



Ski Free Sundays Host Over 8,000 During Season

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO-March 21, 2018-The 2017/18 winter season officially came to a close at historic Howelsen Hill Ski Area earlier this month and so did the Ski Free Sunday program, now in its third year. Ski Free has moved from initially offering three days (972 tickets) in 2015/16 to four days (2,038 tickets) in 2016/17 and this year to thirteen days (8,016 tickets) during 2017/18.

This past winter, Ski Free Sundays saw 8,016 participants enjoy complimentary access to the alpine and Nordic trails during Howelsen Hill's 102nd winter season of operation. The program averaged 616 people per Sunday, with February 18 over President's weekend seeing the highest turn out with 1,023 and the first Ski Free day on December 17 experiencing the lowest at 207 (due likely to limited terrain and snow conditions).

Combined results from the season saw residents from the City of Steamboat Springs come out in the largest numbers (45%), followed by Other Colorado (19%) and Out of State (16%). It should be noted that valley-wide visitation (South Routt to North Routt and west to Hayden and Craig) measured 19% when tabulated together; and reached 64% when combined with Steamboat Springs.

As expected the holiday periods around Christmas, New Year's and Closing Day (start of spring break for some) allotted for the majority of Out of State visitation. The Other Colorado segment followed a similar holiday pattern but shifted slightly favoring New Year's Eve, Martin Luther King, Jr., and President's Weekend.

The Steamboat Springs City Council approved free skiing on Sundays to spur interest from residents in using the city's crown jewel park. In addition, the program celebrated the Olympic season and honored the tradition of this historic ski area. Howelsen Hill has helped generations of Steamboat residents enjoy the sport and been a community gathering place for more than a century.

Owned and operated by the City of Steamboat Springs, Howelsen Hill will be before City Council as the group discusses the ski area's vision, financial impacts, improvements including a new lift, the joint operating agreement with the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club and the future of Ski Free Sundays. Public input is extremely valuable and sought after during these discussions, which will take shape over the coming months and culminate this fall when council determines the 2019 budget.

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