

From the of Meegan Moszynski

Retention and Resiliency

What a summer! From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to the release of *Outdoor Emergency Care*, 6th ed., to an increased focus on bike patrols, the National Ski Patrol has been busy over the past few months.

As you know by now, many ski areas shut down early in March and missed out on their lucrative Spring Break weeks. Although some resorts allowed the public to continue accessing terrain on foot, others shut down completely to avoid crowds of disappointed alpine touring skiers and riders who were not ready to end their season. The season that the National Ski Areas Association's Kottke Survey had projected to be "a promising ski season in much of the country" — on track to result in the fourth best year on record — came to an abrupt halt and, along with it, any real certainty about what the next year may look like.

Mid-March is usually the beginning of a quieter time here in Lakewood. The registration period has ended for the year, the marketing team is regrouping and planning ahead for the upcoming summer and winter seasons, and most travel dies down. This year, however, was quite different for us: as we adjusted to the sudden implementation of a work-from-home schedule and experienced some key staff turnover, the team came together to maintain momentum and redirected priorities to continue supporting our members and sustain our functionality and the durability of NSP.

We started to focus communications on what NSP and its members were doing during the pandemic. We shared stories of patrollers who swiftly shifted their work from on-hill to community-based in order to support local clinics that needed qualified medical providers. We encouraged partners to support the Goggles for Docs program started on a whim by a doctor and a crowd-sourced spreadsheet. Our work became more of a resource for information than ever before, and we strove to be a reliable go-to for our members.

All this happened during the launch of the sixth edition of *Outdoor Emergency Care: A Patroller's Guide to Medical Care*, to which editors Ed McNamara and David Johe, M.D., and many others contributed innumerable hours of phone calls, emails, texts, and conference calls to complete on time. This bright spot amid a time of uncertainty and darkness helped us all keep going. The new text reflects current medical research and practice standards, and every chapter in this new edition has changes and updates.

Four months into this "new normal," we are starting to see the forest through the trees. The launch of OEC6 has been successful, with several positive comments coming into the office about how it reads well and is a well-organized and up-to-date resource for OEC technicians. The budget process, which forced us to figure out how to forecast through a once-in-a-century pandemic, resulted in a collaborative project among the national office staff, NSP Finance Committee, and national board of directors. The acquisition of a Payroll Protection Program loan helped maintain the stability of the national office throughout this time as well.

The Bike Task Force worked hard throughout the spring and early summer months to research how areas were adjusting to a COVID-19 summer. The group has tracked which areas were opening and how they were operating and abiding by local, regional, and national health



guidelines. The state and regional ski associations have been meeting several times a month to discuss summer and winter operations as well, and NSAA has created a steady stream of webinars to keep members informed and supported as they plan for the upcoming year.

The NSP's national medical advisor, national OEC Program director, Refresher Committee chair, National Board Executive Committee, National Education Committee chair, executive director, and other key leaders and staffers met weekly for several months to discuss NSP's response to the pandemic. The group produced a national "COVID-19 Response," which addresses issues related to patrolling during the pandemic and is available both on the member website and public website. This response is high-level and can be adapted and customized for areas, regions, and divisions as they see fit. Many individual NSP programs are working on a program-specific set of guidelines as well, which will be shared with our membership and posted on the website as they become available. This conversation about NSP's response to the pandemic will remain fluid as national guidelines evolve and the fall season approaches, and the group will update the national response as needed.

The best part of these last few months has been the opportunity to see how resilient and resourceful our members can be. When the Western areas shut down early, many patrollers wanted to use their training to help their community. We tracked all the stories of members helping throughout the country and created a map to document this work. This ambition and determination reminded me of NSP's core values: excellence, service, camaraderie, leadership, integrity, and responsiveness. Now, more than ever, members are finding ways to help their communities during a time of crisis.

The education and training of NSP are more important than ever as we enter a challenging winter season. The ongoing training that NSP provides to its members, particularly with the introduction of this year's brand-new OEC text, is the cornerstone of NSP's membership. Although refreshers will look different this year, with the minimum requirement of an online-only session, the importance of maintaining that training and connection with your patrol will be vital. The other benefits of NSP membership — pro deals, the NSP Online Store, this magazine, frequent e-newsletters — add to the benefits that your membership provides. Renew your membership to remain part of "the family" and preserve your free access to refreshers and training materials.

As you reconnect with us this fall to get set up for the winter season, you'll hear a new voice on the phone: that's Cece Palmquist, our new registration manager. She will help set up and edit rosters, process billing, and answer any questions about registration. She can guide you through the "temporarily not patrolling" process as well. Cheri Overton will be a familiar voice to many of you, and she can help anyone who has patrolled for at least one year become an Alumni member if you no longer plan to patrol. Elizabeth Kim will provide support for Member Services and NSP Online Store questions. We are all here to help you and support you in getting ready for the winter.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay in touch! We hope to see you all again soon. +

Chatting with the

NSP 2020: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

BY BRIAN RULL, NSP BOARD CHAIR



As I type this article, I reflect back on my appointment as national chair in January 2020, at a time in which I was developing my 2020 leadership strategy and having no idea of what was coming in the way of the coronavirus and the impacts it would have on our lives, our organization, and more specifically, ski area operations and NSP events. The title of this article provides some insight of where we were, where we are, and where I believe we are going before we close out 2020, so let us roll back to where we started — the January National Board and Officers Meeting.

The Good

Going into the January meeting knowing that there were no other board members who applied for national chair consideration made it a bit easier in building a meeting agenda with my mentor and outgoing National Chair Rick Knight, who I had the honor of serving under as assistant national chair for two years. The two of us, working in conjunction with Executive Director Meegan Moszynski and the support of our fellow board members, accomplished some monumental goals — many of which will be written into the NSP history books. Board, division director, and national office relations improved dramatically over these two years; as evidenced by recent board voting records, we no longer have a divided board. The days of politicking swing voters to meet a simple majority win at the expense of a disenfranchised minority are over. We now have meetings where debates adhere to principles of candor with respect, we disagree without being disagreeable, and decisions pass with consensus — not only in votes cast, but also by those against backing the decision of the board. I am truly honored by the support I have received from my fellow board members and proud of the team I have been entrusted to lead.

My first official act upon accepting the national chair position was to appoint my assistant national chair. For those of you who have attended a board meeting recently, you will recall that this is usually done at some point over the weekend while the incoming national chair builds out the national committees and appointments of national program directors and advisors. Knowing how crucial effective leadership is to organizations, I immediately informed the board of my decision to appoint Chris Pringle as my assistant national chair and requested board ratification, which was unanimous, and we closed the first evening with a solid leadership continuity plan.

The following morning, meeting participants were surprised to see two additional seats at the board table. One was front and center with a Patagonia Patrol Vest and represented the interests of our members — in my opinion, the true “principle customers” of this organization. The patroller chair symbolizes my core belief that our members come first, and the patrol vest serves as a visual reminder for every decision we make. The second chair (to my immediate right) was reserved for another critical voice within our NSP leadership structure — our division directors, who serve a crucial



role in our line leadership. It is my belief that the division director representative deserves a seat at the board table to truly “weigh in” on (discuss and debate) matters of consequence to NSP divisions.

Of additional significance was a change to the ordering of presenters during official board discussion and debate. Prior to my assuming the chair, committee chairs (and, occasionally, board members) presented motions and then moved directly into board discussion and debate, most of the time concluding such debate prepared to vote on the motion, but holding to entertain a quick “weigh-in” from the division directors. This always seemed to be to be a bit of an awkward process since it was apparent that board members had already reached conclusions and the division directors would need to be either for or against. The new process I implemented allows for the presentment of the matter followed by immediate weigh-ins by the representatives of the division directors, national office, and applicable national program director and/or national advisor prior to discussion and debate by the board. This simple change has had a significant impact on our ability to function as a leadership team, and I am hopeful it will continue beyond my tenure as national chair.

As you can tell, I take great pride in the improvements to our processes and the positive impacts to the transparency, trust, and collaboration of your NSP national leadership team. We closed the January meeting energized and ready to take on whatever challenges came forth in 2020 ... or so we thought.



A Patagonia Patrol Vest on display at the board meeting to represent the membership of the NSP.

The Bad

It did not take long for us to get blindsided by one of the greatest problems experienced by NSP leadership — COVID-19. It impacted me as early as my flight home when I was unfortunate enough to sit next to an Asian woman who coughed the entire flight and postured as if she suffered from emphysema. A few days later, I had the same. It took two Z packs and a prednisone dose pack before I beat whatever ailed me. I would like to think that I am a COVID-19 survivor, but I am too stubborn and would prefer to spend my money on something fun versus a COVID-19 antibody test.

Within a few weeks, COVID-19 was all we were hearing about. Then the real shocker came when federal, state, and local authorities started mandating social distancing — which brought our ski seasons to a screeching halt. While it was too late to do much with spring 2020 NSP events, we mobilized a COVID-19 Committee comprised of leaders from our Outdoor Emergency Care and OEC Refresher Committees, Education Committee, national medical advisor, executive director, assistant national chair, as well as myself to commence contingency planning for the 2020 OEC candidate courses and refreshers, as well as summer bike patrols. While our COVID-19 Committee was compiling information and developing formal recommendations for board implementation, I was forced to make some difficult executive decisions.

First and foremost was the cancellation of all national face-to-face events, as well as national officer and staff travel. In as much as scene safety is embedded in our core training, I believe the same holds true for training and administrative events. The health and welfare of our staff and membership is our top priority right now, and until we have assurances that we can adequately mitigate the risks of pandemic exposure, the risks of physical travel and face-to-face events outweigh the benefits of social distancing through virtual meetings and isolated events. Just as we do in patrolling, we will rise to the challenge and weather through the adverse conditions we train and work in. What we cannot accomplish in 2020 due to social distancing restrictions, we will simply defer and double down on in 2021. Please stay tuned by reading national and division email updates, as well as the NSP COVID-19 member page, which is updated regularly.

The Ugly

Being an attorney by trade, not a week goes by that I am not told a lawyer joke. As most of you know, there are a lot of funny lawyer jokes, but there are not many “good” lawyer jokes. I emphasize good in the sense of “acts of good lawyers” versus some negative connotation of lawyer character. Laughing aside, I think we all have friends who are good people (despite being lawyers), yet we acknowledge that the poor ethics of a few have negatively impacted the reputation of the whole. Further, it is not just lawyer jokes. There are far more stereotypes created by acts of just a few — police, doctors, politicians, even clergy. We have been fortunate to not have patrollers targeted, and we need to do what we can to keep patroller jokes within the walls of ski schools.

As many of you who know me know, I tow a hard line when it comes to treating each other with dignity and respect. I have had to deal with too many instances of bullying and harassment within the ranks of NSP leadership and have fought hard to foster equality and respect within our leadership ranks. While we are making some real progress, we can all acknowledge there is room for improvement. Code of conduct complaints and appeals regarding



From L-R: Intermountain Division Director Kevin Johnson and NSP Board Chair Brian Rull.

bullying and harassment are fewer and farther between than when I came on the board four and a half years ago. I am hopeful that this is due to change in conduct versus a mistaken belief that such conduct can go unchecked.

What troubles me more than anything right now is the real ugly that we have recently discovered exists within the ranks of our membership — sexual offenders. I have been informed through news media blotters of several instances of charges being brought against alleged sex offenders who happen to be NSP members. Of critical importance is that each of the incidents involved allegations of inappropriate behavior toward minors, but they have no connections with NSP training or patrolling.

To counteract the threats of potential bad actors, the NSP board, the division directors, and the national office have been working diligently to implement youth protection policies and procedures to foster risk mitigation through member training and supervision. The conversation began with the National Ski Areas Association and others following the passage of the Safe Sport Act by Congress and recent headlines about abuse of young people in other arenas. The policy provides for NSP leadership and others interacting with our youngest members to receive awareness and mitigation training and makes a strong statement that the NSP values our young adult members and takes this issue seriously. The details of the new youth protection policies and procedures enacted by the board can be found in Chapter 13 of the *National Ski Patrol Policies and Procedures*. We now have a dedicated team to fast-track investigations and document code of conduct violations under Chapter 13. Sanctions will include an immediate suspension pending the outcome of criminal proceedings and immediate expulsion upon conviction. One thing is certain — during my tenure as national chair, I will do what I can to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any such conduct unbecoming an NSP member.

Training opportunities should be working their way through division communications, some of which may be mandated depending on leadership classifications and/or instructor certifications, but highly recommended for all who are willing to step up and become advocates for NSP youth protection. We are still working on the details of implementing systematic background checks for NSP leaders, instructors, and select programs/events. Additional information will be forthcoming over the next few months, so please keep an eye out for emails and website updates. +