

Polar Bear Grand Tour Newsletter

Pre-season 2023-24

AMA District II

PolarBearGrandTour.com



Ready to Ride!

By: Jim Conway, Chairman

I hope everyone had a great summer. If you're like me on the really hot days, you're thinking ahead to crisp, cool, even cold, riding. You're looking forward to seeing your Polar Bear friends again. Welcome to the 46th season of the Polar Bear Grand Tour!

If you're not familiar, this is the only organized winter riding schedule in the world. When other riders put their bikes away, we pull out our heavy jackets, chaps, riding pants, electrics and hippo hands. Our season starts the last Sunday of October and finishes late April. Every Sunday except holidays, we have a destination ride somewhere in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania or Delaware. It's an amazing experience to see hundreds of riders show up on a frosty Sunday with snow on the ground. Every destination offers lunch if you want to thaw out before heading home. We offer patches and pins on a points system to commemorate your winter riding props.

You don't need to sign up for the Grand Tour to join us. Just visit the website:

www.PolarBearGrandTour.com, pick a Sunday and show up. If you like it, sign up. (Registration is only required if you want a coveted Polar Bear patch.) In the past, attendance was limited to 550

registered riders. And we hit that mark before Covid came. Despite issues it raised, we rode through the pandemic by adopting rules changes and other no-contact measures. Now we're back to a "new normal."

Like everything post Covid I guess, our participation numbers are climbing. Attendance was up last year. That said, we have room for more riders. So please pass this newsletter along to your friends and post it with your riding club.





Ready to Ride continued

Current Bears take note; we have some changes for the 2023-24 season. Please make sure I have your current email so you can stay informed. I also use email for the rare weather cancellation. So, if you're reading a printed copy of this newsletter, please send me your info.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we can always use a couple more volunteers. We don't want to burn out the existing staff. If you think you would like to volunteer, please contact me. Let me know how you'd like to help. Except for the flight leaders who faithfully attend our meets and tally our points, staff members work on their own schedule and timeline.

See you in October,

Jim Conway

PBGT2020@gmail.com

Schedule Changes

Sign-in is now from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m.

Because Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and Easter all fall on Sundays this season, we will eliminate one stop in April. We want to finish before the weather gets too warm! Be sure to check the schedule if you're going for those gold rockers and coveted 60-point pins.

New Location

Buck Hill Brewery takes the place of Pub 199 on March 3.

Address: 45 State Route 94, Blairstown, NJ 07825. Phone: 908-854-5300. Website: <https://BuckHillBrewery.com>.

The restaurant features farm to table, locally-sourced foods. Not sure what menu they'll have for the Polar Bears this winter, but the summer fare looks very tasty. For example, current lunch specials come with fries and include: a Wagyu Burger for \$22, Ruben and pulled pork sandwiches for \$15 and a BLAT for \$14 (bacon, lettuce, avocado and tomato). They have motorcycles-only parking and understand our vibe.



While Pub 199 was a nice place, they were cash only. They didn't offer coffee and sold water. Their kitchen didn't open until noon. Those were issues for some members. It was fun to see all the animal mounts on the walls. And they always had a roaring fire going for us. We thank Pub 199 for their hospitality.

Special thanks to Ride Coordinators Sal and Charlie for finding Buck Hill. They take their duties seriously, starting a year in advance, contacting every venue multiple times before and in season, ensuring a great experience for our Bears.





Rules Changes

New sign-in start time: 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. Due to some confusion at some destinations we moved the sign-in start time a half hour later.

Elimination of Flights A and B. Going forward all members will be included on just one list. Furthermore, we will continue to use the expedited sign-in procedures; no sign-in books.

Selfie Rule 06 stays. Initiated during Covid, this rule proved very popular for our members. You may use it only three times this riding season.

Take a picture of you and your motorcycle and the destination's sign. Forward the pic with your name and roundtrip mileage to: PBG2020@gmail.com. You can visit the scheduled stop within a five-day window starting the Friday before the assigned date until the Tuesday following.



Earn Pre-season Extra Points

You can earn extra Polar Bear points even before the season begins.

The AMA District II sanctioned Dawn Patrol Labor Day Run is September 3rd, sign in 9:00 a.m. – noon. (Rain date September 17.) You earn two points for signing in plus your roundtrip mileage points from your home to the ride starting point: Bradley Gardens Fire House, 24 Old York Road, Bridgewater, NJ 08807. End site and picnic noon – 4 p.m. Dawn Patrol Clubhouse, 106 Robert Street, Bradley Gardens, NJ.

<https://www.facebook.com/DawnPatrolMC>

Remember too, you can earn two points for donating (or attempting to donate) blood. Please provide documentation. You don't have to ride your bike to the donation site, but if you do you can also earn regular mileage points. Please be careful riding after donating blood.



Order T-Shirts and Sweatshirts

We will be taking orders for Polar Bear Grand Tour t-shirts and sweatshirts again this year. Get your order in at the first few runs and we'll try to have them ready for O'Connors, December 10. There are so few of us riders who can legitimately and proudly wear the Polar Bear shirt.

I get a lot of questions and comments when I wear mine to other motorcycle events. No, we don't jump in the water. Yes, you can ride your bike all year-round. No, I don't get cold. (That last one is maybe a bit of a stretch.)

We have two new Quartermasters: Steve Obermeier and Rob Schanbacher. Be sure to introduce yourself.





Staff Changes

By: Jim Conway, Chairman

I want to thank Gary Rosen, Alex Meller and Joan Roselli for their volunteer efforts to support the Polar Bears over these past years. All are stepping down from their staff positions.

Joan was Flight B leader for many years. She put in countless hours attending just about every Sunday, then tallying all those points for us during the week. Joan had a great personality and a wonderful wit. We'll miss her but she moved to South Carolina. And although it would be massive mileage points, she cannot attend our meets. (Although if I know Joan, she might pay us a surprise visit.)

Gary and Alex took up the Quartermaster job then carried it through Covid. They did a great job bringing back our beloved Polar Bear tees and sweats last season, just in time for the 45th anniversary logo. It was a monumental job working with the production companies trying to reorganize coming out of Covid restrictions.

Steve Obermeier and Rob Schanbacher agreed to pick up Quartermaster duties. Steve is working on some ideas to bring back the Polar Bear Grand Tour bike flags and maybe some other swag.



About Jim Conway

By: Chris Loynd, Newsletter Editor

Unless you are brand new to the Polar Bears, you've met Jim Conway our new Chairperson. He stepped up in the face of a pandemic to take over this important volunteer job.

Jim currently rides a 2008 Goldwing that he bought from a fellow Polar Bear. He also has an FZ-07 Yamaha. He made his own tour pack for it and rode it to Michigan. His first bike was a Yamaha V Star 650.

Jim came to riding later in his life. "My wife passed away in 2008. My daughters had their own families. I kind of felt left alone, hanging out by myself. My wife was such a big part of my life. But she was never interested in riding, even though I always was. So, I took the motorcycle rider course," he explained.





About Jim Conway continued

Jim was introduced to the Polar Bear Grand Tour through an Old Bridge (NJ) riders' group. After two years he was hooked. He was then riding with a group out of Waretown, NJ. In 2010 there was a bad rainstorm and the group couldn't get to the destination. Jim declared that the next year he would ride every week. And he did. Jim has been a perfect attendance Polar Bear since 2011. So he was sure as Chairman he could show up to log us in at every meet. "My family knows where I am every winter Sunday," he said. He also had volunteer experience. Before becoming Chairman, Jim had helped John Bachota with Flight A responsibilities.

Meanwhile, former Chairperson Bob Hartpence had for several years hinted to the entire club he was ready to retire. In August of 2020, now well into Covid, Butch from AMA District II called Jim. "Bob stepped down and recommended you," Butch said. (As you see on this newsletter, on our website and on that liability form you sign, the Polar Bear Grand Tour is sanctioned by AMA District II.)

Jim wasn't so sure. "I'm not the same kind of guy as Bob," he said to Butch. "I'm not that outgoing with people." Still, Butch and Jim both agreed they wanted to keep the Polar Bears going through the pandemic. Jim said "yes."

Shy or no, Jim got a banner made and started campaigning the Polar Bear Grand Tour at local bike events that very summer.

Next, he had to figure a way to handle club logistics under Covid restrictions. "I tried to do the best for the members themselves; so they had a place to go," he said. He worked with volunteer staff to create sign-in procedures that could be done outside in the parking lot. Jim went electronic on the flight logs so riders didn't have to touch anything. He created Google Sheets he then shared online with flight leaders. He came up with a selfi option. Staff decided not to do shirts that year. "We had no idea how many riders would show up. And I didn't want to expose the volunteers," Jim explained.

He's looking forward to a strong 2023-24 season. "The recovery is happening. Last season things started to return to normal. All the venues were open. Number of riders is picking up. We had our first Maryland person riding with the club. Bucks County, PA and Camden County, NJ HOG groups are showing up with more riders, as are the Ramapo, Unified Harley Riders and others."

Jim added, "I'm going to do this 'till I can't go anymore. Between now and then, I'm trying to get the Polar Bears to a place where I can hand off a vibrant Grand Tour to the next Chairman someday. Meanwhile, I'm looking forward to a lot of fine winter rides with all my friends."

