

For Immediate Release: February 24, 2009
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CROSS-COUNTRY SKIERS AND SNOWSHOERS EMBRACING YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK AS WINTER SEASON BRINGS FURTHER EASING OF POLLUTION AND COMMOTION

Word Spreads at Tradeshows and on Email to Check Out New, Quieter
Wonderland

Boise, Idaho—Beautifully clad in deep snow, famously rich in wildlife and boasting the world's greatest concentration of geysers, Yellowstone National Park would seem logically to have been a magnet for cross-country skiers and snowshoers for decades. Yet visitors who prefer quiet national park experiences under their own power have been strikingly underrepresented in Yellowstone for a generation. Turned off by the disrupting influence of snowmobiles, they have largely kept away. Now that is changing.

"We are definitely seeing word spread this winter about the improved ambience in Yellowstone. The buzz is not only among our members in this region; it's also spreading on the grapevine that connects skiers and snowshoers nationally," said Mark Menlove, Executive Director of Winter Wildlands Alliance, a Boise-based non-profit organization that provides a voice for the country's 12 million cross-country skiers and snowshoers.

"Our members are raving about the Parks' great trail conditions and describing the thrill of getting a workout while watching geysers and wildlife," Menlove added. He noted that the changes in Yellowstone this winter mentioned most frequently by skiers include:

- Tour businesses who provide motorized access into the Park dispensing trail information and helpful advice about cross-country skiing and snowshoeing opportunities;
- A noticeable increase in snowcoaches equipped with ski racks; and
- A welcoming atmosphere in the town of West Yellowstone where more skiers have been opting to combine visits into the Park with classic and skate skiing on the town's groomed "Rendezvous" trail system as well as the "Riverside Trail"

connecting West Yellowstone with the Madison River inside the Park.

West Yellowstone's Chamber of Commerce and various tour businesses have recently commented publicly on the influx of skiers to their town and its welcome contribution to their economy.

<http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/articles/2009/02/20/news/40tourists.txt>

Most skiers and snowshoers are not specifically counted as skiers and snowshoers when they visit Yellowstone because they typically enter the Park on snowcoaches. However, the National Park Service does count those who actually ski through Yellowstone's entrances and its latest visitation statistics reflect this sample has increased dramatically—up 88 percent at the mid-point of the winter season at all four entrances and 116 percent at the West Entrance compared to the same date last winter. "YELL Winter Report" at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/park.cfm?parkid=421>

Yellowstone's latest visitation statistics also reflect that the number of snowmobiles entering the Park by the midpoint of this winter season was 44 percent lower than at the same point last winter. This winter the average has been about 150 snowmobiles per day.

Menlove said many skiers and snowshoers who have visited the Park this winter have emphasized to fellow skiers and snowshoers that the additional reductions in snowmobile traffic this winter have made a big difference. "They're saying noise and pollution is still apparent but not as overwhelming. They're recommending other skiers and snowshoers check out Yellowstone and lend support to businesses that are helping move the park in a healthier and quieter direction."

Menlove summarized: "We're seeing excitement and hope. Skiers and snowshoers in many ways reflect the large percentage of Americans who in surveys and public processes consistently say it's extremely important to them to experience clean air and quiet on their public lands. With Yellowstone moving more obviously in a healthier direction there's excitement and increasing hope that its transition to lower-impact forms of winter enjoyment, including skiing and snowshoeing, will continue."

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