

# The Solution

We are seeking financial donations to fund a new grooming vehicle and storage building for grooming equipment. We plan to purchase a Polaris Ranger XP 1000 EPS with tracks instead of wheels from a local dealer. Equipped for grooming, the vehicle will cost \$30,419. We have gotten very positive feedback about this vehicle from groomers at the Nordic Ski Trails in Calumet, MI, Gore Mountain Nordic Trails in upstate NY and Levis Mound in WI.



We have a bid from a local builder for a steel building that is 20'x30'x10' with four roll up doors and one service door. The bid for \$19,080 includes the barn, footings and labor. The concrete floor would be about \$10,000 and site prep would be \$5,000. This building will be shared with the Shoreline Cycling Club who groom the 20 miles of fat bike trails at Big M. Thus, our total goal fund drive is \$64,499.

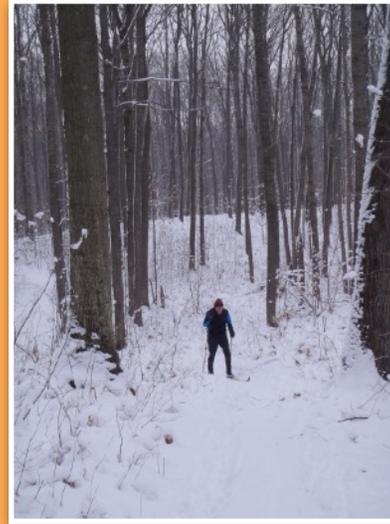
We have applied for multiple grants, including one from the Manistee Community Foundation, for increasing recreation opportunities in Manistee County. We need matching donations to be eligible for these grants. An individual donor has already donated \$20,000 to start our fund drive, and our general fund balance is \$13,000 which includes a \$5,000 Strefling Foundation grant.

We are inviting you to donate and help us reach our goal of raising \$64,499 which will allow us to maintain our ski grooming and keep our equipment safe and well maintained. Our legacy can be that future generations from downstate MI, out of state, and local skiers can also enjoy the winding, forested trails at Big M.

For more information about Big M see our website at [skibigm.org](http://skibigm.org) or email us at [xcskibigm@gmail.com](mailto:xcskibigm@gmail.com)

Your tax deductible donations can be made by check to: Manistee Cross Country Ski Council, PO Box 196, Manistee, MI 49660 or by PayPal through our website [skibigm.org](http://skibigm.org)

**Thank You!**



## Big M Cross Country Ski Trails

**PO Box 196 Manistee MI 49660**

In the heart of the Manistee National Forest

# What is Big M?

Big M has a long history in Manistee County and it has woven its way into the hearts of people throughout the Midwest. Originally it was a downhill ski area that was shut down in the 70s.

In the early 1980s a group of people began to plan a cross country ski area at the site of a previous, well-loved downhill ski area. The trails that were planned were narrow and winding and used the hilly topography of the Udell Hills to their fullest. John Capper, a well respected local trail designer, and the volunteers used chainsaws to carve out narrow classic ski trails. The Manistee Cross Country Ski Council is a registered non-profit that was created to protect and groom these trails in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. In 1984 the two easiest trails were opened, followed by intermediate and advanced trails in the next two years. In the early 90s a beautiful log cabin lodge was built and it is open year round.



Now, 34 years later, the Big M ski trails are still well maintained as classic narrow ski trails. There are approximately 30K of machine groomed classic trails that meet the needs of beginner to veteran skiers. The Big M area continues to receive well over 100' of snow most years.



New sports have become popular over the years allowing the Big M trails to be used year round. In the summer, mountain bikers relish the trails and many longer loops have been created in the hills surrounding the ski trails. The Shoreline Cycling Club (also a registered non-profit) was created to maintain the summer mountain bike trails. In recent years the Cycling Club has started grooming trails separate from the ski trails for fat bikes (mountain bikes with tires 4-5 inches wide). The Manistee Cross Country Ski Council and Shoreline Cycling Club work closely together to benefit the two user groups who often travel a distance to ski and/or bike here.



# Grooming Problems

The current ski groomer is a diesel "half track" Track Truck which is as old as the trail system (both created in 1985)! Track Truck breakdowns occur frequently. This year the Track Truck broke down on the trail due to a fuel line problem, knocking grooming operations out for several days. Other breakdowns in previous years have ended the ski season prematurely or created delays in grooming. We do preventative maintenance to keep it going, but the vehicle is nearing the end of its usable lifespan and replacement parts are getting harder and harder to find. Maintenance has taken up more and more of our operating budget each year.



The Track Truck is also very difficult/quirky to drive due to the hydraulic steering and small front wheels. This makes it difficult for volunteers to gain enough experience while mentoring with veteran groomers to be able to groom on their own. This has stifled the ski club's ability to find new groomers to help out. The two primary groomers from the last few years are getting older, and in order to be able to sustain the grooming of the ski trails we need to make it so the next generation of groomers can competently and efficiently groom the trails.

Theft is another problem because grooming equipment currently is kept out in the open. Our Ginzu groomer which lays the ski tracks has electric actuators to raise and lower the tracksetter. These actuators were stolen in 2017 and cost several hundred dollars to replace. Shoreline Cycling Club hides its fat bike grooming equipment in the woods, but this is hard on equipment and not a good long term solution. Having a secure storage building should help our equipment to last longer and reduce repair/replacement needs.

Lastly, the storage building will help when we do need to work on grooming vehicles mid-winter. Currently repairs are even more challenging because they need to be completed outside or the vehicle needs to be hauled elsewhere.