

FY20 February Cross-Country Ski Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Program Funding Update

The Cross-Country Ski GIA Program is funded fully from revenue from the sale of the [Great Minnesota Ski Pass](#). Revenue from the ski pass is deposited into the cross-country ski pass dedicated account. This account also supports some of the costs associated with grooming ski trails at state parks. Ski passes are required to ski on GIA as well as state park ski trails. The GIA Program is budgeted approximately \$285,000 each year and another \$75,000 is allocated to grooming ski trails in state parks.

Grant-in-Aid payments will be made in full

As a result of good ski pass sales and subsequent revenue into the ski account, DNR is able to make all GIA payments for the trail maintenance performance benchmark (40% of the grant) and the remaining 60% of the grant reimbursement based on the number of hours groomed and the established grooming rates. Clubs and sponsors are encouraged to send their reimbursement requests to their Area Parks and Trails staff to ensure prompt payment.

Ski Pass outreach and enforcement checks have been increased

To encourage more ski pass sales and revenue into the ski account, MN DNR has done a variety of promotions, including updating our educational materials, attending Nordic skiing events (including the 2020 Coop FIS Cross Country Ski World Cup), and increasing our social media outreach regarding the ski pass and ski trails. We have also collaborated with DNR Enforcement to increase ski pass compliance with more spot checks by conservation officers. As of February 1, 2020, 11,190 ski passes (all types) have been sold, which is the highest sales at this point in the season since 2015.

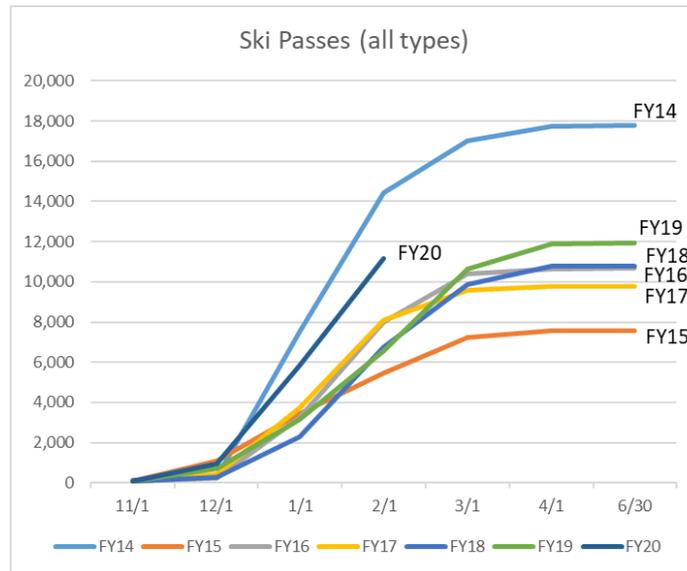


Figure 1. Great Minnesota ski passes sold (all types) from fiscal year 14 to present (February 1, 2020). This ski season marks one of the highest ski pass sales in this timeframe. A total of 11,190 ski passes (all types) have been sold, as of February 1, 2020. This is the highest sales at this point in the season since 2015.

Future Cross-Country Ski Grant-in-Aid Benchmarks and Grooming Payments

The DNR is hoping that these new revenues will help stabilize the ski pass account; however, since the weather and snow conditions add uncertainty, the impact of the new fees and purchasing trends will not be known for potentially a few years. DNR will be carefully monitoring the account to ensure the new rates are sufficient to maintain the current level of funding to the clubs and to the DNR for grooming trails in state parks. Additional information will be forthcoming to meet with the Minnesota Nordic Ski Association (MNSA) and clubs to discuss funding levels and the framework of the account and GIA payments to ensure the account can consistently make payments. We look forward to further conversations and continued partnership with the skiing community of Minnesota on how best to support cross-country skiing in the future.

Cross-Country Ski Grant-in-Aid GPS Verification Required for FY21 funding

For the next ski season’s Grant-in-Aid payments (2020-2021), we will be requesting that all ski clubs GPS their trails to better represent the trails spatially on outreach materials and to validate mileage. This additional information will be critical to DNR’s strategic planning for the maintenance of the fund and to ensure skiers have updated locations and mileage for each trail, which will be made available on the DNR website. The intent of the GPS verification process is to capture a data-driven accounting of the miles of trail in the Minnesota Cross-Country Ski GIA Program.

Additional information regarding how to collect this data will be provided within the coming weeks, around March 2020. With the time remaining in the current ski season, please plan accordingly to ensure these points are collected and mileage is provided, if possible. If you have concerns or feel this will not be possible this ski season, please inform your Area Parks and Trails staff.