

X-Country Skiing/Ski Touring "Focus Group" Survey  
for the West Newfoundland Model Forest

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## DISCLAIMER

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the results of a survey directed at 'avid' x-country skiers/ski tourers who have skied extensively in the West Newfoundland Model Forest (W.N.M.F.). A focus group of 7 people answered a 4-page questionnaire and used 1:250,000 topographic maps to indicate where they travelled on skis. The main areas used for ski touring in order of priority were (1) Blow-me-down Mountains, (2) Lewis Hills, and (3) Eastern Lakes area. However there were many other routes used and enjoyed. The main reasons these areas were chosen was because of their "scenery", "wildlife", "pristine nature", and "good skiing". Suggestions to reduce impacts of logging included "avoid clear-cuts in more scenic areas", "provide buffers along commonly used ski trails", and "stay out of ski parks". Responses to other questions dealing with willing to pay for the trips, conflicts with other recreationalists and areas deserving most protection are detailed in the report. This completes a 2-pronged survey approach examining outdoor recreation use of the W.N.M.F. Previously a random survey of 169 residents was completed as well as focus groups dealing with hiking, canoeing and mountain biking use of the W.N.M.F.

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## Introduction

A previous report (“Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in the West Newfoundland Model Forest”) has highlighted the results of focus group discussions for the activities of mountain biking, hiking and canoeing. This report follows the same format for the activity of x-country skiing/ski touring. The principle aim is to highlight the areas used and concerns of ‘avid’ recreational users of West Newfoundland Model Forest (W.N.M.F.).

## Methodology

To understand outdoor recreational use of the W.N.M.F. it is recognized that there are many types of users. A previous study (“Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in the West Newfoundland Model Forest”) noted that 90% of the outdoor recreational use for the activities of mountain biking, hiking/walking, canoeing and x-country skiing occurred within a few kilometers of the respondents home. However 10% of the local population ventured further afield to pursue these recreational activities. This study examines what areas avid x-country skiers/ski tours used in the W.N.M.F. and what some of their main concerns were regarding other resource users, specifically logging activities.

Unlike the previous study of the general population where individuals were sampled in a random fashion, for this study of avid users, certain people were identified based on their extensive use of this area for x-country skiing/ski touring. These people were identified from the author’s background knowledge and by questioning local experts as to who the most suitable individuals might be. Seven people were surveyed and they included 1 person from Stephenville, a ski touring adventure tourism guide from Pasadena and the remainder were from the Corner Brook/Humber Valley area. All participants filled out a 4-page questionnaire and plotted the routes they used on a 1:250,000 topographic map of the W.N.M.F. Use of local ski parks was not noted since the prime motive for this study was to look at which areas received the most use outside community areas. Each survey took roughly 1 hour to complete. A sample copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix I of this report.

## Results

The results of the survey indicate that many areas are used by avid x-country skiers. Roughly 5 areas can be designated including the Lewis Hills, Blow-me-down Mountains, the Eastern Lakes area (southeast of Corner Brook), the hills north of the Humber River and the old railroad/logging road network south and west of Corner Brook. Some of these routes are seldomly used but others are used many times per year by some individuals. The main motivations for skiing these areas were to “enjoy scenery/views” and “enjoy/experience nature” followed by “exercise”, “social interaction”, “solitude”, and “improving ski skills” was the least important. This contrasted with the reasons these same people gave for skiing on groomed trails at a ski park. In this case “exercise” was the prime motivation followed by “enjoy/experience nature”, “enjoy scenery and views”, “social interaction”, “improve skills”, “excitement”, and the least important reason given was to experience “solitude”.

There was considerable consensus about the top ranked route and that was the Blow-me-down mountains via Copper Mine Brook Road. Most people chose that as their favourite. The second most popular choice was not as clear. Some individuals chose the Eastern Lakes area, while other chose the Blow-me-down Mountains accessed from Benoit’s Cove. Other routes included the Lewis Hills via Cache Valley and the ‘Moose Run’ at the Corner Brook Ski Park. For the third ranked area there was little consensus although the Lewis Hills via 2 different routes was mentioned twice. Several other routes received individual mention including the base of Blow-me-down (near Blow-me-down Brook), the 7-11 route, 12 Mile Dam Road and Caribou Lakes. Combining responses for the 3 top ranked areas resulted in the following - the Blow-me-down Mountain area was ranked highest, followed by the Lewis Hills and the Eastern Lakes areas. Reasons given for these rankings included “wildlife sightings”, “great views”, “great bowl skiing”, “pristine”, good workout”, interesting terrain”, “easy access” (for the Blow-me-down area), “wildlife”, “excitement”, “varied terrain”, “not as easy to get to as Blow-me-down” (for Lewis Hills) and “close to town”, “variable terrain”, “scenery” and “wildlife” (for Eastern Lakes area).

To maintain or improve the ski touring in the W.N.M.F. this focus group had many suggestions. The most common response was to designate the Blow-me-down Mountain area and Lewis Hills area as a “wilderness reserve”. This was

mentioned by several respondents since they felt that without it mining interests and unregulated recreational development might destroy it. Other individuals suggested banning skidoers from Lewis Hills and Blow-me-down and 'Cat Skiing' since "it damages the hillsides". Other suggestions included "increase parking area at base of access routes", "buffer waterways, cabin areas, rail bed", include Eastern Lakes as part of Marble Mountain Reserve Park", "Preserve 7-11 Route as a heritage trail", and "provide buffers along edges of ski parks". It should be noted that for many routes many respondents mentioned that they should be "kept as natural as possible".

Logging companies can reduce their impacts by "staying out of ski park areas", "cleanup areas after completion of cutting", "avoid clear cuts over more appealing areas" and "provide buffers along popular ski routes - 12 Mile Dam Road etc". Respondents typically said they would pay \$10./day (self catered) or up to \$125 - \$200 a day for a fully catered/guided trip. Some respondents said they wouldn't pay anything at present but if some services were provided them they would pay some minimal amount. In terms of conflict with other recreationalists, the main problems seem to have been with skidoers - either noise and/or general annoyance. The general opinion of this focus group of using the old rail bed for skiing was that it was "rotten", "very boring", "not enough variety", and "best left for ATV/skidoers except in some instances near communities where x-country skiing might be feasible".

The area(s) most often sited as deserving protection for x-country skiing were "Lewis Hills", and "Blow-me-down Mountains". This was mentioned by almost all participants. Also some people mentioned that the Serpentine River Valley should also be included in this reserve. One individual suggested that the "Old Man Pond" area and ski route to Deer Lake should be protected.

### Conclusions

Although just 7 individuals were surveyed within this focus group, it is felt that they are some of the most experienced skiers in this region. For instance, they have been skiing for an average of 20 years. The prime areas noted for backcountry skiers were the Blow-me-down Mountains followed by the Lewis Hills and Eastern Lakes area. A map at a scale of 1:250,000 has been included with this report and it indicates all the routes used by these skiers. There was

general consensus that the Blow-me-down Mountain area and Lewis Hills should be protected with some sort of wilderness reserve.

APPENDIX I

X-Country Skiing Focus Group Questionnaire

1. How long have you been x-country skiing? \_\_\_\_ years.
2. On the map, outline the x-country routes you have skied within the model forest. (Include 'official' trails and unofficial trails.)
3. How many times have you x-country skied these routes/areas in the past 5 years?

area/route #1 \_\_\_\_                      area/route #5 \_\_\_\_  
area/route #2 \_\_\_\_                      area/route #6 \_\_\_\_  
area/route #3 \_\_\_\_                      area/route #7 \_\_\_\_  
area/route #4 \_\_\_\_                      area/route #8 \_\_\_\_

(If you have lived here less than 5 years, state # of years \_\_\_\_)

4. What is the main reason you ski these areas/routes. (Use #7 for highest importance and #1 for least importance.)

Ski Parks

exercise \_\_\_\_  
improve skills \_\_\_\_  
enjoy/experience nature \_\_\_\_ (ie. to see wildlife, birds, trees, etc.)  
excitement \_\_\_\_  
social interaction \_\_\_\_  
enjoy scenery/views \_\_\_\_  
solitude \_\_\_\_  
others (list rank) \_\_\_\_

Other Areas

exercise \_\_\_\_  
improve skills \_\_\_\_  
enjoy/experience nature \_\_\_\_  
excitement \_\_\_\_  
social interaction \_\_\_\_  
enjoy scenery/views \_\_\_\_  
solitude \_\_\_\_

others (list rank) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Rank the x-country ski areas/routes in your order of preference.

area/route #1 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #5 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #2 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #6 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #3 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #7 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #4 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #8 \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your reasons for this ranking briefly.

area/route #1

area/route #2

area/route #3

area/route #4

area/route #5

area/route #6

area/route #7

area/route #8

others -

6. To maintain or improve the x-country skiing experience on these routes/areas, what actions would you recommend.

area/route #1

area/route #2

area/route #3

area/route #4

area/route #5

area/route #6

area/route #7

area/route #8

others -

7. What can logging companies do to minimize their impact on x-country ski areas and routes?

8. How much would you pay to x-country ski (per trip) on these routes?  
(Don't include Ski Parks.)

area/route #1 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #2 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #3 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #5 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #6 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #7 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #4 \_\_\_\_\_

area/route #8 \_\_\_\_\_

9. If you could protect 1 area (outside of ski park) for x-country skiing in the model forest where would it be? (Indicate on map.) Explain briefly
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Have you ever had any conflicts while x-country skiing with other recreationalists?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What is your opinion of the old rail bed for x-country skiing?