

Idaho Climate-Economy Impacts Assessment

Snapshot: Recreation & Tourism

Recreation & Tourism, Climate, and Idaho's Economy

Idaho is well-known for its outdoor recreational areas and activities. Over 100,000 Idahoans work in industries related to recreation and tourism. Tourism adds \$3.7 billion annually to Idaho's economy, and provides roughly \$475 million annually in tax revenues. While Idaho is home to abundant outdoor experiences, changes in climate put the outdoor recreational economy at risk for shorter seasons and closures.

Changes in climate

- Increasing temperatures
- Decreasing snowfall
- Decreasing snowpack
- Decreasing summer precipitation
- Decreasing summer streamflow
- Increasing stream temperature

Increasing hazards

- Floods
- Avalanches
- Drought
- Wildfires
- Smoke

Economic risks

- Decreasing visitation
- Increasing cost to make snow
- Decreasing winter recreation
- Increasing wildfire suppression cost/damage
- Increasing number of temporary closures
- Decreasing home values in some locations

Recreation & Tourism Play a Significant Role in Idaho's Economy



Boating, outfitting, and rafting

In 2020, 82,434 boats were registered in Idaho. It is estimated that in 2015, up to 1/3 of households had a boat in some Idaho counties. Spending on products and services related to power boating contributed \$335.3 million to Idaho's economy in 2015. Idaho rivers are rafting destinations for visitors near and far. Idaho has over 3,100 whitewater river miles. For example, in 2015, revenue for outfitters along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River was between \$8.26 and \$8.55 million.



Camping and hiking

Idaho State Parks attract over 6 million visitors annually, generating more than \$184 million for state and local economies and providing 3,000 jobs. In addition to state parks, seven National Park Service units in Idaho attract over 600,000 recreational visits each year, creating 452 jobs and \$12.5 million for state and local economies.



Fishing and hunting

Hunting, fishing, and trapping generate more than \$1.4 billion per year and support 14,000 jobs. Approximately every dollar spent on fishing creates an additional \$2.77 for Idaho's economy. In 2019, more than 130,000 deer, elk, and trophy hunters bought tags and licenses in Idaho, accounting for over \$41 million.



Off-roading and mountain biking

In 2019, there were 167,760 off-road motor vehicles registered in Idaho. Mountain bikers average five trips annually during the spring and summer months, and spend an estimated \$400 per trip.



Skiing and snowmobiling

Idaho has 18 ski resorts—frequent destinations for both locals and non-residents. During the 2016-2017 season, resorts provided 5,345 year-round equivalent jobs and \$242 million in revenue. Nearly 200,000 snowmobile trips are taken annually in Idaho, which account for \$17 million in lodging and over \$60 million in equipment sales and maintenance.

Preparing Idaho for Impacts to Recreation & Tourism

Summer recreation is vulnerable to less precipitation, heat, and wildfires

Seasonal wildfires reduce visitation to parks, even fires outside park boundaries. For example, in Utah, the estimated regional economic loss due to wildfire near national park units is as high as \$4.5 million annually.

Increasing wildfires limit access to outdoor recreation areas for weeks, months, and sometimes years.

Smoke from wildfires impacts use of public lands, and poses health risks to humans and wildlife.

High temperatures also impact park visitation, reducing overall use. Temperatures above 91°F are expected to increase by 34 days in Ada County by 2050.

Altered timing of precipitation and warmer air temperatures affect water temperature and streamflow. This puts fish species and fisheries at risk, and impacts revenue from recreational fishers and revenue for outfitters and guides.

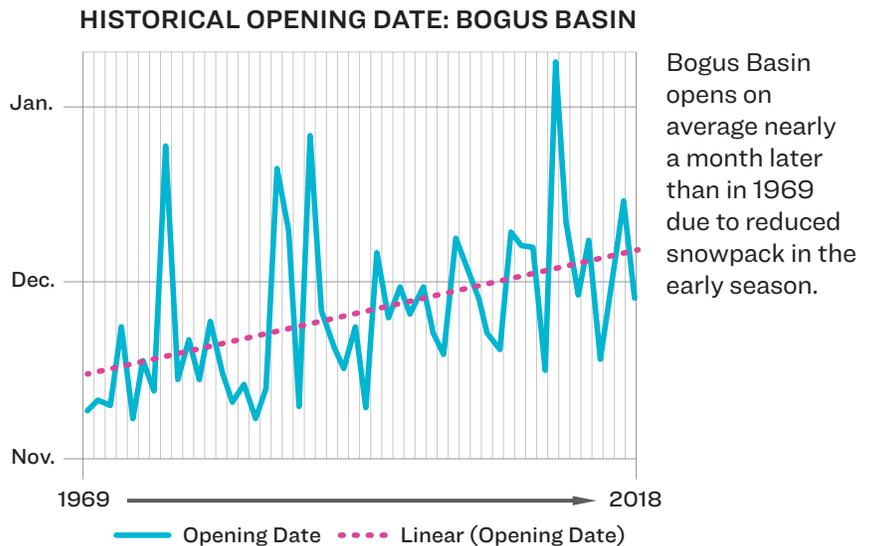
Increasing temperatures impact winter recreation

Since 1982, annual snow amounts have decreased by 41% for some locations in the mountain west, with an average reduction of 34+ winter recreation days.

Ski season length will continue to decrease, with later opening dates, particularly for those resorts without snowmaking capabilities.

Sun Valley is expected to see a 40% decline in the number of days at or below freezing by the late century; similar conditions are predicted across Idaho.

The decrease in snow conditions during early holiday seasons impacts not only ski resorts, but entire communities that depend on revenues from winter recreation.



Opportunities for Adaptation: Diversifying Revenue at Idaho Resorts

Closures and delays are likely to increase and be more pronounced at lower elevation resorts, with higher elevation resorts potentially experiencing an increase in visitation. While declines in snowpack generally have negative effects for Idaho's ski resorts, some resorts already have taken steps to adapt to changing conditions. Resorts are making their own snow and diversifying their year-round revenue streams. Examples include offering expanded summer recreational activities, such as hiking and biking trails; providing conference space; and even holding concert series. In 2016, summer revenue from eight ski resorts in Idaho totaled \$43 million. With increasing demand for summer outdoor activities, Idaho resorts have the opportunity to offset potential declines in winter revenue.

Interested in learning more about economic impacts and Idaho's recreation & tourism?

For further information, resources, tools, references, and additional reports, please visit www.uidaho.edu/iceia



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