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American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Crosses the Finish Line in Phase I of First Ever Capital Campaign

Phase I Capital Campaign Secures Start & Improves Finish Experience

Hayward, Wis. (June 16, 2015) In just 7-months, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) has reached the \$650,000 fundraising goal for Phase I of its first-ever major fundraising capital campaign.

In November 2014, the ABSF announced a 5-year strategic plan to help “Honor the Legacy and Ensure the Future” of the American Birkebeiner ski marathon and to guarantee stewardship and protection of the iconic Birkie trail. “A huge thank you goes out to everyone who donated to this major effort. Your passion and spirit for the Birkie and our mission are evident through your generosity,” remarked John Garrett, ABSF Board President.

The multi-year strategic plan includes:

- **Phase I** - To secure a permanent trailhead and race start area in Cable, WI, near the old Telemark Lodge, as well as to improve safety, traffic flow, and participant experience at the finish line area in Hayward, WI (2014-2015/Completed)
- **Phase II** – To implement comprehensive and sustainable trail improvements to the 107km American Birkebeiner trail system, a network of trails from Cable to Hayward, WI (2017)
- **Phase III** – To develop an outdoor recreation center designed to support silent sports recreation activities (2019)

“The support we’ve received from the Birkie family - skiers, bikers, and runners near and far, along with support from the surrounding communities - is unbelievable. Having a permanent start line near Telemark, as well as an enhanced finish venue, is critical to the participant experience, to our future as an event, and to our ability to promote a year-round active lifestyle,” said Ben Popp, ABSF Executive Director. “You made it happen! Now our team will get to work to complete it!” Many of the finish line improvements, such as the International Birkie Bridge over Wisconsin Highway 63, were in place for the 2015 February Birkie events and work is now underway on the new trailhead and start area.

Last year alone, an estimated 15,000+ skiers, runners, trekkers, hikers and bikers, of all ages, participated in ABSF races and activities along the Birkie Trail. This does not include the thousands of recreational silent sports enthusiasts who utilize the Birkie Trail system each year.

Birkie fever reaches far beyond Cable, Seeley and Hayward, WI with capital campaign fundraising events held in Eau Claire, WI; Minneapolis, MN; Iola, WI; Dousman, WI; and Fox River Grove, IL. “Each of these events was unique thanks to the diverse group of people who live and support the Birkie lifestyle. It was really great getting to meet so many Birkie participants in their own communities and on a more intimate level than during our ABSF events. Birkie Fever is definitely a family affair and a year-round affliction!” mused Amy Rowley, ABSF Development Director.

While originally created to support a ski marathon, the ABSF has grown into much more than a singular ski race and now encompasses a series of year-round seasonal silent sports activities and events including skiing, biking, running, trekking and hiking. Throughout the year, the ABSF maintains the 107km Birkie Trail through ongoing maintenance, mowing and grooming, along with the upkeep of 5 trailside shelters. Perhaps most importantly, the ABSF inspires a healthy active lifestyle for all ages, promotes conservation, and aids in driving economic development throughout Northern Wisconsin.

The ABSF, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, encourages continued donations to support the overall 5-year capital campaign. “While we have hit our Phase I \$650,000* goal, projects like this inevitably have some cost over-runs, so please keep the donations coming! Donations can be made at www.birkie.com/future,” Rowley continued. Any funds received and unused during Phase 1 will automatically be transferred to Phase II which is focused exclusively on shoring up trail access and erosion, protecting and nurturing the corridor, as well as maintaining the sustainability of the trail infrastructure.

Silent sports continue to positively impact the northern Wisconsin economy. In a 2014 University of Wisconsin – Madison/Extension, Department of Urban and Regional Planning case study, utilizing data gathered in 2012, results suggest that roughly \$14.7MM in private sector stimulus was infused directly within Ashland, Bayfield and/or Sawyer counties by nonresident (visitor) silent sports enthusiasts¹, supporting more than 222 jobs within the three counties² in that year alone. This, does not include revenues generated through skiers, hikers, bikers, trekkers, and primary and secondary home owners in and around northern Wisconsin.

About the American Birkebeiner® Ski Foundation and Birkie® Events

Located near Hayward and Cable, Wisconsin, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, is known for its signature American Birkebeiner Ski Marathon held each February. Today, the Birkie brand has grown to encompass a year round lifestyle that provides healthy, active events for thousands of outdoor fitness enthusiasts of all levels. From the iconic Birkie ski race to the Birkie Trail Run & Trek, and Fat Bike Birkie race, the ABSF and the Birkie Trail attract skiers, runners, bikers, trekkers, and hikers, from casual day-trippers to elite superstars. The Birkie embodies a healthy active lifestyle, is a fitness destination and mecca for outdoor sports enthusiasts, and offers a series of best-in-class race opportunities. Ski. Run. Bike. Live! Visit www.Birkie.com to learn more.

⁻¹ University of Wisconsin, - Madison/Extension, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, “*The Economic Impacts of Active Silent Sports Enthusiasts: A Case Study From Northern Wisconsin*,” January 2014

⁻² University of Wisconsin, - Madison/Extension, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, “*The Economic Impacts of Active Silent Sports Enthusiasts: A Case Study From Northern Wisconsin*,” January 2014

Birkie Capital Campaign*
Phase I – Estimated Budget

Work at the Start

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| • Purchase Portion of Telemark Land | \$115,000 |
| • Building Start “Stadium” & Connector Trail | \$110,000 |
| • Permanent/Year-Round Trail Head | \$ 45,000 |
| • Power/Water | \$ 25,000 |
| • Storage & Race Morning Building | \$180,000 |

Work at the Finish

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| • Construction of International Ski Bridge | <u>\$175,000</u> |
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Estimated Campaign Total	\$650,000
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