

Western Mass 5-Day Event report

It all started so innocently.

Ian Smith, NEOC's VP for events, was doing his job diligently, trying to develop a schedule of meets for 2012. He had the idea of a weekend of 5 sprints in the Amherst/Northampton area. He first proposed it for late 2011; when that didn't happen he suggested the spring of 2012.

It was not totally unreasonable. We have some nice areas and nice maps here, including a map of the UMass Amherst campus that had never been officially used, and I had just finished the fieldwork for a new area on the Holyoke Range, just west of the existing Mt. Norwottuck map.

I'm not sure if Ian really thought 5 sprints in a weekend made any sense. But the Western Mass "Gang of 5" – Alex Jospe, Ali Crocker, Phil Bricker, and Gail and I – thought about it. And we liked the idea. Five sprints, all club meets, not impossible to organize. Why not?

But we couldn't just leave it at that....

And within a week or two in late December and early January the idea morphed into two A meets at Earl's Trails (the new map), a sprint at UMass, a sprint at Cemetery Hill in Northampton, and a mass start event at Mt. Tom, all to be held on the Saturday and Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. And because every great idea needs a great name, we called it the Western Mass 5-Day.

And things went into motion real quickly. Permit applications went in and were approved, the ET map was drafted by JJ Cote, Jim Pashetto set up the website and the registration system, sanctioning from OUSA was applied for and granted. All this in about 4 weeks. And one more thing – thanks to the generous agreement of NEOC -- we decided to make the whole event a fundraiser for our fabulous USA Ski-Orienteering team, of which Alex and Ali are the star members, to help them get to the next World Championships in Kazakhstan in 2013.

At that point the early and important stuff had been done, and the organizational pace slackened dramatically for three months. But the entries were starting to flow in. We were hoping for 150 for the 2 A meets and maybe 50-75 for the three club events. But really, no idea what we would get.

Mid-April, 6 weeks to go, time to get serious about the course-setting. I was doing the courses at Earl's Trails, with Alex and Ali vetting. Alex took care of UMass, with Phil vetting. Ali planned the courses at Cemetery Hill, with Phil vetting there too. And Phil did Mt. Tom with me vetting. And all 5 of us taking care of the myriad of things that have to be done to pull off a successful event, times 5.

And slowly but surely things came together. The courses got finalized and checked. Maps were printed. Equipment secured from NEOC and borrowed from Western Connecticut OC. Jim Pashetto coordinated all the computer work, recruiting Ed Despard and Valerie Meyer to help at the events. And the Ski-O community provided a lot of volunteer help – picking up controls, manpower for moving all the equipment, organizing parking.

And then the weekend was here. The weather was dry (yay!) but hot and humid (boo!). About 200 orienteers came (yay!). No controls went missing (yay!). Lots of people pitched in to help, always with a smile (yay!). And from what I could tell, lots of people went home happy after a very busy and very varied 5-day, all done in 29 hours (yay, once more!).

The results will show how everyone did. I would just like to thank NEOC as a whole for its support of the 5-day, and all the people that volunteered so much of their time –

Adrian Owens and Calvin Underwood, starts
Ed Despard, Valerie Meyer, Jim Pashetto, Valerie Murray, results
Rick Worner, Linda Kohn, Lindsay Worner, parking
Ken Walker Sr, Ken Walker Jr, Greg Walker, Stina Bridgeman, Adrian Owens, Eddie Bergeron, Ian Smith, control pick-up
Jim Arsenault, Dean Sturtevant, Mika Latva-Kokko, Aims Coney, Joanne Sankus, Earl LaVallee, Sandy Fillebrown, whatever needed to be done, including a lot of carrying of equipment
Alan Young and Dan Barker, map exchange operation on day 5
Bob Lux, medical director
Eddie Bergeron, Earl's Trails LIDAR basemap
JJ Cote, Earl's Trails drafting
Boris Granovski, Earl's Trails course consulting

So the 5-Day is over. All feedback from the parks is that they were delighted to have us. Other than wishing it had been a little cooler, things went as well as, or even better, than we had hoped. It was a memorable weekend. Thank you to all who came and enjoyed the orienteering in Western Mass.

Peter Gagarin, Meet Director
And the rest of the Gang of 5 – Alex Jospe, Ali Crocker, Phil Bricker, Gail Gagarin.