

appropriate actions to minimize impacts to resources and other visitors. Commercial guides receive more rigorous training and perform guiding duties, usually, as employees of a business. A commercial guide is defined as a guide who is hired by park visitors for a fee or compensation, as opposed to a non-commercial guide, who may not receive compensation or fees. Any person who guides for a fee or compensation must do so under a contract with the NPS to operate as a business within the boundaries of a park unit. Commercial guides are employed by local businesses. Those jobs are not performed by NPS employees.

Guided groups must contain from 2 to 11 snowmobiles, including the guide's machine. This would apply to commercial and non-commercial groups. Individual snowmobiles may not be operated separately from a group within the park. A minimum group size of two was established to require the public to concentrate snowmobiles together in order to reduce the frequency of wildlife encounters along

the roadways. In this respect, guided parties will more closely resemble the "mass transit" aspect of snowcoach use. A maximum group size of 11 was established so that no one party would be so large that a single guide could not safely direct and manage all party members.

Except in emergency situations, guided parties must travel together and remain within a maximum distance of one-third mile of the first snowmobile in the group. This will insure that guided parties do not get spread too far out. One-third mile will allow for sufficient and safe spacing between individual snowmobiles within the guided party, allow the guide to maintain control over the group and minimize the impacts on wildlife.

Initial Daily Snowmobile Entry Limits

The number of snowmobiles that could enter the parks each day would be limited under this rule. These limits are intended to mitigate impacts to air quality, employee and visitor health and safety, natural soundscapes, wildlife, and visitor experience, while providing

the opportunity to maintain historical levels of visitation to the parks with the use of snowcoaches. Once the daily snowmobile entry limits are reached, the only other means of public motorized access will be through the use of snowcoaches. No limits on snowcoach numbers are intended at this time, but could be considered in the future as part of the adaptive management process. The initial entry limits are identified in Table 1. Use limits identified in Table 1 include guides; thus both commercial and non-commercial guides are counted towards the daily entry limits. The NPS considered suggestions to not count guides themselves within these limits, but believe this suggestion would constitute a de facto increase in use from the levels being authorized. For YNP, the daily entry limits are identified for each entrance; for GTNP and the Parkway, the daily limits apply to total snowmobile use on the road segment.

Those limits are listed in the following table:

TABLE 1.—INITIAL DAILY SNOWMOBILE ENTRY LIMITS

Park entrance/road segment	Number of commercially-guided snowmobile entrance passes	Number of non-commercially guided snowmobile entrance passes ¹	Total number snowmobile entrance passes
YNP—North Entrance	40	10	50
YNP—West Entrance	440	110	550
YNP—South Entrance	200	50	250
YNP—East Entrance	80	20	100
GTNP and the Parkway—Total Use on Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail ³	N/A	N/A	² 75
Parkway—Total Use Grassy Lake Road	N/A	N/A	² 75
Jackson Lake	N/A	N/A	² 40

¹ In the 2003–2004 winter season only, these entries would be available for unguided parties of 2 to 11 snowmobiles, to allow sufficient time to develop and implement a non-commercial guide training program.

² These users do not have to be accompanied by a guide.

³ The Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail lies within both GTNP and the Parkway. The 75 daily snowmobile use limit applies to total use on this trail in both parks.

These daily entry limits would be implemented beginning with the winter season of 2003–2004. Adaptive management and monitoring programs would be implemented to allow the interim numbers to be assessed annually. The results of the adaptive management program would determine the need for increasing or decreasing snowmobile numbers to ensure adequate protection of park resources and values, including air quality, employee and visitor health and safety, natural soundscapes, wildlife, and visitor experience. For instance, if air quality monitoring, based on EPA protocols, shows that conditions near a park entrance or along a road segment

are inconsistent with the goals set forth in the March 2003 ROD, the daily entry limits could be reduced to protect air quality. In addition, should NPS adjust BAT requirements, daily entry limits might also be increased or decreased.

The purpose of these caps is to impose strict limits on the numbers of snowmobiles that may use the parks in order to minimize resulting impacts. Compared to historical use where peak days found as many as 1,700 snowmobiles in the parks, these caps represent a reduction. While the caps allow in theory for some growth in daily average snowmobile use, it is uncertain at best whether the former peak day users who are now foreclosed will shift

their snowmobile use to what were the previously less busy days. While NPS does not expect this to result in an actual increase in snowmobile usage from historic levels, the adaptive management process will be used to address impacts not presently foreseen.

The daily snowmobile entry limits were derived based on several factors. First, the daily limits are based on the analysis contained in the SEIS, which concluded that these entry limits, combined with other elements of this rule, would prevent impairment to park resources and values while allowing for an appropriate range of experiences available to park visitors. Second, they approximate at minimum the historic