

Make that snow work for you

'Frostline' gives you N.D. downhill, cross-country conditions

By JANELLE COLE
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Ski North Dakota?
Out-of-staters can laugh all they want. But there are enough of us serious about skiing to warrant a hotline number to get weekly updates on cross-country and downhill conditions.

Actually, it's called the "Frostline" and the numbers belong to the state tourism promotion division.

Here they are: In-state toll-free, 1-800-472-2100; Bismarck-Mandan area, 224-2525; out-of-state toll-free, 1-800-437-2077.

The numbers go to the tourism promotion division, so call during business hours Monday through Friday. The division updates ski conditions at the major cross-country areas and the open downhill areas every Thursday.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING makes up the majority of the report, of course. For those of you who haven't been paying attention, cross-country has picked up steam to the point of being downright trendy.

Actually, if you don't care about groomed trails, you can cross-country ski wherever you can find enough snow.

But there are a lot of groomed trails in the state — too many for us to tackle here.

The Frostline covers cross-country conditions at the following state parks: Lake Metigoshe at Bottineau, Turtle River at Arvilla, Fort Ransom near Lisbon, Fort Lincoln at Mandan and Icelandic near Cavalier.

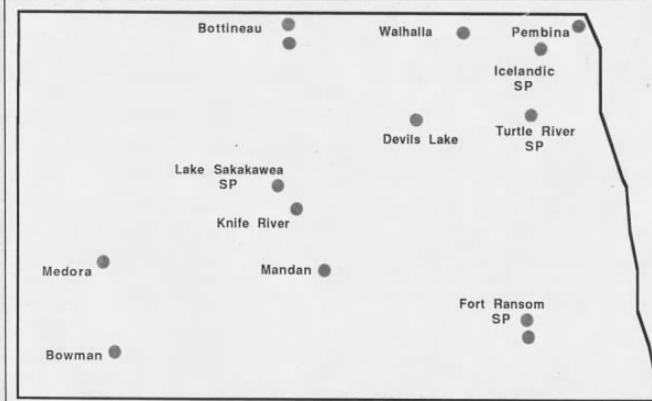
ALSO ON the list are trails at Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site near Stanton, Missouri River Natural Area at Mandan, Nordic Trail near Pembina, Logging Camp Ranch near Bowman and Theodore Roosevelt National Park at Medora.

The tourism division can tell you exactly where the trailheads are at the state park trails and also has maps of the trails at some of those sites. There are beginner, intermediate and advanced trails — groomed and signed — that range in length from 2 kilometers to 13.5 kilometers.

Guided ski tours are given at Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Logging Camp Ranch. You'll have to call Medora at 623-4466 to get more information on them.

BUT POSSIBLY the best deal is at Lake Sakakawea State Park near Pick City.

Park manager John Tunge says he'll custom-groom trails for skiing parties who call ahead.



'Frostline' ski sites ● Downhill ● Cross-country

It sounds almost too good to be true, but it's really easier for him than keeping a set of trails constantly groomed for the few skiers that show up there.

"If it's a bunch of beginners, we can make it easy," Tunge said. Or, "I can make it as long and hard as they like." Sometimes, he said, he would just let locations of the good snow conditions determine where the trail goes.

Call him at 487-3315 if you want him to make a trail.

AT SAKAKAWEA — or all of the state parks — you're welcome to go in and ski whether there are trails or not, says Donna Schouweler at the state Parks and Recreation Department. Some, like Little Missouri Bay State Park at Killdeer may not be accessible, though, because they aren't maintained as four-season parks.

Now, let's not forget downhill. North Dakota yuppies can sneer all they want about "real men don't downhill ski," but there are four downhill areas in North Dakota. Surprised? Most people are lucky if they can name two.

WELL, OK. That's probably because two of them — at Devils Lake and Fort Ransom — operate sporadically. Fort Ransom hasn't opened this year at all, said a worker at the state tourism division.

And Sky-Line Sky-Way at Devils Lake is open only on weekends when conditions are good. That's determined from week to week.

The better two — Frost Fire

Ski Resort at Walhalla and Bottineau Winter Park have had very good conditions lately and are open four days a week.

Oh, they'll never rival Colorado's Steamboat Springs or even Montana's Red Lodge Mountain (vertical drops 3,600 and 2,000 feet, respectively). But they're a heck of a lot closer.

FROST FIRE has the higher vertical rise — 350 feet — and has

eight runs. The longest is only a half-mile, though. It has one chair lift, a T-bar lift and a tow rope.

It's open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday through Sunday and has a day lodge, snack bar, ski rentals and a liquor license.

Bottineau Winter Park has 200 feet of vertical rise and six runs, the longest 1,200 feet. There are two T-bar lifts, an I-bar, a poma lift and two tow ropes.

Snow conditions for cross-country skiing:

	None	Poor	Fair	Good
Bismarck Riverwood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandan Nature Area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fort Lincoln State Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metigoshe State Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knife River Stanton	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T.R. National Park, Medora	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For an update on changing ski conditions at Riverwood call 222-6455. For the latest trail conditions at state parks, Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Mandan Nature Area call the individual parks or 224-4887.

This rating of conditions at selected cross-country skiing sites in North Dakota will be updated weekly on the Outdoors page.

It has a day lodge with snack shop and ski rentals. It's open noon to 9 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.



Cross-country skiing can be as close as a golf course or park in your own city.

By LONNIE BERTSCH of The Tribune