



## IDAHO OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION

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### What is a guide?

A **GUIDE** is an employee of an outfitter who guides outdoor trips. All guides must be licensed with the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board. Guides also are required to complete specialized training for the type of guiding they do, including training and familiarization trips, and they are required to have Basic First Aid/CPR training, or in some cases, certifications in Outdoor Emergency Care.

### What is an outfitter?

**AN OUTFITTER** is a small business owner who offers guided trips for compensation. To operate legally in Idaho, outfitters must be licensed with the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board. If an outfitter operates on federal land, they also must obtain a special-use permit from the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

### Number of Outfitted Guests in Idaho 1970-2005

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000	2005
Hunting	5,000	5,250	5,500	6,000	6,430
Recreation	5,000	19,750	14,500	60,000	82,385
Boating	13,000	30,000	50,000	100,000	133,475
Total	23,000	55,000	70,000	166,000	222,290

### ADVANTAGE IDAHO:

## Hunting tag program gives Idaho outfitters a unique niche in the West

The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association has worked hard over the years to lobby for and defend a unique system that reserves deer and elk tags for Idaho outfitters' clients well in advance of the fall hunting seasons, allowing outfitters to market their hunting businesses for six to eight months and book as many trips as their quota of tags allows.

The "set aside" and "allocated" hunting tag systems, managed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, allow Idaho outfitters to purchase hunting tags directly for out-of-state or resident hunters at the time they book trips. It also gives Idaho outfitters a leg up against the competition in other states, allowing outfitters to compete favorably on a national level.

Scott Farr, owner of Wilderness Outfitters near Challis, says Idaho is one of only a few western states that gives outfitters a guaranteed quota of elk and deer tags each year. Most states require out-of-state hunters to apply for an elk tag through a lottery draw system. If they don't draw a tag, they're out of luck.

### ADVANTAGE IDAHO

Another unique aspect of the outfitted hunting system in Idaho is that outfitters have well-defined and tightly controlled territories assigned areas of operation in which they set up camps and hunt big game. Those areas are reserved specifically for each outfitter as the only commercial operator within its boundaries in order to protect the resource and prevent overcrowding.

"No other state has an area system like ours," Farr says. "It's the only state where outfitted hunters are guaranteed that they won't be competing with the clients of another outfitter."

The general public can still hunt in an outfitters' assigned hunting territory, so it

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■ Idaho's outfitters lead guided trips to many of the state's most spectacular outdoor destinations, contributing more than \$70 million in annual income to the state's \$3.75 billion travel and tourism economy. Travel and tourism continues to grow steadily in Idaho, ranking third among the leading industries in the state.

■ Idaho outfitters employ about 2,200 guides, people who come from all walks of life who often have a knack for telling wild and funny stories about their many exploits in the outdoors, keeping guests thoroughly entertained.

■ About 425 outfitters are licensed by the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board to lead a wide variety of outdoor trips in the state. These are primarily small business owners who operate full-time throughout the year or part of the year, depending on the nature of their business.

■ About 340 outfitters have a designated agent who supervises the company's outfitting and guiding activities.

## ADVANTAGE IDAHO:

# Hunting tag program gives Idaho outfitters a unique niche in the West

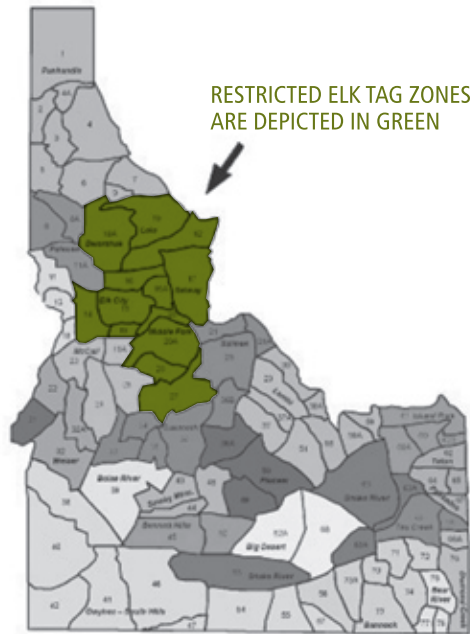
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does not restrict folks who hunt on their own from hunting their favorite areas. "Our system also ensures that the resource is protected from over-commercialization," Farr adds.

A typical hunting area for an Idaho outfitter consists of about 150 to 200 square miles. That's a lot of elbow room.

IOGA officials believe the hunting tag programs are fair to other users because fewer than three percent of the total number of in-state and out-of-state hunters are served by Idaho outfitters. In sheer numbers, Idaho outfitters guide about 6,000+ hunters per year, while in excess of 240,000 big game tags were sold to resident and non-resident hunters who did not hire an outfitter in 2006. The system caters to a distinct category of hunters who want to hire an outfitter to hunt big game, and want to hunt in a quality area with a good chance of bagging a trophy animal. Plus, it supports the outfitting industry and tourism and travel industry in Idaho, adding economic punch to rural economic development.

The IOGA lobbied hard for the "set aside" hunting tag system in 1986 when it passed the Idaho Legislature and was adopted by the Fish and Game Commission, noted Grant Simonds, IOGA executive director. Prior to that time, Idaho outfitters had to compete for



tags with the general public, and highly-valued hunting tags sold out so quickly that outfitters had difficulty competing for tags and marketing their specific hunting areas.

In 1997, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission created a quota system for hunting tags in restricted elk management zones (see map) – areas where Fish and Game officials are worried about big game populations and want to place higher restrictions on harvest – reserving

"allocated" tags for outfitters and the general public. The number of tags that an outfitter receives is based on historic use.

Neither the set aside tag program nor the allocated tag program guarantee hunting tags for outfitters forever. There is a defined period of time from when tags go on sale in early December to market trips and book clients, and then any unsold tags must be returned to Fish and Game for sale to the general public. Any unsold set aside tags must be returned to Fish and Game by July 1, and unsold allocated tags must be returned by August 1.

It's a system of "use it or lose it," Simonds says.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission carefully controls the number of hunting tags offered to Idaho outfitters each year, and establishes the number of tags distributed on an annual basis.

The cornerstone of the program is "fairness," Farr says. In restricted elk management zones, all user groups initially experience a proportionate reduction in the number of tags available, based on historic use. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board keeps records of annual use by outfitters to provide empirical data for tag allocation. The licensing board also has the authority and tools in place to ensure that allocated tag use by outfitters is valid.

## Outfitters pay multiple fees to help with upkeep of federal lands

It's a tough deal to operate a business on public lands. You start with a two-year process of plowing through environmental studies and government bureaucracy in hopes of getting a special-use permit to operate an outfitting business on public land.

And then, if you're lucky enough to get through that process, the government will take a slice of your annual revenues in the form of annual three percent fees that must be paid to the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. Those fees are three percent of an outfitters' annual gross receipts for offering fishing trips, whitewater trips, hunting trips, whatever. As an example, if an outfitter charges \$100 for a half-day fishing trip, \$3 of that revenue must be paid to the local Forest Service or BLM office on an annual basis.

In the year 2005, Idaho outfitters' three percent revenues totaled \$1.15 million statewide. At one time, all those fees went directly to the U.S. Treasury, never to be seen

again. But nowadays, the fees are kept by the home district of the Forest Service or the BLM for potential improvement projects on the district.

National Forest or BLM	3% fees paid by outfitters in 2005
Boise National Forest	\$38,554
Caribou-Targhee National Forest	\$74,180
Payette National Forest	\$44,000
Salmon-Challis National Forest	\$323,100
Sawtooth National Forest	\$60,000
Bitterroot National Forest	\$29,000
Nez Perce National Forest	\$33,180
Clearwater National Forest	\$52,600
Panhandle National Forests	\$13,820
Hells Canyon National Recreation Area	\$112,270
BLM Idaho Statewide	\$372,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,153,225</b>

Idaho outfitters also pay user fees on the most popular rivers in Idaho: the South Fork of the Snake River near Swan Falls, the

Payette River near Banks, and the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, and the Main Salmon River from Corn Creek to Carey Creek. The general public and outfitters pay the same \$5-per-person fees to boat these rivers on the Middle Fork and the Main Salmon, and on the South Fork Snake and the Payette, it's a parking fee per vehicle. It's possible to save a lot of money by buying an annual parking pass.

The fees paid by outfitters and the general public on the Payette River were \$28,500 in 2006, and \$40,500 on the South Fork of the Snake River. Fee collections on the Middle Fork and Main Salmon typically run about \$500,000 million per year.

These fees also are kept at the local ranger district office and spent on improvement projects for the boating public. These expenditures can include boat ramp improvements, rest rooms, facilities for the disabled, parking lot improvements, garbage fees, toilet-pumping costs and more.



## Yellowstone grizzly bear delisting is good news for Idaho outfitters

In the spring of 2007, the delisting of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem was positive news for Idaho outfitters.

Grizzly numbers in the Yellowstone ecosystem have increased from an estimated population of 136 to 312 when they were listed as threatened in 1975, to more than 500 bears today, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The delisting of grizzlies from a "threatened" species to one that will be managed by the states of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming should lead to more predictable regulations and operations for outfitters. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association has supported grizzly delisting for some time.

Meanwhile, the discovery of a grizzly bear shot and killed by a hunter in the North Fork of the Clearwater River roadless area, just three miles from the Montana border in September 2007, created a whole new set of policy questions and potential

uncertainty for Idaho outfitters in the Selway-Bitterroot region.

It was the first time that a confirmed grizzly bear had been documented in the north-central Idaho region in 60 years. The hunter, who was not charged or identified, shot the animal by mistake, thinking it was a black bear. Grizzly bears in northern Idaho are protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working on a reintroduction program for grizzly bears in the Selway-Bitterroot area for a number of years, but the program hasn't gotten out of the starting blocks because of strong opposition. Idaho elected officials oppose reintroduction, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission is against it, and the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association opposes it.

However, the grizzly sighting raised the specter that the Fish and Wildlife Service

could add restrictions to big game hunting in the Selway-Bitterroot area. Officials say they will study the matter before taking any action, if any.

"Certainly this provides a bump in the road we've been on," Chris Servheen, grizzly bear coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service told the Associated Press in October. "There are a lot of ramifications to this. Right now, we're trying to decide how it relates to everything."

A 1996 resolution passed by the IOGA Board of Directors indicates that approximately 130 outfitter businesses, both land and water-based, could be impacted by any new restrictions on big game hunting in the area. The resolution cites concerns about potential access restrictions, increased costs, the possible curtailment of black bear hunting, and a large degree of uncertainty about the impact of grizzlies on deer and elk seasons and future outfitter allocation of tags.

## Delisting of wolves may occur soon, ushering in new era of wolf-management

As Rocky Mountain gray wolf populations continue to climb in Idaho, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appears to be poised to remove wolves from endangered species protection in early 2008, if all goes according to plan.

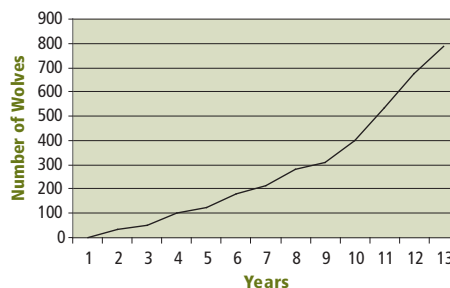
Idaho outfitters have been anxious to see wolves delisted so the Idaho Department of Fish and Game can begin managing wolf populations through hunting, trapping or whatever means necessary, said Grant Simonds, executive director of the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association.

Since the federal government reintroduced 35 Canadian wolves into Idaho in 1995, wolf populations in Idaho have soared to approximately 788 animals in 75 packs with 41 breeding pairs, according to federal and state interagency estimates.

"We understand that wolves are here to stay, and we support the delisting of wolves so the state can get on with the business of controlling wolf populations," Simonds said. "If we remember the recovery goal of 10 breeding pairs in Idaho, we've exceeded that goal many times over."

Ed Bangs, wolf recovery coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service, says his agency will be finished with rule-making on delisting and state management in January or February of 2008, and then delisting could occur soon thereafter. However, animal rights or environ-

Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf Populations in Idaho



mental groups could try to sue the FWS's delisting decision and request an injunction, Bangs noted.

"It's a flip of a coin how a judge would rule on that question," he said.

Absent an injunction, state management could move forward with managing wolves, Bangs said. Delisting also would not be held up if Wyoming's wolf management plan is found to be deficient. At one time, state management plans from Idaho, Montana and Wyoming had to be fully recognized by the FWS before wolves could be delisted in any of the states.

"There is no doubt that wolves are recovered in the region," Bangs said. "They need to be managed like elk, deer and lions and everything else. We feel they'd be better off under state management."

Wolf recovery efforts in Idaho have been controversial among Idaho outfitters because

the wolves feed on deer and elk, reducing herd numbers in some areas and causing hardship to outfitters. Repeat business, a staple of successful outfitting businesses, can quickly erode if an outfitter, who is assigned to a specific area, is not able to locate elk due to predator-prey behavior in which the predator at the top of the food chain has no natural enemies.

"The increasing presence of wolves in Idaho, combined with early season area closures due to the increasing amount of wildfire in this era of climate change, has made it extremely difficult for some outfitters to provide quality hunting experiences for their guests," Simonds said.

"This has been a very difficult issue for our industry. We're looking forward to a time when it won't be."



## IOGA supports 'natural river' option for saving wild salmon and steelhead

IOGA sides with the best science on restoring wild salmon and steelhead runs in the Snake, Clearwater and Salmon Rivers in Idaho.

IOGA's membership has voted to endorse bypassing the four Lower Snake River dams as the best chance to restore wild ocean-going fish. Scientists have found that those dams cause the most damage to wild and hatchery fish runs – on the way to the sea and on the way back.

The IOGA resolution notes that the Idaho Fish and Game Commission endorsed

bypassing the dams as the best "biological" solution to restoring the fish runs in 1998.

Outfitters who guide fishing trips for salmon and steelhead contribute significantly to the rural economy of Idaho. In the 1992-1993 steelhead season, \$90 million in economic activity accrued to the rural economy in Central Idaho, creating an estimated 2,300 jobs.

If the four Lower Snake dams were breached, economists estimate that the improved fish runs would add another \$60 million to the

economy and generate another 1,800 jobs.

"Ultimately, for our fishing outfitters, doing what we can to bring back the wild salmon and steelhead runs to the big pre-dam fish runs we experienced in the 1960s would have the greatest benefit to outfitters and anglers," says Grant Simonds, IOGA executive director. "That's the bottom line."

If dam-breaching ever occurs, IOGA supports mitigating any negative effects that may occur to impacted industries.

## *Go catch that whopper!*

Mark Troy yanked on the oars and back-trolled the boat in a slow eddy next the Salmon River. I watched the tip of my pole quiver and bob as my lure swept across the glassy face of a small rapid. We were hunting for steelhead. It was late afternoon, and I could see a bright yellow in the mirror of the river, reflecting willows on the river bank.

Suddenly, my rod tip went down hard. I lifted up on my steelhead pole, and set the hook. The heavy fish didn't give an inch. I thought I was snagged, but I kept the rod tip up and held on tight. And then the 15-pound test line began to move upstream and peel out line from my reel.

"Fish on!" Troy screamed with delight.

The wild ocean-going rainbow came flying out of the water 30 yards above the boat and jumped a second time, trying to toss the hook. I hung onto that fish and landed the 14-pounder 10 minutes later. We got a photo and released it. It had a real adipose fin.

"Nice going Steve," says my buddy Mark Lisk, giving me a high-five.

Capitalizing on the chance to hook into a steelhead in the fall is a true thrill, and it's just one of the many fishing opportunities that Idaho outfitters offer. Every fall, anglers start a pilgrimage to the Salmon River, Clearwater River and Hells Canyon of the Snake to go after the elusive steelhead. Sometimes it can take hundreds of casts and more than a full day of fishing, but it's worth the wait. Many guide services operate on those rivers, and they know where the fishing is best, and what to use. For busy people who aren't in the know, this can be invaluable information.

In North Idaho, big lakes present opportunities to catch giant Kamloops, Mackinaw,



crappie, rainbows, bass, landlocked chinook and huge northern pike. In Eastern Idaho, the Henrys Fork of the Snake and the South Fork of the Snake line up shoulder to shoulder as one of the most compelling fly fishing destinations anywhere in the West. Monster but clever rainbows await in the Henrys Fork, and wily cutthroat swim in great concentrations in the South Fork, not to mention bulldog-like brown trout. Outfitters usually guide guests in drift boats on these rivers, the best-suited craft for the challenge at hand. They can hold in swift water, and they can set the anchor to fish the hot hole.

In the interior mountains, many Idaho outfitters lead anglers to a series of high mountain lakes at elevations exceeding 8,000 feet, with serrated mountains surrounding camp, where you can fly fish or spin cast for robust native trout. Outfitters lead pack strings into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, the Gospel-Hump Wilderness and many un-named pristine roadless areas to fish both mountain rivers and lakes. Some outfitters fly guests into "the Frank" to fish the Middle Fork of the Salmon, Loon Creek or Big Creek just for the day.

Silver Creek, south of Sun Valley, is just as tricky to fish as the Henry's Fork, so quite

naturally, you've got to hire a guide to help you sneak through the bushes and sight fish in the gin-clear spring-fed creek.

In Southwest Idaho, the bass anglers flock to Brownlee Reservoir and C.J. Strike Reservoir for some very dependable days of catching fish. Brownlee Reservoir, a 40-mile-long lake, is an outstanding fishery for smallmouth bass, crappie, and catfish. Rainbows also patrol these waters. Brownlee is so big, with such a diverse fish population, that you don't always know what you've got on your line until the fish surfaces.

At C.J. Strike, guides show anglers where the find a prolific population of small-mouth bass, not to mention rainbows, crappie, bluegill, perch and channel catfish.

Downriver, below Hells Canyon Dam, lies yet another outstanding fishery in the Hells Canyon Wild and Scenic River, served by outfitters who specialize in fishing for sturgeon, steelhead, rainbows and bass. Catfish can be caught here as well. Choose a jet boat trip or a float boat trip, and off you go. The fishing in Hells Canyon can be absolutely phenomenal in the density of fish per mile, and the variety. Throw lures against the black shiny cliffs and catch small mouth bass and rainbow trout almost every cast, when it's hot.

And then, if you want to catch the biggest fish of your life, try for a giant sturgeon on the Snake or Salmon River. A local guide can show you how. They've got all of the heavy tackle and gear. It's quite amazing to see one of those fish come out of the water, a fish longer than you are tall, looking almost prehistoric.

Now that you've got a sense of the possible, it's time to get out there and catch the big one!



# Idaho is the go-to state for whitewater adventures

To kayakers and rafters in the know, Idaho is the place to go. It's a beautiful, uncrowded mountain state with whitewater river trips in spades. It's got 3,000 miles of action-packed whitewater adventures – day trips galore, and more nationally renowned multi-day wilderness whitewater trips than any state in America, including the National Wild and Scenic Middle Fork and the Main Salmon River, the famed **River of No Return**.

Much like Colorado is a top draw for the nation's skiers, Idaho is a prime destination for river floaters from throughout the world. National and international tourists are getting clued-in to this opportunity as more than 135,000 people book trips with Idaho river outfitters each year, and the number keeps growing. These folks pursue not only adrenaline-charged whitewater trips through thundering rapids – say wah hoo! – but also thrilling whitewater jet boat trips and scenic tours. Jump into a heated, dual-engine 500 h.p. jet boat and rip upstream or downstream at equal speed on the Salmon River near Riggins and in Hells Canyon of the Snake River, the deepest gorge in North America, near Lewiston.

Deciding what kind of Idaho river trip to pursue depends on the traveler's schedule. Do you want to go floating for the day, a long weekend or a week? No matter, check out the options and pick the trip that meets your needs.

## MULTI-DAY TRIPS

Save up your vacation dollars for a once-in-a-lifetime chance to take a week-long trip on the Selway River, the Middle Fork, the Main Salmon in Central Idaho, the Snake in Hells Canyon or the Lower Salmon Gorge below Whitebird. Three-day trips are available as well.

See IOGA.org for information on selecting an Idaho outfitter who will be your host and guide. The Selway, Hells Canyon and the Middle Fork have the most rapids in the Class 4 range among these multi-day rivers. Rapids in Idaho are based on the European rating scale, where Class 1 is flatwater and Class 6 is an unrunnable waterfall. In the high-water period between May, June and early July, the rapids on these rivers get fully charged with mountain snowmelt, making for a wild, exhilarating ride.

The Middle Fork and Selway were among the first eight National Wild and Scenic Rivers designed by Congress in 1968. Hells Canyon

was added to the system in the 1970s. All three rivers cut through pure, wilderness canyons for miles on end. After peak flows give way to a mid-summer glide, the fishing turns on. Fly fishing for cutthroat on the Selway and Middle Fork is so good that anglers are practically guaranteed to catch fish, and often many fish, per day.

Floating the Main Salmon or the Lower Salmon Gorge in July, August or September is the quintessential family trip. In mid-summer, when the days are long and hot, Class 3 rapids have plenty of punch, and the giant white sandy beaches and shallow river eddies create the most perfect play zone for the kids. Elaborate sand castles, water tag, king of the IK (Inflatable Kayak) and beach volleyball can keep the group happy for hours upon hours.

On all of these multi-day river trips, the river guides provide skilled leadership on the water. They row the boat, drive it or guide the paddle crew. When you show up at camp, your tents are already set up, and it's time to sip your favorite beverages, relax and sift the luscious white sand through your toes. The guides don aprons and turn into cooks, often serving up a delectable Dutch oven feast you never imagined possible.

This is what you paid for, getting pampered in the wilderness.

## DAY TRIP RIVERS

Tourists and Idaho residents alike flock to Idaho's plentiful day trip rivers for whitewater adventures during peak runoff in May and June, and during the seemingly endless Idaho summer in July and August, when temperatures are in the 90s and it's ever so refreshing to get doused by the chilly waters of mountain streams.

Scenic jet boat tours of Hells Canyon and the Salmon River have perhaps the longest season of all, because the boats are heated and interior cockpits keep guests out of the cold. Jet boat operators out of Lewiston and Riggins offer scenic boat trips that also showcase each river canyon's unique history, including the chance to see where the Nez Perce Tribe crossed the mighty Snake River as it fled from the U.S. Calvary during the Nez Perce War, early gold-mining operations, authentic cabins occupied by colorful homesteaders and even the home of Buckskin Bill, an eccentric mountain man.

As for whitewater raft trips, just 35 miles north of Boise, the Payette River is packed with fun, with a great variety of Class 3 and



Class 4 guided trips. The Lochsa (Nez Perce for "rough water") is a close whitewater cousin to the Payette, because of its nearly constant Class 4 action, east of Lewiston, Idaho. The Lochsa cuts through a cedar forest adjacent to the Lewis and Clark's historic trail.

The Salmon River, in between the multi-day wilderness sections, offers three distinct day trips packed with Class 3 and 4 rapids, near Riggins, Salmon and Stanley. Near Twin Falls, Idaho outfitters run trips in the Hagerman section of the Snake River, and canoe trips below 212-foot Shoshone Falls. Near the northern tip of Idaho, the Moyie River offers a fun whitewater trip with Class 3 and 4 rapids, and the St. Joe River, near Coeur d'Alene also offers Class 3 raft trips, perfect for families.

## IDAHO'S DESERT RIVERS

The Owyhee Plateau, a vast desolate corner of southwest Idaho and southeast Oregon, contains some hidden jewels in the form of deep incised redrock river canyons like the Owyhee River and the Jarbidge-Bruneau River. Idaho outfitters offer three- to five-day trips on these rivers. The season is typically quite short, usually spanning from April to early June, depending on mountain snowpack and spring weather.

All of these rivers are being proposed for National Wild and Scenic River protection under the Owyhee Initiative, a collaborative pact between ranchers, environmentalists, river advocates, IOGA, hunters and off-road enthusiasts. U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, has sponsored legislation to protect these rivers for perpetuity. IOGA participated in the process that shaped the Owyhee Initiative and supports Crapo's efforts to protect the area.

See [www.ioga.org](http://www.ioga.org) to search for your favorite river trip, or google the river you'd like to run and search for an Idaho outfitter who meets your needs.

## Rural Economic Development

At least 80 percent of IOGA resident outfitter members live in rural Idaho, contributing significantly to the economy of small communities like Salmon, Grangeville, McCall, Cascade, Challis and Bonner's Ferry.

# Wildfires in a new era of global warming

Imagine that you're an Idaho river outfitter who's licensed to run trips on the National Wild and Scenic Salmon River, the famed **River of No Return**. You have a 24-person trip coming up on Aug. 5<sup>th</sup>. You have six guides making \$100+ per day, loading heavy duty trucks with all of the river gear, food and camping equipment for a 5-day trip.

You're ready to go, but you are sweating bullets because several major wildfires are burning near the Salmon River canyon. Some campsites in the canyon have been closed by the Forest Service, and you're worried that the Forest Service might even close the river. Your customers already have flown to Idaho, and they've spent the night in the Stagecoach Hotel in Salmon. The bus needs to pick them up at 8 a.m. and head for Corn Creek, where the trip begins.

You've missed the morning e-mail. And then you arrive at Corn Creek and learn that the Forest Service has closed the river. What are you going to do now? You've spent more than \$2,000 on food and supplies for this trip, your guests will want a refund of \$1,500 per person, and the best you can hope for will be to convince your customers to come back next year.

You face losing \$36,000 in guest revenues for this trip alone, and then you think about the fact that you've got three more trips planned in August, and you get this really awful feeling in your gut, knowing that you may face losing over \$100,000 in this month alone. That's one heck of a stomach punch for a small business person. Ouch!

"For most river outfitters, August is the month when they have an opportunity to make a net profit," says Grant Simonds, executive director of IOGA. "The river closures due to fire eliminated that possibility for many businesses in both 2000 and 2007."

Simonds estimates that Idaho river and hunting outfitters incurred business losses of at least \$5 million in damages from wildfires in the sweltering hot summer of 2007, deeper losses than the \$3.5 million outfitters incurred in the summer of 2000. Now that the smoke has cleared, he's ready to ask the U.S. Forest Service to consider new approaches to managing wildfires in remote

areas like the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, roadless areas adjacent to wilderness or Hells Canyon in the wake of a record-breaking 2007 fire season.

"It may be time for more adaptive management of wildfire," Simonds says. "In this latest era of global warming and climate change, we are likely to see continued drought conditions and the potential for huge fires in the backcountry. Look how much of that country has burned since the late 1980s. How much fire do we need? How much is enough on an annual basis as we move toward some new point of ecosystem equilibrium after a century of the 10 am policy? I think it's time to rethink how we manage fire in wilderness and adjacent roadless areas."

Idaho hunting outfitters also took a beating in the summer of 2007.

Some saw their assigned hunting territory get burned up and their hunting camps destroyed. Others had to stand by in late August, while big fires burned, and waited to see if they could even get into their hunting territories in time to set up camp so they can provide quality customer service to hunters who have booked travel and have anticipated the hunt.

"If you're a hunting outfitter, and you can't get into your hunting area in August, you're sitting there on pins and needles wondering if you're ever going to get into the woods,

and then once you do, what will it look like? What will be left? What do I tell my clients?" Simonds says.

Ken Frederick, a spokesman for the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, says a whole new set of conditions, including climate change, a reduction in fire fighting forces and equipment, and budget cuts, are hampering the Forest Service's ability to respond quickly to wilderness fires – often the most difficult to fight in remote and rugged terrain.

"The outfitting industry leaders should have more dialogue with forest supervisors and regional foresters to find some answers," Fredericks says. "Coming to a common understanding about the new trends in wildfire management will be a good start."

Three major factors are creating difficult challenges for fighting fires in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

- Global warming and climate change. Experts say Idaho will experience longer, hotter summers than before. If winters are lean and snowpack is thin, then the forests dry out even sooner than normal, making for a longer fire season and making it difficult to stop new starts because of tinder-dry conditions.
- A major accumulation of dead, diseased and dying timber in national forests has been building up over the last 75 years of Smokey the Bear policies – that is, stop wildfires as quickly as possible, no matter where. Now the Forest Service is trying to let more fires burn to consume the overstock of woody fuels, but this is leading to bigger fires than anticipated and unprecedented ferocious wildfire behavior.
- An increase in the number of cabins and homes being built adjacent to national forests on the edge of the urban-wildland interface. When wildfires burn in those areas, firefighters are forced to spend resources on saving private homes instead of saving the forest. "When you have finite resources, you have to set priorities," Fredericks says. "There's only so many engines, helicopters, tankers and firefighting crews that we can throw at these fires."

Unfortunately for outfitters, if the Forest Service is focused on saving homes on the edge of the national forest, that means the fires in remote backcountry and wilderness areas receive less of a priority for resources, fire crews and putting out fires. Then the fires blow up to a point where they're too big to put out until late summer or early fall rains or snow extinguish them.

Outfitters want to see changes in the system of priorities whereby backcountry recreation access, the amount of recent fire mosaics on the ground and the number of initial attacks move up the priority scale. They want the Forest Service to be more aggressive and creative in managing fire away from the urban interface.

Dirk Gibson, owner of Adventure Guides, a Middle Fork Salmon River outfitter,



remembers taking the late Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, down the Middle Fork 30 years ago, just prior to the advent of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

"After designation in 1980, the Frank was considered to the crown jewel of the National Forest Wilderness System nationwide," Gibson says. "Today, the Forest Service's lack of initiative is leading to a point where much of the wilderness could be burnt up. We need to move toward the middle and be more smart and creative about this current situation. They are backing themselves into a black forest corner."

Gibson was a rare outfitter who managed to complete all of his trips on the Middle Fork, despite the fire closures of 2007, by putting constant pressure on the Forest Service to think about different options than just closing the river or the forest.

"Oftentimes, their first reaction every day is to just shut it down," he says.

Gibson and Simonds believe the Forest Service needs to assemble an advisory committee of experienced people from

various perspectives that could help the Forest Service come up with some new policies and procedures for managing fire in the age of global warming.

Ideas include agency decision-making that factors recreation access higher up the priority list, making contingency plans for dealing with mudslides, log jams, trail maintenance and campsite closures, which are likely to occur as a result of too much fire on the landscape.

"We need additional freedom and flexibility to manage the river each year, and we need to be able to make decisions quickly," Gibson says. "We'd be more than happy to help them fight fires, set control burns and stuff like that. But they're more apt to stand back and just watch the forest burn because they're worried about some environmental group suing them if they take action."

Simonds is taking steps to begin a process of more public dialogue with agency officials, legislators and congressional officials to look at different approaches to wildfire management.



"The main thing we have to fight for is access to roadless lands and wilderness areas, whether you're a hunting, river or recreation outfitter," Simonds says. "If we can't get there, we can't deliver services that the public has hired us to provide, and you jeopardize a vital part of the economy in rural Idaho, and that's just not acceptable."

Gibson agrees. "The Forest Service wants to let wilderness fires burn because they say it's part of the natural process. Well, in this age of global warming, there's nothing natural about the fires we're seeing today. We have an unprecedented situation, and we need new solutions and new thinking about what we do next. To just say, we're going to close the river is not an acceptable solution. I'm going to fight that one to the end."

## Idaho outfitters contribute \$68 million annually to Idaho's economy

Just as the number of outfitted guests continues to increase each year, so does the economic impact of the guests who book trips with outfitters.

In 2005, the most recent year for which figures were available, Idaho outfitters served approximately 222,300 guests who spent approximately \$38.4 million in client fees for their trips.

According to an economist with the Idaho Department of Labor, for every dollar that outfitted guests spend on an outdoor trip, they contribute another 80 cents of that dollar to other aspects of the Idaho economy, or \$30.7 million statewide.

John Panter, a regional economist for the Idaho Department of Labor, said the statewide impact of outfitters' client fees, combined with spinoff revenue, adds up to a total annual impact of \$68 million on the Idaho economy.

Guest spending broken down by various economic sectors included:

- \$515,522 on groceries
- \$2.15 million on retail goods
- \$1.28 million on meals at restaurants
- \$421,130 on supplies
- \$670,000 on transportation

- \$160,000 on fuel
- \$176,000 on taxidermy and meat-packing
- \$242,560 on lodging

Idaho outfitters offer guided trips throughout the state, spreading revenues to nearly every Idaho county, if not all 44 counties. Outfitters often buy their groceries in local stores near their base of operations in rural Idaho, adding to the revenues of rural communities such as Salmon, Grangeville, McCall and Bonner's Ferry.

Here is an example of the spinoff benefit of outfitters' client fees in a Custer and Lemhi counties, based on outfitter revenues reported to the Salmon-Challis National Forest, based in Salmon.

### Salmon-Challis National Forest

Gross client fees paid to outfitters*	\$10,769,726.00
Total Additional Expenditures	\$4,422,491.04
Groceries	\$106,489.95
All Other Retail	\$186,378.10
Supplies	\$60,506.63
Transportation	\$153,869.40
Accounting & Advertising	\$40,035.59
Lodging	\$251,086.08
Restaurants	\$225,744.55
Gasoline	\$31,479.13

Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Idaho Department of Commerce

Guest spending in rural communities near the Idaho high desert lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, also was significant. Here is how it breaks down for rural communities located near BLM lands in southern Idaho, including Owyhee County, Twin Falls County, Bonneville County, Blaine County, Cassia County and Bannock County.

Here are some details:

### BLM across Southern Idaho

Gross client fees paid to outfitters*	\$12,418,242.00
Total Additional Expenditures	\$7,792,743.98
Groceries	\$150,057.52
All Other Retail	\$638,957.68
Supplies	\$121,013.49
Transportation	\$302,120.07
Accounting & Advertising	\$155,689.78
Lodging	\$323,805.18
Restaurants	\$374,313.76
Gasoline	\$45,984.25

\*3% of the gross fees paid to outfitters are collected by the federal government.





## Building relationships at the statehouse

Since 1992 the highlight of the annual IOGA mid-February Lobby Day is the **Taste of Idaho Outfitting** dutch oven reception for legislators and invited guests hosted at downtown Boise's Basque Center by up to forty IOGA members. The purpose of February Lobby Day is to make contact with elected leaders, share and gather information related to industry issues. IOGA has an effective system for monitoring the legislature that is constantly tweaked and includes professional representation through a lobbyist and the IOGA staff. For more information, contact the IOGA at 208.342.1438 or [idouffitt@cablone.net](mailto:idouffitt@cablone.net).

## IOGA web site key marketing tool

Studies show that at least 90 percent of consumers shop for new destinations and vacation locations by doing research on the Internet. That means it's critical to have a fresh, up-to-date web site if you are in the travel and tourism industry.

The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association's has been online with a comprehensive web site for more than a decade. IOGA's web site receives an average of 6,000 hits per day, 150,000 per month and 2.2 million hits a year.

The site allows consumers to search for unique trips and shop for outfitters by recreation activity. It also features a **Hot Deals** section that allow outfitters to post discounted trips, and consumers to find the best rates for the trips desired. Check out IOGA's web site at [www.ioga.org](http://www.ioga.org).



## Fundraising benefits IOGA and kids

Since 2000 the IOGA has hosted winter live and silent auction fundraisers in southwest and north Idaho in which a portion of the proceeds has benefited children's programs at the Ada County Boys and Girls Club in

Garden City and the Children's Village, a group home, crisis nursery and treatment center in Coeur d' Alene. In both cases, outdoor education programs and activities have been funded featuring

raft and horse rides, river clean up, flyfishing, mountain biking, sending kids to summer camps, swimming lessons, dutch oven cooking and many more fun activities that the kids would not normally experience. For more information on IOGA fundraising efforts, contact the IOGA at 208.342.1438 or [idouffitt@cablone.net](mailto:idouffitt@cablone.net).



## Licensing board model for the nation

The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board, created in 1961, with the support of the industry, is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of those who utilize outfitted services. The IOGLB is a self governing state agency and is recognized throughout the west as one of the most comprehensive licensing programs in existence.

To provide paid services in Idaho, both outfitters and guides must be licensed by the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board. Outfitters must also obtain special-use permits from the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management when necessary. The Licensing Board assures that outfitters are highly skilled, qualified, bonded, certified in first-aid, and financially capable of providing a safe, quality experience for the recreating public.

By statute, the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association send the names of two qualified outfitter/guides to the Governor for his consideration for the outfitter positions on the Licensing Board. Nominees are solicited from all licensed outfitters. A written and oral interview process is conducted by the IOGA board of directors prior to sending names to the Governor.

The Licensing Board is made up of five individuals including three outfitter/guides, one person representing the general public and an Idaho Fish and Game Commission representative. All but the IDFG representative are appointed by the Governor and all

must be confirmed by the Idaho Senate. Compared to other state licensing boards, this is a fair and balanced arrangement:

- State Board of Pharmacy: four pharmacists; one member at-large
- Board of Dentistry: five dentists, two hygienists, one consultant

- Board of Medicine: six medical doctors, two public at-large, one orthopathic physician, one law enforcement official
- Board of Nursing: six nurses, one member at-large

## Our Lifeblood

Clean, Freeflowing streams



Abundant Fish & Wildlife and Quality Habitat

Reasonable Regulation

