

IS IT TIME FOR A CHANGE?

by Sarah Bradham, Acting Executive Director

Within the next few months the Mazama membership will have the opportunity to vote on several updates to the Mazama bylaws. There are four proposed bylaws amendments; one related to policies and procedures, and two about the composition of the Executive Council. The fourth change is regarding bringing an end to our glaciated peak membership requirement.

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Since our founding on Mt. Hood on July 19, 1894, joining the Mazamas has required stepping foot on the summit of a glaciated peak, and having arrived at the summit under your own power. Throughout the course of our history we have had people of all ages join the Mazamas (we believe the youngest was 3 when they joined!). Whether you climbed Mt. Hood, Everest, or Old Snowy, the glaciated peak summit has been the one common denominator for all of our members.

The roots of the glaciated peak requirement are in the Oregon Alpine Club, which was formed in 1887. The original idea for the club was mountaineering, but it didn't take long to expand to include photography, literature, boating, and more. In 1894, William Steel saw an opportunity to create a new group, the Mazamas, which would unify around mountaineering through a membership requirement written into the bylaws, where it has remained since.

Through the years, the Mazamas, just like the Oregon Alpine Club and The Mountaineers (which was an offshoot of the Mazamas) expanded its offerings. The Local Walks Committee was formed in 1912 and was the early incarnation of our current Trail Trips Committee. There have been square dancing events and photography exhibits at the Mazamas. In the 1970s the Whitewater Committee was

formed and offered a robust whitewater rafting program until it was phased out in the mid 80s. The Nordic skiing class was created in 1972 and is still going strong. Chuckwagon events, where participants day hike and have their food and gear supplied for them, were popular. Round the Mountain, an annual event where hikers circumnavigate Mt. Hood over three days with nothing but a daypack, while staying at Mazama Lodge each evening, sells out quickly most years with a waiting list. Five years ago we added Adventure WILD (now Mazama Wild) to our program offerings, serving kids ages 4–10 in a summer camp program based out of the Mazama Mountaineering Center. Our Street Rambles program, which was started in 1987, is our single largest program based on participant numbers.

The new programming created over the years has increased the number of participants in our programs and increased the variety of people that we are able to serve. In a typical year our climbing related activities and education programs serve approximately 1,800 participants. Conversely, our non-climbing related activities (Trail Trips, Street Rambles, RTM, youth programming) and education programs (Nordic, Canyoneering, Backcountry Skiing) typically serve more than six times that number, with approximately 10,000 participants. Despite this expansion in Mazama programming, we have never lost our focus on mountain recreation, exploration, and conservation. All of our activities and events connect to that core mission.



Sarah on a blue bird day on Mt. Hood, enjoying a hike to Silcox Hut.

However, the unintended consequence of our membership requirement is that many of the people who engage in our programs cannot join the Mazamas. Some of our most dedicated hikers and rambles, who would gladly go through our hike leader training, are unable to lead hikes for the Mazamas. These are people who we welcome as participants in our activities, but when they want to give back to their community as volunteers, they are met with a closed door—unable to share their expertise on a committee, as a class instructor, or as a hike or ramble leader.

Every week at the Mazama Mountaineering Center we receive calls and emails from people who have just discovered the Mazamas and are interested in what we do. They are often excited to join and instead of being able to meet their excitement with equal enthusiasm, we must start the conversation with “have you climbed a glaciated peak?” These conversations often end in frustration, confusion, and sadness as the individual

BYLAWS AMENDMENT TIMELINE

There have been articles about the upcoming Bylaws Amendments for the last few months in the Bulletin, in our eNews, and on our blog. Over the next few months you can expect to receive the Voter Guide in the May/June edition of the Bulletin. The Voter Guide will have the full text of the proposed changes, along with statements regarding the proposed changes. The full Voter Guide, along with a full red-line version of the Bylaws will be available on our website. There will be two townhalls to discuss the proposed amendments that will be held on Zoom. If you have questions about the process, you can email bylaws@mazamas.org.

- Classic Mazamas Townhall (Zoom): April 21
- Voter Guide published: May 1
- Opt-Out Period for Online Voting: Ends May 11
- Bylaws Townhall (Zoom): May 25
- Ballots Mailed: May 26
- Online Voting Opens: May 31
- Voting Period: May 31 – June 14
- Results Expected to be Announced: June 15

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR MAZAMA WILD

At Mazama Wild Day Camp we believe that authentic learning takes place when children are able to investigate and interact with the world around them. Nature, art, science, and play are the building blocks that campers will use to explore the vibrant life and amazing mysteries found in surrounding green spaces. Through thematic and guided activities, children will laugh, learn, and make memories to last a lifetime.

Due to COVID-19 there are some changes to our camps for 2021. All camps will be based out of the Mazama Mountaineering Center and each week session will include one or two session of indoor rock climbing on our rock wall. At this time, there will be no field trips due to constraints on transportation due to COVID-19. We hope to be able to offer field trips again in 2022.

Get more information at mazamas.org/mazamawild

realizes they don't meet our requirement, and don't know how to go about doing it.

We have made the argument for years that we are an equitable organization since we allow anyone to participate in our programs and activities, regardless of membership status. However, that participation comes at a cost, as our nonmember rates are higher than for members. Avid outdoor enthusiasts who love our mission and want to help support the Mazamas by becoming members and potentially providing volunteer labor are explicitly not allowed to do so.

If our glaciated peak requirement is about demonstrating skill and fortitude in a mountain environment shouldn't completing the Elk-Kings traverse in the dead of winter when you frequently need microspikes (if not crampons) suffice? How about running around Mt. Hood in a day, which over 42-miles has 10,000 ft of elevation gain and loss and numerous difficult stream crossings? What about climbing El Capitan, which, on it's easiest route, is 3,000 ft of technical rock that requires 5.10b skills? All of those activities show a dedication to the mountains and are arguably significantly more difficult than summitting Mount St. Helens or South Sister, and yet they don't qualify for membership.

If you have years of experience hiking and climbing, you might be thinking "well, how hard is it to go slog up Mount St. Helens or South Sister?" I feel this is the wrong question to be asking ourselves as we evaluate the glaciated peak requirement. If the requirement is, as we often say, rooted in creating a like-minded community dedicated to the mountains, and yet we view Mount St. Helens and South Sister as easy day hikes, how does climbing either of them contribute to that like-minded community?

What about the people who have never climbed, but are extremely active in protecting (or creating) wilderness areas to protect the mountains, advocating for the creation of new trailheads to support more mountain recreation, or actively maintaining the trails we frequent? Aren't those people we would want to welcome into our community that is dedicated to inspiring everyone to love and protect the mountains?

I don't believe the experience of standing atop a glaciated peak is what unites us. Rather, it is our shared love of the mountains and our desire to belong to a community that is our unifying force. A commitment to sharing in common experiences with others and engaging in activities in which we find personal meaning. That could be teaching someone how to rappel for the first time, climbing to the top of Mt. Hood, participating in a weekly Street Ramble, serving on a committee that helps disperse grant funds to organizations and individuals, planning the Portland Alpine Fest, or travelling with the Mazamas on an Outing, to name just a few of the myriad ways one can actively volunteer with the Mazamas.

For the Mazamas to continue to be an vibrant, valued, and relevant part of our community, it is time to update our bylaws and remove the glaciated peak requirement. As we work to build a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, we must be able to say to everyone who wants to be a Mazama that they are welcome here, as a full-fledged member.