

## Appendix E: Area and Visitor Use Information

### *Payette National Forest – Location Overview*

The following sections are meant to provide applicants with a brief overview of the Payette National Forest and surrounding local communities. Applicants are highly encouraged to conduct their own in-depth research on the offered use areas before submitting an application.

Payette National Forest is located in central western Idaho, in parts of Valley, Idaho, Adams, and Washington Counties (the offered operating areas encompass parts of Adams and Washington Counties). The Forest manages approximately 2.3 million acres of lands. It is bordered by Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (managed by Wallowa-Whitman National Forest), Salmon-Challis National Forest to the east, Boise National Forest to the south, and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest to the north. Payette National Forest is part of the Intermountain Region of the Forest Service, which includes Nevada, Utah, and parts of Idaho and Wyoming, as well as a very small area in California. The Payette National Forest Supervisor's Office is located in McCall, Idaho and oversees five Ranger Districts: McCall, New Meadows, Council, Weiser, and Krassel. For more information on Payette National Forest, please visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/payette>.

Several smaller communities lie in close proximity to the three offered operating areas. These include New Meadows (Adams County), Council (Adams County), Cambridge (Washington County), and Weiser (Washington County). All of these communities provide goods and services that have traditionally supported recreationists coming to Payette National Forest. These communities can provide a base of operations for outfitters and guides offering services to clients.

### *Popular Winter Recreation Activities on Payette National Forest and the Surrounding Area*

The Forest offers a wide range of winter recreation activities. Snowmobiling, downhill skiing, snowboarding, and Nordic skiing are the most popular winter sports, but there are also many opportunities to snowshoe, icefish and sled, among other things. The area boasts 500 miles of groomed snowmobile routes, with 245 miles of groomed routes on Payette National Forest. The Forest also hosts two ski resorts with some of the best skiing to be found in Idaho.

### *Winter Recreation Use Patterns and Visitor Use on the Payette National Forest*

In 1998 a team of research scientists and forest staff developed a recreation sampling system called National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM), which provides recreation use estimations at the national forest, regional and national levels. The first round of surveys on Payette National Forest was conducted in 2003, with additional surveys completed in 2008, 2013, and 2018. Participation rates were estimated for three classes of winter recreation activities on the Forest: downhill skiing or snowboarding, snowmobiling, and cross-country/Nordic skiing. The table below provides estimates of overall visitation and winter sports participation on the Forest. These figures are necessarily rough estimates and consideration must be given to snow pack and snow season length variations for given years having large effects on yearly snow sports based visitation. The large range of overall visitation shown in yearly estimates may also be related in part to errors in survey sample design and implementation in a given cycle rather than an actual up/down trend in visits.

#### ***Estimated Annual Visits and Winter Recreation Visits to Payette National Forest***

Survey Cycle Year	Annual Number of Forest Visits	Number of Snowmobile Visits	Number of Ski/Snowboard Visits	Number of Nordic Skiing/Snowshoeing Visits
2003*	621,630	37,298	130,542	24,865
2008	883,000	86,534	130,684	56,512

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2013	397,000	68,681	125,055	27,790
2018	374,000	23,188	95,370	26,928

\* Data collection in 2003 varied in some respects from later survey years and data may not be directly comparable.

The NVUM data also revealed that most people coming to Payette National Forest come primarily from a relatively localized area, characterized by Valley, Washington, Ada, Payette, Canyon, and Adams Counties. Out-of-state visitors are greatly outnumbered by Idahoans and these are dominated by visitors from Oregon and Washington.

***Payette National Forest Visits by Distance Traveled\*\****

Miles from survey respondents' homes to interview location	National Forest Visits (%)		
	2008	2013	2018
0-25 mi.	22.5	25.1	27.5
26-50 mi.	2.8	8.8	6.5
51-75 mi.	2.4	4.0	9.2
76-100 mi.	24.0	21.6	24.3
101-200 mi.	29.0	21.9	14.7
201-500mi.	8.1	12.4	11.8
Over 500 mi.	11.0	6.2	6.1

\*\* Self-reported estimates.

For additional visitor use information for Payette National Forest and other National Forest System lands, please visit: <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/nvum/results/>

***Payette National Forest Snowmobile Outfitter-Guide Use Levels***

Snowmobile Outfitter-Guides 1 and 2 both operate in the same use area north and east of McCall and New Meadows. This area consists of approximately 326,259 acres and encompasses areas surrounding Bally Mountain, Patrick Butte, Wear Eagle Mountain, and Upper Payette Lake. The area's eastern boundary is the South Fork of the Salmon River (see the Payette National Forest *Forest-wide Outfitter and Guide Project Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact* for maps and specific details of the operating area, labeled "Area 1" therein). Both began on-Forest operations in the winter of 2016-2017.

***Payette National Forest Snowmobile Outfitter-Guide 1***

Timeframe	Service Days Used (of 300 possible)
2017†	106
2017-2018	137
2018-2019	297

† reported use started January 2017.

***Payette National Forest Snowmobile Outfitter-Guide 2***

Timeframe	Service Days Used (of 300 possible)
2016-2017	84
2017-2018	153
2018-2019	196

Snowmobile Outfitter Guide 3 operated in Area 1 as shown in this Prospectus (see Appendix B: *Maps of Use Areas*). This Outfitter-Guide ceased operations after the 2018-2019 season.

***Payette National Forest Snowmobile Outfitter Guide 3***

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Service Days Used (of 300 possible)</b>
2014-2015	79
2015-2016	128
2016-2017	150
2017-2018	163
2018-2019	135

*Issues and Conditions to Consider Related to the Winter Environment*

The winter sports industry is dependent on reliable snowfall year to year. However, we expect climate change to contribute to warmer winters, which may result in unpredictable snowpacks and lengths of the winter seasons. Applicants are reminded that climatic changes may impact the amounts of visitation to the area and visitors' participation in recreation activities, which is related to the profitability of snowmobile-based businesses. Applicants are further encouraged to review historical and future weather trends with organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service, or other organizations that provide similar data for the west central Idaho area.

Snowmobiling is a winter recreation activity that takes place in varied terrain across the Payette National Forest. Given that snowmobile recreation often takes place in remote settings, commercial operators should be prepared to deal with extreme conditions and remain cognizant that locations offered up through this prospectus may be far removed from immediate assistance should emergencies occur. Clients should be accurately appraised of potential exposure to adverse environmental conditions and be properly outfitted with clothing and equipment to deal with these elements.

Avalanches occur both naturally and based upon human triggers. Snowmobiling is a significant human avalanche trigger in susceptible terrain and snowpack. While the Payette Avalanche Center for the Payette National Forest does provide advisories during the winter recreating season, operators should have an understanding of avalanche-prone terrain and factors affecting avalanche conditions. Operators should also have an understanding of the most current avalanche rescue procedures and equipment in case of an avalanche affecting clients or employees.