



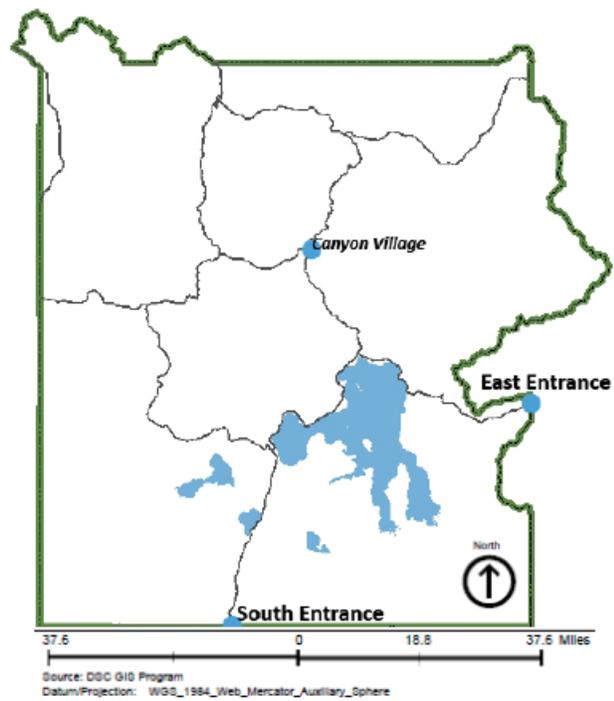
PROPOSED WINTER USE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT ADJUSTMENTS

Yellowstone National Park is proposing two adaptive management adjustments to the 2012-2013 Winter Use Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)/ Record of Decision (ROD).

The first proposed adjustment would align the opening and closing dates of the East Entrance with other park entrances. Under this change, the East Entrance would open no earlier than December 15 and close no later than March 15. The existing seasonal closures were originally implemented due to avalanche safety concerns on Sylvan Pass. With many years of implementation, the NPS now has the operational capacity and expertise to safely open the pass on December 15 and to keep it open until March 15. This change will standardize opening and closing dates for the entire park.

During the existing East Entrance seasonal closures, the park operates below the oversnow vehicle (OSV) capacity set in the SEIS/ROD (107 transportation events instead of 110). Accordingly, existing conditions have provided a small benefit to park resources resulting from the seasonal closures. Adjusting the East Entrance dates to align with the rest of the park means that the park would now allow access up to the capacity established in the SEIS/ROD from December 15-March 15. Air quality, acoustic and soundscape, and wildlife impacts would not exceed established thresholds, or change measurably from existing conditions, because implementing this change would not increase the total daily allocation for motorized access and because existing impacts at full use levels are below thresholds established in the SEIS/ROD. While duration of impacts would expand by twenty days each year, there is little if any potential for daily thresholds to be exceeded.

Yellowstone National Park: East and South Entrances



The second proposed adjustment would change the daily opening time for the South Entrance from 7am to 8am. The current opening time means that contract holders/operators leave Jackson, Wyoming well before sunrise, and before road conditions can be properly assessed and hazards mitigated by NPS staff. The change in opening time at the South Entrance shortens the operating window for motorized access by one hour each day. Adjusting the opening time from 7am to 8am would not alter total transportation events, use patterns, or park resources.

Proposed changes for the East and South Entrance are permitted under the Winter Use SEIS and ROD, which allows for adaptive management so long as environmental impacts would be minimal and would not exceed thresholds established in the plan.

WINTER USE BACKGROUND

Yellowstone National Park manages the amount of OSVs in the park through the allocation of transportation events established under the 2013 SEIS and subsequent “Final Rule” published in the Federal Register. The 2013 Winter Use Rule allows for up to 110 total transportation events each day. A transportation event equals one group of snowmobiles (maximum group size of 10, seasonal average of 7), a noncommercial transportation event (up to 5 snowmobiles), or one snowcoach. Of these transportation events, 50 events are reserved for snowmobiles (46 commercial, 4 non-commercial), and 60 are reserved for snowcoaches. At the highest potential level of use, if all 50 snowmobiles transportation events are used in a single day, there could be a maximum of 480 snowmobiles in the park. However, commercially guided snowmobile transportation events may not exceed an average of 7 snowmobiles per event over the season, so the average number per day would be no higher than 342 snowmobiles. Transportation events are allocated to each winter entrance plus Old Faithful, based on the demand at each of those entrances. The East Entrance is currently allocated 2 of the 46 transportation events for commercially guided snowmobiles, 1 transportation event for non-commercially guided snowmobiles, and 1 event for a commercial snowcoach. Additionally, the impact analysis conducted in the SEIS assumed full utilization of transportation events during the entire winter season, and did not consider the seasonal closures put in place on the East Entrance.

The Yellowstone Superintendent has authority to determine the start and end dates of each winter season, which may begin no earlier than December 15 and ends no later than March 15. There are currently seasonal closures in place for the East Entrance from December 15-21 and March 2-15. As a result, there are 20 fewer days to utilize transportation events from the East Entrance compared to the rest of the park, resulting in up to 25 fewer snowmobiles (19 on average) in the park per day than the allotted amount in the Plan. As such, the daily number of transportation events in the park are below the allotted capacity. Removing the seasonal closure at the East Entrance would increase the number of snowmobiles in the park per day up to the level allowed under the existing Plan, ranging from an average of 14 additional snowmobiles per day to as many as 25 per day.

For more information regarding winter operations in Yellowstone National Park, please visit: <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/winter-use-management.htm>

PROPOSAL SCHEDULE AND HOW TO COMMENT

The NPS invites your ideas and comments about this proposal. Please submit your comments by clicking on the “Open for Comment” tab on the left side of this webpage. Comments must be received by midnight MST, of the date listed on the webpage listed above. Additional compliance will be prepared after analysis this public comment, and proposed changes could be implemented by the start of the 2020-2021 winter operating season.