



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yellowstone National Park

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 29, 2010 10-005

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307 344-2015

Yellowstone National Park News Release

Scoping For New Long-Term Winter Use Plan Begins

The National Park Service (NPS) published a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on January 29, 2010, announcing the start of public scoping for the long-term Winter Use Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Yellowstone National Park. This long-term plan will guide the management of winter use in the park to ensure that park visitors have a range of appropriate winter opportunities, that these activities are in a suitable setting, and that they do not impair or irreparably harm park resources or values.

Scoping is an opportunity early in the planning and EIS process for the public, organizations, and other agencies to suggest issues and alternatives that should be considered by the NPS in preparing the plan and EIS.

"We begin this process with a clear goal: a winter use plan for Yellowstone National Park consistent with the NPS mission, best available sound science, accurate fidelity to the law, and the long-term public interest," said NPS Director Jon Jarvis. "While the public scoping is just a first step, it is an important one, and the NPS looks forward to receiving comments and learning from them," he noted.

The EIS will consider a variety of alternatives for managing winter use in the park, including: the use of snowmobiles, snowcoaches, and wheeled vehicles; and guiding requirements. The EIS will evaluate the environmental effects of winter use on air quality and visibility, wildlife, natural soundscapes, employee and visitor health and safety, visitor experience, and socioeconomics.

A draft EIS and proposed rule are expected to be released in the spring of 2011 for public review. The NPS intends to complete the EIS process and issue any new regulations prior to the start of the 2011-2012 winter season.

Currently, the park is operating under an interim winter use plan. The interim plan is intended to be in effect for two winter seasons (through the winter of 2010-2011), while the NPS prepares this long-term winter plan. The temporary winter use plan allows for a maximum of 318 snowmobiles in Yellowstone each day. All visitor snowmobiles in Yellowstone must be led by commercial guides. All commercially guided snowmobiles are required to be "Best Available Technology," which are the cleanest and quietest commercially available snowmobiles. Up to 78 snowcoaches are also permitted each day, and they must be commercially guided.

Public scoping comments will be accepted until midnight Eastern Time, March 30, 2010. Comments should be substantive, pertinent, and provide new information not available in earlier winter use planning processes. Respondents are being encouraged to submit their comments online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>. To submit comments in this manner, select "Yellowstone National Park" from the drop down box and then follow the link for the winter use plan.

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Comments may also be mailed to: Winter Use Scoping, Yellowstone National Park, P. O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190. Finally, comments may be hand-delivered to Yellowstone National Park headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming. Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or in any other way than those specified above.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The following is the schedule of public scoping open houses:

February 16, 2010, Idaho Falls, Idaho, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Hilton Garden Inn, 700 Lindsay Blvd.
February 18, 2010, Billings, Montana, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Hilton Garden Inn, 2465 Grand Road.
March 15, 2010, Cheyenne, Wyoming, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Little America Inn and Resort, 200 West Lincolnway.
March 17, 2010, Washington, D.C., from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in The Old Post Office, 12th Street and Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.

A scoping brochure is available at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>. Additional information about winter use planning and visiting the parks in the winter, can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/yell/winteruse.htm>.

- www.nps.gov/yell -