

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Ten-Year Hut System Master Plan

2019-2029

Purpose

This plan was created by and for Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) members for the purpose of maintaining and further developing a best-in-class alpine hut system in Southcentral Alaska.

State of the Hut System

MCA's eight huts have been constructed between 1964 and 2018. They are simple structures designed to provide safety and comfort during human-powered wilderness travel. Our huts support challenging personal trips, casual outings with friends and family, and serve as a venue for MCA trainings.

Planning Process

In 2018, the MCA Board of Directors developed a 2023 Strategic Plan to guide the Club toward its core purpose of strengthening Alaska's mountaineering community. Strategic Plan Objective 2.5 ("Reactivate Huts Committee, guided by a 10-year master plan, to ensure MCA huts are the best in their class") was identified by the Board of Directors as a high priority action. The process to develop the Huts Master Plan was:

1. Late 2018 - Interviewed hut users, volunteers, and current and past Board members, to develop a summary of current needs for each hut.
2. February 26th, 2019 - Hosted a two-hour workshop with 14 longtime huts volunteers and Board members to prioritize plan items.
3. Spring 2019 - Created a financial forecast for huts expenditures from 2019 to 2029. Extrapolated from the financial analysis presented May 15th, 2018, of huts expenditures from 2013 to 2017.
4. Hosting follow up focus group meeting, for refining the plan. April 2019
5. Presenting draft plan to general membership for feedback. May 2019
6. Recruit Hutmeisters for finalizing and implementing goals for each hut.

Current hut needs

Status reports at the start of the master planning process can be found in appendix 1.

1) Mint:

Mint is the most popular MCA hut and consequently has the most pressing issues. Overcrowding is common, as is overuse or misuse. Waste fly out is a significant expense for the club, and much of the waste is generated by non-members. There is no single easy fix for these issues. A task force was convened to evaluate options. Their report is viewable in appendix 2. Management strategies being considered include appointing a summer caretaker, and renovating/expanding the hut. If expansion is pursued, an avenue to offset cost is grants. Matsu Trails Foundation has encouraged the club to apply for a \$25,000 grant, since the hut benefits Matsu trail users. Additionally, signage updates and user surveys are being developed to help educate users on hut use, and encourage engagement in the club.

Mint Hut 10-Year Plan				
Priority	Description	Lead	Cost	Timeline
1	Summer caretaker (June 1, 2019 - September 1, 2019) to address overcrowding. Educate new visitors on hut etiquette, waste system, and ways to get engaged with MCA	TBD	\$0?	Need to ID a lead soon
2	Mint Hut Task Force researches feasibility of long-term solutions	Galen Flint, Vicky Lytle, Stan Olsen	\$0 due to volunteer labor	ASAP
2.5	Renovate, remodel, move. (Task force outcome)		\$10,000+	
3	Front door. The door is beginning to delaminate, and should be replaced	TBD	TBD	2020-2022
4	Apply for Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation grant for hut renovation project. Including reskin of outer walls, refurbish interior and possible extension/expansion of hut.	Max, with support from Huts Committee	\$0 due to volunteer labor and supplies	August - September, 2019
5	Reskinning. The current skin is older generation material. It may last with basic upkeep, or it may allow issues such as that seen at Dnigi. If the hut is kept in its current configuration, a reskin could be worthwhile. Continue to monitor.		\$12,000	2025 or beyond

2) Bomber:

Bomber continues to function well. One weak point is the door. Water is sometimes able to enter, either through normal use (wet users entering), or door not closing properly. Adding a foyer would improve the hut's functionality and longevity.

Bomber Hut 10-Year Plan				
Priority	Description	Lead	Cost	Timeline
1	Windows- two kitchen windows are scheduled for replacement. The new windows are on site.	TBD	< \$100	2019 or 2020
2	Foyer addition	TBD	~\$8,000	~2024
3	Reskinning. The current skin is older generation material. It may last with basic upkeep, or it may allow issues such as that seen at Dnigi. Continue to monitor.		\$12,000	With foyer?

3) Rosie's

Rosie's is the last of the three Eklutna Traverse huts to be reskinned. April 2019 visitors noted growing holes in the roof. This work should be scheduled as soon as possible, either 2019 or 2020. Cost estimate \$17,000

4) Dnigi:

A leak in the siding circa 2010 has allowed for rot/degradation of the wood beneath. The west wall is the most affected, but the extent of the damage is not fully known. In 2013 a maintenance trip was executed to mitigate the damage and prevent further decay. Details can be found in the maintenance trip report in appendix 3. Subsequent informal inspections have found that the 2013 maintenance has prevented further degradation. However the initial damage has not been fully repaired. If this hut is to be maintained long term, a more extensive repair should be performed.

Dnigi is the least visited MCA hut. The addition of Holden to the system may increase its use, and thus its value to the membership. If this proves to be the case, a more expensive repair option would be better justified.

Dnigi repair options:		
	Description	Cost estimate
1	Do nothing. At least short term, the hut is not degrading further.	\$0

2	Do minimal repairs. Human powered inspections. Open siding, replace rotted members.	\$5,000
3	Restore to original. Helicopter out tools and skilled carpenters for an inspection. Plan the repair. 2nd fly out for repair.	\$10,000
4	Replace skin with newer generation material, and replace all damaged wood. Perhaps possible without a separate inspection trip.	\$15,000

Scandinavian

Need more detail about any maintenance problems. Schedule an inspection.

Pichler's

Reskinned in 2015. No current issues.

Han's

Reskinned in 2013. No current issues.

Holden

New build 2018. Monitor for any wear-in issues.

Volunteers and Organizational Structure

With no paid positions within the MCA, the success of the hut system over the next decade will depend on thousands of hours of volunteer support and extensive coordination and collaboration. To enable a high-functioning Huts Committee, Task Forces, and volunteer system, the MCA uses the following organizational structure:

Board of Directors

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Huts Committee

|

Task Forces, Hut Meisters

Overuse/Abuse

1. Begin discussions with land managers to determine if there are any options for restricting visitors numbers. Can we require advance bookings? Can we reserve huts for club trips? Any available options for future sustainable use should be understood, even if not implemented.

Funding

1. Recruit a task force focused on identifying potential funding sources and obtaining outside funds for larger hut projects.

Volunteers

In addition to the above capital projects, we have identified the following structural changes to the MCA operations that would support the hut system:

1. Actively recruit volunteer hutmeisters for each hut, and define roles and responsibilities:
 - a. Coordinating planned and emergency maintenance
 - b. Ensuring signage meets current MCA standards
 - c. Annual inspection and visitor count, which is reported to the Huts Committee Chairperson. Compile historical visitor numbers based on logbooks.

Financial Forecast

Annual huts maintenance expenditures from the five year period 2013 to 2017 average \$8,600 per year. This includes reskinning two huts and an air supported maintenance trip on a third. Details are viewable in appendix 4. Future maintenance expenditures are anticipated to be similar. Annual maintenance costs should average between \$7,000 and \$10,000.

New hut construction is an additional expense. The Holden Hut construction resulted in approximately \$63,000 in cash outlays. This includes over \$37,000 of grants and donations. If a similar new construction is made in the next ten years, the club should plan on saving at least \$3,000 a year.

Summary of high dollar maintenance and renovations:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
	\$17,000		\$11,000		\$8,000		\$12,000		
(Dnigi eval)	Rosie's Reskin	(Bomberw indows)	Mint renovate		Bomber foyer		Dnigi wall		

Detailed forecast year-by-year and hut-by-hut numbers are presented in appendix 5. Grants and hut-specific donations should be pursued to reduce hut burden on general club finances, particularly for new hut construction, and possibly Mint hut management expenses such as renovation and waste fly out.

Waste Management

Different waste management systems are used at different huts. Most are functioning well. The Mint outhouse is often not well cared for. Different outhouse systems have been discussed. An evaluation of the Mint waste system was performed, and can be viewed in appendix 6. No alternative systems are readily available, and the existing system is robust. Therefore the best management available is to educate users, and encourage all users to take ownership. Additionally, scheduling barrel fly-outs will allow for financial planning and effort coordination. A urine diverter was installed in 2018, and a new sign has been developed to inform users of its operation. Additional educational/inspirational signage options are being explored.

New Hut possibilities

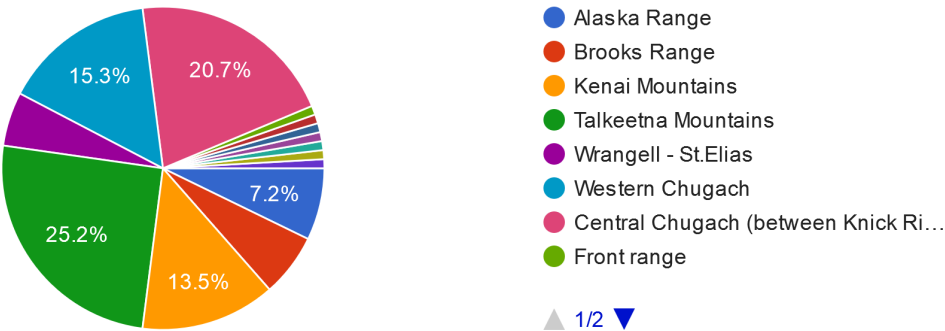
The club has continued to evaluate options for expanding the hut system. As the Holden Hut was recently completed, the club does not plan to undertake any new construction prior to 2025 and likely longer than that. However, planning ahead grants can be secured, locations evaluated, and savings stored.

Previous search. From 2006 to 2012 the club undertook a search for a new hut site. The site chosen was near the Powell glacier, on what was once the East fork of Powell, a.k.a. Mike’s Glacier. This construction has not taken place.

The 2018 survey asked where members would choose for a new hut, and found opinion to be divided. The most popular choice was an additional Talkeetna range hut, but only 25% of respondents chose this option.

If MCA were to build a new hut, in which mountain range would you want it?
(If desired, you can share the specific...ment section at the end of the survey)

111 responses



Communications, user engagement, and collaborations

Users are the custodians of the huts. To encourage and empower us to do the best jobs we can, educational materials and communication tools should be developed. Collaborations with other organizations should be cultivated for achieving shared goals (e.g. AAC’s Snowbird hut on the bomber traverse)

Item	Description	Lead
Website updates	Evaluate user-to-user communication options	Jonathan Strong

Usage numbers	Develop a mechanism to track visits to the hut	TBD
Signs	Update signs to reflect current systems, and encourage responsible use	Jonathan Strong
User manual	SOPs for hut systems; housekeeping, kitchen use, maintenance, outhouse use, etiquette	TBD
Hutmeisters	Recruit volunteers to oversee and coordinate plan for each hut	TBD
Landowners	Communicate with State of Alaska to ensure we are compliant and our goals are facilitated	Greg Bragiel is coordinating with CSP superintendent
Other organizations	Coordinate with American Alpine Club (Snowbird Hut) and Alaska Huts (Manitoba Yurt)	TBD

Appendices

Appendix 1

Recent details are available in the 2018 huts chairman report, viewable here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Ud7Jhvk33uyU-43kRt1wT1ytZVSMIsF-YEaBvDH4TMA>

Status of the hut sheetmetal jackets can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CE3VR9bJ0SKnxWtZ80aMkRfgBp-bpXn2EoEMmeRxUbk>

Appendix 2

Mint task force report is viewable here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Uq61VQJ7SJhJyg3G6hdm-TOTrN0Ok1andAo_Md8p2hs

Appendix 3

Dnigi maintenance trip, 2013, report viewable here (begins middle of page 1):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BIXOwNX7qrVFgvMLmMs-q4X5vxWNn_rq/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 4

Financial analysis by Charlie Sink, presented May 2018:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QMpn3tXWNfvcCBsZFjciQC80T2Q3CHDa8WdfNnprsfQ>

Appendix 5

Spreadsheet of the huts financial forecast for 2019 to 2029 can be viewed here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ued_535Lqc9X1IkG8BGJNEwLhXL4eQYwNqhl2jwkqko

Appendix 6

Mint outhouse evaluation:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1C_3VMumCorgHZf5eDevCRDA1fVmvFsex