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PLAN FOR NEW OLYMPIC-CALIBER BIATHLON CENTER UNVEILED AT MOUNT ITASCA

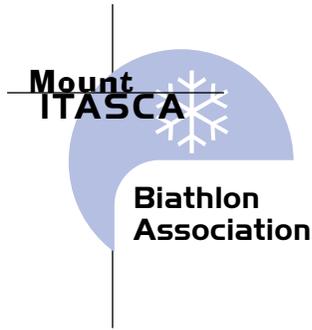
Coleraine, Minn.—Three officials from the United States Biathlon Association (USBA) along with Coleraine city officials helped unveil the plan for the new Olympic-caliber biathlon training facility at Mount Itasca today. Plans for the million-dollar project include 2.5 kilometers of new trails, snowmaking, facility upgrades and a European-style biathlon and Nordic spectator-friendly stadium. This will be a year-round competition, training and recreational facility.

“There are currently two ‘centers for excellence’ being developed for year-round Olympic biathlon training in the United States,” said USBA President Lyle Nelson, the main speaker at the event. “This proposed Mount Itasca Biathlon Center and the Maine Winter Sports Center in Fort Kent, Maine, will provide the training future Olympians need in the United States. We at the United States Biathlon Association are absolutely thrilled to be part of the development of the biathlon center for excellence here in Coleraine.”

The proposed biathlon course includes a 2.5K Nordic skiing course and a 27-point shooting range. The course and range will meet international standards to host all biathlon and Nordic skiing events. The course was designed by Trail Designer Chris Seymour, a Nordic skiing and biathlon coach from Lake Placid, New York.

Biathlon, which is an Olympic sport combining Nordic skiing and target shooting, is a perfect addition to Mount Itasca. Already a world-class ski-jumping facility, Mount Itasca has room to expand to create a biathlon range. The new Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center (MSSEC), just a few miles down the road, is a cooperating partner in this venture. Designed to train Olympic teams in the shooting sports, recreational shooters and those using firearms for self-defense or hunting, MSSEC will partner with Mount Itasca to provide biathlon education and training.

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For Coleraine, as well as Grand Rapids and the rest of southeast Itasca County, this venture is not just a natural outgrowth of existing facilities. It's an opportunity for economic development that plays to the region's strengths. Itasca County has some of the best Nordic skiing in the state and the nation. With two premier Olympic training facilities in the MSSEC and the Mount Itasca ski jumps, Itasca County communities have supported sports-oriented development. Just one example of the economic opportunity this represents—the Mount Itasca development is expected to generate 5,000 overnight stays per year. “This facility won't be just for state and national athletes,” noted Gene Eklin, president of the Mount Itasca Biathlon Association. “We're committed to teaching the winter sports to kids for recreation, training local athletes for competition and hosting state and national athletes. These groups overlap because we have talented competitors in our area. There are currently two local youth—BethAnn Ellingson and Jared Eklin—on the Junior National Biathlon Team.”

The Mount Itasca Biathlon Association and Minnesota Biathlon have already raised over \$34,000 in funds and in-kind donations for the proposed year-round training and competition facility. The groups have also developed strategic partnerships to help secure funding and cooperate in programming with the United States Biathlon Association, the Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center, the Greenway Joint Recreation Board, and the Itasca Ski and Outing Club. Other cooperating organizations making this venture possible are the City of Coleraine, the Itasca County Trails Task Force, and Itasca Development Corporation.

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SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Lyle Nelson

Lyle Nelson is the president of the United States Biathlon Association (USBA). A four-time Olympian in a career that lasted more than two decades, Nelson is the “grandfather” of biathlon in the United States. Nelson was given the honor of carrying the United States flag at the opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympics at Calgary in 1988. A West Point graduate and retired Army major, Nelson is an author, motivational speaker, and currently the manager of the Soldier Hollow Olympic Venue in Heber City, Utah. He is responsible for the building and preparation of the Olympic venue for World Cup and Olympic competitions in biathlon, cross country and the cross-country portion of Nordic combined.

Andy Shepard

Andy Shepard is a member of the USBA board of directors and an executive at L.L. Bean. Shepard spearheaded the development of a major Nordic/biathlon program in northern Maine that involves several venues and a three-year budget of \$2 million funded by the Libra Foundation.

Piotr Bednarski

Piotr Bednarski is the director and head coach of Minnesota Biathlon. In his nine years of coaching Minnesota biathletes, Bednarski has built the top biathlon club in the nation and was recognized as the 1996 Elite Coach of the Year by the United States Olympic Committee. Minnesota biathletes have dominated the Junior World Championship Team and represented 40 percent of the field at the 1998 Olympic Trials. He has just been awarded the USOC's Development Coach of the Year award for 2000.

Max Cobb

Max Cobb is the USBA program director. Cobb represents the USBA at the international level and is responsible for the overall operation of the US Biathlon team. He's been involved with the development of the Maine Winter Sport Center and the Libra Foundation grant and is a promoter of Minnesota Biathlon. Cobb is also the chief of competition for biathlon events in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.



WHAT IS BIATHLON?

Biathlon is a sport that tests an athlete's endurance and precision with the combination of Nordic skate skiing and target shooting with an air rifle or .22 caliber rifle. **Biathlon** includes a Nordic course ranging from 2.5K to 4K and a shooting station. Competitors complete several loops of the course and shoot at the station a number of times—the number of loops and shooting times vary by event. At the station, competitors shoot at five targets from either a standing position or a prone position.

Biathlon events include individual, relay, sprint, and pursuit. Performance is measured by time and accuracy of shooting, and each miss of a target adds a penalty that varies by event.

The sport of **biathlon** originated in the Scandinavian countries, where 4,000-year-old prehistoric carvings depict hunters on skis. **Biathlon** was first in the 1924 Olympics as a “military exercise”—Scandinavian countries had soldiers on skis in the early twentieth century. During World War II, Finns on skis became the most renowned of Scandinavian biathletes when they led raids against the invading Soviets. **Biathlon** was dropped from the Olympics after World War II because of its military connotation, but returned as an Olympic sport in 1960. Women’s **biathlon** was added to the Olympics in 1992.



HISTORY OF MOUNT ITASCA

The Itasca Ski and Outing Club was formed in 1905 to promote the sport of ski jumping. The group has held an Annual Ski Jumping Tournament every year since then, with the exception of some of the war years. In 1948, the group acquired the Mount Itasca property to develop ski sports and provide a home for its 60-meter ski jump. The Olympic-caliber 70-meter Ole Mangseth Ski Jump, named for the founder of Itasca Ski and Outing Club, was installed in 1991 with the help of funding from Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, IRRRB and the City of Coleraine.

The Itasca Ski and Outing Club has been the midwife and Mount Itasca the birthplace of champions: **Ole Mangseth** set the American distance record in 1907 and was inducted into the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1967. **Barney Riley, Alfred Orhn, Rolf Mangseth, Roy Laramie, Gene Wilson,** and **Bob Riley** all won the National Championship in different classes in the years between 1910 and 1941. **Gene Wilson** was the US Ski Team captain in 1950. **Jim Maki** was a two-time Olympian in ski jumping, competing for the United States in the 1976 and 1980 Olympics. And **Jon Denney** (originally from Duluth, but now local) won the Junior Olympic ski-jumping competition in 1977 and then became a member of the US Ski Team.

As the forward-looking folks realized in 1948, promoting all the ski sports helps each individual ski sport. And Mount Itasca is a gateway for all the ski sports-downhill skiing, Nordic skiing, Nordic combined and biathlon as well as ski jumping.



MOUNT ITASCA DESCRIPTIONS/SPECIFICATIONS

Ski Trails

Mount Itasca has 4.7K of cross-country trails, ranging from intermediate to challenging. A 10K loop for novice/recreational skiing is currently being planned. Arrangements are pending with the DNR to access land that would serve this purpose.

Ski Jumps

Five jumps: 5-meter, 10-meter, 20-meter, 40-meter, and the Ole Mangseth 70-meter. The Ole Mangseth is an Olympic-caliber jump.

Alpine Ski Area

Mount Itasca has several downhill runs and one chairlift with 34 chairs. The downhill runs range from beginner to intermediate in difficulty. The ski area is currently open when there is sufficient natural snow (at least 12 inches). Operating hours are weekends and Friday evenings. The ski area also hosts special groups on weekdays.

Biathlon

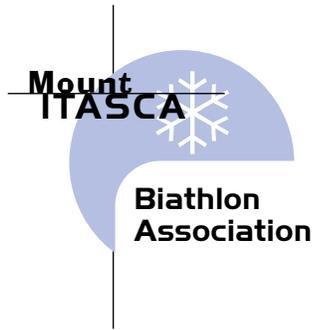
2.5K of competition biathlon trail has been designed, marked and brushed. This 2.5K loop will meet international standards for Nordic skiing, biathlon, and Nordic combined. A 27-point biathlon range meeting all international requirements has been designed and laid out. Logging and earthwork for the biathlon stadium, trails, and range is underway.

Chalet

2,400 square feet of space on the main floor, including a kitchen and restroom facilities. The lower level includes a locker room and showers, restrooms, ski rental and ski patrol headquarters. The chalet can host groups of up to 100 people.

Other Facilities

There is a warming hut at the bottom of the ski jumps with a wood-burning stove, concessions, and historic pictures of ski jumpers from our region and the ski jumps.



Mount Itasca Improvements Descriptions/Specifications

Biathlon and Nordic

- ❄ 5K of competition Nordic trails (expanded from 2.5 K in original design)
- ❄ 10K of beginner to intermediate recreational Nordic trails
- ❄ 3K paved roller ski loop for summer training
- ❄ Snowmaking and lights on 4K of the competition trail and the shooting range
- ❄ 27-point biathlon shooting range with biathlon/Nordic stadium for spectators
- ❄ Timing building and concessions in stadium
- ❄ Trail-grooming equipment, including tillers, snowmobile, and groomer

Other Proposed Improvements

Ski Jumps

- ❄ Rebuild the 20-meter and 40-meter jumps
- ❄ Install a Poma lift and snowmaking

Ski Hill

- ❄ Install snowmaking

General Facilities

- ❄ New maintenance building with waxing area
- ❄ Grooming machine
- ❄ Paved access road and parking lot
- ❄ Paved access to Mesabi Bike Trail



Mount Itasca Biathlon Center Progress-to-Date

- ❄ Endorsement by United States Biathlon Association, Minnesota Biathlon Association, Mount Itasca Ski and Outing, Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center, the Greenway Joint Recreation Board, and other organizations.
- ❄ City of Coleraine is in the process of purchasing Itasca County tax-forfeited land to allow expansion of Mount Itasca.
- ❄ Permission pending from the DNR to lease additional forest land for recreational cross-country trail development.
- ❄ Raised more than \$34,000 in funds and in-kind donations.
- ❄ Course design completed by Trail Designer Chris Seymour of Lake Placid, New York.
- ❄ Plans have passed the Coleraine City Council.
- ❄ Completed the design, marking, and clearing for the competition trails in the biathlon course.



If We Build It, They Will Come

World-Class Training and Events

Olympic-Caliber Training

- * Mount Itasca hosted the US National Ski Jumping Development Team and the US National Nordic Combined Development Team for summer plastic training in 1999 and 2000 as well as individual members of the US and Canadian national teams.
- * Mount Itasca is the annual summer training site for regional ski jumping and Nordic combined teams nationwide, including teams from Lake Placid, NY; Steamboat Springs, CO; and Park City, UT.
- * The Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center (MSSEC) presently has training opportunities for five Olympic shooting sports at its indoor 50-meter shooting range, including rifle training for biathletes. MSSEC has hosted the US Olympic Rifle Team and members of the Canadian National Rifle Team in its first year of operation.
- * MSSEC and Itasca Community College hosted the Junior National Biathlon Team for a 10-day summer training camp in 2000. The Junior National Biathlon Team has periodically used the MSSEC facility for summer training. Minnesota Biathlon also ran a 10-day regional camp for 35 beginning and intermediate biathletes in cooperation with MSSEC and Itasca Community College.

National, Regional and State Sporting Events

- * Mount Itasca was selected to host the 1998 Junior Olympics for ski jumping and Nordic combined. Lack of snow forced the event to move to Ishpeming, MI, where it was held under the direction of the Itasca Ski and Outing Club.
- * Mount Itasca hosted the regional qualifying events in Nordic and slalom for Minnesota Special Olympics in 2000.
- * Mount Itasca has been the qualification site for members of the US Ski Jumping Team for the World University Games.
- * Mount Itasca hosts nationally sanctioned ski-jumping competitions annually.

Biathlon Plans

- * Bids for 2002 Junior National Biathlon Championships and 2005 Junior World Champions.
- * Mount Itasca would be an ideal site for the Summer Biathlon National Championships
- * Professional biathlon coaching program in cooperation with MSSEC

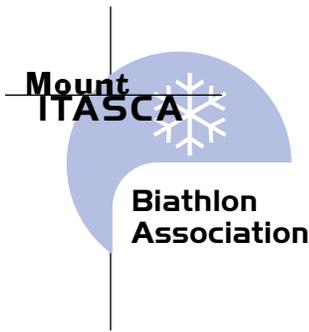
Local Winter Sports and Youth Activities Tradition

Training for Young Athletes

- * Mount Itasca has about 35 youth in its ski-jumping program. The youth program has been in place for about 25 years with current active ski club volunteers. The Itasca Ski and Outing Club has coordinated youth programs since 1906.
- * MSSEC holds a variety of shooting sports programs for young competitors and plans to host junior national rifle camps summer 2001, possibly with Olympic coaches.
- * The only biathlon course in Minnesota now is on the Camp Ripley Army Base and is difficult to access.
- * With the addition of the proposed biathlon trails, Mount Itasca has the potential to become a recognized training site for Nordic combined.
- * With snowmaking, local school teams won't have to leave the area to train.

Recreational Opportunities and Lessons

- * Mount Itasca provides lessons and a supportive family environment for downhill skiing, Nordic skiing and ski jumping.
- * MSSEC provides classes in firearms safety, target practice and self-defense for hunters, target shooters and gun-owners of all ages, including classes specifically for children and for women. A recent public clinic held at MSSEC by a US Olympic pistol coach attracted international-style shooters from across the country.
- * Northern Lights Nordic Ski Club organizes group skiing events and provides the Nordic skiing lessons at Mount Itasca.
- * Minnesota Youth Ski League offers lessons at Mount Itasca to beginning to intermediate cross-country skiers ages 4 to 15.



Cooperating Organizations

Itasca Ski and Outing Club, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that has been in existence since 1906. The club has been the developer and operator of the facilities located at Mount Itasca, including the alpine ski area, the ski jumps and the Nordic trails. The ski club has also coordinated all of the youth programs and competitions that are held at the site. The Mount Itasca Ski Area is located on land leased from the City of Coleraine and the State of Minnesota.

Greenway Joint Recreation Association became actively involved with Mount Itasca in July 2000. It currently leases the property from the City of Coleraine and the State of Minnesota and provides staff and financial support for Mount Itasca and its programs.

Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center (MSSEC) opened in 1999 as a venue for world-class training and local and regional education in the shooting sports. The fifty-meter range at MSSEC is one of three in the United States.

Minnesota Biathlon is an amateur sports club dedicated to training future Olympians by recruiting and training athletes ages 13 and up to compete at the international level, promoting the sport of biathlon, and developing new biathlon facilities around the state. Minnesota Biathlon was recognized by the US Olympic Committee as the top junior development program in 1997 and is the largest and most successful biathlon club in the United States.

United States Biathlon Association is the national governing body of the sport of biathlon. The USBA directs the national biathlon team, coordinates Olympic team selection and training with the USOC, works with state and regional biathlon groups, and is the organization representing the sport of biathlon to the world.

Minnesota Youth Ski League (MYPL) is a volunteer organization with local chapters throughout the state that offers children between the ages of 4 and 15 and their parents the opportunity to learn, develop and enjoy cross-country skiing skills together. MYPL offers leader training, volunteer opportunities for parents and others, festivals and outreach programs to build interest in the sport.

Itasca Development Corporation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the economic vitality of Itasca County by working with businesses and communities to promote the development, retention and expansion of new and existing businesses.