

APRIL 2006

FALLS CREEK newsletter

La Nina's back — with a colder, wetter winter in tow

Victoria faces a wetter, colder winter due to the return of the La Nina weather system in the western Pacific Ocean.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Centre yesterday confirmed the existence of a La Nina after a large mass of cool water that started forming along the equator was detected in the second half of last year. Typically, La Nina, the opposite of drought-inducing El Nino, also heralds unseasonal rain in much of Queensland and NSW.

In the US, La Nina brings warmer and drier conditions in southern California as temperatures in the eastern Pacific cool, and an intensified hurricane season in south-eastern states.

NASA climatologist William Patzert said he had watched the current La Nina strengthen over the past six months and expected its impact to be felt in Australia into winter.

"Over the next six months, everyone will have to be vigilant and plan accordingly," he said.

Source: 'The Age', 5/2/06



Early bird season Falls Creek entry passes

Applications for early bird resort entry passes will close on 30th April. The discounted cost is \$160 and the application form can be obtained through http://falls creek.com.au/downloads/FCRM_Car_Permit_2006.pdf



VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome Marg

AAC Falls Creek will have a new Lodge Manager for the 2006 Winter Season. Marg Sewell has had previous experience in the catering and hospitality sectors in addition to managing alpine lodges. She also works as a ski instructor and she has been spending the Australian summer instructing at Squaw Valley. Marg will return from the United States in time for our Work Party in May.



Thank you, Adam

I would like to thank Adam Westmore for his service as Lodge Manager. Adam took on the role at very short notice over six years ago and in addition to bringing his cooking skills he was also one of the key drivers in instituting the current room cleaning arrangements. Adam is of course a long-standing member of AAC Falls Creek and we can expect to see him on the mountain in his various capacities, including his business activities and in his role with the local SES.

Welcome to new members

Welcome to those who have joined in recent months: Robert Jeffrey; Genevieve, Julian & Katrina Tehan; Michal Szkilnik; Danielle & Rachel Carew; Surrey, Gabrielle & Deakin Hunter; Sabine Kehoe and Genevieve Sitlington.

There are really just two kinds of people – current AAC members and prospective AAC members, so if you know of any prospective members who consider joining, please direct them to our membership information on the www.aacfalls creek.com website. We have a rapidly diminishing pool of members who wish to sell their debenture interest in the Club and we may soon be in a position similar to Anton and Perisher where we once again have a waiting list for people wanting to join.

Sprinklers

The Victorian Government has proposed changes to building regulations that will require the retrofitting of fire sprinkler systems to all existing accommodation premises by July 2008.

The AAC Falls Creek lodge was built in accordance with best practice and it is fitted with hardwired smoke alarm systems that are regularly checked and

inspected. The lodge is also equipped with regularly serviced fire extinguishers and hydrants fitted with hose reels as required. Battery back-up powered exit lights are installed and the kitchen area is equipped with fire blankets. The lodge has never had a fire incident.

Based upon expert advice, the cost of retrofitting a fire sprinkler system to the Lodge has been conservatively estimated at approximately \$100 per square metre, which in our circumstances would be approximately \$65,000. We expect that the final cost of retrofitting a fire sprinkler system would be considerably more expensive, perhaps as much as \$100,000, given the technical issues that we anticipate would be associated with remote alpine location and conditions.

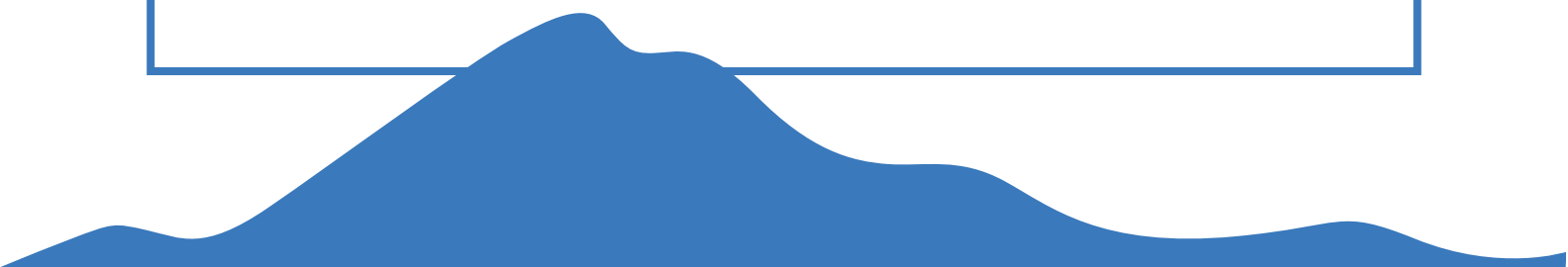
A requirement to retrofit sprinkler systems may lead to the closure of some not-for-profit alpine lodges at Falls Creek simply because they will be unable to afford the cost. A project on this scale over this timeframe is affordable by AAC Falls Creek; however it would be to the exclusion of expenditure to improve the amenity of the lodge such as those we have made in the past few years, including renovation of the kitchen area and the en suite bathrooms. The Committee has made a submission to the Building Commission acknowledging the need to fit sprinklers in new or renovated buildings but opposing the proposed requirement to retrofit sprinkler systems.

The sprinkler retrofitting issue has been taken up by the Falls Creek Alpine Association and ski club organisations at the other Victorian resorts.

Thank you

This will probably be my final 'View from the Chair.' I have previously indicated to the Committee that I will be standing down as Chairman after the AGM in May. There are a couple of reasons for my decision. The first reason is a case of 'too many hats' with my other roles as AAC national President and my efforts to establish a new AAC project in Niseko. The second reason is that I believe it is desirable to have some rotation and change – there are too many voluntary organisations (many of them other ski clubs) where positions have been held by the same people for too many years. I have indicated that (subject to the decision of the AGM) I am prepared to continue in a supporting role on the Committee.

I would like to thank the other members of the Committee for their support, Adam Westmore for his work as Lodge Manager, our booking agents Ken & Alan Long and the staff at ProAcct for their professional assistance over the past three years.



annual general meeting

AGM in May

The AGM of AAC Falls Creek Inc will be held at 7:30pm on Tuesday 23rd May at the Royal Brighton Yacht Club. In common with previous AGMs, this evening will be shared with Anton (Hotham) and AAC Dinner Plain. Details will be mailed to all members.

Please consider nominating for the Committee – current members can tell you that the work is interesting and not too time consuming. We need to make sure that the Committee stays in touch with the needs of the membership and women members and those who are cross-country skiers or snowboarders are encouraged to consider nominating.

may work party

May 6th-7th

The Work Party will be on the first weekend in May (Saturday 6th / Sunday 7th). People assisting at the Work Party receive an accommodation voucher for a weekend at the lodge. The work is rarely arduous and might involve minor maintenance nature (such as filling the wood supply, basic cleaning and perhaps some minor painting). An added bonus for those attending will be the opportunity to meet our new Lodge Manager. Please contact Alan Long on (03) 9328 4491 if you are able to attend.

Minor maintenance requirements at the lodge for 2006 will include some work on the Lodge Manager's Flat, renovation of the storeroom and attention to some aspects of the dining and lounge area.

Become an instructor

The Falls Creek Snowsports School will be conducting its annual Instructor Hiring Clinic between Saturday 10th June 2006 to Wednesday 14th June 2006. The cost for five days, including lift passes and instruction is \$150.

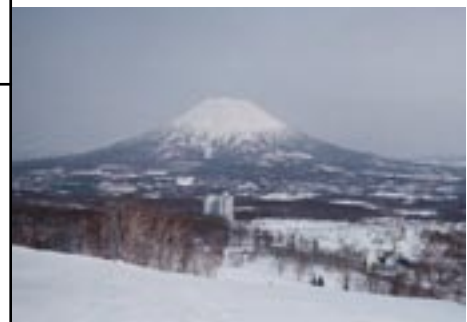
Even if you decide you don't want to instruct (on either a part-time or full-time basis), the hiring clinic will certainly improve your skiing / riding. Details of the program can be obtained through: <http://www.skifalls.com.au/?EXP=191>.

Weddings, parties, anything ...

We have received an advance booking for December 2006 where one of our members has booked the lodge for her wedding. Consider using the lodge for similar activities outside the ski season, perhaps family reunions or workplace staff retreats.

Niseko

It is possible to escape the Australian summer. Niseko, on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, is an alpine resort where customer service still prevails with lift attendants who aren't just courteous, but also brush the (fresh powder) snow from chairlift seats. Lift queues were rare and the lift operation was almost never interrupted. The longest ski run was over 5 kilometres and the snow depth in February was 41/2 metres. A seven-day lift pass, valid between 8:30am and 9:00pm, costs less than \$350 and a reasonable meal in an on-mountain restaurant costs about \$6. The skier / boarder ratio was probably around 60:40 and there also appeared to be far fewer accidents than in Australian resorts. AAC members who skied at Niseko in February included Ian Farrow, Howard Farrow and Nigel Cowie from Falls Creek and John Carruthers from Anton.



2006 lift prices compared

Are we getting good 'value for money' in Australia?
A good conversation starter.

| Lift prices 2006 (adult, day) | A\$ | Difference |
|-------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Vail (USA) | \$110 | 26% |
| Deer Valley (USA) | \$103 | 19% |
| Alta Snowbird (USA) | \$94 | 8% |
| Perisher Blue | \$91 | 5% |
| Thredbo | \$91 | 5% |
| Mt Buller | \$88 | 1% |
| Whistler (Canada) | \$88 | 1% |
| Falls Creek | \$87 | |
| Mt Hotham | \$87 | 0% |
| Mt Hutt (NZ) | \$73 | -16% |
| Val D'Isere (France) | \$65 | -25% |
| Arlberg (Austria) | \$65 | -26% |
| Niseko (Japan) | \$55 | -36% |

(based on 15/03/2006 exchange rates)

Adult day ticket prices have been used as the benchmark indicator. Discounts are available in most cases for multiple day passes. Prices include local taxes (such as GST/VAT).



Newsletter Contributions

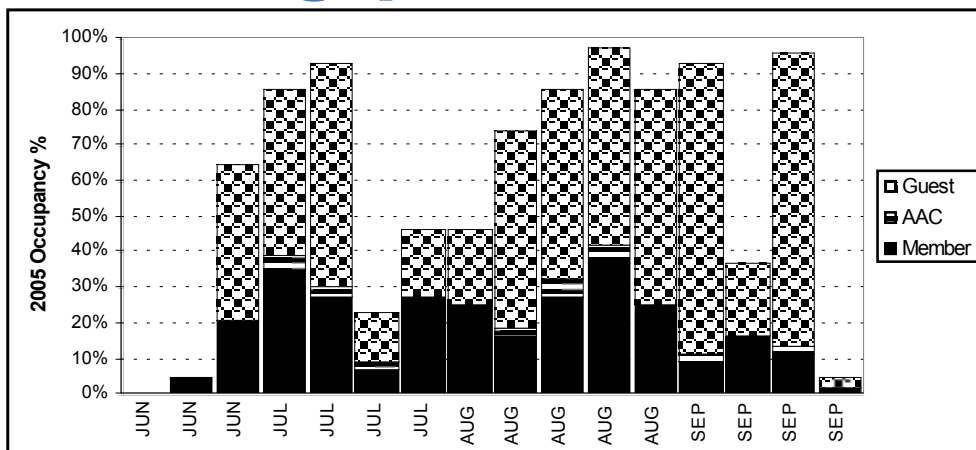
If you've got stuff you want to say, good snow stories or just great goss, we'd love to hear it.

So please email us at:
julie@maxwell.com.au

Members who...

introduce new members to the Club will receive a one week accommodation voucher

Booking patterns 2005



The average lodge utilisation on a weekly basis over the winter season was 57%. The accommodation mix over the season was 35% members, 2% AAC reciprocals and 63% guests of members. Most of the 'guests' were family of AAC Falls Creek members.