



Travis Grimler / Echo Journal
Diane Norlin of the North Country Nordic Ski Club glides along a ski trail on the Cut Lake Trail.

LOCAL CLUB FINDS JOY IN SNOW

By Travis Grimler
Staff Writer

Political season is in full swing

Caucuses are Feb. 25; presidential nomination primary is March 3

By Nancy Vogt
Editor

Election Day 2020 is months away, but you've no doubt seen the Democratic presidential candidate debates and ads on TV.

There's no denying it: Political season is well under way.

Caucus night – the most grassroots part of an election year – is Tuesday, Feb. 25, with caucuses for

the various political parties scheduled across the state, including in Cass and Crow Wing counties.

For the first time since 1992, a statewide presidential nomination primary election will follow on Tuesday, March 3.

In a nutshell, according to an internet search: In primaries, party members vote in a state election for the candidate they want to represent them in the general election. After

the primaries and caucuses, each major party – Democrat and Republican – holds a national convention to select a presidential nominee. Then on Election Day (Nov. 3), people in every state cast their votes.

Caucuses

Precinct caucuses, run by Minnesota's political parties, give voters a chance to participate in the political process at the most grassroots level. The Minnesota Secretary of State's office said caucuses are the first in a series

of meetings where parties may endorse candidates, select delegates and set goals and values (called party platforms).

Caucuses are private events that are directly run by the political parties. State and local governments run primary elections.

Presidential primary

This year, for the fifth time in Minnesota, a state presidential primary will be held. This is an official election for voters to cast

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In January, cross country ski enthusiasts in Crow Wing County learned that the county would stop grooming Larson and Wolf Lake Ski trails. In approximately 2009, a similar decision in Cass County resulted in formulation of Lake Country Nordic Ski Club, a club that today, keeps the love of the sport alive on Washburn, Hiram, Cut Lake and Goose Lake Ski Trails.

"The ski trails were maintained by the county prior to this ski club being formed," said club President Terry Vacek. "I guess around 2008 or 2009 the county said they were going to have volunteers do it. The county didn't want to be responsible for it and the cost anymore."

"Because of their funding being decreased they weren't able to spend the time to do the grooming," said Diane Norlin, club secretary.

"That's why the club had to be initiated and founded."

Vacek was part of the founding group that formed the group. He said he initially responded to ads by the county that were seeking volunteers to continue grooming the Cass County trails. By the time he contacted the county land services office, the plan had changed.

The county was no longer interested in having volunteers work for them to do the work, but once a group of skiers had begun talking about taking over maintenance as a ski club, the county saw that as a preferable solution.

"The main purpose is to maintain the four granted aid ski trails in the county: Hiram, Washburn, cut lake and Goose Lake," Vacek said. "The majority of the emphasis is on maintaining those trails and clean them up in the fall, make sure they're ready for the snow season then support the trails with grooming during the season. Also the purpose of the club is to promote skiing and fellowship of Nordic Skiers."

When the club first formed, they received around 40 applications for memberships. The group formed a charter and picked officers. They have handled the maintenance on the Cass County Nordic Ski trails ever since. Today the group is formed of people from all over. Of course some are from Pine River, Backus or Hackensack. Others are from the metro, Missouri and Arkansas. They come to Cass county specifically to enjoy the trails.

They meet quarterly starting in September and during the ski season they are responsible for keeping the trails groomed after snowfalls. In October, ahead of the snows that make the pastime possible, volunteer group members clear the trails of obstacles that could cause trouble later in the year.

"We go out and any trees that have fallen, the blackberry bushes, we try to trim those up so they aren't in the ski pathway and also for the groomers," Norlin said. "Sometimes we get people that bring their four wheelers and that really helps

“It's extremely quiet, and in fact a number of times I've skied up on deer, I've skied up by wolves and plenty of rabbits and squirrels and things.”

TERRY VACEK,
club president

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B2B attendees learn about garden fertility

By Travis Grimler
Staff Writer

The annual Back to Basics Sustainable Living Event at Pine River-Backus School on Saturday, Feb. 15 once again had information for anyone wanting to learn about fiber, beekeeping, mushrooms, food processing and many other traditional skills. Holding two full classroom sessions was Kathy Connell of Redfern Gardens of Sebeka.

Connell, a former inspector in the meat, organic farming and organic processing industries, among other careers, spoke on garden management including garden fertility.

Connell said she has been gardening since the age of eight.

"Someone wanted me out of the way and handed me corn seed and said, 'go plant these.' I was hooked," Connell said.

Even so, some of her lessons were learned the hard way in adulthood. One lesson she gave her class on fertility was not to assume there was any one answer that was right for everyone. Connell, for example, has changed her mind on many things. An advocate of organic gardening since the 1960s, it may be surprising to learn that she has some leeway for inorganic fertilizers, which she says are excusable from time to time. The alternative, after all,



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Silas and Elias Dabill enjoyed the honey straws that were available from several vendors at the Saturday, Feb. 15 Back to Basics event.

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Plans to prevent aquatic invaders in the works

More inspection hours, mobile decontamination on tap for 2020

By Chelsey Perkins
Brainerd Dispatch Community Editor

A new lead inspector, mobile decontamination equipment and an increase in inspection hours are all part of Crow Wing County's plan to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in 2020.

Approving a prevention plan is an annual action the county board takes as part of outlining how the county intends to spend about \$450,000 in grant funding received from the state to combat invasives such as zebra mussels and starry stonewort. It includes a

multipronged approach, combining watercraft inspections at boat landings, decontaminations at fixed and mobile locations, treatment of Eurasian milfoil, education and awareness through marketing efforts and early detection. The county intends to allocate

17,040 hours to inspecting watercraft – 140 more than last year – at 42 public accesses selected through a data model to determine risk of AIS. The model takes into account the location of infested and uninfested waters, the average number of boats inspected per

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