

Update on CMC Marketing and Membership Outreach

I want to update you on CMC's plans to strengthen our club's brand, build awareness, attract new members and increase member retention. We have several strong initiatives underway, both at the state level and in cooperation with the groups. With our 100th anniversary approaching, now is a great time to re-invigorate our outreach efforts; make sure we're appealing to a broader set of prospective members; and ensure that CMC is delivering the high-quality experience that will keep members coming back.

Sign-Up Fee Waiver

Earlier this year, at the request of several groups, we agreed to waive the \$25 sign-up fee for new members at certain times during the year for groups requesting a waiver and committing to a strong membership development or marketing plan. Several groups, including Denver, Boulder, Gore Range, and San Juan already are taking advantage of this opportunity.

For example, the Denver Group has identified several calendar periods through year-end when prospective members can join with no sign-up fee. The group is focusing marketing efforts on these dates with events such as outreach at local REI stores, featuring a new presentation that conveys the benefits and value of CMC membership. The Boulder Group will offer the discount at its monthly open houses for prospective members and also for non-members attending the group's annual holiday dinner who elect to join.

Web Site Upgrades

We've taken steps to make the CMC website more user-friendly, with further improvements in the works. If you've visited our site lately, you've probably noticed the four large buttons at top left ("Trip Schedule," "Class Schedule," "Why Join" and "Contact Us"), which address 75 percent of what most visitors are looking for when they come to our site. These buttons make it easy for visitors to move quickly to the information or function they need. We'll continue to improve the user experience on the CMC site, for current members and prospective members.

Marketing and Outreach Staff Support for CMC and Groups

We are investing in the growth of our club by hiring a new full-time marketing and outreach manager, Rachel Scott, who began work on July 26th at the state office in Golden. Rachel has a strong marketing background, most recently working for an outdoor industry company in Nashville.

In her new role, Rachel will work with groups, operating committees and the state board to develop and implement a CMC marketing and outreach plan, with help from volunteers including the state marketing committee. She will visit in person with all CMC groups throughout the state to discuss specific group marketing and membership development needs.

Rachel will focus on coordination with Groups to increase membership, improve our retention numbers, and get the CMC name out!

Increased Presence and Visibility

You will be seeing and hearing more about CMC across the state in the coming months. We plan to ramp up our presence at outdoor recreation events appealing to a broad cross-section of members and prospective members – from our own events, such as Mountain Fest and the Backcountry Bash, to other festivals celebrating outdoor recreation, like the Teva Mountain Games.

We are planning more membership drives, including outreach on Colorado's university campuses, to attract younger members. The State will coordinate with Groups to provide tools for them to do outreach in their local communities.

We're also doing more with the media. You may have heard our statewide CMC message as a sponsor of Colorado Public Radio. We're also seeking more "earned media" publicity – for example, Fort Collins Group Chair York recently did a radio interview about CMC and what we have to offer, along with CMC CEO Katie Blackett.

We have also started on a "We miss you" campaign to attract expired members to rejoin the club at either a reduced rate or at the "Friends of the Mountains" supporter rate.

New CMC Logo and Tagline

Like many of the leading mountaineering and outdoor associations (including the American Alpine Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Mountaineers, the Mazamas and the Sierra Club), CMC is updating its look, with a new logo and tagline, approved by the state board on September 14th.

For nearly 100 years, the bighorn sheep and "More than a great hiking club" tagline have served us well. But the tagline says more about what we are not than about what we are and aspire to be, and the sheep logo does not convey – instantly, powerfully and in a contemporary way – that our club is about the mountains of Colorado – enjoying, celebrating and preserving them.

CMC plans to retire the bighorn sheep with honor, although he will reappear from time to time in recognition of his long service to our club and his place as part of our heritage. Our new logo is a strong, simple image based on the silhouettes of two of Colorado's most recognized and photographed peaks – the Maroon Bells. As you know, we experimented with many logo designs; sought two rounds of feedback from groups and state committees; and took this feedback into account in developing the new design.

Logos are highly subjective things. Given the diversity of strong opinions among our members, our powerful attachments to heritage and tradition, and a natural tendency to resist change, we recognize not everyone will like this decision. After careful deliberation and consideration of a wide range of feedback, your board feels we must look to the future and present CMC to the world with a more contemporary face.

The quality of experience we deliver to our members, and the energy and enthusiasm we bring as volunteers to our outreach efforts, are even more important predictors of our future than our logo, and we intend to focus our energies there.

We also have adopted a new tagline for the club, “A Passion for the Mountains,” which will replace “More than a great hiking club.”

You will see our new logo and tagline beginning to appear as part of CMC’s marketing and outreach efforts soon, beginning with our web site and gradually including printed materials, signage and branded apparel as well. We will strike a balance between moving promptly to introduce our new brand and managing costs by using up certain materials with the old logo. The impact on CMC’s finances will be minimal, since we applied for and receiving a generous grant to help fund the development of more contemporary marketing materials for our club.

Delivering an Improved Member Experience

A brand is much more than a logo or tagline – it’s the sum total of user impressions and experiences. For CMC, the most frequent and powerful expression of our brand is the experience our members have during trips and schools. Ensuring our leaders deliver a consistently positive experience is among the most important things we can do to improve member recruitment and retention.

The State Safety and Leadership Committee, comprised of volunteers from across the state with school and trip leader experience, has begun work on a trip leader standards and training program that is directly aimed at giving our much loved volunteers, who truly are the front line for the club, the tools and skills needed to deliver a consistently great experience during their outdoor quests, including safety, group dynamics, communications skills and leader expectations. At the July board meeting the board and guests gave the State Safety & Leadership Committee a charge to come up with some basic leadership standards that all leaders will have. There is no timeline set for these standards to be developed. As you’ve already seen, we’ve asked for your input. And your perspectives, experience and knowledge, will continue to be sought. This will ensure that we are true to our mission of providing a safe experience in the backcountry.

Many of our leaders already possess these skills. Our intent is to raise our game to a consistently high level across the state, ensuring our members have a memorable and impactful experience with us, so that they not only stay as part of our family but they tell all of their friends to join as well.

Your Support and Involvement Are Important

We invite and encourage you to be part of the solution. How can you get involved?

- Talk with people you know about CMC, share your positive experiences and encourage them to check us out.
- Invite non-member friends to attend our events, like Mountain Fest, Backcountry Bash or group open houses.
- If you’re part of social networking sites like Facebook, post photos from your CMC trips on your Facebook page – and/or upload them to the CMC Facebook page.
- Share your ideas for getting the word out about CMC – contact your group council, your staff liaison, Rachel or Katie.
- Volunteer to help with marketing and membership outreach, either for your group or at the state level.

- Encourage fellow members to stay involved in club activities by going on trips, signing up for schools or enjoying the fun social opportunities of CMC – because members who are involved are much less likely to drop out.

Thank you for your continued support of CMC. See you on the trail.