

The Case for Financial Support of the Northern Michigan Region Ski School

Why the NSP-C Ski School was Formed:

The Central Division PSIA-C Ski came into being to fill a void within the Central Division of NSP and to improve the quality and consistency of ski instruction provided for candidates. The void was to protect instructors from liability when teaching skiing (as opposed to toboggan handling) because the NSP has no specific course dealing with teaching candidates to ski the "Ski Patrol way". The quality improvement was highly desirable because area trainers, when preparing candidates for Basic and Senior status, usually taught from their own personal experience. That is, there has been no standardized and documented process for teaching skiing as a recognizable skill.

In this sense teaching skiing was different from every other skill instruction the NSP provides, from Chair Evacuation to Outdoor Emergency Care. For those skills there is a documented standard for teaching and acquiring sufficient skill in a given discipline. Such a standard does not currently exist within NSP for teaching skiing. The result is that considerable difference exists from Region to Region and sometimes within Regions as to what constitutes sufficient skill for a candidate to pass the Basic or Senior evaluation, and how to teach a candidate to reach that level.

To address this need, the Central Division wished to capitalize on the long history of cooperation between PSIA and NSP. PSIA already has world class programs offering standardized and documented methods to teach and evaluate skiing skills. As a PSIA member ski school, NSP-C Ski School, and its Region Affiliate (like Northern Michigan) are able to take advantage of the complete PSIA curriculum and liability protection.

The Goals of the NSP-C Ski School

To make the program work, members of a region's P & T Staff become exposed to PSIA teaching philosophy and certification. They will then use those skills and improved teaching methods when training area candidates. Hopefully, a greater level of standardization will be reached for teaching and certifying individuals as Basic or Senior Patrollers. To have the necessary exposure to PSIA philosophy and teaching methods, members of the P & T Staff, and by extension, Area Trainers, need to become PSIA certified and maintain that certification. We realize PSIA certification for the entire P & T staff is a goal that may never be reached. However, perhaps 15% of the P & T Staff already has some level of PSIA Certification, and we see this as an incremental process that should be encouraged.

After a member has joined, the NSP-C Ski School allows only those Patrollers with PSIA Level I to actually teach, and then only to the level of their certification. A Level I PSIA member can teach only to a basic level of instruction which most skiers can reach within a couple of days. It takes and is expected that a Level II PSIA member, who can teach to a higher level of skill would be necessary to be truly effective in training Ski Patrol candidates.

The Costs of Becoming a PSIA Members and NSP-C Ski School Member

Becoming and remaining a member of PSIA is expensive. Annual dues are \$75. A PSIA member is required to attend an education event at least once every two years, and those events usually cost \$150. PSIA Certification Exams generally cost around \$150. On top of the PSIA expenses, membership in PSIA-C Ski School is yet another \$50 annually.

Why Financial Support from the Region is Necessary

We think financial support by the Region for these efforts is not only appropriate, but make an import statement about the level of professionalism the Region expects from one if its certifying bodies. It also helps defray costs not faced by instructors in other disciplines such as OEC and Toboggan Handling. Without this incentive, it will be more difficult to attract and retain interested Patrollers as qualified ski instructors.

We ask that the Region express its financial support in two ways. First, in support of recruitment, we ask that up to three (3) individual's joining the NMR Ski School for the first time be reimbursed for half of their PSIA Level I certification exam. We do not anticipate there would be three individual's each year, and in some years there will be none, but it would provide a tool to help cushion the significant up front out-of-pocket expense. Second, in support of the existing membership of the NMR Ski School, we ask that half of the annual dues expense for the PSIA-C Ski School be reimbursed. This will help defray the ongoing costs that ski instructors face that instructors in other disciplines do not. We understand that other Regions are supporting their PSIA-C Ski School members in this way. An individual would not be eligible for both reimbursements.

We also recognize that becoming a member of PSIA opens the door for individuals so inclined, to take their skills beyond the NMR Ski School. At first blush that may seem counterproductive, but to the extent those individuals spend time teaching the public, their own skills as instructors will improve. So broadening their teaching skills by doing it more often is in fact very beneficial to the Region.

To make sure that the Region receives the benefit of its investment, ski instructors who receive reimbursement will be required to attend and teach in Region Ski School activities during the year. These activities include the Region P & T Clinic, our new Ski & Ride Better class, a ski instructor error recognition clinic held the day before the actual event and open to all P & T members, as well as requests from smaller Patrols who may not have their own qualified instructors to provide training for their Basic and Senior Candidates.

This financial support also would be conditional from the very beginning. In other words, it would be very clear that it is designed to promote and support membership in the NMR Ski School to provide benefit to the Region. Should some unknown abuse be uncovered, the support could and should be withdrawn for an individual.

How the Region Can Afford to Support this Initiative

P & T Programs for the Region traditionally operate at a profit. Costs associated with the programs generally are limited to reduced price lift tickets as some areas and incidental costs for materials to run the programs, such as postage, paper, and refreshments provided at an event. The net profits from the P & T programs are provided to the Region for its general goals, investments, and even to help subsidize other non-P & T programs if necessary. The financial support requested would not exceed the profits generated by the P & T programs. Thus, the Region is not being asked to take money earmarked for other programs to support the Ski School. To the contrary, the Ski School would like to use money generated by P & T programs to help support another P & T Program

As you can see, the limited financial support requested by the Region Ski School to increase and sustain its membership will be valuable to the Region and demonstrates the Region's commitment to providing the best possible programs and instruction for its patrollers and candidates. Additional information about the number of current members and cost projections can be made available on request.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this request.