

The Crystal Sled Dog Trail System

A history of the trail system

In the mid-1990s Seattle area people were looking for a place to run their sled dog teams where there was good snow and not too far of a drive. Crystal Springs offered good snow and some groomed snowmobile routes but it was very hard to get safely out of the parking lot. Some musher discovered the **abandoned** cross country ski trail in the northwest corner of the original lot and started to use it. Since the trail was not groomed it was very hard to run dogs on the trail after new snow storms. There were many water crossings on the abandoned trail. A local musher started to groom the trail with an old snowmobile and a home built drag type groomer. Another musher started to help with the grooming the next year which allowed us to groom a whole system of trails to the east of the Crystal Springs. For the next few years we worked hard at keeping the system groomed but parking was still a problem. In the far southwestern corner of the new upper lot there was a natural area that could be set aside as a dog sled parking area. With the blessings/help of the Winter Recreation Coordinator and Lake Easton Park Manager we mushers rented a loader/backhoe and moved large boulders around to make the parking area. In October 2003 a major 2 day cleaning and widening of the old ski trail was completed. For the 2003/2004 grooming season a grant was approved for grooming the one mile trail “The Crystal Dog Trail” from the musher parking to the crossing of the FS road 5480 (Lost Lake). With the blessings of the Winter Recreation Coordinator and Lake Easton Park Manager, a short connector trail was created (brushing) to connect our trail to the John Wayne ski trail for our safety. It was agreed that we would be able to share the trail with skiers from the FS road 5400 where the ski trail crossed the FS road 5480. A funding grant was approved to groom the entire dog sled system for the 2004/2005 season but the land owner (USFS) could not approve the grooming. Sometime during the 2004/2005 season the gravel pit operators plowed their access road and this destroyed the groomed trail. This continued to be a problem for some time. Since we could not groom, some of the funds were used to make improvements to the parking area and the wet areas of the “The Crystal Dog Trail. Musher’s continued to groom the system by snowmobile with a very rare grooming by snowcat. In the late summer of 2007 the remainder of the “grooming funds” needed to be used or they would be lost. The old, broken ski trail kiosk was installed at the entrance to the new dog sled parking area trail. Sign posts were installed and large boulders moved to enlarge the parking area. A new route was created to get around the plowed road that had caused lots of problems. A second exit was created for the small teams and the cross country skiers that were starting to use the trail. The contractor for the second groomer shed had left a large embankment in front to the new building. State Parks asked us to try and remove this dirt/rock. The volume was more than the rented equipment could manage but about 2/3rd of it were removed and placed on low spots of the outlet trail. For the next four years mushers continued to groom the trail system by snowmobile while we tried to work with the USFS to get the needed “permission to groom”. In 2011 we received permission to complete a

small number of “test grooming’s” and with this we received funding to groom the entire system. In September 2011 the USFS provided some needed culverts and mushers provided the loader/backhoe, labor and fuel to improve the Crystal Dog Trail. At the same time other mushers spent all day “brushing” many of the trails. For the 2012/2013 season we received permission to groom the system without restrictions. During the 2012/2013 grooming season it was discovered that a short portion of Trail 4 was on private lands. These private land owners did not want the trail groomed and no one was to trespass on their lands. In past years Trail 4 was a groomed snowmobile route to Easton. During the early summer of 2013 we worked with the USFS (Tim Foss) and the staff at Lake Easton to move the trail a few feet to get Trail 4 on public lands. This was not good enough for the land owners and Trail 4 was made into a loop that is a long way from private lands. Summer/Fall of 2013 a 36 inch by 30 foot culvert was installed on the 5 Dog Loop trail. Cleared a blocked 36 inch culvert on Dave’s trail, trail brushing completed and other work on water problems.

History as of November 2013

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