

Strait Talk, November, 2009

As winter approaches, I'd like to share information about the Dakota Ridge Winter Recreation Facility. With 12 km of groomed cross country skiing and snowshoe trails, Dakota Ridge offers excellent winter recreation for all ages from about mid-December to the end of March. It is delightful to have morning coffee at the water's edge surrounded by green and then spend the day in a winter wonderland with no ferry ride in between!

Dakota Ridge is an integral part of the SCRD's Parks and Recreation services and also a component of tourism development. Summer attractions abound on the Sunshine Coast. Dakota Ridge offers family activities in the winter season which is traditionally slow for our B&B's, motels and restaurants. Ski and snow shoe rental shops have developed, tours are offered and there is now a local shuttle service.

As soon as there is enough snow to safely groom the trails, the season officially begins. The trail system is first class but facilities are basic. A warming hut with a wood stove is available dawn til dusk and there is an outhouse with an eco-holding tank but no food services or garbage pick up. Visitors need to bring their own water and food and be prepared for a wilderness experience with variable weather conditions. The road (accessed at the top of Field Rd) is cleared regularly, but expect winter conditions and use 4 wheel drive vehicles and chains. Car pooling is also recommended as parking is limited. The SCRD depends on the support of Volunteer Trail Hosts who receive a free season's pass. They perform numerous tasks including visitor information, monitoring trails, shovelling snow, and validating/providing tickets. Some are even involved in trail grooming. Recently a group of committed volunteers insulated the warming hut with a generous donation from Sechelt Rotary.

Volunteers play a major part in planning and hosting special events. On Feb 7, 2010, complimenting the Sunshine Coast Olympic Torch Relay, the 3rd Annual Snowfest will be enjoyed by hundreds of people in races, snow sculpture contests, and other special winter activities. The 2nd Annual Dakota Ridge Snowshoe Race is set for Mar 7.

Another group of volunteers run Jackrabbits, a popular cross-country ski training program for 4-9 year olds which starts up in January. For information contact Natasha at 885-2946 or [HYPERLINK "https://webmail.scrd.ca/owa/redirect.aspx?C=63bab80745e24fef9bf9ed0c84643a9e&URL=mailto%3adakotaridgejrs%40hotmail.com"](https://webmail.scrd.ca/owa/redirect.aspx?C=63bab80745e24fef9bf9ed0c84643a9e&URL=mailto%3adakotaridgejrs%40hotmail.com) dakotaridgejrs@hotmail.com.

Check [HYPERLINK "http://www.scrd.ca"](http://www.scrd.ca) www.scrd.ca for current information on trail and road conditions, trail maps, ticket prices, volunteering and special events. Take advantage of Early Bird prices for season's passes: 10% off prior to Dec 15! Children under 12 ski and snowshoe for free. Adult, youth and senior passes and day fees help defray the cost of trail grooming, road clearing and the maintenance of this spectacular winter facility. Plan to try out Dakota Ridge this winter! donna_shugar@hotmail.com
The opinions expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the rest of the SCRD Board.