



"The will to win means nothing without the will to prepare."

-Juma Ikangaa

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

1. SKI TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS/ADDITIONS

- In addition to mowing trails, a bypass was added to "The Plunge" trail section and the "Powerline" section was widened with help from the City of Spooner.
- LED floodlights were added at the high school practice soccer field. The City of Spooner provided the light pole; electrical work was donated by Goeff Hagen.
- Thanks to many hours of work by volunteers, using chain saws and brush cutters, storm damage and debris on trails in the early winter was cleared and they were re-opened in a timely manner.



2. MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS/ADDITIONS

- Ongoing

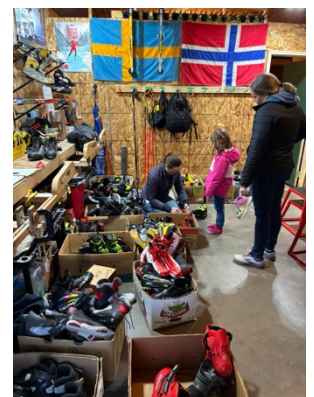
3. SIGNAGE

- In 2025, new ski trail signs were placed throughout the system.
- New bike trail signs are nearing completion and

will be placed in Summer 2026.

4. EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

- For Youth Ski program: 10 new pairs of waxless classic skis with bindings were purchased by ROT; 8 pairs of ski boots were donated, purchased by several ROT board members. Ski pole inventory is in the process of being added to and improved.
- As funds are available, the inventory of youth ski boots and bindings are being standardized through a process of purging old SNS and Pilot equipment, replacing them with NNN.
- Two board members, Del Bakkum & Jeff Emerson, attended a ski trail grooming course at ABR in Ironwood, MI, in February '26. This led to the purchase and installation of track renovator attachments for the Tidd Tech groomer which will allow for higher quality of groomed and set track in certain snow conditions.



5. BATTLE OF THE BUCKTHORN

- Over the past year, 113 work hours were put in by volunteers, community members and DNR personnel to root out and control the invasive species that has been spreading for 20 years. Work will continue based on mapped priority zones. The next work day is October 31, 9 am-noon.

MOUNTAIN BIKE & XC SKI CLUBS FOR YOUTH

1. MOUNTAIN BIKE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

- Offered as part of the Spooner Middle School after-school programming

2. YOUTH SKI PROGRAM

- For 2025-2026 from January-March, 50+ youth, ages 3-12 participated in the youth ski program, which includes ski lessons and games on skis every Monday after school during the ski season.
 - Some students participated in the “Light Rails” skiing a second session each week to improve in both classic and skate techniques. The growth and enjoyment over the sessions happens quickly, especially for motivated youth.
 - As many as 15 adult leaders volunteered time and expertise, helping to both teach technique and expose these young people to the joy and fun of XC skiing. Cookies and other treats were provided each session, purchased by ROT.



MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL TEAM COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

1. MOUNTAIN BIKING TEAM

- Spooner Composite was recognized by the National Interscholastic Cycling Association for logging 450 hours of trail work—#1 for the state. This was noted as particularly impressive for the small town and team size. The work included adding features and almost 1600 feet of trail.
- “Give it a Go” days have been organized this Spring to introduce youth to the MTB team.

2. MEDIA COVERAGE

- The Rails Ski team and Coach Katie Eichten were featured by Duluth’s WDIO in March. Regular team race results were also consistently reported to the Spooner Advocate and social media.

3. INDIVIDUAL & TEAM RESULTS

- ROT skiers consistently placed in top spots at Conference and CXC qualifier events. High school boys won the Northern Conference championship. High school girls and both middle school teams came in second place.
- Rails high school boys took 3rd place overall in Wisconsin Nordic State competitions. For the middle school skiers, two eighth graders finished in top spots overall for boys and girls. Middle school boys also were state Sprint champions.
- 7 skiers qualified for post-season events with 3 students travelling to New York and 2 to New Hampshire for competitions.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. “SNOW-CIAL” SKI GATHERING

- This new initiative was offered twice weekly with an adult guide, December-March (on Sunday mid-afternoon and, starting in January, on Mondays during youth ski). Ten interested persons signed up with 2-4 participants each time.
- Feedback was positive but an alternate schedule will be tried for the 26-27 season.

2. SKI WORKSHOP OFFERINGS

- Given expressed interest and two adults who have volunteered to lead sessions, some ski technique workshops and possibly a group training option for Birkie week events are planned for further development this fall.
**Please let us know if you might be interested in taking these XC skiing lessons, even, and especially, if you are a complete beginner/novice to the sport!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Rails on Trails athletes, coaches and adult volunteers will be participating in the Spooner Rodeo Parade on Saturday, July 11.
- Plans are in the works for Rails on Trails to organize the Zombie Run during Spooner Chamber of Commerce's Jack-o-Lantern Fest this fall.
- Community Battle of the Buckthorn: Saturday, October 31 from 9 am-12 noon.
- Watch our Facebook pages and websites for more updates!
 - <https://www.railsontrails.org>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/RailsOnTrails>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/p/Spooner-Mountain-Bike-Team-61578972573295/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/462230026094938> (Wildcat Trails, Washburn Coounty)