

# IMPACT



Lincoln County, 115 West A St., Box 608, Shoshone, ID 83352; 208-886-2406; Fax: 208-886-2407

## The Economic Impact of Snowmobiling in Valley County

### *The Situation*

Snowmobile recreation is surrounded by controversy: allegations of damage to the environment, wildlife, and endangered species; tradeoffs among recreation users (snowmobilers and cross country skiers using the same area); and trail closures or restrictions. All are exacerbated by public land ownership where some of the public supports snowmobile recreation and some oppose it. Snowmobiling enthusiasts, businesses, and county officials want the local economic impacts of snowmobiling to be considered in future policy decisions. From the economic development perspective, snowmobile recreation is a high expenditure recreation. Capturing those dollars in the local economy has tremendous potential to make a key contribution to the growing recreation base of Valley County.

### *Our Response*

After a request from the Idaho Snowmobile Association and Valley County snowmobile clubs, a University of Idaho graduate student and Extension faculty members developed this study to determine the contribution of snowmobile recreation to the local economy. Three scenarios were chosen to study: a new snowmobile event, area closure, and the impact of a low snow year. Using an Input-Output model and a survey of recreational expenditures conducted in Valley County, we estimated the impact of the scenarios on the economy of Valley County.

### *Program Outcomes*

In 2003, approximately 50,000 snowmobile visitors came to Valley County. Each visitor spent an average of \$148 per person per day, including prorated capital expenditures. This generated 120 jobs, \$2.6 million in personal income, and \$7.4 million in unmarginated sales. Based on these figures and assuming no offsetting impact, the impacts of the scenarios are as follows: A new snowmobile event (such as a fun run or sno-cross race) could draw 800 visitors and \$224,000 in sales; closure of an area could cost the County a loss of 7,200 visitors and a loss of \$832,000 in sales; the impact of a low snow year (such as the winter of 04-05) dropped 20,000 visitors and a loss of \$2.2 million in sales. We were able to show that snowmobiling is a vital part of the economy of Valley County.

### *The Future*

There is interest in other areas of the state, where recreation such as snowmobiling is an economic driver in the economy. This study is being used by Valley County officials to guide decisions affecting snowmobiling and the entire recreation base of the Valley County Economy. Businesses are now working together to plan recreation winter events and minimize conflicts between winter recreation uses on public lands. The information will be used by the Idaho Snowmobile Association to support their recreational activity as a key winter recreation industry.

## ***For More Information***

Steven L. Hines, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension—Lincoln County  
115 West A St. Box 608  
Shoshone, ID 83352  
208-886-2406  
Fax: 208-886-2407  
Email: [shines@uidaho.edu](mailto:shines@uidaho.edu)

Garth Taylor, Agricultural Extension Economist  
Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology  
University of Idaho  
PO Box 442334  
Moscow, ID 83844-2334  
208-885-7533  
Fax: 208-885-5759  
Email: [gtaylor@uidaho.edu](mailto:gtaylor@uidaho.edu)

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