**PARA Gate Judge Education & Certification Program 2012**

**Review**

The PARA gate judge program added 43 new certified gate judges since May 2011. We finished the year with 97 judges, 3 short of our goal, and 18 Chiefs. With a few exceptions, all the clubs are well represented in the number of certifed judges, and all the ROC’s have at least one certified chief.

This year approximately half of the people who volunteered as gate judges at most PARA races were certified. These judges provided confident, competent judging, and were helpful in on-hill training of other non-certified volunteers. Many TD’s reported improvement in the quality and knowledge of our gate judges.

Many ROC’s have begun offering an extra incentive to certified judges at all their races, creating additional motivation for people to become certified and volunteer. This was a major contributor to increasing participation in the program and improving the overall quality of gate judging in PARA. We thank the ROC’s.

The Gate Judge Recognition pins were received well. We experienced some problems in getting the pins to the judges, so we need to find a more efficient method of distribution next year. Thanks to John McGregor for desiigning, ordering, and picking up the pins.

Gene Pavitt graded all the exams this year and tracked the missed questions. Gene also helped to analyze the wording of some of our materials and exam questions so that we can improve the program next year. Thank you, Gene.

Many participants expressed enthusiasm for the program and appreciation for the ease of access to the materials. Some also expressed interest in becoming Alpine Officials.

The average gate judge exam score was in the high 80’s, a slight improvement from last year due to a greater emphasis in the educational documents on commonly misunderstood topics. Only one person failed the exam and he admitted he did not read the educational materials.

Although the compatibility problem between Apple computers and the Adobe Acrobat “Submit” button for online forms still exists, we only had two people lose exams this year. Most Apple users followed the instructions about how to save and attach their exam to an email.

Although we circulated several emails indicating that PARA would help recruit judges for ROC’s, few clubs requested the help. We recommend that ROC’s take advantage of this offer more frequently. The online & email recruting efforts have been successful when used.

The confusion we experienced in the first year of the program about when the extra incentives should be offered has abated. Thank you ROC’s for your cooperation and support of the program.

**Expectations for 2012-2013**

1. Modify the materials to reflect rule changes if necessary
2. Place greater educational emphasis on topics that are still misunderstood.
3. Continue promoting the program to PARA’s membership through bulk emails and direct outreach to club presidents.
4. Set a goal of having 130 active cerified judges by the end of the year
5. Create a mechanism to identify and delete judges who are no longer active.

Two other race associations have approached us about utilizing the Gate Judge materials for their organizations. With consent from the PARA Executive Board, we have agreed to allow use by others with explicit permission and with recognition of PARA and the authors of the documents. We will also add a disclosure that the documents have not been reviewed by USSA.

Overall, we believe this program has reduced the number of controversies due to poorly trained gate judges, making ski racing in PA more fairly decided for all competitors. Since clubs should be providing as many gate judges as possible from their own membership when they host races, we recommend that they encourage their membership to become certified, and to volunteer. We also recommend that clubs provide at least one gate judge educational clinic each year for parents, using certified Chief Gate Judges or USSA TD’s as trainers and the documents in this program as course materials. Most of the first year start-up problems were resolved this year and the program ran smoothly with greater understanding about how it works from all the involved parties.

Submitted by Bill Filling

PARA Gate Judge Coordinator