**PARA Gate Judge Program 2011**

**Review**

The PARA gate judge program had a successful first year with 55 volunteers passing the certification exam and 14 judges who passed the Chief Gate Judge exam. Although half of all judges and chiefs were from just two clubs, each club that hosted a race had at least one certified Chief. Exams were submitted at a regular pace throughout the season and some TD’s reported an improvement in gate judge performance as the year progressed. Many participants expressed enthusiasm for the program and appreciation for the ease of access to the materials. Some also expressed an interest in becoming Alpine Officials.

The first 25 exams were analyzed to identify the most commonly missed questions. As a result, the materials were modified to place greater emphasis on these subjects. Performance on the exams improved after the revisions were made. Only one person failed the exam. The average score was 86%.

There is a compatibility problem between Mac computers and Adobe Acrobat PDF forms that prevented Mac users from using the “Submit” button to e-mail their exams. A few tests were lost until special instructions were added to save the form before attempting to submit it. After December, most exams were graded and certification cards sent within 48 hours of receipt.

One club instituted a policy of offering an additional lift ticket for every certified judge who volunteered at all their races. Only two clubs requested help from PARA to recruit judges for their races when they did not have all the positions filled prior to the race. These clubs offered an additional lift ticket for certified volunteers who worked.

Certified judges were contacted when necessary through an Outlook distribution list. This was used to distribute educational updates and to solicit volunteers. PARA’s commercial e-mail program was helpful in promoting the program to members.

Despite explanations in three areas of the program documentation, some certified gate judges thought they would be offered incentives every time they volunteered whether the ROC requested help through PARA or not. This created some frustration and confusion from volunteers and ROCs.

**Recommendations for the 2011-2012 Season**

1. Clarify how the incentive program works and when it should be offered.
2. Encourage ROCs to utilize PARA’s assistance every time they do not have their judge positions filled two weeks prior to their race. This leaves the option of filling the positions through other recruiting methods but provides the safety net of using outside certified judges if necessary. Every ROC should strive to have all their gate judge positions filled at least an hour before the scheduled start of the race.
3. As a symbol of appreciation and recognition, and to help promote the program, offer some form of recognition such as a pin to those who become certified.
4. Modify the materials to reflect rules changes if necessary
5. Use the list of most commonly missed questions and applicable rule changes to prepare a short, online bi-annual update exam.
6. Find a volunteer for the coordinator to help administer the program.
7. Continue promoting the program to PARA’s membership through bulk emails and direct outreach to club presidents. As noted above, half of all the certified judges and chiefs were from two clubs that aggressively promoted the program to their membership. With a strong promotional effort by all clubs and greater use of the program by ROCs, we could exceed 100 certified judges by the end of the 2012 season. This would be the critical mass where we would have a large number of certified judges and chiefs at every race who could help educate rookies and provide better gate judge performance.