

NATIONAL
SKI AREAS
ASSOCIATION



For Immediate Release

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Skier Visits Dip Slightly to 53.6 Million in 2014-15

Preliminary Results from NSAA's Kottke Survey Reflect Effects of Low Snowfall Totals

LAKEWOOD, Colo., May 4, 2015—The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) announced today that U.S. ski areas tallied an estimated 53.6 million skier and snowboarder visits during the 2014-15 season—down 5 percent from last season's 56.5 million total, and down 3.8 percent from the 5-year industry average of 55.7 million skier visits. The annual skier visit tally, an important industry metric, was released today at the NSAA Convention and Tradeshow in San Francisco, Calif.

Despite a stronger economy, weather challenges across all regions of the country contributed to this drop in skier visits. Nationally, snowfall was 28 percent below average this season—particularly on the West Coast—and especially frigid temperatures in the Midwest and the East, along with sizeable snow storms in the Northeast, impacted the ability of skiers and snowboarders to even get to many ski areas.

"The good news is that despite the vagaries of Mother Nature, ski areas have adapted and responded with dramatic expansions and investments in energy-efficient snowmaking," said Michael Berry, president of NSAA. "Even in a season where snowfall is off, our guests still get an incredible skiing or riding experience."

NSAA's survey results also contained some particularly positive news. For example, the results from the critical Rocky Mountain region were well above the region's 5-year average. Similarly, both the Northeast Region and the Southeast Region also had seasons that surpassed their 5-year averages. While the three regions were each just slightly below last season's skier visits, both the Rocky Mountain region (where Colorado set an all-time record for skier visits last year), and New England (which had a very strong season in 2013-14) performed well despite weather challenges.

NSAA's survey results also showed strong growth in season pass sales, which were up 6.2 percent from the previous season—an important indicator in the public's demand for skiing and snowboarding. Furthermore, international visits continued to grow, with double-digit growth over the previous season. This was especially encouraging, because this growth occurred against the backdrop of a strong dollar, which often translates into fewer international visits. In 2014-15, international visits accounted for 6

percent of all skier visits to American ski areas, up from 5.6 percent last season.

This season, the Northeast region was barely off last season's strong skier visits numbers by 0.8 percent, and the Southeast region was also down slightly by 1.4 percent. The Rocky Mountain region was down slightly from last season by 2.1 percent. The Midwest region, which suffered from brutal cold spells, dropped 9.3 percent from last season. The Pacific Southwest was down 6.4 percent, and the Pacific Northwest fell by 36.3 percent over the previous season, declines driven largely by weather.

In the 24 seasons of available NSAA's *Kottke End of Season Survey* data (1991-92 to 2014-15), this season is estimated to have had the lowest snowfall on record for half the country (the Pacific Southwest, Pacific Northwest, and Rocky Mountain regions), and the second-lowest snowfall overall in the past quarter-century. By contrast, snowfall was slightly above average in the Northeast and Southeast regions.

From a long-term view, while 2014-15 was challenging for the Pacific Southwest and Pacific Northwest, other regions had relatively average, or above-average, seasons. The Rocky Mountain region enjoyed its sixth-best season on record, whereas the Southeast region had its 10th best season in the last quarter century.

Placed in context, 2014-15 skier visits nationally were up 5.1 percent from a recent low of 51 million visits in 2011-12, and down 11.5 percent from the industry's record high of 60.5 million visits from the 2010-11 season.

NSAA will release a final *Kottke End of Season Survey* this summer. To order a copy of the report, visit NSAA online at www.nsaa.org

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FORMED IN 1962 FOR SKI AREA OWNERS AND OPERATORS NATIONWIDE.**