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## THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA

CANADA'S NATIONAL MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

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## LE CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA

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### High Season

### Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut Skiing Winter 2004

The Fairy Meadow Hut has been officially renamed the Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut.

If this is the first time you have organized a trip like this, please see the "Tips For First Time Organizers" at the end of this letter.

To follow is some information that will help you with your planning. If you have any questions unanswered, don't hesitate to call or e-mail me.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Traveling in the backcountry can be hazardous. Contacts for avalanche and weather conditions are listed later in this document.

### HELICOPTER DETAILS

You will be meeting at a parking area just north-east of the Heather Mountain Lodge (see map on page 10) on your day of departure. We share this parking lot with Golden Alpine Holidays. As the trip organizer, please ask for Brad or Allison of GAH when you arrive. They will provide you with instruction on where and how to park. We have had occasional incidents of theft in the past, so be sure not to leave valuables in your cars.

The helicopter will be at the site at **12:00 p.m. READY TO FLY** (mountain standard time). THE ENTIRE GROUP should be at the staging area by 11:15 a.m. so that you have time to organize bags, lock up your vehicles, change into ski boots, remember things you have forgotten, etc. The pilot will give a brief **helicopter safety talk** to the entire group at this time - no one can miss this talk.

The propane supply is now two 500-pound tanks that are flown in at the start of the season. You no longer need to fly in small tanks with your group. As a result of this the personal weight allowances have been increased slightly. We are asking each group to record the amount of propane left at the end of each week and include that information with their snow report.

Each return flight will take about 45 minutes, and all groups (20 people per group) will be flown in **five flights**. That sounds like a long wait for the last couple of groups, but Alpine Helicopters DO request that everyone remain at the parking lot during this time. Most Saturdays there will be two helicopters, so the flying time will be very quick. If someone, or a

group misses a flight, the extra cost for a flight in will be in the neighborhood of \$300 per person, based on four people flying in (if one person misses, they will have to pay about **\$1200!!**) This extra flight would be a cost in addition to the money you have paid for the hut and helicopter.

There are no set baggage limitations per person, only maximum weight per load limitations. You are limited to a total of 6000 pounds for a group of 20, which averages out to 300 pounds per person (including the person, the personal gear, the skis, and a portion of the group food and gear). For an average group of 20, each participant should be able to bring in 50-60 pounds of personal gear (including sleeping bag, beverages, glacier gear, clothing, toiletries, etc.). Approximate average group weights include:

- food (including packaging) (average of 5 lbs. per person per day) = 800 lbs.
- skis/ boots/poles (15 pounds per set) = 300 lbs.
- group ropes (three at 10 lbs. each) = 30 lbs.
- 20 people (average 165 lbs. Each) = 3300 lbs.
- personal gear (55 lbs. per person, including “beverages”) = 1100 lbs.

TOTAL: 5530 lbs.

It is usually better to tell the participants a lower maximum weight than what it really is - human nature is to bring more anyway! If you cannot weigh in within the restrictions, you will have to **pay for an extra flight**. The helicopter company will be weighing people and their gear on a scale at the staging area, so be sure and weigh yourselves and your gear carefully before arriving.

As bulk is a problem on helicopters, please ask people to pack in small bags and boxes rather than large duffel bags or large food boxes. Tell everyone to keep bulk to a minimum. Some groups have brought bulky coolers in the past – these are unnecessary, as there is a new un-insulated vestibule complete with mouse proof storage bins for keeping food cold.

The local weather can be quite unpredictable, and the chances of getting “**stuck**” in the hut for one extra day is about 30%. The chance of being stuck for two or more days is 15%. Pack your food accordingly.

It is **mandatory that you have a VHF radio or satellite phone** at the hut with your group (two groups of 10 may share one). I recommend that you rent from a company in Banff called Gencon Communications. Don McKinley is very helpful, and will send the radio or satellite phone on the bus to Alpine Helicopters in Golden, already programmed for you. The radio and satellite phone are for **emergency use only** and cannot be used to relay personal messages or to get weather reports. The radio uses the Evans Forestry Company's repeater that they generously allow us to use for free. Generally speaking, someone in the outside world will be manning the radio frequency that your radio is set up for between the hours of 7:00am and 5:00pm. The cost for the radio is about \$75 for one week, including tax and delivery charges. If you would like the security of being able to call out 24 hours per day, you can rent a satellite phone from Gencon at an approximate cost of \$100 for the week plus \$5 per minute talk time. Due to the high cost of satellite phones, there is a \$2000 refundable deposit required. The battery is only good for about 7-8 hours, so they are also for emergency use only. Call or e-

mail Don at Gencon if you want more information. (403) 762-4396, e-mail [gencon@telusplanet.net](mailto:gencon@telusplanet.net)

If you have your own radio, these are the frequencies you will need: Channel 5 – Rx 151.82, Tx 154.055. Be aware that there are rules about bringing radios into Canada from other countries, and that some radios are not suitable for use at the hut because they are not powerful enough. Speak to Don at Gencon for more information.

Groups **flying into Calgary** have asked me about **getting to the staging area**. Most people from out of town rent a couple of large vans or a fleet of minivans in Calgary and keep them for the week. To give you an idea of costs, National Car Rental charges about \$400 Canadian for a minivan which can carry seven passengers (but likely not much gear). This price includes picking the van up on Friday and returning it the following Saturday and includes unlimited kilometres. For a group of 20, You will likely need four vans to move your group and their gear.

Alternatively, you could catch a bus to Golden from Calgary - call Greyhound at 1-800-661-8747 or (403) 265-9111. Their fares are about \$85 return or \$50 one way. They have buses leaving at 7:00am (arrive Golden 11:00am), 1:30pm (arrive Golden 5:30pm), 6:15pm (arrive Golden at 10:15pm) and 11:00pm (arrive Golden 2:25am—times may change: call Greyhound at either of the above numbers to confirm). With this option, you would need to take a taxi from Golden to the staging area, which is about 50 km west, near Heather Mountain Lodge. The number for the taxi company in Golden is (250) 344-5237. The quote for getting people to the staging area from Golden is \$150.00 per 10 passenger van (and they have racks on top for gear). Wait time is charged out at a rate of \$30 per hour, with the first 15 minutes being free.

I have also been asked about **places to stay the night before your trip**. You can stay in Revelstoke, Rogers Pass or Golden, but I would recommend Golden. If Rogers Pass closes for avalanche control on the day of your flight, you won't be going anywhere if you are in Revelstoke or at Rogers Pass. Some of the affordable places in Golden are:

The Ponderosa Motor Inn (250) 344-2205  
The Rocky Mountain Motel (250) 344-2251  
The Golden Gate Motel (250) 344-2252  
The Kicking Horse Hostel (250) 344-5071

I would recommend booking early - it is a pretty busy town with all the snowmobilers.

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

Do not send cash. We would prefer if you would pay your balance with a cheque. This can be done two ways:

1. Mail or courier us a cheque or money order in Canadian funds. Your bank will tell you the rate they will give.
2. Mail or courier us a cheque or money order in U.S. funds. We currently give a rate of 45% (this may change closer to the payment date – call to confirm). To figure out how much to make the cheque out for, divide the amount you owe us (in Canadian funds) by 1.45.

Your balance can be paid with Visa or MasterCard if you would prefer. The person making the booking is responsible for collecting and forwarding all payment to the ACC - no individual payments from the party members.

## HUT DETAILS

The hut is a beautiful two-story wooden building with a legendary 10 person wood fired **sauna**. It is a wet sauna - so bring your environmentally friendly soap and shampoo, and have a “bath” every day!

The living area has built-in benches and tables and a large fireplace. The kitchen has another set of benches and tables, a second fireplace and a propane stove and oven which is of normal household kitchen size. In addition, there are two counter top, two-burner propane stoves. A two-burner Coleman white gas stove and lanterns are stored in the basement, for use in the event of a complete propane failure. You will need to bring in 1 gallon of white gas. The kitchen is well supplied with dishes, cutlery, utensils, pots and pans and bakeware to provide for a full hut (including roasting pans, cookie sheets, and bread and muffin tins).

Three rooms upstairs sleep 20 people comfortably on four inch thick, covered foams. If your guests decide to bring pillows, please remember that bulky items are the biggest problem with the helicopter capacity. In other words, tell them to bring a small pillow if they have to bring one at all!

**Food storage** is in the new, un-insulated vestibule on the back of the hut complete with mouse proof storage bins.

**Water** is available 100 metres south of the hut at the junction of a ravine and a small valley (see the map on page 6). A very tall flagpole marks the water hole, so that it may be easily located after a heavy snowfall. Using this supply instead of melting snow is necessary if the propane supply is to last the winter (besides, the creek water tastes better than melted snow). There are several 20-gallon pails and a yoke in the hut for gathering water.

Double pendant propane lamps handle the lighting over the kitchen tables and single wall lamps in the counter and sink areas. Note that the white gas lanterns, which are now stored in the basement, are no longer needed for normal lighting requirements. Please do not take any

gas lanterns upstairs into the sleeping areas for fire hazard reasons; foamies and down make for a nice fire.

**Grey water disposal** can usually be dealt with directly down the sinks. Be very stringent about straining off food particles before draining water, and you should have no problems. If the system backs up, you will have to dig a snow-pit. The pit should be located off the path and in the general direction of the outhouse. The largest particles should be strained off and burned before dumping.

Burn any food scraps, bones, and paper waste in the wood stove. Plastics and tin cans and other non-burnable **garbage** must be flown out at the end of the camp. Also, please bag up and fly out the ashes from the wood stove. Again, don't forget to record the amount of propane left in the 500-pound tank.

Other waste issues are handled by a new **outhouse** conveniently located a short, scenic walk away. We are encouraging the use of a snow walled urinal that can be located off of the trail between the hut and the outhouse. Encourage your group to use this one area only - for the sake of all guests at the hut (aesthetic purposes). The outhouse barrels are flown in and out of the hut once a year at great expense. Please do not put garbage in them. In the winter, the snow load on the buildings becomes quite heavy - please remove some of the snow.

There is a ladder under the front gable of the hut that can be used for clearing snow from the roof. Please do not wear crampons or use an ice axe on the roof, as doing so will likely cause a serious leak.

The main **supply of wood** is located in the woodshed by the sauna. There are supplementary supplies of logs on the front deck, on the ground in front of the deck (you will have to dig these out) and beside the back door. If you think the wood supply is running low, please check all of these locations and let me know how much is left so that we can get more wood flown in for the next group.

The hut has a good supply of **tools**: shovels, axes, splitting mauls, and wedges are kept in the cabinet on the front deck.

No one goes into the hut to clean up between groups, so the rule is: please leave the place cleaner than when you found it. Many groups find it very useful to have a **clean-up** sign up sheet that can be passed around on the Friday night before Saturday's departure. On Saturday morning, everyone has a job to do before taking the last couple of runs and then flying out. There is a sample clean-up sheet on page 9 of this package.

**Don't forget** to bring your **sleeping bags** (rated to -5°C to -10°C or 14°-23° Fahrenheit), **toilet paper**, newspaper for lighting the fire, matches, and one gallon of white gas, a few dishtowels and sponges. Most groups also bring in a **spare set of skis** or two in case of a major breakdown. There is no **first aid kit** at the hut – bring your own.

**Remember that whatever you bring to the hut will need to be brought out with you at the end of the week.**

## THE SKIING

The skiing around the Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut is truly world famous. You get to choose between short slopes just outside the door or peaks, long tours, and experts-only chutes. Of course the powder is unbelievable and you would have to be the unluckiest people in the world not to get some when you go!! The area is for strong, intermediate skiers at minimum; beginners need not apply. Groups must have a good understanding of avalanche terrain and glacier travel in order to ski safely around the Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut.

The book, ***Summits and Icefields*** by Chic Scott is the best source of info concerning skiing in the area. This book, as well as the maps for the area can be ordered from the ACC. The maps are \$10.65 each and the book is \$17.07 CAD, plus shipping costs.

I have been asked about snowboarding at the Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut and have this report from a backcountry snowboarder; "the hut is an excellent backcountry boarding location, although some of the best riding/skiing locations require somewhat long approaches".

We recommend that you keep your eye on the conditions prior to your trip - check out the following websites:

Weather: [http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/forecast/Maps/bc\\_e.html](http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/forecast/Maps/bc_e.html) (click on "Golden" or "Revelstoke") or click on "text forecast" and go to "Columbia Districts". The area that you are interested in is known as the "North Columbia".

Avalanche Hazard and snow pack information:

<http://www.avalanche.ca/weather/bulletins/index.html> (click on and review the section for North Columbia). Also, at this webpage you can click on a link called "Glacier National Park" and you will be connected to the snow pack and avalanche forecast for Rogers Pass (similar area and snowpack to Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut).

BC Environment Snow Pillow Data: a great website that shows satellite operated snow study sites around the province of B.C. Go to <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/aib/wat/rfc/index.htm> From November to early January, the area to refer to is "Molson Creek" (it is about 100 kilometres northwest of Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut). In early January, the man-measured snow plot information starts up, and the areas to look at are "Sunbeam Lake" (15km south of Fairy Meadow), or the Bush River site (40km east of the Fairy Meadow).

The maps that pertain to the area are 82N/13 (Sullivan River) and 82N/12 (Mt. Sir Sandford). The hut is located at 394352 on 82N/13. Please note that there are some mistakes on the mapsheets:

- the Bill Putnam (Fairy Meadow) Hut is misplaced on 82N/13 – it should be in the high forested zone south of the Granite Glacier
- Friendship Col is misplaced on 82N/12 – it should be between Mts. Damon and Pythias
- Ironman should be west of Austerity
- Gargoyle should be the next peak south-east of the East Peak of the Gothics

I am often asked about the use of harnesses and ropes on the glaciers around Fairy Meadow. Most groups wear their harnesses at all times on the glaciers. If you are following an established track uphill, you may choose to have a member of the group carry the rope in their pack. If you are venturing into uncharted territory and/ or if you have whiteout or flat light conditions, you will likely want to rope up at least for the uphill travel. There are monstrous crevasses capable of swallowing trains on the glaciers, however the snowfall in the area is equally colossal and crevasse problems are rarely reported. Of course the snowbridges will be better later in the year than earlier. And the ACC's disclaimer is: the final decision whether to rope or unrope is yours.

There is an avalanche information record book in the hut. Please fill this book out to the best of your ability – the information contained in it will be important to groups coming in after yourselves, and hopefully you will be able to glean some information from it too.

As soon as you return from your trip, I will be asking you to send a snow conditions report for the sake of future groups. Useful information will include average snow depth, avalanches observed, (aspect, angle, elevation), weather summary (including wind, and amount of new snow), and any other interesting observations your group makes. The report need not be long (no more than a page) or written by or for an avalanche technician. You may want to assign this job to someone in your group prior to your trip.

Finally, if you are interested in hiring a cook or having food pre-prepared for your group let me know and I will provide you with contact information, or will set it up for you. Also, if you would like to hire an Association of Canadian Mountain Guides certified guide, let me know and I will provide you with a quote for services.

I hope this information will be useful to you. If you have any other questions, please call me at (403) 678-3200, ext. 104, fax me at (403) 678-3224, or e-mail me at [lwhite@AlpineClubofCanada.ca](mailto:lwhite@AlpineClubofCanada.ca).

Let it snow!!

Kind regards,

Lawrence White  
Facilities Administration Manager

## TIPS FOR FIRST TIME ORGANIZERS

I have been witness to the high stress levels of some first time trip organizers over the years. The following tips are based on what some people have done wrong in the past, and hopefully these may prevent you from making the same mistakes...

- Start “advertising” your trip EARLY. You will be surprised at how many people cannot go if you ask them less than several months in advance.
- Don’t accept anyone as a confirmed “yes” until they have given you a deposit. Make the deposit substantial – something people will not want to walk away from (I would suggest \$200 per person).
- Set a deposit deadline, and stick to it (even with your friends). I would recommend a deposit deadline of at least three months before the trip.
- Payment is due in full to the ACC two months prior to your trip, so you will definitely need to get final payment from your participants prior to that.
- Share the previous logistic and hut information letter with your participants.

Good luck, and please do not hesitate to call me if you have questions!

## **BILL PUTNAM (FAIRY MEADOW) HUT CLEAN-UP SHEET**

Clean kitchen (wipe down tables, counters, inside cupboards, clean stovetop & oven).

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Clean upstairs (shake out mattresses, sweep underneath mattresses, sweep and mop floor and stairs).

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Chop wood and restock wood supply under inside stairs and in sauna.

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Burn all burnable garbage (including all cardboard boxes). Clean out wood burning stoves (empty ashes & wash glass doors) in living room, kitchen and sauna.

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Sweep and mop living room and kitchen floors.

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Wipe down tables and surfaces in living room, including window sills and cupboards in back hallway.

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Clean outhouses and wipe down benches in sauna. Change outhouse barrels IF they are 3/4 full - please don't change them too early (or too late)!

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Re-shovel & level stairs going to outhouses and sauna. Cover your urinal with snow.

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Wash windows.

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Shovel rooftops (hut, outhouses, sauna, & woodshed). Please – NO CRAMPONS OR ICE AXES on the shingles!

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*Record the amount of propane left in the 500-lb. tanks for inclusion with the snow report.*

Please make a note of anything that is missing or lacking in the hut and let the ACC know so that we can send the items in with another group.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**