

WINTER RIDING ISSUE



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**ON PAGE 2:
 CHENA HOT SPRINGS RIDE NEEDS HELP!**

CHECK OUT BUD'S COMMUTING CORNER

UPCOMING RIDES & EVENTS:
Sunday Winter Rides:
 Sundays at Noon,
 Meet at Ivory Jacks.
Icicle Bicycle Ride Series:
 Jan 8 at Goldstream Sports
 Jan 27-29 - Stage Race at Goldstream Sports
 Feb 5 at Yukon Quest Trail
 Mar 5 - Birch Hill
 Mar 19 Goldstream Valley

SPOKE 'N WORD

Happy Holidays!

A message from FCC Secretary Christina Ireton

Seasons Greetings! I want to take this time to thank you for sharing your amazing stories or your rides and races during 2016 that made our newsletter shine! We have come to our final issue of 2016, and I hope you all enjoy it as we have put together a special winter riding issue for you! The winter is an incredible time to enjoy riding in the interior. Trails that seem to hide away all summer in the mud and bog offer us new found miles of opportunity when the ground freezes. I encourage you to get out and enjoy wherever your two wheels take you this winter. Most of all, I wish you all a very happy holiday season and a new year full of new adventures. I look forward to bringing you cycling news in 2017!

Chena Hot Springs Ride looking for volunteers

This event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday June 24, 2017 and is a popular family event that has been generously sponsored for many years by Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and organized by FCC. For years Kay Kindt, with help from Kelly Scanlon and Christine Matson, has organized this ride.

We hope to inspire some future organizers to help us keep the CHSR alive! We are looking for help/training this year: organizing the event which involves some planning meetings in February/March, tasks to be completed May/early June, and the week before and after the event. The three of us are looking to take a year sabbatical from the CHSR, possibly in 2018, and would like to work with at least

three people to keep the event going. We hope to have more detailed information to you in the next FCC newsletter. For more info contact: Kay at kay.kindt@gmail.com, Kelly at kelly.scanlon@k12northstar.org, or Christine at christinematson@pahalaska.org

Hitting the Winter Trails

Contributed by David James

Twenty years ago there were only a few of us riding mountain bikes through the winter. Equipping our summer bikes with the Snow Cat Rims that Simon Rakower invented, we slogged on trails that were primarily used by dog mushers, skijorers, snowmachiners and skiers. Seeing a fellow cyclist was a rare occurrence. What a difference the introduction of fat bikes has made. What was once an activity for only the hardcore trail riders is now the fastest growing winter sport around. With all the new riders it's a good time to discuss where you can and cannot ride and talk trail etiquette we should all be practicing that helps keep us safe and our winter trails multi-use friendly.

If you're looking to learn new trails, join the Sunday group rides that meet at Noon at Ivory Jacks. This is a chance to meet other riders and explore the extensive trail system in Goldstream Valley. The temperature cutoff is 20 below, but you'll often find people show up in colder temps. It's always a good safety idea to ride with someone else, especially in very cold temperatures. By late March, these rides can be 20 plus miles with climbs. The trail system is extensive enough that most routes have plenty of bailout points if you get tired. Everyone is welcome and the rides are not races, so if you feel up to it,

come join. For these rides and any on your own, always remember water and snacks.

Goldstream has some of the best riding around, and the trails running up O'Connor and El Dorado Creeks are great spots for good climbing and fun downhill. Ski Boot Hill, where the KUAC tower is located also has lots of trails and can be accessed from the Goldstream side in winter. Ester Dome is another prime spot. Along with Ivory Jack's, the Ballaine Road pullout is another good spot to launch your ride from, as is the pullout on Sheep Creek at Ann's Greenhouse. Further from town, the trails in Two Rivers and the Chena Hot Springs state recreation area are also fun, as are the White Mountains trails. Fat bikes can be used on any multi-use route.

Trail etiquette. Please don't ride on trails that are groomed and maintained for skiing. These include the University, Birch Hill and Skarland trail systems. People put a lot of time and work into making those trails skier friendly, and fat bike tires can undo their efforts almost as quickly as snowmachines can. Be sure you are on public rights-of-way. If you see a private property sign, respect it and do not utilize the trail. While some people have closed legal access routes, there are others challenging them on this through the legal process. Let's deal with the problem that way rather than by aggravating the situation by barging past a "do not enter" sign.

In Fairbanks, we've been very lucky to have positive relations between motorized and non-motorized trail users. Years ago it wasn't as friendly, but things have since improved tremendously. Let's help keep it that way. Instead of cursing the guy on the snowmachine, stop and chat with him. Remember, he wants the trails to remain open as much as we do. And if you happen to get hurt, it could be the guy or gal on a snowmachine who comes along and helps you out. It all works better when we work together.

Your attitude toward other trail users is key to everyone's experience. Yielding the trail is important. The first rule is, if the person is being pulled by dogs, whether on skis or in a sled, clear the trail completely, and if you have a dog with you, keep it under control. Musers and skijorers are often moving quickly and sometimes are still in the process of training their dogs. We want to respect their safety as well as that of their pooches. Beyond that it gets trickier. Theoretically cyclists yield to skiers and walkers (and definitely horses if you encounter them), while snowmachiners are supposed to yield to us. Also, if you're going downhill and the other person is coming up, they get the right of way because it's easier for you to resume your ride. Generally this is what people do, but in

practice it never hurts to go the extra mile and just be the one who yields every time. That gives people a good impression of us as our numbers grow. If you are overtaking someone on a trail from behind, announce yourself in advance by loudly calling out "Trail!" while they still have sufficient time to get out of the way. Likewise, if you hear someone call out behind you, clear the path as quickly as possible.

Winter cycling is heaps of fun and the numbers of people doing keep steadily growing. What was once an anomaly in the local winter outdoor scene is now arguably the dominant sport. Get out, have fun, and be the sort of rider that lets people in Fairbanks know we're a great group to have around. This will encourage more of them to join us.

Bud's Commuter Corner

Brought to you by Bud Kuenzli

For the next few commuter corners, we're focusing on winter cycling tips! This month's focus routes, gear, and sharing the busy roads.

Your Route. It seems obvious but often we know the direct route from A to B and get on our bike, clip in (or not!) and head to work or the grocery store. If you do that regularly, consider hopping in your car or taking a leisurely ride to check out alternate streets and paths. A five minute detour from your most direct route might save you ten or take ten minutes longer but make the trip safer and more enjoyable. A secondary route may be slower but safer and knowing that route may also provide an alternative if the primary route becomes impassible. A little reconnaissance could pay off in a nicer, safer commute.

Your Gear. Those commuting on busy streets and paths need to be well lit and visible from all sides.

Just as important as car drivers seeing you is your ability to see them. A good lighting system up front and at the rear with a backup light or spare batteries tucked away somewhere is a no brainer but being sure cars can see you is only part of the safety equation. Seeing the road and cars in front of you by installing a headlight is another part but that still doesn't allow you to see behind you. There was a time when I eschewed the use of mirrors. Now that half the driving population is talking and texting while driving I don't leave home without a mirror. A mirror mounted on your helmet eliminates the issue of getting winter goggles over a handlebar mirror and lets you see the headlights behind you as they veer toward the shoulder your riding on. Surprisingly I even find the use of a mirror helpful on the winter trails, allowing me to see stealthy dog teams approaching, allowing me to stop and get off the trail before I hear the commands of a musher.

Next time you're on your commute, explore alternate paths aren't so busy, be sure you're sporting some bright winter clothing and make sure you can be seen front and back. Keep warm, keep safe and keep spinning.

