National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior



FINDING AID

WINTER USE RECORDS 1985-Present (bulk dates: 1999-2004)

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Yellowstone National Park Archives P O Box 168 Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 199066

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HISTORY

Public access to Yellowstone National Park during the winter months has been a controversial topic since its establishment. There have been those who have desired to view the wonders of the park during even the harshest of winters, but traversing the park during the winter months has always been dangerous.

Skiing and snowshoeing were the most popular ways to get around Yellowstone National Park in the winter until the invention of the snowmobile in the 1960s. More visitors have come to the park with their snowmobiles causing the skiers and snowshoers to complain about the noise and air pollution from the snowmobiles. Over the years, Yellowstone National Park and the National Park Service have tried to create a balance between keeping the park open to visitors in the winter months and preserving the natural landscape.

Although there were previous plans for winter visitor use within Yellowstone National Park, a concentrated winter use program was not developed until about 1985, with the first winter use management plan being released in 1990.

1990 – The National Park Service issued the first winter use environmental assessment (EA) for Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park.

1997 – The National Park Service was sued by groups who believed the bison used the groomed roads to leave the park which then led to their slaughter. This caused the National Park Service to develop a new winter use environmental impact statement (EIS).

1999 – The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) was released and the National Park Service received close to 46,000 public comment letters, phone calls, and e-mails.

2000 – The final environmental impact statement (FEIS) was released. It banned snowmobiles from Yellowstone National Park and instead converted all transportation within the park to snowcoaches only. A snowmobile group then files a lawsuit which challenged the ban.

2001 – The National Park Service settled the lawsuit with the snowmobile group by agreeing to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS).

2002 – The draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS) was released and the National Park Service received over 357,000 comments from the public.

2003-2004 – A final rule was published allowing 950 snowmobiles into the park daily provided they were guided through the park and that the snowmobiles met the Best Available Technology (BAT) standards. A Federal court decision voided all previous decisions so the National Park Service had to write a new environmental assessment (EA). This one allowed only 750 guided

Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobiles into the park daily. This winter use plan received about 95,000 public responses.

2007 – The winter use environmental impact statement (EIS) was released. This one only allowed 540 guided Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobiles into the park daily. The National Park Service received 122,000 public comments on this plan.

2008 – A Federal court decision cancelled the 2007 winter use plan. A modified version of the 2003-2004 plan was followed instead, but it allowed 720 guided Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobiles into the park daily.

2009 – An interim winter use plan was in effect for two winter seasons. This plan allowed only 318 guided Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches into the park daily.

2010 – The National Park Service began preparing the next long term winter use plan.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

WINTER USE RECORDS 1985-Present (bulk dates: 1999-2004)

| CATALOG NUMBER | YELL 199066 |
|----------------|---|
| VOLUME | 157.5 LF |
| DESCRIPTION | This record group contains materials that relate to the development of a Winter Use Program for visitor recreation purposes within Yellowstone National Park during the winter seasons from 1985 to the present. |
| | This is an ongoing collection with more recent materials being added to it as those records become inactive. |
| | The Media Series consists of photographic slides relating to winter recreation in Yellowstone National Park from 1995 to 2000, VHS tapes of winter use promotional clips and interviews, and winter use plan presentation and work flow charts. |
| | Each of the Winter Use Plan Series generally contains the same three types of information, which are grouped together. The first is the administration group which contains draft and final winter use plans, internal reviews and comments, legal actions, and general correspondence. The second is the research group which consists of materials used in writing the winter use plan such as various air quality and noise pollution studies, wildlife management surveys, Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobile studies, and winter use plans used by other national parks. The third is the public response group which contains newsletters, public meeting transcripts, and letters written by the public and sent to the National Park Service in response to the various drafts and winter use plans. |

| ORGANIZATION | Organized into six series: Series I, Media; Series II, 1990 Plan; Series III, 1997 Plan; Series IV, 2000 Plan; Series V, 2003 Plan; Series VI, 2007 Plan. |
|-------------------------|---|
| PROVENANCE | Records were created by the Yellowstone National Park's Natural Resources Division and the Special Management Assistant in the Superintendent's office. |
| RESTRICTIONS | YES |
| ASSOCIATED MATERIALS | Administration Records (A Series), Land and Recreation Records (L Series) Yellowstone National Park Combined Archives |

HIERARCHY

I. Media

II. 1990 Plan, 1985-1990

III. 1997 Plan

IV. 2000 Plan

V. 2003 Plan

VI. 2007 Plan

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Media

The media formats within this series include photographic slides relating to winter recreation in Yellowstone National Park, hand-drawn pictorial presentation charts and laminated work flow charts used to show the process of creating a winter use plan, and VHS tapes of promotional clips and interviews relating to winter use in Yellowstone National Park and winter recreational equipment.

II. 1990 Plan, 1985-1990

Within this series are the Winter Use Program's administrative records, the 1990 Winter Use Plan, the wildlife impact studies and park visitation reports used in the research process for the plan, and the public comment letters received during the plan's review period.

III. 1997 Plan

This series contains the Winter Use Program's administrative records, budget information, drafts of the Winter Visitor Use Management and Environmental Impact Statements for Bison Management plans, and the 1997 Temporary Road Closure Environmental Assessment Plan. There are marketing studies, snowmobile accident reports, and snowmobile operations surveys used in the research process for the various drafts and plans. The public comment letters in this series were received during each of the plans' review periods. Some materials relating to the lawsuits filed against the National Park Service are also included in this series because they pertain to the 1997 Plans even though they were filed after the plans were implemented.

IV. 2000 Plan

The contents of this series include the Winter Use Program's administrative records, draft and final 2000 Environmental Impact Statements, and budget information. There are multiple economic impact reports, air and water quality surveys, and wildlife studies used as research materials for the 2000 Winter Use Plan. Because of the controversial nature of this Winter Use Plan there were more public comment letters received during this plan's review period than for the previous plans. More lawsuits were also filed against the National Park Service with some documents being restricted because of Attorney-Client privilege.

V. 2003 Plan

This series contains the Winter Use Program's administrative records, budget information, and the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. There are air quality and noise pollution reports, snowmobile emissions studies, wildlife management assessments, tourism marketing plans, and winter visitation surveys used as research materials for the 2003 Winter Use Plan. The controversy surrounding this plan created a lot of public response in the form of letters and e-mails. More lawsuits were also filed against the National Park Service, including the Fund for Animals lawsuit, with some documents being restricted because of Attorney-Client privilege.

VI. 2007 Plan

Within this series are the Winter Use Program's administrative records, budget information, and the 2007 Winter Use Plans. There are Best Available Technology (BAT) and snowmobile impact studies, avalanche hazard assessments, air quality and noise pollution reports, tourism marketing plans, and visitor surveys used as research materials for the 2007 Winter Use Plan. The public response to the controversy surrounding this plan generated many letters, form letters, and e-mails. The Winter Use Program kept a sampling of the responses and transferred all of the comments to a digital database. More lawsuits were also filed against the National Park Service with some documents being restricted because of Attorney-Client privilege.

CONTAINER LIST

| Series Nbr 01 | Series Title Media |
|--|---|
| Box Nbr | Title |
| 1 | Presentation and Work Flow Charts, Winter Use Photographic Slides, 1995-2000. DVD: Copies of Public News Broadcasts on Yellowstone Winter Use, 1994-2004. DVD: "Winter Comes to Yellowstone" |
| 2 | VHS Tapes Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks: Winter Use 2000 Yellowstone National Park: Winter Use 2000 Gwaii Haanas Visitor Survey CBS Evening News with Dan Rather, March 4, 2004 Yellow Bus in Winter at Yellowstone National Park, Feb. 4, 2004 Montana PBS Interview, December 2004 8th Yellowstone Interagency Science Conference, Sept. 11, 2002 West Entrance & West District, 1994 Amanda Hardy: Elk & Bison Responses to Recreation in Yellowstone National Park Thesis Presentation, Oct. 17, 2001 NBC Nightly News, Dec. 17, 2003 The Red Bus Rides Again The Daily Show: Endangered Snowmobiles, January 2003 Winter Use |
| | |
| Series Nbr 02 | Series Title 1990 Plan |
| 02 | |
| | 1990 Plan Title [Administration] Yellowstone/Grand Teton Winter Use Survey (Final) 1990. Winter Use Plan Assessment, 1990. Winter Use Plan, Phase I (Draft), 1988. Evaluation Report |
| 02 Box Nbr | 1990 Plan Title [Administration] Yellowstone/Grand Teton Winter Use Survey (Final) 1990. Winter Use Plan Assessment, 1990. Winter Use Plan, Phase I (Draft), 1988. Evaluation Report and Input Material [Administration] Internal Winter Use Review, Staff Comments, Internal |
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| 02 Box Nbr 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 1990 Plan Title [Administration] Yellowstone/Grand Teton Winter Use Survey (Final) 1990. Winter Use Plan Assessment, 1990. Winter Use Plan, Phase I (Draft), 1988. Evaluation Report and Input Material [Administration] Internal Winter Use Review, Staff Comments, Internal Correspondence, Internal Comments [Administration] Winter Use Report (Draft), 1987. Winter Use Planning, Internal Comments [Research] Winter Dollar Cost, 1970s. Effected Environment, 1986. Sensitive Areas, Background Information [Research] Notes from Winter Use Reports and Surveys, Wildlife Impact, Concessions Reports, Environmental Assessment, 1980 [Research] Winter Use Statistics, 1968-1988. Park Visitation Census Responses, 1983-1984. Public Response Letters, 1985-1988. Winter Use articles, 1990. Comments on Draft, 1990 |
| 02 Box Nbr 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1990 Plan Title [Administration] Yellowstone/Grand Teton Winter Use Survey (Final) 1990. Winter Use Plan Assessment, 1990. Winter Use Plan, Phase I (Draft), 1988. Evaluation Report and Input Material [Administration] Internal Winter Use Review, Staff Comments, Internal Correspondence, Internal Comments [Administration] Winter Use Report (Draft), 1987. Winter Use Planning, Internal Comments [Research] Winter Dollar Cost, 1970s. Effected Environment, 1986. Sensitive Areas, Background Information [Research] Notes from Winter Use Reports and Surveys, Wildlife Impact, Concessions Reports, Environmental Assessment, 1980 [Research] Winter Use Statistics, 1968-1988. Park Visitation Census Responses, 1983-1984. Public Response Letters, 1985-1988. Winter Use articles, 1990. |

| Series Nbr 03 | Series Title 1997 Plan |
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| Box Nbr | Title |
| 1 | [Administration] Winter Road Closure Environmental Assessment, 1997, Internal |
| | Review Comments on Draft, Draft of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Bison |
| | Management, 1997 |
| 2 | [Administration] Internal Review Comments on Draft, Draft Revisions, Temporary Road Closure Environmental Assessment (final), 1997 |
| 3 | [Administration] Comment Letters from Winter Visitor Use Management (WVUM) Draft Public Review, Public Agency Meetings, Team Meetings, Comments on Final Draft |
| 4 | [Research] Snow Survey Report, 1996. Open House Comment Letters, Visitor Use Management, West Yellowstone Survey, 1997. Marketing, West Entrance Closure |
| 5 | [Research] Winter Visitor Use Management Work Plan, 1993. Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) Meeting Notes, 1994-1995. Issues Review 1994 |
| 6 | [Research] Concession Winter Use Contracts, 1995. Winter Use Planning |
| | Correspondence, Winter Use Policies and Practices |
| 7 | [Research] Meeting Notes, 1997. Public Involvement Strategy, Yellowstone |
| | Alternatives, Bison Feeding Contingency Plan Report, Shoshone N.F. Safety & |
| | Cooperation, Greater Yellowstone Winter Visitor Use Management Work Group |
| 8 | [Research] Meeting Notes, 1995-1997 |
| 9 | [Research] Snowmobile Accident Reports, 1987-1993 |
| 10 | [Research] Snowmobile Accident Reports, 1993-1995 |
| 11 | [Research] Correspondence, Newsletters, Guided Snowmobile Tour Prospectus, 1994. Snowmobile Operations, 1997 |
| 12 | [Public Response] Winter Use Letters, 1994. Congressional Responses, 1994. Letters, 1995-1997 |
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| 14 | [Public Response] Winter Visitor Use Management (WVUM) Comment Letters |
| 15 | [Public Response] Winter Road Closure Environmental Assessment (EA) Public Comment Letters |
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| | Comment Letters, Public Comment Letter (A-K) |
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| 21 | [Public Response] Winter Road Closure Environmental Assessment (Final) Public Comment Letters, 1997-1998 |
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| 26 | [Budget] Fiscal Year Budget Materials, 1992-1997 |

| Series Nbr 04 | Series Title 2000 Plan |
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| Box Nbr | Title |
| 1 | [Administration] Yellowstone and Grand Teton Environmental Impact Statement (Draft), 1999 |
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| 4 | [Administration] Winter Use Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Timelines, 1999. International Association of Snowmobile Administrators, 1999 |
| 5 | [Administration] Funding for Research for Winter Environmental Impact Statement (WEIS), 2000 |
| 6 | [Administration] Winter Concessions Information, 1991-1999. Scoping Documents, 1998 |
| 7 | [Administration] Internal Correspondence, 1997-1998. Memorandum of Agreement Documents, 1998 |
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| 9 | [Administration] Winter Use Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Hearings, 1999 |
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| 11 | [Administration] General Correspondence, 1998-1999 |
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| 13 | [Administration] General Correspondence, 2000. Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) |
| 14 | [Administration] Record of Decision for Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) |
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| 20 | [Administration] E-mail Correspondence on Snowmobile Rules and Policies, 2000-2001 |
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| 22 | [Administration] Internal Comments on Revised Draft, 1998-1999 |
| 23 | [Administration] Internal Comments on Revised Draft, 1998-1999. Comments on |
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| 24 | [Administration] Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Correspondence, 2000. Comment Summaries, 2000 |
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| 26 | [Administration] Staff Comments on Draft, 1999. Correspondence on Draft, 1999 |
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| 36 | [Research] Winter Road Closure Environmental Assessment (EA) Analysis Outline, 1997. Yellowstone Financial Overview, 1997 – Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) Environmental Assessment (EA), 1997 |
| 37 | [Research] Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), 1998. Snowmobile Conference Notes, 2000 |
| 38 | [Research] Memo to Superintendent about Opening Roads, 1967-1968. Senate Hearings, 1967. History of Winter Use in Yellowstone Master's Thesis, 1986. Development of Snowmobile Policy Articles, 1999 |
| 39 | [Research] Comments on Winter Use Management, 1997. Yellowstone as United Nations World Heritage Site, 1984-1996. Environmental Impact Statement Project Agreement, 1999 |
| 40 | [Research] Letter to Tribal Representatives, 1999. Meeting Minutes, 1999-2000. Federal Register Notices, 1998-1999 |
| 41 | [Research] Briefing Statements for Sub-Committee Meeting, 1999 |
| 42 | [Research] Newspaper Articles, 1995-1997 |
| 43 | [Research] Newspaper Articles, 1998-1999, Winter Visitor Use Management (WVUM) Newsletter, 1998-1999 |
| 44 | [Research] University of Idaho Visitor Survey and Additional Analysis, 1994-1995 |
| 45 | [Research] University of Idaho Visitor Services Report, 1996 |
| 46 | [Research] University of Idaho Visitor Services Report Draft and Final, 1989-1990 |
| 47 | [Research] Correspondence on Social Science and Bioeconomics, 1998-1999 |
| 48 | [Research] Correspondence on Social Science, Bioeconomics and Social Science Correspondence with the University of Montana, 1998-1999 |
| 49 | [Research] Public Opinion Survey Report, 1998. Yellowstone Winter Visitors' Stories Master's Thesis, 1999. National Telephone Survey, 2000 |
| 50 | [Research] Wyoming Visitor Survey, 1997. Idaho Parks Survey, 1994. Air Quality Study, 2000. Wildlife Study, 1999 |
| 51 | [Research] Grand Teton Noise Report, 1994. Snowmobile Accidents, 1994. Grand Teton Incident Reports, 1995-2000 |
| 52 | [Research] West Entrance Air Quality Studies, 1995-2000. Water Quality Studies, 1999-2000 |

| 53 | [Research] Snowmobile Contaminants Workshop, 2000. Water Quality Studies, 2000. |
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| 55 | [Research] Internal Correspondence on Air Quality, 1995-1999 |
| 56 | [Research] Internal Correspondence on Air Quality, 1997-1998 |
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| | Study, 1997 |
| 58 | [Research] Research Permit Applications for Wildlife Studies, 1997. Wildlife Studies, 1997-1999 |
| 59 | [Research] Winter Air Quality Research Grant Proposal and Correspondence, 1997 |
| 60 | [Research] International Association of Snowmobile Administrators Documents, 1999- |
| 00 | 2001. Correspondence on Snowmobiles, 1998-2000 |
| 61 | [Research] Correspondence on National Park Snowmobile Policy, 1999-2000. |
| 01 | Snowmobile Use Survey, 2000 |
| 62 | [Research] Winter Information, 1977. Winter Use Administrative Index, 2000 |
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| 78 | [Public Response] Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), 2000. |
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| | Colorado, Idaho, and Livingston, 1999 |
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| 83 | [Public Response] Public Comment Letters, 1999 |
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| 90 | [Administration and Public Response] Winter Use Plan Administrative Records, 1999-2000 [CDs]. Scoping Comments, 1998 [CD] |

| Series Nbr 05 | Series Title 2003 Plan |
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| Box Nbr | Title |
| 1 | [Administration] Correspondence on Record of Decision, 2003. Memos on Reservation |
| | System, 2002. Correspondence on Delay Rule, 2001-2002. Supplemental |
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| 2 | [Administration and Legal Matters] Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) Lawsuit Settlement Agreement Documents, 2001 [RESTRICTED]. Media Coverage Documents, 2002-2003. Conference Call Notes, 2001-2002 |
| 3 | [Administration] Biological Assessment, 2002-2003. Internal Briefings, 1999-2003. Memos on Budget, 2000-2003 |
| 4 | [Administration] Conference Call Notes, 2002-2003. Grand Teton Draft Winter Use Monitoring Plan, 2001. Notice of Intent, 2001. Operations Information, 1996-2002 |
| 5 | [Administration and Legal Matters] Fund for Animals Lawsuit Briefs. ISMA Lawsuit Briefs. Employee Health Complaints, 2000-2001 [RESTRICTED] |
| 6 | [Administration] Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) Proposed Rule Drafts with Comments, 1999-2003 |
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| 8 | [Administration] Draft Responses to Comments and Internal Review. Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Volume I & II, 2002 |
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| 13 | [Administration] Correspondence and Comments on Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), 2003 |
| 14 | [Administration] Carbon Monoxide and Particulate Matter Air Quality Reports, 2002. Final Internal Review Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (IRDSEIS) |
| 15 | [Administration and Legal Matters] Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Volume I & II, 2003. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests, 2001- 2003. Fund for Animals Lawsuit, 2002-2003 [RESTRICTED] |
| 16 | [Legal Matters] Fund for Animals Lawsuit, 2003 [RESTRICTED] |
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| 21 | [Administration] Correspondence on Training Manuals and Training Courses, 2002- 2003 |

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| | Planners, 2003. Winter Pilot Project, 2001-2002. Press Releases, 2001-2003. Record of |
| | Decision, 2002-2003 |
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| | Feasibility Analysis, 2003. Guided Snowmobile and Snowcoach Tours Prospectus, |
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| 24 | [Administration] Political Correspondence, 2000-2003. Correspondence and Internal |
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| 26 | [Research] Assessment of Air Quality and Air Pollutant in National Parks Study, 1998 |
| 27 | [Research] Correspondence on Air Quality Report, 1999-2001. Air Quality Documents, |
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