



# Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska Parks & Recreation Department

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 630  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519  
Tel 907-343-4355

URL [www.muni.org/departments/parks](http://www.muni.org/departments/parks)



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** August 13, 2020

---

**To:** Parks & Recreation Commission

---

**Cc:** Steve Rafuse, Parks Superintendent

---

**From:** Parks and Recreation Department

---

**Project:** **PRC 2020-15 – Proposed Slalom Course Trail Improvements  
at Hilltop Ski Area, Far North Bicentennial Park**

---

### INTRODUCTION

Youth Exploring Adventure, Inc.,(YEA) manager of the Hilltop Ski Area, proposes alterations to the facility to extend the slalom course on Wolverine Run. The project site is near the existing ski jump facility. YEA indicates that the subject site is optimal on the ski area for this type of course. According to YEA, this project will allow the course to meet standards for particular events, enabling race teams that train at Hilltop to offer more opportunity to their athletes.

### PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposed project would modify an existing run, extending its length for the slalom course to 210 meters. The first 90 meters of the course would require modifications including creation of a start mound 15-20 feet wide and 30 feet long. YEA expects to build the mound with imported fill material along with existing soil moved from grading—contouring the trail as needed. According to YEA, the first 90 meters of the course along the tree line would require the removal of 12 trees as well as sculpting and grading of the terrain. The remaining 120 meters of the existing run would be left unaltered.



Figure 1: Hilltop Ski Area – Winter Trails Map

A sketch on an aerial photograph (at right) shows the location and conceptual layout. Yellow shading indicates the proposed trail extension, where clearing and grading is proposed.

The project is supported by several ski organizations and coaches who believe the improvements would be a valuable asset to their programs serving the ski community. Letters of support are attached.

The Parks & Recreation Department concurs that the proposed improvements, if properly designed and constructed, would add value to the facility and are consistent with Hilltop Ski Area's recreational purpose.



**Figure 2: Hilltop Ski Area  
Proposed Slalom Course**

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The Parks & Recreation Department recommends adoption of the attached Resolution for conceptual approval of the proposed slalom course improvements at Hilltop Ski Area.

The Department recommends that the proposal be subject to the following conditions:

1. YEA, Inc., shall submit a site development plan acceptable to municipal staff showing specific alterations including clearing, filling, grading, and revegetation.
2. The plans shall minimize site disturbance to the extent possible and shall be consistent with MOA Standards and Specifications (M.A.S.S.) and Design Criteria.
3. YEA, Inc., shall obtain all other required permits and approvals for the proposed project, including filling, grading, and storm water management.

Attachments:

Site Images  
Letters of Support

Cc: Trevor Bird, General Manager, Hilltop Ski Area



*Figure 3: View from top of the proposed slalom course*



*Figure 4: View from top of the proposed slalom course*



*Figure 5: View of the upper section of the proposed slalom course*



*Figure 6: View looking uphill from the base of the proposed slalom course*



**Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska**  
**Parks & Recreation Commission**

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 630  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519



**Resolution No. 2020-13**  
**Hilltop Ski Area Slalom Course Development**

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, Hilltop Ski Area at Far North Bicentennial is a popular recreation facility that provides winter recreational opportunities for Anchorage residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Youth Exploring Adventure, Inc., manager of Hilltop Ski Area, desires to construct improvements to the ski area to provide a slalom run suitable for advanced training and competition to serve more skiers; and

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements, if properly constructed, are consistent with the plan and operation of the facility; and

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements are supported by alpine ski user groups including Special Olympics Alaska, Alyeska Ski Club, and the Hilltop Alpine Racing Team; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves in concept the proposal by YEA, Inc., to construct improvements to the slalom race course on Wolverine Run at Hilltop Ski Area, subject to the following conditions:

1. YEA, Inc., shall submit a site development plan acceptable to municipal staff showing specific alterations including clearing, filling, grading, and revegetation.
2. The plans shall minimize site disturbance to the extent possible and shall be consistent with MOA Standards and Specifications (M.A.S.S.) and Design Criteria.
3. YEA, Inc., shall obtain all other required permits and approvals for the proposed project, including filling, grading, and storm water management.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 13th day of August, 2020.

---

Chair  
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

---

Josh Durand, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department



To whom this may concern,

As the representative of our junior alpine racing group I am very excited to hear that John Dehaven and Hilltop are planning on extending a Slalom training hill in Anchorage's ski hill. Our age groups, U10 to U19, do use Hilltop at a regular basis for our in-week training activities. With a Slalom hill at proper racing regulation where our coaches can set an average of forty gate turns for our athletes compared to the usual fifteen turn Slalom courses will make a real positive difference in the athletic progression of our athletes. Having a legitimate run of about 200-210 meters where our Alaskan clubs can host races of higher caliber such as University or international competitions right in the heart of Anchorage will be a huge benefit to our skiing community. Not only it will allow our athletes to race against higher level athletes, but it will also bring more spectators to Anchorage.

I look forward in potentially seeing this project under its way. I along with the Alyeska Ski Club do support this initiative and would happy to help in any way to make this Slalom hill happen.

Please feel free in contacting me for any other clarification or questions in relation to ASC 's junior groups and our training opportunities at Hilltop.

Regards,

Jennifer Danza  
Alyeska Ski Club  
U16 Head Coach – Juniors Program Director  
[juniorsprogramdirector@alyeskaskiclub.com](mailto:juniorsprogramdirector@alyeskaskiclub.com)  
907-382-0566



June 9, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I am the program director and head coach for the Hilltop Alpine Race Team. We are excited at the opportunity of improving one of Hilltops existing ski runs so that it can be used for alpine racing and training.

As the program director and head coach for the HART program we strive to give our athletes the highest quality training experience possible. As a program we support training and hosting races for the entire Alaska US Ski & Snowboard Division, Youth Ski League and Special Olympics. One thing we desperately lack is a full length slalom run that meets the regulation for length and vertical pitch. A brief list of some of the user groups that would benefit from this are UAA, HART, Alyeska Ski Club, Arctic Valley Ski Team, Fairbanks Ski Team, Juneau Ski Team and Special Olympics.

Hilltop as a venue typically is the first venue to open for the ski season. Hilltop also has the largest population base and is the most accessible venue in the state. Due to the hard work, location and knowledge of the staff at Hilltop it typically has the most consistent ski surface in the state as well. What it lacks is length and vertical drop for its runs. This is an opportunity to modify part of the Wolverine run by adding material to create a start mound and removing a minimal amount of vegetation while grading the top of the run. I can't express enough the impact this would have for our program and state. This would be a significant step forward in helping resolve the limited amount of useable regulation race and training space for athletes here in Alaska. In addition it would better prepare our athletes for competition outside the state and it could also give us a venue that could host races on a level that Hilltop currently is unable to do.

We appreciate your time and consideration on this exciting opportunity.

Regards,  
John DeHaven  
Program Director  
Hilltop Alpine Race Team

---

**HART**  
HILLTOP ALPINE RACE TEAM



June 29, 2020

To whom this may concern:

My name is Jason Kohler and I'm the Alpine/Snowboard Special Olympic Commissioner for Special Olympics Alaska. I'm writing this letter in support of Hilltop Inc. seeking permission for the expansion of the Wolverine Run. The expansion of Wolverine is a needed one that would benefit several user groups in the ski racing community to include: Hilltop Alpine Ski Team, Anchorage and Mat-Su Special Olympic Ski/Snowboarding Teams, and the University of Alaska Alpine Team.

The expansion of the Wolverine run would improve Slalom event training and racing venues. It is currently under-utilized by both the public and racing community because of its geographical location on the hill. This expansion makes the Wolverine run usable for all groups in the racing community and further provides Hilltop Inc. more options when it comes to public hill space and race team training and racing event space.

If Hilltop Inc. is unable to expand the upper portion of Wolverine Run this run will continue to be underutilized by not only the public but the racing community because it doesn't meet the racing specification for quality training or the ability to hold sanctioned race events. This expansion for the Wolverine Run is a good thing for Hilltop Inc. and the winter sports community that they serve.

Sincerely,

Jason Kohler  
Special Olympics Alaska - Alpine/Snowboarding Commissioner

June 11, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my robust support for the improvement of an existing trail at Hilltop Ski Area. I am a longtime alpine ski coach in Southcentral Alaska, and I have faced many challenges regarding weather, terrain, snowmaking, and critical access to crowded training venues as our sport continues to grow in number.

As the head coach of Alaska's only NCAA alpine ski team at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, I'm always looking for ways to improve our training. We have used Hilltop Ski Area for many years, but the section of usable terrain is very short. I support Hilltop's plan to add material to the top of Wolverine to improve both length and vertical drop. There would be minimal impact to clearing growth on the south side of the trail, and the improvements would significantly benefit every youth ski and snow-sport athlete in our community.

Hilltop has always had the highest quality snowmaking in Southcentral Alaska. The Hillside's snowmaking conditions are such that you can put a training venue together sooner in the fall and maintain the training surface to provide the best venue possible.

I can think of many user groups who would greatly benefit from this improvement. Special Olympics Alaska, Alyeska Ski Club, Arctic Valley Ski Team, Hillberg Ski Team, Hilltop Alpine Race Team, the University of Alaska-Anchorage Ski Team, along with many Youth Ski League programs from around the state would have a certified and controlled training and competition venue. These improvements are in line with many local non-profit organizations including Healthy Futures, Healthy Alaskans 2020, and Youth Alliance for a Healthy Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration in regard to this project.

Sincerely,

Sparky Anderson  
Head Coach  
NCAA Skiing  
University of Alaska-Anchorage  
[sparky@alaska.edu](mailto:sparky@alaska.edu)  
[www.goseawolves.com](http://www.goseawolves.com)  
(907) 350-9718

June 9, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I am the President of the Youth Ski League. We host a series of ski races that introduce the youth of Alaska to the sport. We are very excited on the possibility of a new race and training run at Hilltop.

We as an organization host races for 5-17 year old athletes. We serve as an introduction into racing for all the alpine race programs and our races can have up to 300 athletes which is enormous.

Hilltop as a venue has gone above and beyond to support and host our races. With Hilltop being the most accessible and constant venue it is very exciting at the possibility of this new slalom run. We as an organization fully support this opportunity.

Regards,  
John DeHaven  
President  
Youth Ski League  
907-519-9361