

## The “Art of Grooming”

Despite the scarcity of snow this season, the Fertile Sand Hills ski trails have been in remarkably good shape due to some new grooming equipment and dedicated volunteers.

The biggest improvement is purchase of a used Ginzugroomer and tracksetter made possible by a grant from the North Star Ski Touring Club based in Minneapolis. AELC’s “old reliable” groomer pressed a track in the snow and that was it until you got more fresh snow to work with. The Ginzugroomer has “teeth” that can chew up old icy snow to recondition it and then set a new track.



The new set-up also allows the tracksetter to be lifted up to just leave a flat packed surface—useful in areas with too little snow to set a track and also on steeper grades where not having a track is safer for controlled descent. By packing the trails early in the season, they also hold the snow better later in the year as warmer temps take a toll on the snow cover and trails.

This was all made possible through countless hours put in by Matt Forgit and Paul Stromstad in getting the equipment set up and making many extra passes to pack and track the trails. Thanks also to Craig Engelstad for his expertise and use of his shop resources to retrofit the City’s snowmobile to pull the groomer and to Tanner West for setting up the electrical systems.

Thanks also to the North Star Ski Touring Club for the grant funds to purchase the groomer. NSSTC is the leading advocate for cross-country skiing in the Twin Cities and Minnesota. Their mission is “to enjoy and promote the development of cross-country skiing.” Information about the club at <https://north-stars.org/>.

