

THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB

From the 2010 Annual Report.

2010: The birth of a new AAC. As we continued to grow membership and deliver on our mission, we also devoted extraordinary effort to the foundations of our new Five-year Strategic Plan. Indeed, “Double Duty” is the phrase that best defines fiscal 2010 for The American Alpine Club.

2010 was an extremely busy year in the policy arena. We worked with Yosemite National Park on the Merced River Plan and found climber-friendly solutions to the cliff closures in Minnewaska State Park, New York. Denali and Rainier National Parks both proposed substantial increases to their special-use climber fees. We worked very hard—and successfully—to obtain a public process to debate those intentions. Rainier finally settled on \$43, an increase at the lowest end of their proposed range. We are still working hard on the Denali issue and will continue to press for more transparent and iterative processes when climbers are singled out for special fees.

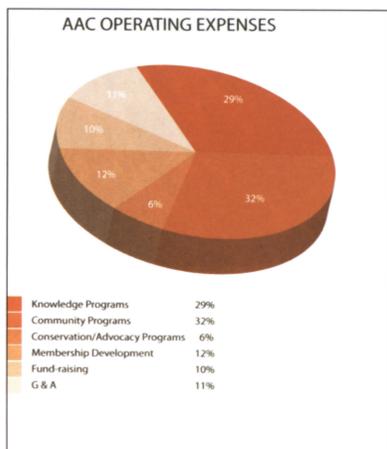
Craggin’ Classics multiplied out to three new locations (New Paltz, Chattanooga, Truckee), and we continued to learn that local engagement is the most essential ingredient to successful events. At our 2010 Annual Benefit Dinner we announced that future benefit dinners would move around the country (2011 Seattle & 2012 Boston) as part of our goal to deliver more programs locally. Climber and business leader Jim Collins was our 2010 keynote speaker. His remarks were particularly fitting as the AAC enters this exciting time of change.

The American Mountaineering Museum hosted its first Hall of Mountaineering Excellence Gala and Awards Dinner. Bob Craig and Yvon Chouinard were inducted as the first recipients of this new award along with posthumous inductees Bob Bates and Charlie Houston. Ed Viesturs was the keynote speaker for a wonderful evening that also raised \$15,000 and led to a year in which the museum was fully self-funded.

Just next door, the AAC Library shelved the first half of its new 30,000-volume Central Asia Library, plus new guidebooks and one-of-a-kind archives. With the help of volunteer Jason Albert, the AAC Story Project—a collection of podcast interviews with notable climbers—launched in September 2010, heralding our efforts to put more resources online.

The Grand Teton Climbers’ Ranch had a very good year in which its total revenues completely covered its direct expenses. Part I of our climbers’ exchange with Iran was hosted in the Tetons and was a tremendous success, and GTCR Work Week again pulled in eager climbers who improved basic amenities. 2010 was John Clegg’s last year as Ranch Manager. The torch passes to his Assistant Manager, the enthusiastic Robert Montague. The Ranch also supported our continued distribution of free Restop bags in the Tetons as part of our larger conservation work.

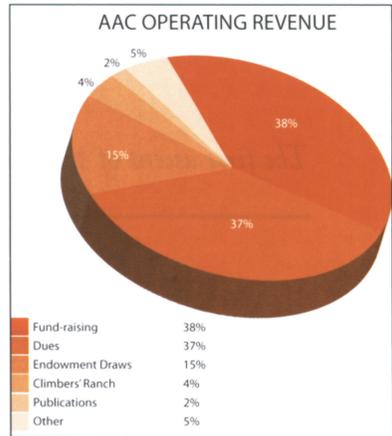
The year’s conservation highlight was hosting Exit Strategies: a conference on managing human waste in Wilderness. Roger Robinson was tireless in organizing a gathering of scientists, land managers and NGO leaders from over 17 countries to talk



about this important issue in a three-day conference held in Golden.

AAC Research Grants, along with the Nikwax Alpine Bellwether Grant, gave away a total of \$11,700 to 18 researchers for research work in 2010. And AAC Climbing Grants totaled \$27,700 to 23 individuals.

2010 also cemented the case for substantial change at the AAC. We had another year in which—while membership revenue grew by 5%—retention waned, and we spent a greater share of our total budget acquiring new members to replace the old. This, combined with expenses associated with the outreach to build the Strategic Plan, led to an operating loss of \$75,596. 2010 was financially difficult and a terrible year for non-profits. I do not, however, attribute our loss to the economy. Instead, it is a clear statement that the AAC's relevance to the climbing community and value for members was not what it needed to be. That had to change.



Looking Ahead

2009 was the year we solidly determined it was time to remake the AAC to be more relevant for today's climbers. 2010 was the year we decided what to do about it. Throughout the year, we spent staff and volunteer time asking: How should we rebuild America's national climbing organization?

After reaching out to over 2,000 climbers through surveys and focus groups, we built a draft Five-year Strategic Plan and submitted it to the board as the 2010 fiscal year came to a close.

The effects of the final plan, ratified in February 2011, have been positive and sweeping. Now our staff structure is united through five groups: Membership, Community Programs, Information & Marketing, Conservation & Policy, and Development. Each group's leader and staff are focused on the most critical parts of the AAC mission: putting our members and the places we climb at the forefront. The plan breaks down into the following strategies:

1. Improve member benefits
2. Develop community programs
3. Regain leadership as a climbing information resource
4. Improve and create new grants
5. Strengthen commitment to conservation through community programs & grants
6. Provide lodging facilities where needed at climbing destinations
7. Build a separate strategy for the American Mountaineering Center

The full plan is available for download at americanalpineclub.org/p/5-year-plan

Now, as the AAJ goes off to the printer, we are launching that plan—a plan that builds our AAC like never before.

Phil Powers
Executive Director