimistic about everything except the snow already on the ground at the huts. The great early season we had last year made it impossible to get everything set up last winter. The good news is that we're set to go for this winter!



Photos Hannah Taylor/SHA: Control Box for Francie's Cabin Beacon Basin(1). Toggle switches operate one transmitter each, enabling the user to choose easier or more challenging scenarios (up to six transmitters at Francie's, four at Janet's). Detail showing transmitter wires running from control boxd (2), through five foot tall hollw tube (3) to ground level (4), where they run out to each transmitter box, now buried by snow.

BACKCOUNTRY BALL



Despite stiff competition from the Colorado Rockies first home game in the 2007 World Series, the 6th Annual Backcountry Ball was a great success. The Backcountry Ball was held on Saturday, October 27 at The Maggie Restaurant at the base of Peak 9 in Breckenridge. Thanks again to all the folks who donated to the silent auction. We are pleased to announce

that the auctions raised over \$6,500 for the SHA Educational Scholarship Fund. This fund enables us to offer discounted hut nights to qualified nonprofit, educational groups.

Many thanks to the Presenting Sponsor of the Backcountry Ball, Breckenridge Ski Resort. The ski resort graciously donated the venue, servers and food for the event again this year. Thanks also to Ellwood Barrett and the Downhill Blues Band, and to the many volunteers who helped ahead of time and during the event to ensure everything ran smoothly.

We are currently planning on holding the 7th Annual Backcountry Ball for Saturday, October 18, 2008. If you would like to get involved in helping with the planning, let us know!

2006/2007 BY THE NUMBERS

Summit Huts Association's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Here is a look at some of the figures from the Fiscal Year 2006, July 1 2006 - June 20, 2007.

\$62,345 = direct expenses to operate Janet's, Francie's, Ken's & Section House

6784 = number of user nights at Janet's, Francie's, Ken's and Section House during winter 06/07

972 = combined occupancy for Janet's and Francie's for summer 2007

265 = number of nights Francie's Cabin was open for reservations in 2007

226 = number of nights Janet's Cabin was open for reservations in 2007

77% = percentage of Summit Huts income from users' fees

66% = combined occupancy rate for Janet's, Francie's, Ken's and Section House for winter 06/07

38% = combined occupancy rate for Janet's and Francie's for summer 2007

22.5 = number of cords of wood purchased

WINTER 2008/2009 RESERVATION LOTTERY

The lottery for early reservations for the 2008/2009 winter hut season begins on Friday, February 15, 2008, when all lottery forms are due back to 10th Mountain Division Hut Association. If you are a member of 10th Mountain and a member of Summit Huts, you will receive your lottery form from 10th Mountain, otherwise you will receive it from Summit Huts. Either way, it will come in a 10th Mountain envelope and will also be available on line. On Monday, March 3, 2008 the drawing will begin and all reservation confirmations will be sent out by Thursday, March 20, 2008. After the lottery is completed, Summit Huts Individual, Family and Hut Nut members (\$25-\$99) may book up to two additional trips, while Hut Tripper, Lifetime and other members (\$100 & up) may reserve an unlimited number of additional trips by calling 10th Mountain after April 1, 2008, during the members only call in period. The first opportunity for the general public to make a hut reservation for the 2008/2009 winter season will be June 2, 2008.

Although the lottery is competitive (particularly for weekends and holidays), of the roughly 1,000 forms submitted each year, 87% of the individuals or groups represented will get a trip. The lottery is one of our most popular membership benefits. If you are considering becoming a member or renewing your membership with Summit Huts, it is to your advantage to do so before the February 15 deadline so you can participate in the lottery. Summit Huts members may choose Summit Huts or 10th Mountain Huts for their lottery trip choices.

FRIENDS OF SUMMIT HUTS

JUNE 1 - DECEMBER 1, 2007

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.

\$500-\$999

Maggie Lifland
Dr. John G. Warner, DDS
Jack & Wendy Wolfe
Hans & MJ Wurster

\$250-\$499

Gary & Janet Freese
Phil & Barbara Gibbs
Rich & Maryann Rowley

Hut Tripper (\$100-\$249)

Ed Anderson
Kendra Driemeyer
Nick Farkouh
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Hut Nut (\$50-\$99)

Judy Fetzter
George & Melissa Gruber
Jana Hlavaty
Kathleen McGovern
Brad Sawtell & Heide Andersen

Family & Individual

(\$25-\$49)

Scott Beattie
Ruth Buchheit
Drina Burns
Dan Connell
John & Wendy Cooney
Mark & Annette D'Augelli
Paul Dickinson
Robbie & Andrea Dickson
Jerry Divine
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Matt Krane
Louise McGaughey
Turk Montepare & Deb Crook
Todd Rankin
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Bryan & Sue Whitcomb
Mark Wyatt

In Kind

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Krystal 93

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Jack & Wendy Wolfe

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Dr. Ben Eiseman
Freda Langell Neiters
Olav Pederson
Sigurd Rockne

The Summit Huts Association is a Colorado non-profit 501(C)(3) tax-exempt corporation (I.D. # 84-1072451) dedicated to providing venues for educational, community and professional programs and refuge to self-propelled backcountry recreational

THANK YOU!

During Fiscal Year 2006 (July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007), 115 Friends of Summit Huts made restricted and unrestricted contributions totalling \$15,286.62. We couldn't do it without you!

Summit Huts Association
Winter 2007/2008 Newsletter



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Summit Huts Baseball Caps



100% Cotton
Available in
Black & Pink

Black cap logo is Red, White and Black
Pink cap logo is Pink, White, and Black

\$20.00 each

Hut Reservation Information

Availability: 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 2007/2008 winter season at Summit Huts are \$31/person/night at Janet's & Francie's Cabins, \$28/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
JANUARY - JULY 2008

WORKSHOPS

**AVALANCHE LEVEL 1
BACKCOUNTRY TRAVEL
COURSES**

JANUARY 12-14 AT FRANCIE'S
JANUARY 26-28 AT JANET'S

**WILDFLOWER WORKSHOP
WITH NANCY REDNER**
JULY 26-27 AT FRANCIE'S

**VOLUNTEER
DAYS**

WINTER 2008
FEBRUARY 9 AT JANET'S
FEBRUARY 23 AT FRANCIE'S

SUMMER 2008
AUGUST 16-17 AT FRANCIE'S
TBA AT JANET'S, SECTION
HOUSE & KEN'S CABIN

MORE IMPORTANT DATES

**JANUARY - JULY 2008
LOTTERY DEADLINE FOR
2008/2009 WINTER**
FEBRUARY 15

**LAST NIGHT OF WINTER
RESERVATIONS**
APRIL 26 SECTION HOUSE &
KEN'S CABIN
MAY 17 FRANCIE'S &
JANET'S

**FIRST NIGHT OF SUMMER
RESERVATIONS**
JULY 1 AT FRANCIE'S
JULY 12 AT JANET'S



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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