



Annual Report 2022-2023



Mission Statement

Grand Mesa Nordic Council is a community-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting fun and safe cross country skiing experiences on Grand Mesa for skiers of all ages and abilities. GMNC relies entirely on voluntary contributions and grants to fund trail grooming and maintenance operations.



Non-Discrimination Policy

Grand Mesa Nordic Council does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for our staff, members/clients, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors. Minors may be excluded from membership or participation at the discretion of Grand Mesa Nordic Council leadership.

Letter from the Executive Director

What an incredible season! I've been a GMNC member since 2004, and I've never seen so much snow.

The snow came early and stayed late. Thanks to excellent early snow and negotiations with the Forest Service, we made it through the Kannah logging project without shutting down. We also fully opened our Skyway/County Line trail systems earlier than ever, with the help of extensive off-season trail work done by our ops crew and a big cadre of volunteers. We opened the Summit Trail this year with snowcat grooming, thanks to many, many hours of trail work last summer by a volunteer team led by Winslow Robertson.

A string of atmospheric rivers and heavy snowfall made for a challenging season for our grooming crew — Dave Smith, Gordon Steidel, Eric Jansen, James Miller and Jon Canty. Hats off to this crew, who worked their butts off, toiling through many days of brutal weather to bring us beautifully groomed trails.

Melissa Newell, our new Events Coordinator, stepped up our events and volunteer work. Thanks to her, not only are volunteer numbers way up, but we had more people join GMNC and give more in donations than ever before. For the first time, we surpassed 1,000 constituents (one constituent is one individual or family that has given to GMNC, so our true numbers are even higher when accounting for families).

Our ski school also had a fantastic year, with 3 free learn-to-ski clinics, 19 other ski clinics, and many private group and individual lessons. Kudos to Ski School Director Debbie Cheesman for her hard work putting all the pieces together and to our large team of instructors for sharing the joy of skiing.

I like to say that GMNC is not a ski resort -- we're a community. We strive to make cross-country skiing and snowshoeing fun and accessible to everyone in our community, regardless of their backgrounds or financial means. We continue to work with our community partners to provide access to gear and instruction.

Nordic skiing is more than just a recreational activity — it helps people stay healthy and active during the long winter months. Our trail users tell me that skiing improves their mental and physical health and helps them cope with the stresses of life. Some people come to the GMNC trails to find peace and solitude in nature, and others find community and social ties, and we will continue our work to preserve and promote these ways of enjoying an outing on the Mesa.



We are working with the Forest Service on the possibility of adding new ski and snowshoe trails to the Skyway/County Line system. With their permission, we did some test grooming of potential trails in April. We plan to make a formal proposal to move forward with some of them.

You may have heard that we're working on building a permanent warming hut at Skyway. The building will provide a community gathering space, a place to come in from the weather and storage for our equipment. We will have a formal announcement about the Skyway Cabin soon. Stay tuned!

-Christie Aschwanden, Executive Director



Operations Report

That's a wrap! The 2022-23 season did not fail to impress. It was the year of the "atmospheric river," producing nearly 40 feet of snow (476")--160% of normal. During our 185-day season, there were more days with measurable snow than there were sunny days. Our longest stretch without snow was in April. The road was closed 17 times. Our groomers traveled more than 50,000 km (31,000 miles) packing down snow and laying down corduroy. It was amazing to see our signs and trail markers disappear under the thick blanket of white. Our grooming crew of me, Gordon Steidel, Eric Jansen, James Miller and Jon Canty were excited to see friendly familiar faces and meet new snow enthusiasts out on the trail or during our full moon events, races, learn to ski programs, and weekly meetups. The GNMC plans to build on these highlights and strives to have the best Nordic experience anywhere. Have a safe summer and look to the opening of the 2023-24 season in less than 200 days.

-Dave Smith, Operations Manager/ Lead Groomer



Events & Volunteer Report

I was hired for GMNC's newest staff position, Events and Volunteer Coordinator, in September of 2022 and immediately began working to curate a calendar of events to provide opportunities for community members to engage with GMNC staff and volunteers and socialize with one another. We held 17 membership tables, six on-mesa parties, six races, four Full Moon Skis, and eight off-mesa events. We served countless cups of hot cocoa and homemade cookies at our membership tables and parties. I also started a weekly Women's Meet-Up Group offering the chance for skiers of all levels to come together and enjoy each other's company and our great trails.

In addition to managing and planning events, I coordinated volunteers and developed a team of Trail Ambassadors. A total of 31 Trail Ambassadors attended the Ambassador trainings. These Ambassadors were provided with name tags and represented GMNC out on the trails, providing support to users and helping to educate people on proper trail etiquette. The program was a great success.

All of our events were staffed by volunteers who created a warm, welcoming community feel any time an event was happening, engaging all trail-users from first-timers to seasoned skiers and snowshoers. We also had a terrific group of volunteers who performed trail maintenance work in the off season.

Our volunteers donated over 1,000 hours this season. It was a remarkable season marked by not only record snow, but a great sense of community service, engagement, and connection amongst members.

-Melissa Newell, Events & Volunteer Coordinator



Ski School Report

Despite the ever-changing schedule, we had a very successful season. We began with an instructor clinic led by Wyoming-based coach and ski instructor Judi Hulme, who helped get our 17 instructors aligned with a teaching protocol.

A grant from GMNC members Bill and Laurae Fortner-Welch allowed us to offer three learn-to-ski clinics, free of charge to the public. We partnered with REI and the Nature Connection to offer free or low-cost ski rentals for several of these clinics. These clinics were a big hit and resulted in new members and ski enthusiasts.

Throughout the season, we offered numerous paid classic and skate clinics as well as a private lesson program. The feedback we've received says we made our customers happy! We held a two-day Master's Clinic for older adults who wanted to sharpen their skills, as well as an ongoing weekly series for Masters.



Our Women's Wednesday Clinics were wildly popular, and we had a spin-off women's group meeting on Fridays. A Progressive Skate Clinic Series filled up right away. We had something for everyone.

-Debbie Cheesman, Ski School Director



Leadership

GMNC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors from our local communities.



Dan Tille
President

Originally from the the Midwest, Dan spent 13 years traveling around the US and Europe for his wife's career in the US Air Force. He runs an endurance coaching business and spends time with his wife and two daughters, training his dogs, skiing on the GMNC trails, and riding his bicycle as often as he can.



Christine Noel,
Treasurer

Dr. Christine Noel, CPA, is a tenured Associate Professor of Accounting at Colorado Mesa University with 20+ years of teaching experience. She loves to volunteer, hike, and cross-country ski. She has cross-country skied all around her beautiful home state, and is delighted that the best skiing Colorado has to offer is right here at the Grand Mesa Nordic Council.



Marguerite Tuthill
Secretary

Marguerite Tuthill grew up in Avon and has called Grand Junction home since 2015. She learned to love Nordic skiing as a college student in Minnesota. Marguerite heads operations for a local value-based healthcare company and spends her free time reading and hiking. She has a very fluffy, and very friendly, Newfoundland dog that has designated herself an unofficial greeter on the Countyline dog loop.

Board of Directors

Members At Large



Susie Attaway

Born and raised a beach bum near Mustang/North Padre Islands, Susie spent several decades traveling our vast mountains as a medical sales rep in healthcare. An avid back-country telemark skier, Susie started her winter Nordic addiction on the Grand Mesa after attending a skating clinic in Crested Butte.



Tom Ela

Tom was born and raised in Grand Junction and learned to downhill ski at the old Mesa Creek Ski Area. After 15 years of college and seeing the world, he returned to Colorado. He helped found the GMNC in 1990 and has been a Board Member almost continuously since. He has been integral in putting on the GMNC races since the beginning.



Larry Gruel

Larry joined the GMNC board after relocating to the Grand Valley in June of 2020. He's been in the management accounting and banking business for over 25 years. A convert from Alpine skiing to all things Nordic, Larry rarely rides a lift now, and when he does, it is typically in tele skis. In addition to cross country skiing, Larry is an avid (but admittedly slow) cyclist and took up winter Biathlon racing in last winter (even slower).



Joe Ramey

Despite, or maybe because of, being born and raised in the desert of southern New Mexico, Joe longed for the mountains. He moved to the West Slope for love, including the love of skiing. Joe has been a GMNC member since 2000 and has served on the Board off and on since 2005. He recently retired from a rewarding weather forecasting career, including 16 years at the National Weather Service office in Grand Junction.



John Traylor

John was born and raised in the Grand Valley and has skied on Grand Mesa his whole life. Now retired after a career in public finance, he is happy to support a great organization like GMNC and all it does to enhance winter sports and community building for Coloradans. He encourages you to get involved!

Key Staff



Christie Aschwanden
Executive Director



Melissa Newell
Events Coordinator



Dave Smith
Operations/Lead Groomer



Beth Klein
Bookkeeper

Community Partners

- Alpine Bank
- Delta County
- Friends of Youth and Nature
- Goodwin Foundation
- Grand Valley Nordic Ski Club
- Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission
- Jean Thomas Lambert Foundation
- Kampe Foundation
- Kids Pasta Project
- REI
- The Rotary Club of Delta Colorado
- Mesa County
- The Nature Connection
- Riverside Educational Center
- U.S. Forest Service
- Western Colorado Community Foundation



Business Supporters

Bronze Supporters (\$500+)

The Board & Buckle
Bookcliff Family Dental
Chill Switch Wines
Cristee-Meade Building Co.
Colorado Mesa University Outdoor
Program Dufford, Waldeck,
Milburn & Krohn, LLP.
The Gear Junction Outdoor
Grand Mesa Lodge
Loki Gear & Outdoor Shop
Lost Mesa Grill
Mariko Wilcox, CLU®
Palisade Pedicab
Pali-Tours
Palisade Dino Mart (Sinclair)
Palisade Pet Care
Summit Canyon Mountaineering
Thunder Mountain Lodge



Race Series Sponsor (\$1,500)

Empowered Energy Systems

Basic Business Supporters (\$250+)

The Alpine Motel
Cedaredge Lodge
Chickadee Ranch
The Great Outdoors Company
Maison de Terre Bed & Breakfast
Odin Recreation
Primary Care Partners
Dr. John Unger, Montrose Chiropractic
The Yarrow Taproom

Ways Our Supporters Give



Dustin Dodson
Donated a car.

“It was so simple
and a great way to
support GMNC!”



**Nike VanArsdale
& Jeff Mikesell**
volunteered their
time -- 27 and 37
hours each.



Chuck Bodie
Found Employer
Matching Funds

“It's an easy way to
leverage your donation
to the GMNC.”



Treasurer's Report, Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2023

The GMNC had a good year financially. Although the year-end result is a loss, our numbers are moving in the right direction.

Total revenues were up 9% over last year, largely driven by individual contributions. The number of donors (either individuals or families) cleared the 1,000 mark and membership dollars increased by 24%. Programs, such as adult clinics, grew and earned enough to be self-sustaining.

Some expected government funding fell through, resulting in a 14% decrease in this source of operating funds. Administrative expenses increased due in large part to hiring an Events Coordinator who is already paying back by providing a strong presence at the trailheads and on social media. Some costs we had this year will not be incurred next year, such as the purchase of two new snowmobiles and the price of setting up the new grooming reports program and e-commerce site.

As with everyone, normal operating expenses such as printing, insurance, and fuel costs increased over last year. In addition, we incurred significantly higher than expected equipment and maintenance expenses associated with our snowcat grooming machine.

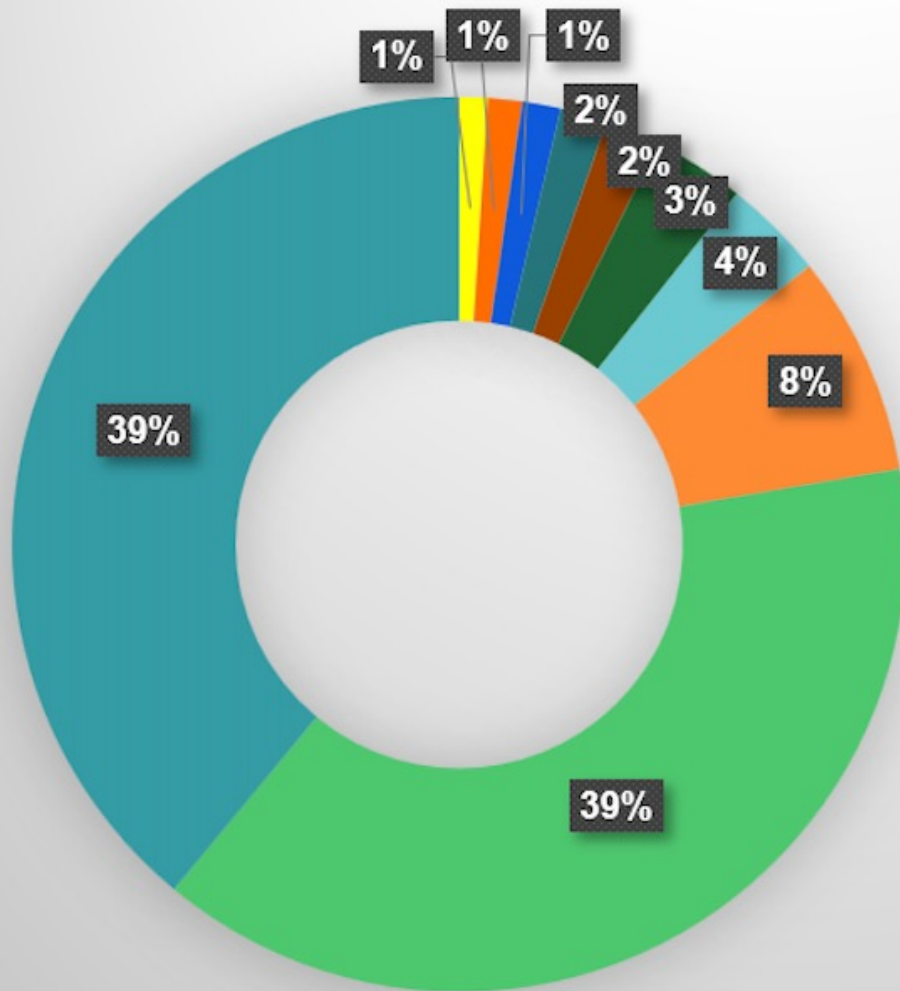
As you can see on membership charts, we are continuing to grow in both memberships and donations. Given the big growth we've seen in the last couple of years, we're taking a very conservative approach to budgeting for the coming seasons to ensure that we can continue covering our increasing costs and remain sustainable and vibrant.

We continue to set aside contingency funds, and we hope to increase donations to the Capital Equipment Replacement Fund next year to help us continue to cover unexpected equipment costs.

Our newly prepared budget for the upcoming year has been thoughtfully vetted by our board and is designed to ensure that the GMNC will operate in the black for the upcoming year.

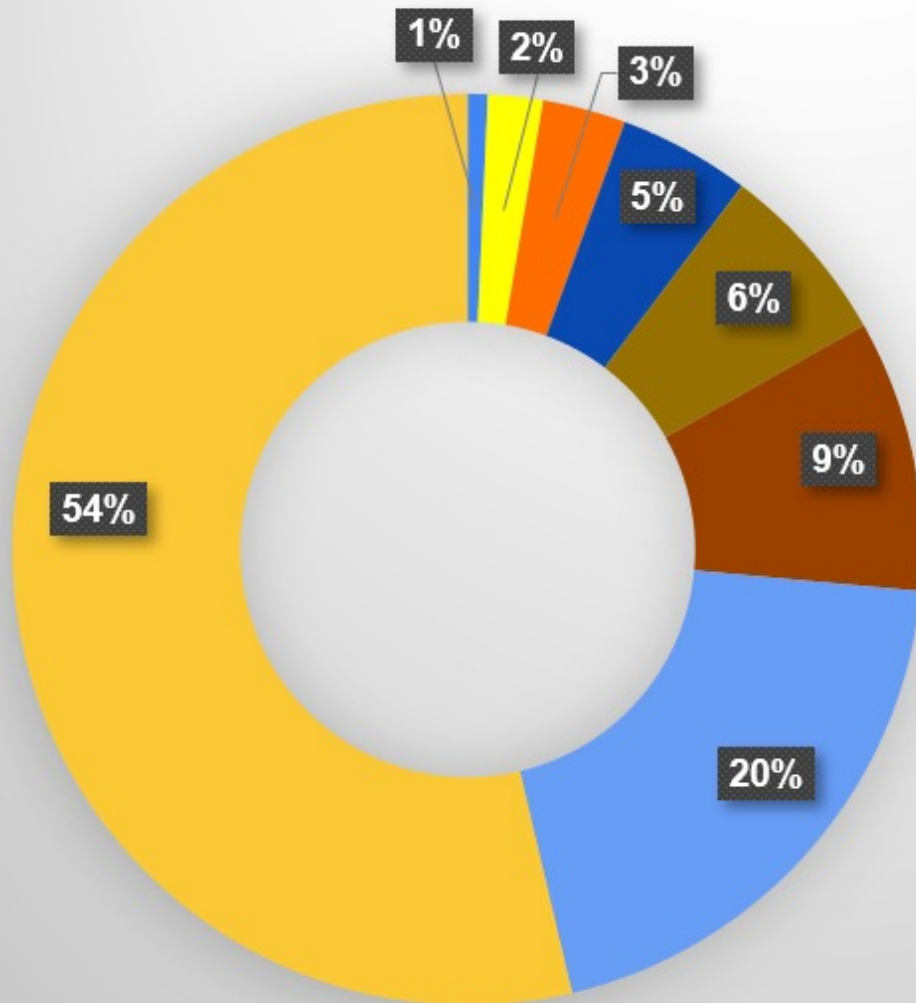
-Christine Noel, GMNC Treasurer

Expenses 2022-2023



■	Maps & Other Printing	\$2,987
■	Fundraising	\$3,586
■	Credit Card Fees	\$4,033
■	Administrative Costs	\$4,927
■	Merchandise Cost	\$5,775
■	Insurance	\$9,649
■	Website, Software	\$10,609
■	Program Costs	\$23,159
■	Trail Grooming & Maintenance	\$112,357
■	Payroll & Payroll Taxes	\$113,176

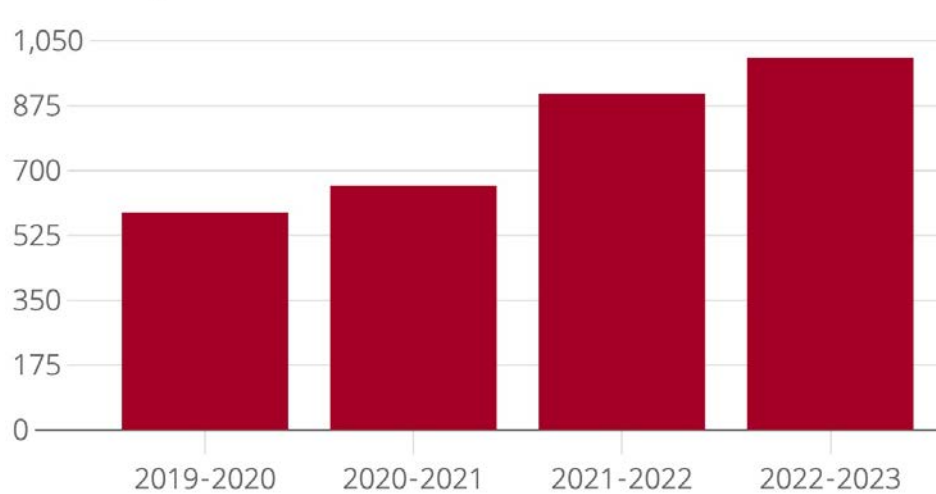
Revenue 2022-2023



- Special Events \$1,956
- Merchandise Sales \$5,371
- Donations to Capital Equipment Reserve Fund (CERF) \$8,128
- Business Contributions \$12,873
- Trail Boxes & Daily Use Donations \$17,900
- Programs \$26,526
- Grants \$54,600
- Memberships: \$147,659

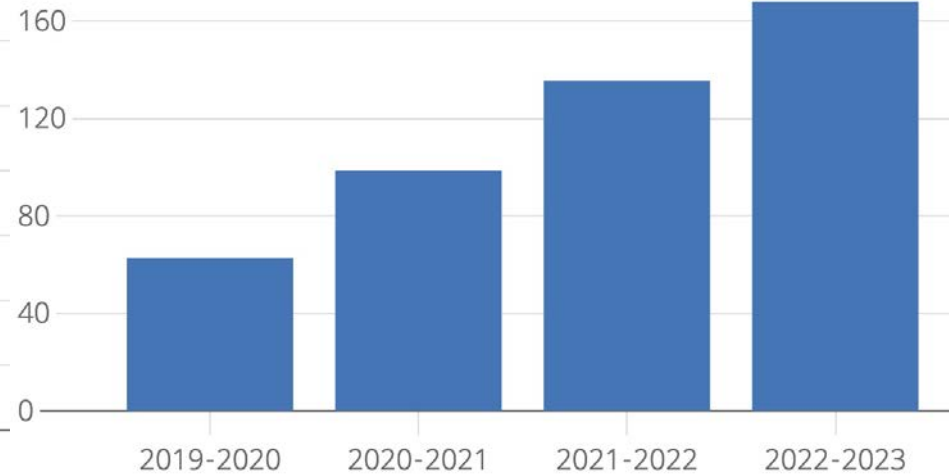
Membership Growth

Membership Growth



Made with Chartbuilder

Total Member Donations (in \$thousands)



Made with Chartbuilder

Ski Season	First-Time Donors	Total Constituents (individuals or families)	Total membership & donations
2019-2020	N/A	587	\$62,643
2020-2021	218	659	\$98,516
2021-2022	307	907	\$135,512
2022-2023	329	1,004	\$167,922

The 2022-2023 Events By the Numbers





Skis for Kids!

We work with partners to get kids outside skiing. The Riverside Educational Center brings kids from the Grand Valley to our trails. They provide the equipment, we provide grooming and some instruction.

Every 4th grader from Delta County and Olathe learned to cross country Ski on our trails this winter, thanks to our partnership with The Nature Connection. The Nature Connection also provides low cost family ski lending and Pop-Up ski lending at some of our events, including Family Fun Days and our free ski clinics.

The Grand Valley Nordic Ski Club offers coaching and instruction to kids who want to try racing. They were a crucial partner for the Family Fun Days.

We also received support from Friends of Youth and Nature, the Kampe Foundation and the Rotary Club of Delta for kids programs.

GMNC Runs on Volunteers

Our volunteer team grew substantially this year. A total of 78 volunteers donated more than 1000 hours to GMNC and our community.



In summer/fall of 2022, a crew of eight volunteers along with our operations crew completed the widening of Summit Trail to make it snowcat accessible. Additional volunteer crews worked to clear trails and repair signs and marker posts in the County Line, Skyway and Ward trail systems.

Volunteers also staffed membership tables, facilitated parties and full moon ski events, and provided support, timing and refreshments at our races. We could not have offered the wide range of events that we did without this generous contribution of time from our volunteers.

The volunteers who staffed our events raised thousands of dollars in day-use donations and GMNC merchandise sales, signed up dozens of new members, answered countless questions, and served hundreds of cups of hot cocoa and dozens of cookies.

Our volunteers brought a welcoming presence to our trailheads. This year, we expanded our Trail Ambassadors program to include 31 Ambassadors. These volunteers were the friendly face of the GMNC, helping trail-users with directions, educating users on trail etiquette and the organization, and cultivating a welcoming, positive environment on the trails where everyone felt they belonged, regardless of skill and ability.

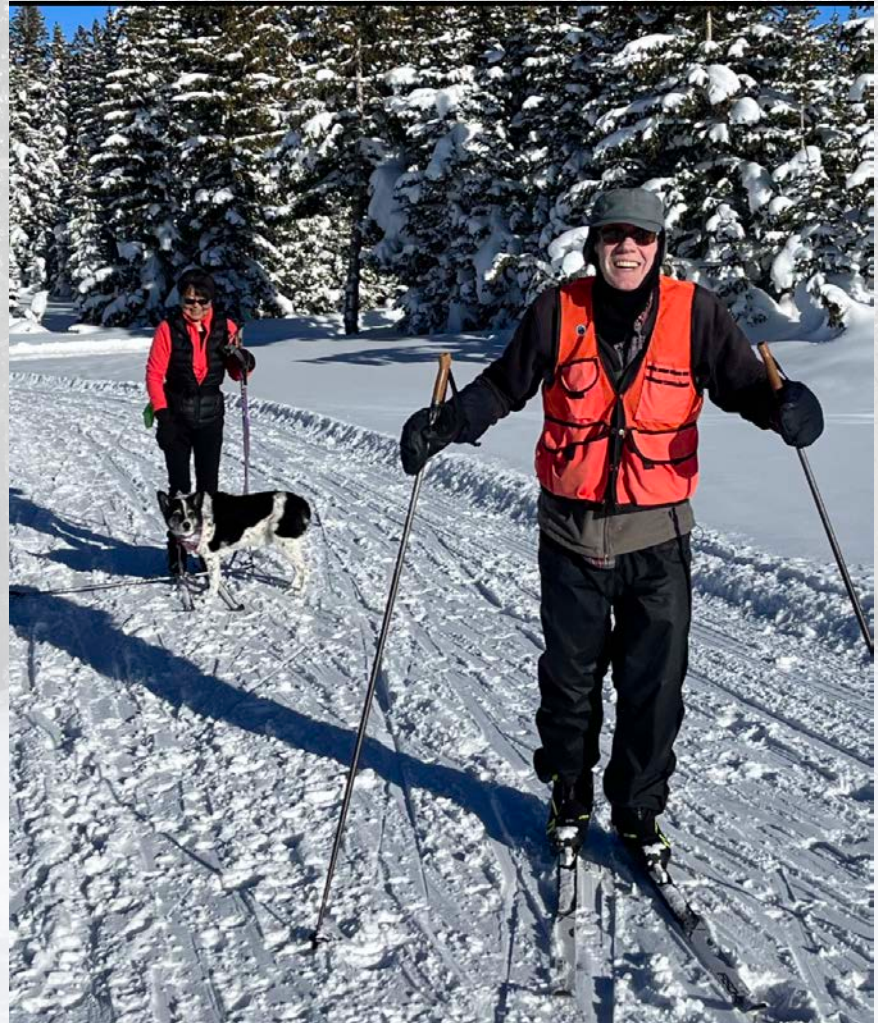


Member Spotlight: Art Trevena and Joyce Tanihara (and Joey)

We support the GMNC because the organization provides wonderful cross-country skiing opportunities. The GMNC's superbly groomed, high-altitude ski trails allow us to keep active from November through April, maintaining our physical and mental health. We often ski with our dog, Joey, so we appreciate the dog-friendly nature of the County Line and Ward Trail Systems.

Joyce appreciates and enjoys all the GMNC trails, and Art's favorite is Skinned Horse Overlook Trail at Ward. We live about 4 miles north of Cedaredge, which allows us to get to our favorite GMNC trailheads in less than half an hour. Joyce learned to Nordic ski 29 years ago at Skyway and has been classic, skate, and back-country skiing ever since. Art, who has been cross-country skiing for 48 years, enjoys back-country touring, but he also likes classic skiing.

Joyce has been involved with the GMNC since 1995 and served on the GMNC board for several years. Art joined the GMNC after moving to Colorado in 2006. For 2022-2023, Art and Joyce volunteered to scout, help clear trails of fallen trees, and install signage on the Ward System.



In addition to their very generous financial contributions, Art and Joyce are Super Volunteers, logging 33 and 26 volunteer hours this season, respectively.

Supporter Spotlight



Jay Mathis

My husband and I moved to Grand Junction from Illinois at the end of 2018. I didn't get to ski on Grand Mesa until 2019, and I realized what a magical place it was.

I get up there as many days as I can. I love all the trails, and ski all the trails multiple times a week. My favorites are Lions, Vista Valley and Scales Lake.

I'm always stopping and snapping a photo and thinking how beautiful this is and how lucky I am to live so close to such a special area.

I am so thankful to the GMNC for all the hard work that goes into making this amazing area accessible. Thanks to the dedicated people who promote our skiing community and the love of this life- long sport.



Randall & Michele Gillette

We became members and contributors to the capital fund at the beginning of the 2022-23 season after recently relocating to the North Fork Valley (Paonia) and truly feel part of the GMNC family already.

We were introduced to the wonders of the Grand Mesa thanks to our Paonia neighbors and longtime members Dave and Jill Knutson. Besides the obvious solitude and splendor of skiing through this marvelous landscape, it's been the social connections that we've formed that have given us the most joy. We thank everyone for being so welcoming.

This first season Michele enjoyed group lessons from Jane McGarry while Randall mostly dinked around discovering as many of the trails as possible. We managed to complete one of the 10K events and earned a prize called "skier who savored the racecourse the most".



Nike VanArsdale & Jeff Mikesell

We started skiing up at County Line in December 2020. The vet said our dog was overweight and needed more exercise. That's when we realized we needed more exercise too.

We started on the dog loop and barely made it around the loop and back to the parking lot, with huffing and puffing and a lot of stopping on the way. We started skiing three days a week and our fitness level improved dramatically and quickly.

We love to go up on the Mesa in any weather. It's a quick drive from Orchard City and the best escape we have. We find it to be a great place to talk things through as we huff and puff around the trails, in the fresh air. Lots of life planning has happened as we ski our favorite trails. Nike's favorite trail is Overlook. We ski in the winter and farm in the summer.



Dustin Dodson

I feel that GMNC supports me much more than what I give back to the organization! The community, the year over year improvements and the feeling that everyone is equally accepted is what keeps me coming back.

As I start to kick and glide towards Summit Trail (my favorite) I give a silent thank you to all the board members, paid staff and volunteers who make it possible. GMNC continues to innovate by adding new trails, offering programs that result in people putting on ski boots who've never dreamed of doing so, holding clinics as well as moonlight skis and races.

The word is getting out that the GMNC has created something special and unique —all for the lowest annual membership fee of any area that I know of!

2022-2023 in Photos

