

John Morton – Founder’s Award 2023

By Jonathan Wiesel

Over the past 50+ years, John has seen dramatic evolutions in Nordic sports and industry – from wood skis to synthetics, wool to spandex; plus, the introduction of grooming and XC skating, snowmobiles supplemented by snowcats and ATVs, narrow classic trails often giving way to groomed highways, snowshoeing and fatbiking joining XC trails, and more. Over these years, he has been a high school English teacher, broadcast journalist, novelist, newspaper columnist, and served in Vietnam. Based in Vermont, John has also cross country skied around the world; been an international-caliber biathlete; biathlon and college XC skiing coach; and as far as I’m concerned (this is homage from a friendly competitor) he’s the premier Nordic ski trail designer in North America, maybe anywhere. After all, he’s had both recreational and competition projects all over the snowbelt states, South Korea, China...

As a trail designer since 1989, Morty has worked with schools and colleges, lodges and real estate projects, alpine resort and “pure” cross country areas, communities and private landowners, ski clubs and golf courses and non-profits... Unlike some designers, he’s aware that really tough trails are only suited to elite athletes, whereas the great majority of our clientele are recreational skiers.

Some of his clients are names known through our business – Trapp Family Lodge VT; Town of Breckenridge, CO; Dartmouth College, NH; most recently Ariens Nordic in Wisconsin, CCSAA’s new member...

Trails... trails are our bread and butter, our mainstay and main menu item in the Nordic industry. John has been a leader in planning, design, and construction of sustainable, environmentally responsible, financially viable, *fun* recreational and racing trail networks for cross country skiing, running, walking, snowshoeing, hiking, biking, equestrian use and more.

The criteria for CCSAA’s Founder’s Award are:

- In recognition of their leadership within the cross country ski industry
- In recognition of their implementation of an operational practice to be emulated by others in the cross country ski industry
- In recognition of their vision in driving forward the Cross Country Ski Areas Association
- In recognition of their promotion of recreational cross country skiing

John Morton meets all these criteria, with flying colors!