

Winter Wildlands Alliance Conference Promotes Advocacy for Human-Powered Winter Sports

Contributed by Marti Stephen
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Winter Wildlands Alliance's "Advocacy in a Climate of Change" conference presented panels on topics from grassroots organization survival skills to climate change October 24-25 at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, Colorado. Panel begins discussion on parameters of responsibility in hybrid skiing

Golden, CO - Winter Wildlands Alliance's "Advocacy in a Climate of Change" conference presented panels on topics from grassroots organization survival skills to climate change October 24-25 at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, Colorado. Also included was a frank discussion on hybrid skiing. The two-day conference gathered grassroots activists as well as U.S. Forest Service and Environmental Protection Agency personnel to talk about human-powered sports on winter public lands.

The conference is a biennial forum designed to educate activists and help them network. National Forest Service areas frequently ignore important Travel Planning for winter use, often due to funding, according to members of the Forest Service who attended the conference. Activists from Alaska to Colorado had also gathered to help ensure that such planning happened and that it included terms for a quiet, quality, safe environment for human-powered sports.

Topics during the 11 separate panel discussions included "Winter Recreation in Public Lands Planning", in which Phil Strobel of the Environmental Protection Agency presented findings on aural pollution and its adverse effects on both wildlife and human beings. During "Vail Pass Recreation Area: A model for resolving user conflicts?" members of the Vail Pass Task Force presented the story of how they had worked out a coalition of human-powered winter recreationists and snowmobilers to quell user conflicts on Vail Pass.

In an important move, the conference included the panel "Recreational Trends: Hybrid Skiing" presenting the viewpoints of proponents of more traditional backcountry skiing and those who favor using snowmobiles to either access backcountry skiing or serve as uphill transportation. This panel included WWA Executive Director Mark Menlove, Vail Powder Guides owner Ben Bartosz, wildsnow.com's Lou Dawson, and noted Idaho backcountry skier Lew Peterson.

"It's known as an integral part of the culture already", noted Dawson during his presentation at the panel. He further predicted that remote controls would become part of hybrid skiing in the future, when skiers could ride snowmobiles to the top, then send the machines down and ski after (or before) them.

The panel wasn't meant to draw conclusions regarding hybrid skiing's effect on the environment, but rather to come to a better understanding of how to address the issue in land management decisions. Dawson invoked freedom as the underlying reasoning for hybrid skiing and its growth in popularity, while WWA board member Lew Peterson countered when he spoke at length about having skins and being able to access areas through human power. "Isn't that the point?" he asked.

Menlove was pleased that hybrid skiing was addressed. He told the panel and audience, "This issue isn't going away, and the time to discuss it is now."

Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national non-profit organization promoting human-powered recreation on winter public lands.