



10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION  
HUT SYSTEM NEWSLETTER  
WINTER HUT SEASON  
2017

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Base of Operations in Leadville

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**W**HY DO YOU VISIT THE HUTS? Is it to enjoy the remote backcountry, ski untouched powder, connect with friends and family, or escape to a simpler, quieter lifestyle for a few days? The reasons to visit the huts are many and varied, of course, and they're all good in our book. 10th Mountain's job—regardless of the reason—is to make sure your backcountry hut experience is all that you hope for, and more. This includes providing information to allow good planning, convenient and pleasant methods to make your reservation, and ensuring a rewarding experience while traveling from the trailhead to the hut. Of course—perhaps most important—10th Mountain needs to provide a first-rate backcountry hut that provides warm, comfortable shelter for you to enjoy.

10th Mountain does a good job of taking care of its huts and, thankfully, the huts are currently in really good condition. But 10th Mountain needs to ensure that this continues far into the future. Maintaining the huts requires skilled staff, volunteers, trucks, machinery, and sheer volumes of supplies. All this activity requires land and buildings: in short, it requires a base of operations which, curiously enough, 10th Mountain does not have. 10th Mountain's headquarters in Aspen support all administrative functions and some field operations, but lack of space and zoning make it less than ideal to support the entire system's hut maintenance needs.

Leadville, on the other hand, has served as the de facto base of operations for the majority of the huts. However, 10th Mountain has just been making do by using employee's driveways, garages and rented space to administer operations, store vehicles, supplies, and coordinate volunteer sessions. This has been neither adequate nor permanent, and 10th Mountain needs to do better.

To this end, 10th Mountain plans to construct a permanent Base of Operations in Leadville/Lake County. This facility will provide the capability to administer all day-to-day field operations including training and supporting staff and volunteers, purchasing and storing consumable supplies, processing firewood, supporting capital improvements at the huts, and mobilizing for regular hut inspections. In short, this facility will provide a safer and more productive working environment that will allow 10th Mountain to continue to maintain the huts—to even higher standards—far into the future.

I'm delighted to report that considerable progress has already been made. In May 2015, 10th Mountain received a donation of 4.2 acres of land which is located ½ mile north of Leadville and ideal because of its proximity to Leadville, zoning, relatively large size, and wooded, semi-rural nature. Soon after, 10th Mountain developed a conceptual site plan and schematics/renderings of planned improvements, contracted final construction documents, selected a general contractor, and recently initiated a capital campaign.

Site improvements will include three buildings, driveways, parking areas, and an area to process firewood. The main building (2,400 sq. ft.) will include bays for service vehicles, office, entryway, and short-term housing for up to four people. Housing will include a

kitchen, two small bedrooms, and a common area that could double as a training area for staff and volunteers. This housing will make it easier to hire and retain good employees, help solve the challenging housing problem in Leadville/Lake County, and increase security of the facility. The vehicle shed (576 sq. ft.) will store snowmobiles, ATV's and log splitters, and will be equipped with a loading dock to provide the capability to load/offload without having to use a ramp. The toolshed (200 sq. ft.) will be located adjacent to the exterior firewood processing area and will house personal protective equipment, chainsaws and log splitters. The firewood processing area will consist of a flat area large enough to accommodate delivery of 35' logs, processing, and loading into trucks, or storing for future transport to the huts.

The design of the buildings reflects the mining heritage of Leadville/Lake County, and building materials were selected for their durability, low maintenance, and aesthetics. Of note, the main building is designed to accommodate future needs with possible additional bays for vehicles and administration, and the lot is large enough to construct additional housing or other facilities, if necessary.

Grading and utility work are scheduled to begin as soon as conditions allow in spring 2017, and all design elements (buildings, driveways, etc.) are expected to be completed by fall 2017. The cost for this project is estimated to be approximately \$600k and the early and quiet stages of the capital campaign were initiated in October 2016. The response has been incredibly generous and speedy and we now plan to open the campaign to the public before the end of the year. So, please consider this as advance notice (i.e., fair warning...): you can expect to receive a humble "ask" from me within the month, and I hope you consider joining the effort. In the meantime, feel free to call or email me if you have any questions or comments. 

—Ben Dodge | Executive Director  
10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION  
HUT ASSOCIATION

## Backcountry Snowsports Initiative

**L**AND MANAGEMENT PLANNING EFFORTS affects winter recreation opportunities across Colorado. BSI is working on a number of projects with implications for backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, winter mountaineering and other snow sports.



- Rio Grande National Forest plan revision—overarching management decision may affect winter motorized travel, and new designations (proposed Wilderness, Special Interest Areas, etc.) can help protect quiet use on your favorite landscape in the San Luis Valley.

- Pike-San Isabel National Forest Travel Management Plan—while not specifically addressing winter travel management, new seasonal closures could help reduce user conflict and protect winter wildlife habitat.

- Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan—you may not envision snowpack on low-lying BLM lands, but in Leadville, winter recreation doesn't discriminate by agency.

- Fat-Bike Grooming Proposal: The Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association (CBMBA) has submitted a proposal to the U.S. Forest Service to groom 46.6 miles of winter trails for fat biking and other winter recreation. Comments are due to the Forest Service by November 18.

- Mosquito Pass Backcountry Experience—"An alternative, year-round resort currently under development near Alma." Attend the public meeting November 21 for more info.

For more information, or to get involved, visit [www.cmc.org/bsi](http://www.cmc.org/bsi).

Also, don't miss the Backcountry Film Festival coming to Colorado this winter. Details and dates coming soon at <http://www.cmc.org/bcff> 

### 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION HUT ASSOCIATION | DECEMBER 2016

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The 10th Mountain Division Hut Association is a privately funded not-for-profit organization located in Aspen, Colorado. The purpose of 10th Mountain is to plan, finance, build and manage, for public use, a mountain hut system that promotes understanding and appreciation of the natural mountain environment while developing individual self reliance. We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have.

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# Winter Outdoor Education

**A**CCORDING TO GRIFF SMITH, former educator and principal, and one of the founders of Aspen Middle School's (AMS) outdoor education programs, the tradition of cross-country skiing and winter camping began in the 1970s with a transition to overnight hut trips in the late 1980s.

In the 1970s, a combined class of 5th and 6th grade students called "the un-graded" cross-country skied one day a week, working up to an overnight skiing adventure where kids built and slept in trench-style snow and tarp shelters. Locations included Weller Lake, Government Trail, Anderson Ranch and, with the encouragement and assistance of Bob Child, many of the kids camped out on the Child Ranch where as seventh graders they did a ski ascent of Haystack Mountain.

In the late 1980s Scott Edmondson, Smith's fellow teacher and outdoor education enthusiast, suggested incorporating huts into the program. After discussing the idea with Peter Loram, 10th Mountain's director at the time, Edmondson and Smith took a reconnaissance trip to Shrine Mountain Inn and ran into one of the owners, Chuck Ogilby, who was—and to this day—is still instrumental in making the AMS trips possible. The short distance, modest elevation gain, and accommodations were an ideal fit.

Smith noted that the Shrine Mountain Inn itinerary presented the kids with challenges they thought they couldn't achieve, but once they accomplished that first goal—skiing to the hut with heavy packs—they successfully tackled the other increasingly difficult goals, such as ascending Wingle Ridge on the second day, and skiing out 9-plus miles via Red Cliff on the final day.

The ski out to Red Cliff has been replaced by an elaborate, yet cost effective, use of school buses that requires the arriving and departing groups to use the same trailhead; but the focus—to give kids the opportunity to find their own grit and determination to overcome challenges—has not been replaced, and remains an integral part of these amazing AMS hut trips.



A late afternoon return to Jay's Cabin after a trip to Wingle Ridge

**A**MS PARTICIPATES in 10th Mountain's Backcountry Exploration Program, which encourages the use of the huts by non-profit educational groups, offering up to a 50% discount on whole hut rentals Monday–Thursday nights. 10th Mountain caught up with 6th Grade teacher Mark Munger, to learn about Aspen Middle School's (AMS) winter outdoor education program.

**How long has AMS been using the huts?**

I started teaching at the AMS in 1993, and the trips had been going on for a while, so I will estimate since the late 1980s.

**Have the AMS hut trips always been for the entire 6th grade over multiple weeks to Shrine Mountain Inn?**

Yes. We traditionally take six groups of 18-22 students and stay in Jay's Cabin and Chuck's Cabin. Each trip is a 3-day, 2-night experience.

**What is your role at AMS?**

My role has been to oversee the equipment, which includes all of our skis, bindings, boots, skins, sleds, and clothing. I have been charged with maintaining the gear and ordering equipment when needed. We have been very fortunate to have had the Aspen Ski Swap support over many years. I annually write a grant request to the Ski Swap, and those funds have been used to keep our students supplied with very

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

nice equipment. Along with the other 6th grade teachers, we plan day ski trips and provide education regarding winter wilderness travel. We feel that this preparation has helped to ensure the success of our program. The entire program is a big undertaking, and we would not be able to do these trips without the efforts of all 6th grade teachers, parents, and community volunteers.

**When and where was your first school hut trip?**

My first year at the school, I went with the principal at the time, Griff Smith, to the Gates Hut with a group of students. We wanted to see if that hut was a suitable alternative from the Shrine Mt. Inn. We found that it was a bit too long for 6th graders. We realized that the Shrine Mt. Inn huts were ideal for our needs. Just under three miles to the hut is challenging, yet do-able, and rewarding for over 2000 students since I have been at the school.

**Does AMS have any unusual or noteworthy hut trip traditions?**

As with all of our Middle School outdoor education trips, we have a tradition of circling up each evening to debrief the day, listen to students' reflections on the challenges and rewards that they experienced, and offer everyone in the group the chance to provide positive feedback to the group. Our skiing tradition is to ski to the summit of Wingle Ridge on our second day. Each teacher that leads a trip has their own traditions of special meals, a special story at night, games, etc. My favorite has been to make some tele turns in the meadow above Walter's Cabin upon returning from Wingle Ridge.

**What is the award that is given to one 6th grader each year?**

Tell us about the mounted ski in the 6th grade core. We want to recognize students that have exemplified our SKIER traits (Self, Kindness, Integrity, Effort, and Respect). We have chosen those students from each trip to have their names mounted on a ski which is hung in the 6th grade core.

**What do you feel are the most important lessons that the kids learn (from the experience itself, and/or from topics covered on the trips)?**

Students often come away from this trip with a sense of accomplishment that is very difficult to replicate in the classroom. They have a physical challenge of skiing

in cold weather, carrying a heavy pack, and climbing to a height that many only see from a ski lift, automobile, or photograph. Pride and increased self-confidence are quite evident in many students. In addition, the challenges of preparing meals, keeping the huts clean, keeping track of their personal gear, and getting along with peers provides them with the opportunity to experience the challenge of working as a team.

**As a leader/educator, do you have any tips for taking kids on hut trips?**

Preparation is essential. Our day trips are important events that allow the kids to learn how to use the equipment, travel outside in the winter, and practice their skills. Not only do the adults prepare for themselves, the added burden of knowing student skills, personalities, medical needs, and what is in their pack is critical. I would say possessing a pound of patience, giving an earful of encouragement, and a sense of humor, are essential as well. Of course, all leaders need to have winter back-country skills and first aid training.

**Kids are notorious for bringing items they shouldn't on trips—any memorable items that were carried to a hut?**

Items that I remember are some very important stuffed animals, the occasional cell phone, several bags of candy, a very large hair dryer, and some outrageous slippers. This led to a slipper fashion contest that I have held the past few years. One year, a math book made it to the hut as one student thought we might be having math class at the hut.

**Speaking of, do you have a luxury item you take when you go on a hut trip?**

My comfortable slippers and swimsuit for the sauna would be about as luxurious as I get. Many of the teachers pack lemon drops or chocolate as rewards for skiing five minutes without stopping.

**What is your favorite hut and why?**

Jay's has become my favorite as I choose to sleep near the door in the main room. While not the most private or comfortable, I can prop myself up in the early morning, before the commotion, admire the log work inside, watch the sunrise, and hope to catch a view of a pine marten. 🐺

# Thank You to Our Volunteers

**M**Y FIRST YEAR OF MANAGING the Braun huts has been a tremendous learning opportunity that I have enthusiastically and gratefully embraced. Maintaining seven high altitude huts provides a constant supply of adventures. Severely abused roads, frozen chains, a gummed up chainsaw carburetor, storms, avalanche conditions, or perplexingly clever rodents can all present unique challenges to keeping the many parts and pieces of our hut system running smoothly.

Due to the nature of this job, I mostly work alone. This can lead to comical head scratching situations like figuring out how to remove an old 500 pound cast iron woodstove and install a new one using: a dolly, pulleys, and a car jack. During our short, snow-free summer maintenance season there is simply too much for one person to do to prepare the Braun huts for winter. We rely on several dedicated groups of wonderful and skilled volunteers.

This summer the Goodwin-Greene Hut was in need of some overdue love and care. A group of friends who always book an annual spring skiing trip to the hut offered to help over a weekend in August. Friday night and early Saturday morning they began to arrive, some by an off-trail route from Independence Pass, some by mountain bike, and even one who ran 12 miles from his front door.

Without snow piled up to the eaves and the hurried lure of spring skiing, the many projects needed at the hut were glaringly obvious. The beloved pan abode looked a little too well loved and weathered, with peeling paint and a stubborn marmot who was confused as to what we were doing at his hut. We stripped, sanded, and cleaned

the hut of its tired flakes of paint and began anew with several fresh coats and the addition of bright trim. A vent pipe that was a constant shoveling nightmare was removed and rerouted. The wood shed was thoroughly cleaned of its marmot middens, rodent holes were patched up, and a new floor of donated Trex was built. The group was tireless and spent the late afternoon splitting three cords of wood to the tune of some quite horrible yet energizing pop music.

Inside the hut Casey Ward, one of our new board members, along with his father Jim Ward (age 81), and Spencer Ward (age 5) wired several new lights into the solar system. The hut is now a much brighter place, and it was very special to work with three generations of some of our community's most devoted hut and cross-country ski supporters.

From the inception of the Braun huts in the early 1960s to their reincarnation in the late 1990s, volunteers have been essential to the existence of this unique hut system. I would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in the past, especially those who have continued to stay involved through the years. This fantastic community of volunteers and hut supporters is fundamental to what makes these huts so special and ensures their continued success. 🏔️

-MORGAN BOYLES | Alfred A. Braun Hut Manager



## Benedict 100

Paragon Guides | January 22-27, 2017

**P**aragon Guides leads this six-day, 100-mile backcountry tour that connects five 10th Mountain Division Huts. The tour honors 10th Mountain Division veteran and hut system founder, Fritz Benedict.

Ski from 11 to 18 miles each day, staying overnight at Margy's, Betty Bear, Uncle Bud's, Jackal, and Shrine Mountain Inn. Long days with cold temperatures, pre-dawn starts, trail breaking, and variable snow conditions will demand a high level of fitness and skill.

Each hut is staffed with hosts who welcome you, keep the fire stoked and water plentiful, and prepare your dinner and breakfasts.

Backcountry ski touring experience on telemark or AT gear is required. We interview all participants to ensure their fitness and skills match the demands of this trip.

Cost: \$1885/person includes guides, hut hosts, breakfasts, après ski beer and wine, dinners (BYO lunches), sleeping bags at each hut, and hut fees.

trips@paragonguides.com | 970/926-5299

## Legacy Tour

Aspen Alpine Guides | February 2-5, 2017

**T**he Legacy is unique in that it is a multi-hut tour that covers remote wilderness terrain seldom used by individuals or groups. The tour is designed to celebrate the history of a few of the founding members of the Hut Association.

The Legacy tour begins from the remote mining outpost of Lenado (AAG will provide transportation from Aspen) with overnight stays starting at Margy's Hut, continuing to McNamara Hut and participants will close out the tour with a stay at the Benedict Huts. The final day presents a ski descent directly into Aspen.

The Legacy Ski Tour is a semi-supported trip with guides and hut support that includes dinners and breakfasts. Participants should plan on carrying a 40 to 50 liter backpack, with avalanche safety gear, layers of clothing, sleeping bag and trail lunches/snacks while ski touring between the huts. AAG will provide a full gear list prior to the trip to all participants.

Cost: \$1250/person  
www.aspenalpine.com

# Skiing 100 Miles...*Aspen to Vail*

FIRST HEARD of the “Benedict 100” in 2012, when I came across a sample itinerary on the 10th Mountain website. Although I had been doing regular hut trips for nearly ten years, my immediate reaction was something along the lines of: “One-hundred miles from Aspen to Vail in 6 days?!?! A long day of 20 miles?!?! Is that even possible?”

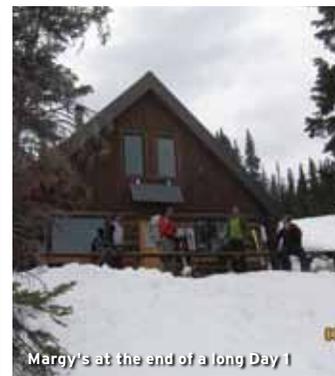
Fast forward to late March of 2016, when four friends and I found ourselves at the Hunter Creek trailhead outside of Aspen, believing that, yes, it was actually possible. At least, that’s what we told ourselves. Our trip entailed nearly a year of planning. With two elementary school principals among us, we didn’t have much flexibility on dates. We chose spring break, knowing that the days would be longer and warmer, but hopefully not too warm to prevent efficient backcountry travel.

We had meticulously trimmed our gear to minimize pack weight. Instead of the copious amounts of fresh food and other indulgences we would normally take on a weekend trip, we counted the calories of each meal and passed on most luxuries. Instead of wide skis and heavy boots suitable for maximizing fun on the downhill, we chose lightweight gear more suitable for long days of mostly gentle terrain that characterizes the route. In spite of the planning, light packs, and light gear, there was still some doubt about the journey ahead. We knew the days would be long, and there was a lot of talk about how our middle-aged, weekend warrior-trained bodies would hold up after several days.

As I reflect upon the trip, I’m struck by the diversity of the experience and the contrasts we encountered not only during each day but throughout the entire week. Cold, crisp snow in the mornings usually made for efficient travel, and one afternoon brought warm temperatures that made the snow conditions a range of mildly annoying to extremely frustrating. There were well traveled trails where we would follow blue diamonds for hours without consulting a map, and there was remote wilderness travel where we would consult the map every 10 minutes.



Conquering the Continental Divide



Margy's at the end of a long Day 1



Betty Bear is only 11 miles away



Celebrating in Vail

SCOTT GILPIN PHOTOGRAPHS

Each day multiple weather patterns would blow through, changing conditions from warm, calm and sunny to cold, windy and blustery. There were steep, fast descents and miles of gradual, rolling terrain. Sometimes a downhill mile would take less than ten minutes, other times more than an hour. At Margy’s, Uncle Bud’s, and Jackal Hut we shared the huts with other groups. At Betty Bear we had the hut all to ourselves. At Shrine Mountain we were met by a group of friends.

Finally, after six days of backcountry travel where we encountered probably a total of less than 50 people, we skied down the slopes of Vail where we passed thousands of skiers. It is the diversity of these experiences that keeps me coming back, year after year. The basic blueprint of every trip is the same, but the experiences are always unique. I would like to thank the staff and volunteers at the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association that make trips like this possible, and of course my wife and family for their support. Have a great season! 🏂

—SCOTT GILPIN

# *Extraordinary* Hut Volunteers

We just can't say it enough...**Thank You 10th Mountain Volunteers!**



PHOTOS BY DAVE LEE



Tenth Mountain Division Hut Association  
1280 Ute Avenue | Suite 21  
Aspen, Colorado 81611

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## The Guide's Corner

“IF SNOW MELTS DOWN TO WATER, does it still remember being snow?” Jennifer McMahon, *The Winter People*.

Perhaps nothing is more representative of winter hut life than the “snow melt pot” sitting on top of the wood heat stove. This slow transition from the powder we ski to the water we use for drinking, cooking and cleaning represents a major step away from the faucet at home that provides instant water, already hot, if that is what we choose. It is a basic hut chore that requires constant attention. Who among us has gotten to a hut after a long day on the trail only to find the “melt pot” near empty? Backcountry ethics and hut protocols should remind us to leave water for the next group.

As guides, we perhaps have a heightened sense of melting water, knowing that we will use quite a lot for cooking and cleaning, as well as keeping the group well hydrated. With a full hut of hungry and thirsty people, melting snow needs to become a priority. Having plenty of water means everyone has the opportunity to remain hydrated, and the hut can maintain a more sanitary condition.

Here are a few tips/suggestions that may help provide plenty of water for your next hut trip:

- Along with the large “melt pot” consider a secondary pot on the stove for additional melting potential.

- If the “melt pot” is full, fill a few pitchers or another kitchen pot (hot water for dishes?) so you can continue to melt snow.

- Don't fill the “melt pot” with snow. Rather, keep a slurry of water and slush, slowly adding snow as the slush melts. Snow itself is a poor conductor of heat.

Basic hygiene should also be a priority when melting snow. Be mindful of the process, keeping hands and gloves out of the snow. When choosing a spot outside for snow collection, move away from trafficked areas and leave a snow shovel at the site so others can easily find it. Dump the snow into the pot rather than scoop it by hand.

Finally, when you watch your bucket of snow turn into a mere inch of water in the “melt pot,” feel good about it. Chances are you just spent the day skiing some great Colorado powder!! 

– Donny Schefchec | Paragon Guides



DAVE LEE