

**Friends of Lapham Peak  
Annual Meeting**

**REPORT ON SNOWMAKING – 2016-2017**

By: John McCarthy

The 2016-2017 season was the 11th for snowmaking at Lapham Peak. The system was expanded in spring of 2016, and is now capable of providing a thick layer of manmade snow on about 1.5 kilometers of trail. The manmade snow loop at Lapham Peak has, on many occasions during the 11 years of operation, been the only skiable snow in southeast Wisconsin. This was especially true for the 2016-2017 season.

The reliability of the manmade snow has resulted in the development and growth of several programs, including the recently formed Lapham Peak Ski Club (formerly Over the Peak), who are focused on cross country skiing based out of Lapham Peak.

This report summarizes the performance of the snowmaking system in the past ski season, the fundraising efforts of the Friends of Lapham Peak Snowmaking Committee, and the planning for completion of the system.

Snowmaking Operations – 2016-2017 Ski Season

Snowmaking in 2016 got off to a reasonably good start due to cooler weather during mid- December. Problems with a leak at a valve in the piping system impacted the ability to make snow and delayed completion of a full loop. Warm weather followed, and the groomers were able to push snow around portions of the trail to complete a 0.4 kilometer loop. This loop, which had several areas with shallow coverage, was available for skiing around New Year's, and was used for the Peak Nordic Kids program and the Wednesday Night races during January and February. Additional snow was made when colder weather returned, but subsequent warm weather throughout January and especially February negatively impacted the snowmaking trails. Grooming of the manmade snow trails ended on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

A program established in 2015 to involve volunteers in the snowmaking and trail grooming processes was expanded. This program, which supports DNR snowmaking and grooming efforts, will continue to become more established in the upcoming ski season.

Snowmaking System Improvements

A major addition was made to the snowmaking system in 2017. Two new SMI Polecat snowguns have been purchased and delivered, and are ready for use

during the 2017-2018 season. The new snowguns will be able to deliver more than twice the volume of manmade snow than the snowguns in the current 'fleet'. The two new snowguns cost about \$41,000, and were paid for with funds from the dedicated snowmaking account.

Significant rehabilitation work has been accomplished by Miller Bradford on the snowcat, and is ready to go for the upcoming season. Repairs have also been made to the well, to address problems with intermittent flows, and to increase capacity, so that water is available in the pond when needed for snowmaking operations.

Other improvements are being made to the trail layout to improve the snowmaking experience, including widening at key locations, the installation of marker posts to help establish the width and depth of manmade snow on the trails.

### Snowmaking Committee – Planning and Fundraising

The Snowmaking Committee continued to plan and implement fundraising campaigns to support the snowmaking project. These efforts included the Wednesday Night Ski League, the Lapham Loppet, the Summer Solstice concert, and the Bike Swap. Implementation of the Penguin Pal Campaign is also underway. This campaign will provide information to skiers about funding of the system, and ask for donations, to be recognized by a penguin sticker. Efforts are also underway to solicit sponsorships from businesses and to meet with elected officials to encourage State funding for snowmaking operations and maintenance.

The Snowmaking Committee has developed a Strategic Plan for Snowmaking, to complete the snowmaking system; establishing priorities for purchase and installation of the remaining components of the system, as funding allows. The remaining components, include Installation of Phase 3B and 3C piping and power; additional PoleCat snowguns; providing a shelter to house the snowcat; and installation Phase 4 piping and power to extend the system to the top of Two Tier Hill, providing a total snowmaking trail system of about 3 kilometers. The estimated cost for these improvements is about \$270,000, expended over seven to ten years.

The committee continues to work on new ideas for fundraising, while the technical team develops the design plans required for the remaining system components.

### Memorandum of Understanding with DNR for the Snowmaking Project

The DNR is in the process of updating agreements with Friends groups throughout the State, including the Friends of Lapham Peak. Work has been

initiated on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to be included with the Friends-DNR Agreement, that will define the responsibilities for installation, operation, and, maintenance of the snowmaking system. A meeting was held with DNR on October 24<sup>th</sup> to identify the steps necessary to get approval of the MOU and allow for system expansion. This will include demonstrating that the system is financially sustainable (by the Friends); and that either a variance or amendment to the Park's 1989 Master Plan to address a possible campground within the snowmaking trail expansion area, will be required. FLP members should take note that the DNR will soon be taking comments from the public on parks usage within the Southeast region as part of their statewide ROA (Recreational Opportunities Analysis) process.