



# Future of PARA

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Work Group Report and  
Recommendations



# Work Group Goals

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Investigate the following tenets of the USSS Health of Sport Task Force (as outlined in their March 2022 report)

- Increase accessibility - reduce barriers to entry
- Reduce Cost - look for efficiencies/reduce school absences
- Increase enjoyment - leading to higher retention and a feeling of success
- Simplify systems and pathways for advancement

in order to identify the common related challenges faced by PARA clubs that could be addressed by HOS report aligned

The task force noted in the report that **“the discussions require a broader reach to develop a more thorough understanding of the challenges and solutions.”**

# HOS Report Areas of Focus

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- Club Fees
- Sport Structure\*
- Travel Costs\*
- Prep Period/Calendar\*
- Start Limits
- Professionalism of the Sport\*
- Accessibility for Athletes/Coaches/Officials\*

\* areas where PARA clubs and athletes face challenges

# HOS Report Findings and Recommendation Highlights

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## SPORT STRUCTURE

Currently the US has a loose system of advancement with an unclear pipeline. US ski racers deserve a logical progression with clear markers that reward performance.

Promoting High School racing and USCSA Collegiate racing in the overall structure of alpine racing, provides reasonable and accessible levels of competition that may be appropriate and fulfilling for a large percentage of our U16 and older athletes. These avenues provide a pathway to stay in the sport and continue to enjoy competitive racing as they begin to realize that the US Ski Team or NCAA racing may not be a realistic goal.

**Recommendation: Regions need to reexamine their pipeline and make sure that a structure is in place which allows for advancement based on reasonable standards. It should allow for promotion that results from performance.**

# HOS Report Findings and Recommendation Highlights

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## TRAVEL COSTS

Financial costs (transportation, room and board, entries, and lifts) and opportunity costs (education, training, rest, periodization) are greatly impacted by competition schedules at all levels affecting both performance and retention.

Travel costs are directly affected by athletic pipelines.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Great care must be taken to establish best practices that provide high achieving athletes with the necessary challenges and experiences to realize their potential and maintain their competitiveness with their international age group peers *while not inappropriately driving the expectations and cost for athletes whose age group peers are national, regional, divisional, or local.*

# HOS Report Findings and Recommendation Highlights

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## PREP PERIOD/CALENDARING

Racing should start after there has been adequate home preparation time.

*Recommendation: Incentivize racing closer to home. Eligibility for racing out of athlete's region based on meeting approved standards (standard met or approval required)*

# HOS Report Findings and Recommendation Highlights

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## PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE SPORT

As youth sports trend toward talent identification at younger ages, the push toward professionalism in ski racing is becoming more prevalent. This professionalism is a significant contributor to increased costs.

**Recommendation:** It is recognized that Clubs and Academies are free to offer what they believe serves their clientele. If it is agreed that more services are required as an athlete reaches higher levels of competition, then it follows that a standards-based system of advancement is necessary to help athletes and their parents know what is needed.

# HOS Report Findings and Recommendation Highlights

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## ACCESSIBILITY

There are additional costs of participating in the sport of alpine ski racing that are rising and should be looked at carefully. These costs impact athletes, coaches, and officials. Every effort should be made to keep costs low for young families. Online and local coach education courses would lower the cost to weekend/part time coaches, and could help lower club fees. With so many events throughout the country, the officials community is working hard to keep up with demand.

**Recommendations: Fees should be reasonable to continue to attract participation. Online and local education opportunities for coaches' certifications.**



# PARA's Challenges

- Changes in mountain management/ownership groups have revealed a shift in priorities that impact mountain operations and club operations
  - Emphasis on season pass holders experience at the “expense” of the day ticket holders and other niche groups like racers.
  - Increased prices for nearly all on and off snow services
- Warmer winters with less snow, and subsequent mountain operation changes, have led to shorter training/competition seasons.
  - Less emphasis on “riskier” early season snowmaking, and more focus more on the “big ticket” holiday weekends (less on the day-to-day conditions from start to season end)
  - Fewer opportunities, with less flexibility, to train and race - typical PARA club’s regular season consists of roughly 34 on snow days for training.
- Lack of focus on skills development and a disproportionate focus on racing (in particular in the younger age groups)
  - Shorter seasons with similar year-to-year race calendars leads to a larger proportion of time on snow being dedicated to racing and not training. Less training leads to less skill development.
  - The few athletes seeking high level racing vs the many athletes kids who need skill development and the vast majority of whom will never be low points racers.

# PARA's Challenges

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- Not all clubs/regions within PARA can provide appropriate competition environments across all age groups.
- Increasingly high registration costs (and travel time investments) to participate in PARA events (regional qualifiers, State Championships, U16 Series, PA Cup)
- Lack of clarification of how PARA fits into the regional and national landscape
  - PARAs role in and ability to prepare athletes for FIS racing?
  - PARAs role in and ability to prepare athletes for academies?
  - PARAs role in and ability to prepare athletes for academies?
  - What are PARAs goals and limits in terms of athlete development from one age group to another?
- Lack of ongoing and accessible coach and officials training programs limits the number of high quality staff throughout PARA.
- Lack of opportunities for PARA athletes to “lengthen season” if they are not derby/regional or FIS athletes.

# Work Group Recommendations to PARA GB

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- Evaluate current regional model (total regional populations, team locations and sizes, travel distances from one hill to another, and each hill's capabilities, etc) to realign if appropriate or potentially eliminate regions from a competitive standpoint all together
- Training and competition goals/limits (per age group) need to be established to clearly differentiate the statewide programs for U8/U10/U12/U14 and above
- Create a section of website that "delineates" the various athlete pathways and then differentiate PARA programs according to long term paths for athletes - FIS, Academy Prep, USCSA racing, local racing only
- Implement a statewide race entry fee cap per age group
- Develop a group that works with mountains on racer lift ticket price cap

# Work Group Recommendations to PARA GB (cont.)

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- Reconsider open U12 and U14 Champs (one event for boys and one for girls) in order to allow PARA regions more flexibility in their schedules and to allow for more training time
- Ongoing (PARA sponsored and organized) coaches training programs - online when possible
- Ongoing (PARA sponsored and organized) officials training programs (not just refreshers, but actual training for the highest need areas - TC, RF, CR, TD, etc.) - online when possible
- PARA State Calendar on *homepage* of website including all statewide events for coaches/officials/athletes

# Work Group Recommendations to PARA GB (cont.)

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- PARA needs to develop a protocol to support clubs/teams in approaching mountains with requests for support and to push back on the restrictions and changes being imposed
- Evaluating the prices of races (including travel)
  - Consider race entry fee cap
  - Working with mountains on racer lift ticket price cap
- PARA needs to align it's schedule with national and regional calendar for U16 and above to allow athletes to participate in high school champs