

SKI NORTH ULTRAMARATHON

Ski North Ultra Participation Guide updated 2/25/26

Welcome! This will serve as the Ski North Ultra's second year participation guide. Thank everyone who has been so supportive and encouraging of this race. Last year was a wild one and I suspect every year will be a little different.

Sense of Adventure

The hope for this event is to give you a North Woods experience, support a long-distance ski, and give some exposure to these incredible trails. There will be some unconventional parts - road crossings/river crossings where you need to take off your skis, singletrack trails, maybe some animal tracks. I've been at Bally Creek with more chickadees than I've ever seen in one spot. I've also seen wolf tracks on the Massie/Hall loops, and a beaver tail near the Hansen Hjemsted aid station. Nature will likely happen out there.

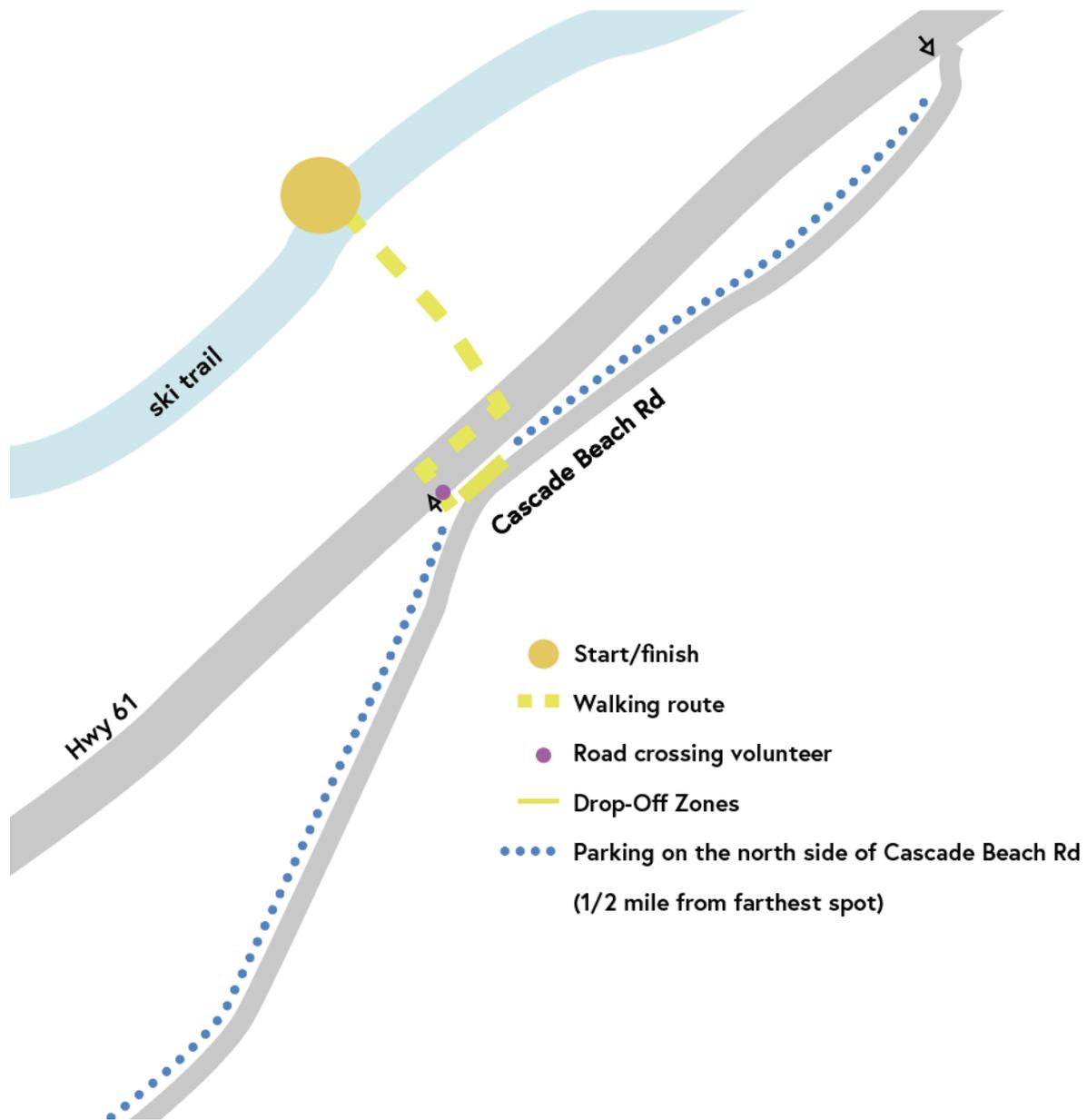
This is a challenging course. There are long, extended climbs and descents, 10 km+ long. These are recreational trails that are not necessarily designed for racing around, which can make skiing them at higher speeds quite technical. There will likely be some narrow two-way sections, tight corners, and two-way single-track where you'll need to pay attention. There will also be sections where the two races go different ways and sometimes they cross paths. **It's important that you have an idea of the route.** Consider loading the gpx files onto your watch if possible.

There are usually 10-15km between aid stations (18k is the longest stretch), and limited cell service on the trails. Please ski within your capabilities.

The trails are also open to the public during this event, so please be considerate of other trail users.

Parking

Primary parking will be on Cascade Beach Rd. aka the frontage road next to Hwy 61 this year. People do have homes along this road. Please come in on the north end of the road, park on the right side of the road. There will be a drop-off zone indicated close to the road crossing. There will be a volunteer to help facilitate crossing Hwy 61, along with signage, but cars are NOT requested to stop, so please wait until you cannot see cars in either direction before crossing. Carpooling is encouraged! There is a bit of a walk up a driveway to the Start/Finish area. Cars may be using it - this is a snowmobile parking lot, so we aren't permitted to use it as race parking. We will also use this area as an aid station and drop-zone for extra skis, clothes, supplies.



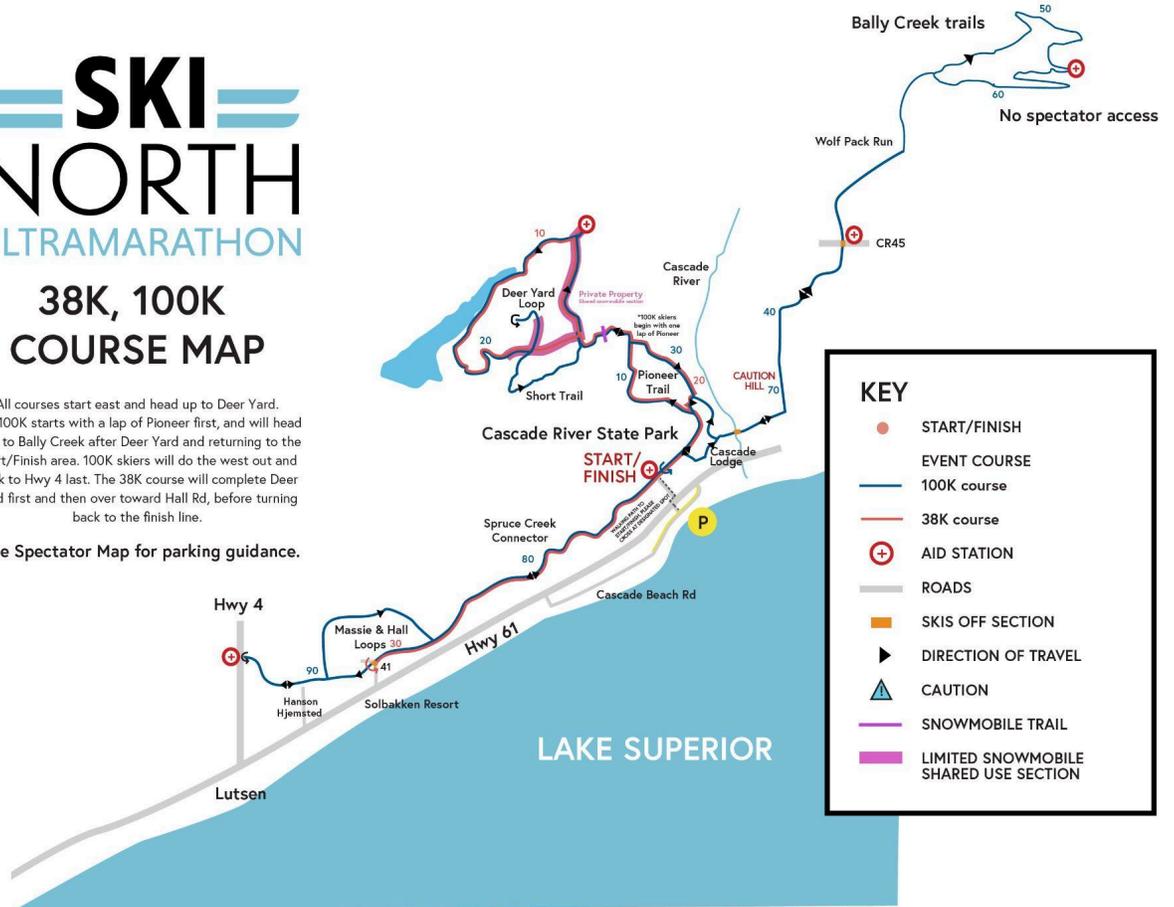
The Course

SKI NORTH NORTH ULTRAMARATHON

38K, 100K COURSE MAP

All courses start east and head up to Deer Yard. The 100K starts with a lap of Pioneer first, and will head east to Bally Creek after Deer Yard and returning to the Start/Finish area. 100K skiers will do the west out and back to Hwy 4 last. The 38K course will complete Deer Yard first and then over toward Hall Rd, before turning back to the finish line.

See Spectator Map for parking guidance.



Note a new start/finish area! The course order has changed since last year. **Each race will start at a snowmobile parking lot on the west side of the State Park, instead of in the main State Park area.** All races start heading northeast toward the Pioneer Trail. See [Google Map](#).

Course description

38K Course

The 38K will loop up around Deer Yard Loop and back down Pioneer, through the start/finish area, down to Hall Rd and back. There is a variety of terrain, mostly intermediate to beginner.

100K Course

The 100K is going to start with a lap around Pioneer, frankly because we were short a handful of kilometers. There are some quick turns on the downhill section of this loop. Then a hard right back up Pioneer to the Deer Yard Loop - this is nearly all climbing up to that first aid station at the Deer Yard Trailhead. It's about 15km here, and another 18km to the next aid station, so stock up and be prepared for some longer stretches.

Heading around Deer Yard Loop counter-clockwise, we're adding on an out-and-back on the FireTower Trail and then an addition of the Short Loop (advanced section) before coming back down Pioneer Trail. Please stay right on the two-way section up and down the FireTower Trail. This exchange also involves jogging back about 20 feet on the trail between FireTower Trail and the Short Loop. A note for these sections - there are private homeowners along these trails, so please be respectful and stay on trail. You may see them snowmobiling in and out and this is all allowed - it's their only way in and out. They're aware of the event and skiers in general and will be cautious.

After the Short Loop, skiers will turn right back toward Pioneer. This is a 1km section that's two-way leading into a left-hand turn onto Pioneer. The 100K leaders may encounter some of the slower 38K skiers if they're really cooking. So, do your best not to take anyone out. Generally speaking, skiers going downhill will have the right-of-way, and the 38K skiers will be asked to yield to the 100K skiers on this particular intersection.

It should be a pretty fun ski downhill back to the Start/Finish area. We will have a big aid station here, with a drop area for skis/clothes for you to bring, and wax support.

From here, unlike the 38K course, you are going to turn around, and work your way toward the Cascade River crossing. After about a kilometer down the trail, you'll head right toward Cascade Lodge and take a lower trail that crosses a creek and gets you over to Cascade River. We won't use the trail that went down to the Finish last year - that was a little too wild :) This may or may not be groomed leading up to the river crossing, but it will be packed. You do need to take your skis off for the River Crossing - there will be signage. Mostly because there are stairs. But this can also be a notoriously slippery spot because of all the foot traffic. Take a hot second (or more) to enjoy the waterfall and then you'll start the long 13+km climb up to Bally Creek. Once you pass by the group campground (where we started last year), you'll start a big uphill climb. Keep an eye up - this is all two-way. Stay right. **Skiers going downhill get the right of way.** If the downhill conditions are too fast or icy, we may require a skis-off section. TBD. It's a pretty quick, bumpy and long downhill in the best of conditions. So, here's your "this may be sketchy" warning. Perhaps check it out yourself before the race if possible- it wouldn't be a "send it" hill for me personally. We needed to use this route because of a DNR Deer Wintering Area. At the top of the climb, you'll enter two-way, single-track territory. After about 5 more km, you'll have a road crossing at CR45. Again, cars do **not** have to stop, so look both ways before crossing. You'll need to take your skis off.

After about 5 more km, you'll do a ~10km loop around the beautiful Bally Creek (aid station up there) before coming back. On the way back down, this could be pretty fast under certain conditions, so please

use caution. There are a couple of larger downhill sections. We placed this in the middle of the race to hopefully optimize the likelihood of good conditions. Again, watch for two-way traffic.

Back through the east side of the State Park (reminder, caution downhill! I'd approach this one lightly) and over the waterfall bridge across the River. You'll make your way back to the Start/Finish hub, and then you're nearly there! $\frac{3}{4}$ there!

The last section brings you out and back to Hwy 4 (Caribou Rd) and back. There is one road crossing at Hall Rd, and last year, there was some gravel that made its way onto the trail a bit, so perhaps consider taking your skis off earlier than you think you should. We'll have the aid station at Hwy 4 this year so hopefully nobody keeps going this year (there IS a ski trail that keeps going, but you should turn around!) And then back around the Massie Loop and back to the finish. This is all relatively flatter (Massie has a nice climb).

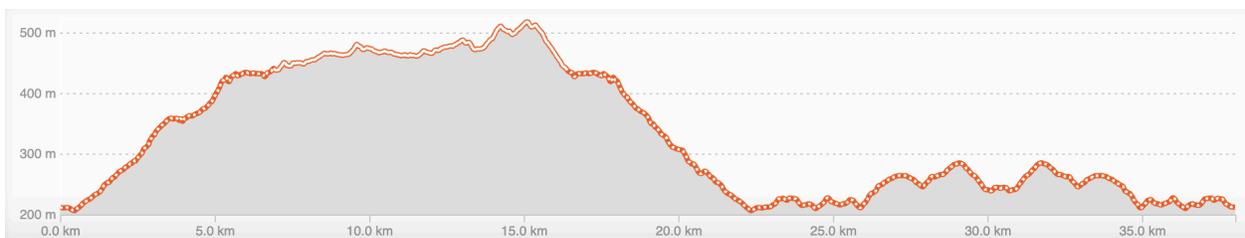
Skis off sections/road crossings

Skiers will need to take off their skis for a section over the bridge (there are stairs). There are also a few roads to cross along the way (CR45 twice and Hall Rd). While we will have volunteers at CR45 to help you out, skiers are responsible for making their own choices crossing the road. **Skiers DO NOT have the right of way.** There will be signage for cars, and signage for skiers indicating the intersection coming up. Hall Rd is less busy of a road, but of course please take the time to look for cars.

Elevation Profiles



Elevation profile for the 100km: Per Strava, we're looking at about 5700 feet (1740m) of elevation. For reference, the Birkie Skate race is roughly 4600 ft of elevation gain for 50km, so this is higher but spread out twice as far.



Elevation profile for the 38km

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MARCH 7:

Bib pick-up: 4:30-7:00 pm at [North Shore Winery](#) at 202 Ski Hill Rd, Lutsen

Recommended! Come ask your questions.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8:

Bib pick-up: 6-7:30 am at the Start Area

7 AM - 100K start

7:30 AM - 38K start*

2:00 PM - 38K cut-off

7 PM - 100K cut-off

7:30 PM Post-race celebration at Up Yonder in Grand Marais - come for age group awards, overall prizes and exchanging of stories!

**updated time to improve some two-way traffic flow*

Drog Bags

Before the race, 100K skiers may drop off personal items at the Start/Finish hub. Skiers will come through this area around 35km and 75km. Please label your bags. This might include favorite food/drink, skis, changes in clothes, wax, etc.

Ski exchanges are welcome at other locations but that is between you and your support people.

Course markings

Please get a good idea of the course and map ahead of time. You will need to pay attention. Due to the distance, this event is probably more minimally marked than other urban races. Any left or right hand turns will have a colored arrow indicating the direction, sometimes slightly ahead of the turn. 100K follows the blue arrows, 38K follows red. If the course goes straight, there will be pink pin flags indicating the trail to follow, as well as pink tape in the trees. Follow the flags and tape. We will try to have course marshals at confusing intersections.

There will be signs marking two-way sections (stay right), road/snowmobile trail crossings, and aid stations coming up.

GPX files

Consider downloading the gpx files ahead of the race for a smartwatch.

[38K gpx file](#)

[100K gpx file](#)

Headlamp

The sunset on March 7 is about 6 pm. If you depart the 76km aid station (Start/Finish) after 3pm you are **required to have a headlamp** with you.

Tracking skiers / time cut-offs

Aid stations will be tracking participants as you come through, so please have your bibs visible. We are staggering cut-off times to be more lenient in the beginning, and tightening up throughout the race. So, if you are hitting the cut-off times but just barely, note that you may need to quicken your pace later on (fortunately, the terrain gets easier that last third of the race).

AID STATION TIME TABLE

100K course	min/km pace	START	Deer Yard	Start/finish	CR45 (1)	Bally Creek	CR45 (2)	Start/finish	Caribou	Finish
distance into 100k course		0	15	33	41	55	65	76	87	100
distance betw. aid stations			15	18	8	14	10	11	11	13
	3:00	7:00 AM	7:45 AM	8:39 AM	9:03 AM	9:45 AM	10:15 AM	10:48 AM	11:21 AM	12:00 PM
	3:30	7:00 AM	7:52 AM	8:55 AM	9:23 AM	10:12 AM	10:47 AM	11:26 AM	12:04 PM	12:50 PM
	4:00	7:00 AM	8:00 AM	9:12 AM	9:44 AM	10:40 AM	11:20 AM	12:04 PM	12:48 PM	1:40 PM
	4:30	7:00 AM	8:07 AM	9:28 AM	10:04 AM	11:07 AM	11:52 AM	12:42 PM	1:31 PM	2:30 PM
	5:00	7:00 AM	8:15 AM	9:45 AM	10:25 AM	11:35 AM	12:25 PM	1:20 PM	2:15 PM	3:20 PM
	5:30	7:00 AM	8:22 AM	10:01 AM	10:45 AM	12:02 PM	12:57 PM	1:58 PM	2:58 PM	4:10 PM
	6:00	7:00 AM	8:30 AM	10:18 AM	11:06 AM	12:30 PM	1:30 PM	2:36 PM	3:42 PM	5:00 PM
	6:30	7:00 AM	8:37 AM	10:34 AM	11:26 AM	12:57 PM	2:02 PM	3:14 PM	4:25 PM	5:50 PM
	7:00	7:00 AM	8:45 AM	10:51 AM	11:47 AM	1:25 PM	2:35 PM	3:52 PM	5:09 PM	6:40 PM
last call pace	7:12	7:00 AM	8:48 AM	10:57 AM	11:55 AM	1:36 PM	2:48 PM	4:07 PM	5:26 PM	7:00 PM
cut-offs			9:20 AM	11:35	12:15	1:50	3:00	4:15	5:30	7:00 PM
Crew access		walk-in	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	walk-in	yes	walk-in
Drop bags		yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes
Portapotty		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
38K course		START	Deer Yard	Start/finish	CR45	Bally Creek	CR45	Start/Finish	Hall Rd	Finish
distance into 38k course		0	9	23					30	38
distance betw. aid stations	min/km pace		9	14					7	8
	2:45	7:30 AM	7:54 AM	8:33 AM					8:52 AM	9:14 AM
	4:00	7:30 AM	8:06 AM	9:02 AM					9:30 AM	10:02 AM
	6:00	7:30 AM	8:24 AM	9:48 AM					10:30 AM	11:18 AM
	8:00	7:30 AM	8:42 AM	10:34 AM					11:30 AM	12:34 PM
	10:00	7:30 AM	9:00 AM	11:20 AM					12:30 PM	1:50 PM
last call pace	10:16	7:30 AM	9:02 AM	11:26 AM					12:38 PM	2:00 PM
cut-offs	10:15	7:30 AM	9:20 AM	11:35 AM					12:45 PM	2:00PM
Crew access		walk-in	yes	yes					yes	walk-in
Drop bags		yes	no	yes					no	yes
Portapotty		yes	yes	yes					yes	yes

Dropping out/out of time

If you decide to drop out of the race - before heading to the nearest hot tub, please report your name, number and location of drop-out to one of the following, so we don't go looking for you:

- a) Let an aid station volunteer know.
- b) Let the sweeper know.
- c) Text 651-706-4765.

Also we plan to reuse the bibs, so please return your bib when you can.

You have a few options from here - you can:

- a) Keep skiing, but remove your bib and understand you are no longer being supported by the race.
- b) You can call for a ride from anyone up there supporting you, provided there's cell service.
- c) If you need a ride from a race volunteer, we can help arrange that - please just let an aid station volunteer know and they'll send for someone. You may need to wait for 15-30 minutes in this case.

Communication

For your own knowledge and your spectating team, there is unlikely to be cell coverage anywhere up the hill, away from the lake. Up near Deer Yard and Bally Creek, there is very limited cell service. Aid stations will have radios to communicate. Please plan accordingly.

Look out for each other

If you pass a skier that doesn't look great, check in with them! If anyone needs assistance, please pass on that message at the next aid station.

Aid Stations Supplies

At aid stations, you can expect (with some range):

- Water and Tailwind (orange)
- A variety of foods: clementines, bananas, cookies, bars, potato chips, cardamom rolls
- The Start/Finish hub will have some quesadillas and bakery items from the Crosby Bakery
- One portapotty per aid station
- One trash receptacle and compost receptacle following the food table. **Please take the time to dispose of your own waste** - many races ask volunteers to pick up your discarded item, but I feel like we can do this. Let's keep the land clean and be kind to our volunteers.

Wax support

Conditions last year changed quite extensively throughout the day. Consider bringing extra wax, possibly skis. We will have wax support at the Start/Finish aid station, and CR45 aid station.

Low impact

This aims to be a low-waste event, so we are trying to choose low-packaging foods to provide, and won't have cups. **Please bring a bottle or other way to carry water.** Notice if you have a bottle that tends to freeze. A drink belt might work better. We won't have gels. You're welcome to bring your own but please make sure they end up in the trash.

Spectator parking

is limited at aid stations. Support people are welcome along the course, but please be considerate of our neighbors and public trail users. For that reason, support people **may not park** at Bally Creek. Please consider carpooling and generally picking one spot to visit (vs all of them) to spectate. Please see [Spectator Guide](#) for parking guidelines.

After your race!

Hang out, cheer racers in. We will have your drop bags and changing tents at the Start/Finish area.

Big thank you to Cascade Restaurant for providing a post-race meal! There is a survey that will be emailed out re: food requests. Email rykken44@gmail.com if didn't get that.

We are seeking **volunteers** so if you have friends or family coming up, please encourage them to check out our [volunteer opportunities!](#)

75K Club

If you make it to 75K, you get to join the 75k club! We'll have handmade medals for you.

Prizes

We will present prizes to the top three finishers for each race, as well as age group winners. Please join the post-race celebration at Up Yonder to be presented with these.

Age Categories

We'll have awards for the top person per gender of each age category as follows: 0-18 (for the 38K), 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79. We'll have these available at Up Yonder from 7:30-9:00 pm after the races.

Up Yonder

(local restaurant and bar in Grand Marais) Racers and volunteers and organizers and fans - come hang out after your race! We'll buy you a beverage.

The Great MN Ski Pass

Please purchase a [trail pass](#) and enjoy other state park ski trails during the winter! A great deal. And **plan to have a [Minnesota State Park Pass](#) for parking, if you choose to go into the State Park.** And if

anyone feels like skiing on Sunday, Pincushion and Sugarbush are nearby and both really wonderful choices.

A big thank you to our sponsors/supporters!



Northland Apiary

