



News Release - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Relaunches Sustainability Initiative

Hayward, WI (December 2, 2021) – The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) relaunched their Birkie Green initiative in December 2021. In its infancy, Birkie Green was primarily focused on reducing waste. It has since evolved into an organization-wide commitment to sustainability. There are five distinct initiatives being pursued as part of Birkie Green:

1. Limit use of unrecycled material for retail and race swag
2. Increase reliance on renewable energy
3. Reduce or offset harmful carbon production
4. Continue to reduce waste and choose positive environmental alternatives
5. Build sustainable structures going forward

ABSF is putting the first initiative into practice by innovating their iconic race bibs. The 2022 Birkie week race bibs will be made from 100% recycled plastic that is made in the USA and sewn into bibs right here in Wisconsin by Borah Teamwear. Each bib is made from approximately 5.5 plastic water bottles, which equates to 65,000+ water bottles per year being kept out of landfills.

The second initiative began with solar arrays being installed at the Birkie office in downtown Hayward, WI and the Samuel C. Johnson Family Outdoor Center in Cable, WI. There are plans to install additional arrays at other locations because, "It's the right thing to do, and we have the capacity in our area to generate renewable energy" said Joe Vadeboncoeur, ABSF Chief Operating Officer.

In 2022, ABSF is working toward their third initiative by offsetting their local consumption of fossil fuels during Birkie week. "Putting on the Birkie takes a lot of resources, there's really no way around that," said Vadeboncoeur, "we have to move and groom snow, bus participants, and heat buildings." ABSF is collaborating with ClimeCo to offset their fossil fuel consumption by contributing to the Crow Lake Wind Farm in South Dakota. Additional carbon credits have been set aside for participants to offset their Birkie week travel, should they choose. From a long-term perspective, ABSF is working toward being a carbon neutral organization by 2026.

As part of the fourth initiative, ABSF is building upon waste-reduction strategies and introducing a variety of positive environmental alternatives. Currently electric car chargers, solar lighting at aid stations, digital (vs. paper) assets, and swag made from recycled materials are some ways they've made improvements. By 2023, ABSF aims to offer only eco-friendly products for sale and for event SWAG. By 2026, their aim is to be a zero-landfill organization.

One approach ABSF is taking to build sustainable structures is to use materials sourced from their own property, such as lumber or salvaged materials, in new structures whenever possible. "A great example of this is how we reused beams from the old Telemark lodge to construct the tunnel at the Birkie start area," said Vadeboncoeur. Additionally, LEED building standards will be utilized during the development of future buildings, including the "Base Camp" facility at Mt. Telemark Village.

When explaining why Birkie Green is a priority for ABSF, Vadeboncoeur often references a quote from climate activist Robert Swan, "The biggest risk to the planet is the belief that someone else will save it." Learn more about Birkie Green online bit.ly/BirkieGreen.

Birkie Green sustainability goals: 2026 - 100% renewable energy; 2026 - Carbon neutral organization; 2026 - Zero landfill organization; 2023 - Only eco-friendly products offered for sale or event swag

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