

3/ How many skier visits are likely and how big a ski area?

From Comprehensive report to Park Superintendent Banff National park Nov. 2007

Due to the small size of most XC ski area operations, obtaining good statistics is difficult, unlike for the DH ski industry.

Cross Country Ski Areas Assoc. collects annual skier visit statistics. The graphs of CCSAA data for both skier visits and kilometres of machine-groomed trails are shown in the appendix.

These are limited by the willingness of operators to collect and share their data and also do not account for possible disastrous ski seasons due to bad weather.

K-Country only has estimates of skier visits based on car park vehicle counts.

Annual skier visit statistics

- CCSAA avg. 2005 range from about 1,000 to over 100,000. The median is the range of 10,000 to 20,000 skier visits (Royal Gorge at Tahoe is largest with 150,000)
- K-Country has provided the following estimates
 - Peter Lougheed Park 60,000
 - Other areas total 40,000
(Bragg Ck. Ribbon Ck. Mt. Shark, Sawmill & Backcountry trails & Telemark skiing)
- Canmore Nordic Centre is estimated to have 75,000 skier visits
- In the Banff-Bow Valley Study of 1996, estimates to restore and maintain secure habitat for wildlife in winter were made as follows:
 - Upper Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Taylor Lake, Boom Lake 1001 – 10,000 persons/month
 - Pipestone, Mosquito Creek, Skoki, Egypt Lake etc. 101 – 1,000 persons/month
- Based on the available information, industry stats and K-Country experience, there seems little reason to expect any great increase in the numbers estimated to be satisfactory in 1996 at Lake Louise.
- Trackset ski areas would have annual skier visits (of 5 months) in a range from
 - Up to 5,000 – 10,000 at Num-ti-Jah / Bow Lake
 - Up to 50,000 at an expanded Upper Lake Louise (Chateau Lake Louise)
- Backcountry Touring trails would continue in the range of 500 – 5,000 annual skier visits per trail with say Paradise Valley and Skoki being more popular than Mosquito Creek etc.

Size of XC ski areas:

- CCSAA Avg. 1990 (never updated) range from 5 – 75+ km. The median is 16 – 30 km. (Royal Gorge at Tahoe is biggest with 360 km)
- Note smaller new Olympic sites at Whistler and Turin have 35 km not the 75 km of Canmore
- Many of the smaller kilometre numbers reported by CCSAA are associated with smaller ski lodges where lodging, food & beverage revenue covers most of the cost of tracksetting.
- Another factor not addressed in the statistics is the distance from the ski area to urban centres or other markets. Experience from Colorado and Tahoe suggests a driving distance of 2 – 3 hours to major metropolitan areas and airports is desirable (e.g. Denver & San Francisco).
- The minimum economic size of a trackset trail system to consider is probably 15 – 20 km. Based on the experience of the Upper Lake Louise trails since 1982, approximately 20 km of trails draws many visitors from Calgary and other Alberta cities. 30 km would be better.
- CCSAA surveys of its member ski areas suggest that area designers consider that
 - 60% of XC ski trail users stayed within 3 km of parking lot
 - 85% of users stayed within 5 km of parking lot

A significant question is the cost of construction and maintenance of trails, parking lots, lodges, warming huts, toilets and other facilities including maintenance buildings and grooming equipment relative to the number of skiers using the ski areas and facilities.