



# Annual Report 2019

*Exploring Redfish Lake, courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho and Drake Cooper Advertising*





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*The Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI), created in 1988, is an enduring coalition of state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations that work together to provide Idaho citizens and visitors with statewide recreation opportunities.*



*Idaho City snowshoeing, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation; Bruneau Overlook and Lower Salmon River, courtesy Bureau of Land Management.*

THE IDAHO RECREATION AND TOURISM INITIATIVE (IRTI) DEVELOPS PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATES with various agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals to improve public information, services, and projects associated with recreation and tourism in Idaho.

IRTI is a coordinating entity for statewide recreation and tourism projects, with the goal of enhanced opportunities for citizens and visitors to enjoy outdoor recreation in the State of Idaho. IRTI is guided by its Steering Committee, which meets quarterly and sets the priorities for collaborative projects. This group is comprised of entities that have on-the-

ground expertise in recreation, including land management agencies, recreation providers, natural resource specialists, and tourism experts.

IRTI is recognized for its networking and information-sharing, with a commitment to public-private collaboration. IRTI partners contribute funding, in-kind expertise, project coordination, communication, and other collaborative services. This support encourages responsible, healthy, and memorable outdoor experiences for citizens and visitors alike, which ultimately bring economic benefit to communities across the state.

The following IRTI partners have committed their resources, abilities, and services to Idaho recreation:

- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Department of Commerce
- Idaho Transportation Department
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- National Park Service
- Idaho RV Campgrounds Association
- Friends of Idaho State Parks
- Bogus Basin
- Idaho Heritage Trust
- Boise State University, Andrus Center for Public Policy
- Drake Cooper Advertising
- Red Sky PR



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### WHY IRTI? THE VALUE OF RECREATION

Visits to Idaho are on an upward trend, and the public is clearly looking for outdoor recreation opportunities nationwide.

Visit Idaho's 2017 visitor research study, conducted by Longwoods Travel USA, provided statistics that indicate recreation is one of several primary reasons for travel to Idaho. Of the top five activities beyond shopping and fine dining, the report states that visits to national state parks, landmarks and historic sites, hiking and backpacking, draw visitors to Idaho.

Also in 2017, 34.3 million person trips occurred (3.8% higher than 2015), of which 40% were overnight and 60% were day trips. The overnight trips netted \$1.9 billion for the state's economy, a 12.2% increase from 2015. The study further noted that 49% of those traveling to Idaho were visiting family and friends, while 40% traveled due to marketing efforts that publicized all that Idaho has to offer, with the majority visiting from nearby western states. Most notably, 28% of the visitors were actually in-state citizens exploring their own state's resources.

Idaho Tourism stated the top reasons for travel to Idaho included visiting friends and family, *experiencing the outdoors*, and touring the region. This resulted in \$3.7 billion dollars spent in direct travel expenses, followed by related activities of growing eco, cultural, and agritourism. Favorite regional activities in Idaho's statewide travel regions included fishing, water sports and swimming, hiking, backpacking, camping, and visits to national and state parks and landmark-historic sites. IRTI has assisted with every area of these activities for many years.



*Round Lake, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*





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*Outdoor Recreation Roundtable* and the *Idaho Outdoor Recreation Economy Report* each focused on the important roles that recreation and tourism play as economic drivers. One IORE report focused on Idaho's "high quality of life" with 79% of Idaho residents participating in outdoor recreation each year. It made the case that Idaho's outdoor industry "attracts and sustains employers and families," which in turn produces active workforces that ensure communities will thrive economically and socially across the state.



The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation also publicized that in 2018, \$6 million people (residents and non) visited state parks and campsites, contributing significantly to Idaho's economy, jobs, and quality of life. Research on recreation shows a wide range of outdoor activities that are

increasing yearly, engaging many in-state and out-of-state participants, including more persons exploring the state by RV, camping/"glamping," motorcycle and ATV riding, hunting/shooting/trapping, horseback riding and other equestrian activities, dog training, and winter sports. IRTI partners support these activities statewide.

IRTI PARTNERS SUPPORT WILDLIFE PROGRAMS, HABITAT AND SPECIES CONSERVATION EFFORTS, AND YOUTH CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAMS. IRTI partner Idaho Department of Fish and Game also conducts a non-game program that emphasizes popular wildlife watching, birding, pollinator awareness, outdoor photography, and education programs. The Idaho Fish & Wildlife Foundation manages the popular Idaho wildlife license plate sales. IRTI partners have worked with various aspects of these programs for years,



working to increase awareness and support for wildlife diversity research and management projects that focus on species in the greatest need of conservation, including threatened and endangered animals, birds, fish, and plants. License plate funding also extends to on-the-ground habitat monitoring and conservation.

Plates sales also provide much-needed support for conservation education, wildlife publications, youth programs, classroom outreach and materials. Idaho has a robust youth focus, including *Be Outside Idaho*, *Watchable Wildlife*, and *Bird by Bird* programs.

SINCE 1988, IRTI HAS BEEN ACTIVELY COORDINATING EFFORTS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INTERESTS to benefit outdoor recreation and its related businesses for the benefit of the citizens and visitors.

IRTI's thirty-year history of coordinating efforts between state, federal and local governments, private sector interests, non-profits, and NGOs have helped partners promote the state's recreation and tourism opportunities on a national and international scale, bringing awareness of Idaho's natural beauty and amazing outdoor experiences to the forefront of public interest.

Since its inception, IRTI partners have helped analyze the status of recreation statewide, assessing the quality of public experiences, and developing innovative ways to leverage collective resources. IRTI partners have been integral to efforts such as the State Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Another IRTI partner, the state's Commerce Department, works closely with



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*Elephant's Perch camping, courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce Visit Idaho and Drake Cooper Advertising; Idaho Scenic Byway sign at Lake Coeur d'Alene, courtesy Idaho Transportation Department; Stay on Trails billboard 2005, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*

local communities and industry leaders to stimulate innovative recreation-related businesses that will remain in Idaho for years to come.

A LEGACY: 30 YEARS WORKING TOGETHER PROVIDING INFORMATION AND SERVICES. Since 1988, the IRTI coalition has combined resources to support overlapping agency and organizational objectives. The annual IRTI budget projects a shared plan to successfully implement projects, and many signatories to the IRTI MOU contribute funding, but it is not a partnership requirement. Each partner contributes its best expertise, ideas, and in-kind support, which has worked for many years. This approach encourages flexible management of projects that meet changing demands and interests through the years.

IRTI has facilitated a number of information needs across the state for 30 years. IRTI partner Idaho RV Campgrounds Association developed a statewide campground directory to help RV visitors with their travel and camping needs. This guide is still one of IRTI's primary annual projects today. IRTI also created Idaho's statewide scenic byways system, marked by visually-pleasing roadside signs and accompanied by brochures. Idaho Department of Transportation will work with IRTI partners on possible new approaches to byways in 2020. IRTI instigated the Interagency OHV coordinating committee in 2003, resulting in years of enhanced OHV recreation management and safe trails use. A massive communication effort ensued, with radio spots, billboards, posters, and sticker and a website promoting the partner campaign. Partners have

assisted with other public information projects, such as Idaho's *Watchable Wildlife* program. Partners produced two versions of the popular Idaho wildlife viewing guides with site-specific information. This publication spurred another IRTI-sponsored project, the *Idaho Birding Trail* guide, which is in the process of being revised.



*Legacy IRTI publications: Campground Directory; Wildlife viewing, 1989, 1990; Birding Trails, 1995, 2003.*





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# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*Winter sleigh ride and Main Salmon rafting, courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho; Dunes motorcycling, courtesy Bureau of Land Management.*

### IRTI PARTNERS COMMITTED TIME, DOLLARS, AND EXPERTISE IN 2019 TO THE FOLLOWING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

#### OPERATIONS

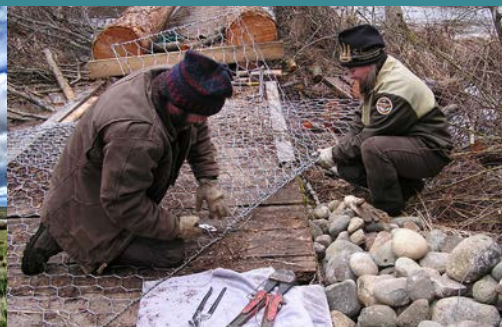
- FY2019 IRTI Annual Operating Plan and Budget signed (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019, projected total \$253,190)
- FY2020 IRTI Annual Operating Plan and Budget activated (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020, projected total \$255,690)

*\*In accordance with existing MOU (2016-2021). The operating plan and budget is not an obligating document for federal or state funding, and projections are contingent upon funds being allocated to signatory agencies. Some funding is directed by terms of Cooperative Agreements between IRTI (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, lead) and federal agencies with annual performance reporting requirements. IRTI membership is not contingent upon fiscal obligations, and in-kind support is recognized as legitimate operating plan contribution. Some, but not all IRTI partners serve as bankers for collaborative projects. The IRTI coordinator position is paid from funds contributed to IRTI. Of these funds, 50% are dedicated to salary and 50% to operating costs, under the guidance of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*

- IRTI Steering Committee Meetings (FY2019): September 17, November 30, January 17 (rescheduled to Feb 15 due to Federal Government shutdown), April 30, September 17, December 11 (agendas, minutes disseminated)
- Special IRTI Meetings - Office of Outdoor Recreation discussions (July and August, 2019)
- IRTI Mid-Year Status Update web-posting (May 8, 2019)
- Annual work plan coordination, communication, organization and promotion
- Annual federal SF425 financial report and associated cooperative agreement compliance completed (IDPR)
- Maintain and coordinate communications, website, social media inquiries about recreation, education, parks, etc.
- Clearinghouse for exchange of information about outdoor recreation statewide
- Connecting organizations, agencies, elected officials, NGOs, non-profits, businesses about recreation
- Advisory capacity on issues pertinent to recreation, conservation education, natural resources, tourism
- Speaking engagements on behalf of IRTI and other recreation and tourism topics



# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*Recreational boating, courtesy US Bureau of Reclamation; Market Lake WMA viewing blind, courtesy Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Trail maintenance, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*

## PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

- Idaho RV Campgrounds Association printed 117,000 copies of the RV IDAHO Campground Directory, and distributed them to over 300 campgrounds, Visitors Centers, Chambers of Commerce, tourism organizations, and public agencies in Idaho as well as eight other states. IRTI partners such as USFS and BLM distribute it also at visitor centers and at the Idaho Sportsman Show. The online Idaho RV Campground Directory had over 22,292 website visits with 105,588 page-views.



- IRTI partners assisted Idaho Department of Commerce with



planning and hosting the annual Idaho Conference on Recreation and Tourism (ICORT) in October, 2019. This year's

theme, "Finding our Place in Idaho's Recreation Economy," set the tone for sessions that addressed a projected 18% growth of Idaho's recreation economy over the next decade, and how organizations, companies and communities can contribute to and benefit from this growth. IRTI partners IDPR, BLM, NPS, Drake Cooper, and Red Sky PR assisted IDC with event planning, marketing, and session speakers.

- IRTI partners also overlap on trail maintenance projects critical for hiking, camping, horseback riding, and non-motorized and mountain biking, and have assisted with mapping projects that benefit these outdoor activities for years. USFS and IDPR worked together on trail maintenance this year; IDPR, IDL, USFS, BLM, and others collaborated on ATV/UTV/OHV and motorbike awareness, safety courses, education programs, and messaging.

- The Non-Motorized Trail Program at IDPR is currently working to establish a stable funding source for non-motorized trail maintenance.

In 2020, an Idaho



Trails Supporter sticker will be available with a suggested donation amount of \$10. IDL also works on these issues.

- IRTI partners Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and National Park Service are working on the first phase of the Billingsley Creek master plan, a wrap-around trail system that connects locals and visitors alike. It is hopeful that they can break ground on a visitor center next year. IDPR also opened the Lake Cascade State Park Visitor Center in May, 2019.





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# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*Black Canyon Park, courtesy US Bureau of Reclamation; Hells Gulch hikers, courtesy Bureau of Land Management; Snowshoeing in Idaho, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation; Be Outside Idaho activity, courtesy Idaho Department of Fish and Game.*

• IRTI partners collaborate often on new initiatives at campgrounds, parks, rivers and lakes, visitor centers, trails, and more. This coordination supports federal and state agency endeavors and leverages staff expertise to achieve best visitor experiences to the state. IRTI partners USFS and BOR are analyzing the effects from proposed Anderson Ranch reservoir dam raise to recreation opportunities. USFS cooperated with the BLM in joint management of the Payette River to provide better service to the recreating public. The popular Idaho State Parks Passport program continues to draw visitors to state parks, boosting local economies and drawing residents to their state's park system. This program was rooted as an IRTI project, preceded by the VIP program, intended to encourage residents and non-residents to visit statewide.

• Friends of Idaho State Parks held its educational program for high school students, "Writers at Harriman," again this summer at Harriman State Park. About 40 students attend this workshop that gives them the opportunity to work with professional writers, artists, storytellers, and more in the outdoors, and then have a chance to publish their work in the *Henry's Fork Journal*.



• Friends of Idaho State Parks and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation dedicated the Ponderosa State Park Visitor Center as the Dirk Kempthorne Visitor Center. Former Governor Kempthorne and his wife worked with this partnership to create the *Experience Idaho* backpack loaner program for Idaho State Parks that have visitor centers. The backpacks have binoculars, GPS units, and youth outdoor activities.



*Friends of Idaho State Parks Writers at Harriman 2019; Experience Idaho backpack program, courtesy Nicole Walker.*





# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*IRTI partners support youth outdoor activities across the state with funding, staff, materials, and other in-kind assistance, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*

• *Be Outside, Idaho* is a grant program of IRTI to facilitate outdoor education programs to connect children with nature in Idaho, from backyards to mountain-tops. \$13,000 in grants were awarded for the 2020 grant year to projects that support the mission to “Inspire kids and their families to spend time outdoors and bring activity back in their lives.” This year, *Be Outside, Idaho* was able to fully fund or partially fund eleven out of 26 total projects. Grant recipients: Anser Charter School, Butte County Soil and Water Conservation District, Canyon County Parks, City of Kuna, Golden Eagle Audubon Chapter, Gooding Public Library District, Kendrick School District, Meridian Middle School, Meridian Parks and Recreation, Palouse Land Trust and Post Falls School District.



IRTI partners Idaho Departments of Parks and Recreation and Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management have been active supporters of the grant program. BLM and Parks and Rec increased funding for 2019-2020 to support extending BOI's grant efforts statewide.

• Idaho Department of Fish and Game led 45 events for the annual Free Fishing Day, and some free fishing events were also hosted on National Forest reservoirs and ponds. This year an estimated 3,099 anglers (residents and non-residents) fished Idaho's waters without a license. For many, especially kids, it is a first exposure to outdoor recreation. Departments of Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, other IRTI partners



are engaged in a wide variety of aquatic efforts besides fishing: habitat conservation, species monitoring, free rod loaners, analytics, and tracking.



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# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*Bird by Bird program schoolchildren, Idaho fly fishing, Market Lake Wildlife Management area viewing blind, courtesy Idaho Department of Fish and Game.*

• *Bird by Bird Idaho* an IRTI-partner project, celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Over 7,500 students have passed through “B3” in these years, benefiting from this citizen science and outreach program that teaches students about bii 14 schools (K-12th). Partners IDFG, USFWS, BLM, Wild Birds Unlimited, Golden Eagle Audubon, Intermountain Bird Observatory at Boise State University, The Peregrine Fund, and teachers and parents work hard together, “*Educating children one bird at a time!*”



• The *Idaho Watchable Wildlife* program is led by IDFG, with the help of IRTI partners. Recent activities include the redesign of



the *Idaho Statewide Birding Trail* guides. With over 175 sites, the new guides will now appear as separate guides for the state’s four regions, complete with maps, best birding spots, and photos to encourage quality birdwatching state-wide over 2,000 miles. New signage will



also be installed along the birdwatching routes. Statewide birdwatching also boosts Idaho’s rural economies.

The *Idaho Watchable Wildlife* program worked with Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation to install a new wildlife viewing blind at the Market Lake WMA near Idaho Falls, where over 19,000 visitors per year experience

waterfowl hunting, wildlife watching, touring, and other outdoor activity. Interpretive signage and handicap-accessibility help all visitors learn and enjoy this place year-round. Market Lake blind provides the public an opportunity enjoy the benefits of this important bird area. *Idaho Watchable Wildlife* also contributed to national *Watchable Wildlife*, the American Federation of Wildlife Association (AFWA) and its Wildlife & Nature Tourism Academy, webinars, research studies, and more. IRTI-supported *Idaho Watchable Wildlife* projects contribute to wildlife conservation, education, and nature tourism efforts across the U.S.

• The 23rd annual Salmon & Steelhead Days for Idaho fifth-graders hosted 2,176 kids, 74 classes, 34 schools over a three-day period. Payette students traveled the farthest to attend!





# IRTI Annual Project Summary: FY 2019



*Black Canyon Dam watersports, courtesy US Bureau of Reclamation; Snowshoe yurt, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation; courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho.*

• IRTI partners managed campgrounds and visitor centers through site and trails maintenance, information and reservations, and special events. US Forest Service also worked with Idaho Department of Fish and Game on Highway 21 corridor interpretive sign planning. The National Park Service will be working on a new paleo lab, and the Hagerman Fossil Beds site is now 30 years old. This July, several IRTI partners joined the NPS and Friends of Minidoka for the annual pilgrimage for survivors and descendants of Japanese American incarceration, and the opening of a new visitor center in what was once known as Warehouse #5. Idaho Heritage Trust offered IRTI valuable advice on cultural heritage, raising awareness of historic preservation of outdoor sites.



*Opening of the new visitor center at Minidoka, courtesy of the Friends of Minidoka.*

• Celebrating Idaho's outdoor beauty through the arts was a special effort of both the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Bureau of Land Management. The IDFG MK Nature Center has new outdoor interpretive signs and an indoor pollinator mural. BLM established an Artist-in-Residence program. Snake River artist in residence Scott Switzer painted beautiful Idaho landscapes.

Artwork also graced two first-day-of-issue US postage stamps. IRTI partner IDFG hosted the unveiling of a series of four stamps honoring American frogs this summer. Wild and Scenic Rivers featured the work of BLM employee, Bob Wick.







*Painting by Scott Switzer, BLM Snake River Artist in Residence.*



# *A Solid Foundation for the Future: The Legacy of IRTI*

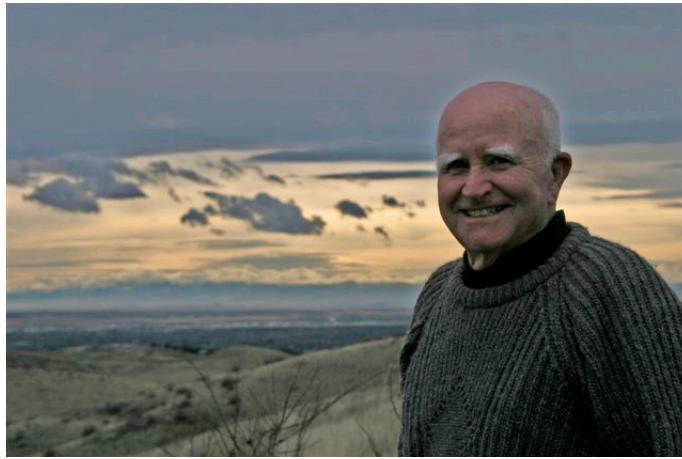
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A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE IDAHO RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE

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DEDICATED TO

*Jack Lavin*

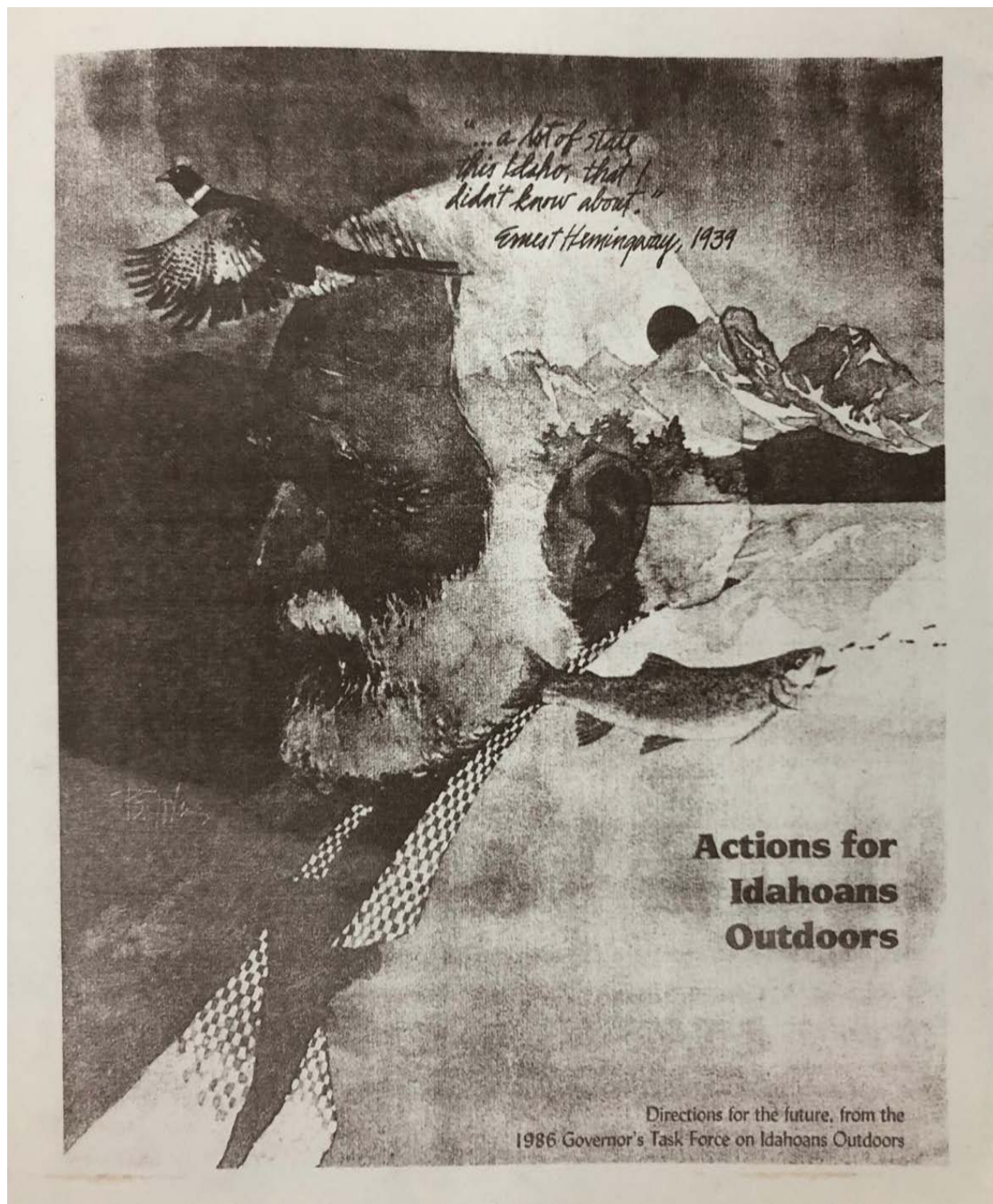


FOREST SUPERVISOR: TOIYABE, UINTA, BRIDGER, SHOSHONE,  
AND BOISE NATIONAL FORESTS

AND

LEADER OF THE IDAHO RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE: 1988-2007

*Jack Lavin, courtesy Antonia Lavin Hedrick.*



*"Actions for Idahoans Outdoors," 1986 Governor's Task Force on Idahoans Outdoors, under Idaho Governor John V. Evans. Historic document courtesy Boise State University, Special Collections & Archives, Governor Cecil D. Andrus papers.*



# *A Solid Foundation for the Future: The Legacy of IRTI*

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## A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE IDAHO RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE

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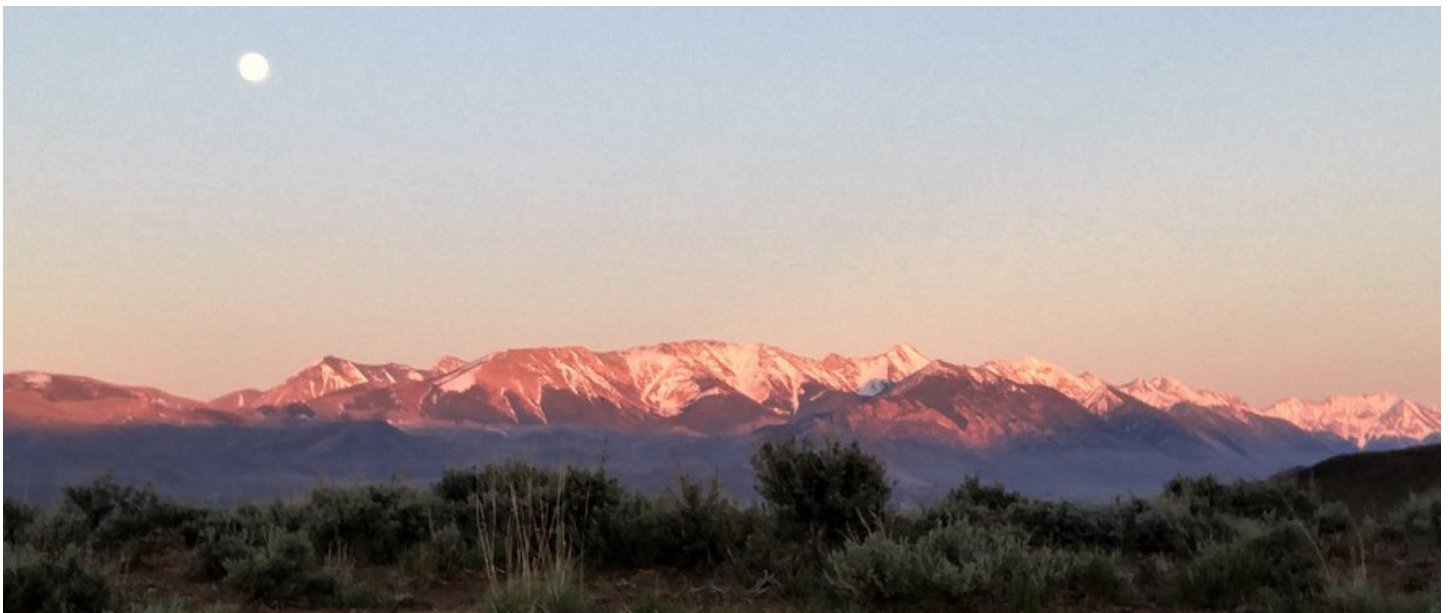
*IRTI history research by Meggan Laxalt Mackey, with assistance from Andy Brunelle, Vicki Jo Lawson, Rick Just, Jennifer Okerlund, and IRTI partners. Historic documents courtesy Boise State University, Special Collections & Archives, Governor Cecil D. Andrus collection, with assistance from archivists Gwyn Hervochon and Cheryl Oestreicher.*

- 1986** Governor’s Task Force on Idahoans Outdoors, Idaho Governor John V. Evans  
Produced “Actions for Idahoans Outdoors: Directions for the Future” action plan
- 1987** January 5, Cecil D. Andrus became Governor of the State of Idaho for the second time  
(Andrus previously served as Governor 1971-1977, and served as U.S. Secretary of the Interior, 1977-1981)

“Idaho Leisure Travel and Recreation Study” sponsored by Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department of Commerce, and University of Idaho. The study was aimed at identifying ways to improve outdoor recreation opportunities and tourism marketing in the state. UofI published the study.

Governor Andrus, an avid outdoorsman, focuses on environmental, public lands, and Endangered Species Act issues, with an emphasis on the value of outdoors and recreation for the state. Years later, Andrus quoted the poet Robert Frost in his memoir *Politics Western Style*, “We should not have to care so much, you and I ... But we do care, and we should. We care about the future ... I remain hopeful that I will be able to pass on to my grandchildren all the pleasures of life in an unspoiled West. Perhaps hope should be replaced by a stronger word. It is a matter of obligation.”

— Cecil D. Andrus, with Joel Connelly, *Politics Western Style*, Sasquatch Books, Seattle, 1998, p. 239



*Challis foothills, courtesy Bureau of Land Management.*



*Hiking in the Pioneer Mountains and Hayden Lake boating, courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho; Lady Face Falls, courtesy Rachel Pyron.*

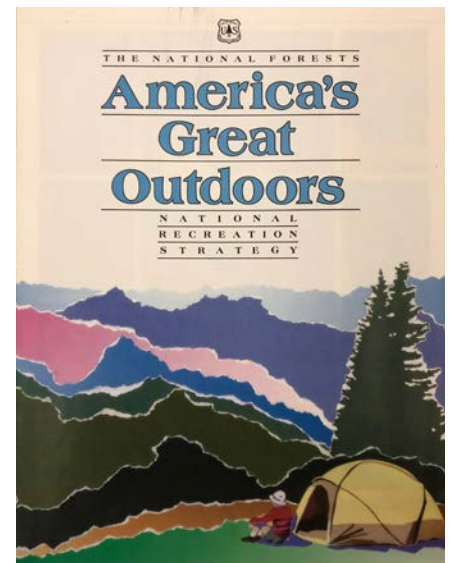
## A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE IDAHO RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE

**1988**

US Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson challenged each national forest to identify partnerships and resources to elevate recreation as a priority goal. This resulted in the the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, release of *America's Great Outdoors: National Recreation Strategy*.

Ronald Reagan's White House Task Force *Report on Outdoor Recreation* called for improved collaboration among local, federal, and private organizations.

Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus strongly supported an emphasis on outdoor recreation. Soon, an idea surfaced to create an initiative in Idaho that focused on Idaho's recreation as a marketable commodity. Partnerships were encouraged among federal, state, and private entities statewide to improve public information; share funding for facility operations; conduct inventories of outdoor recreation places such as campgrounds, picnic spots, paths, trails, boat launches and docks, and sports areas.



**August 1988**

US Forest Service and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation sign an agreement to begin a statewide recreation initiative. Idaho's Forest supervisors and Governor Andrus supported the effort.



## September 1988

Jack Lavin, retired US Forest Service supervisor, assumes role as the first “Idaho Recreation Initiative Coordinator.” The position was under the director of Idaho Parks and Recreation. Lavin develops the “Idaho Recreation Initiative” (IRI) Plan to “create a safe place for a large number of agencies to discuss recreation and tourism and to develop a mechanism for crafting solutions and sharing money.”

## December 1988

Lavin’s plan identified the following needs:

- Conduct an assessment/inventory of resources, including Visitor Centers
- Hold an Idaho Recreation Conference for recreation and travel professionals, agency/business leaders
- Provide marketing training to interagency personnel, and “IdahoHost” visitor services
- Develop and publish annual ‘Stockholders Report,’ National Forests book, maps, Idaho Campground Directory, Camping and Picnic Guide, Scenic Byways, Wildlife Guide, directories, calendar of events, and other publications
- Actively participate and coordinate with tourism councils and Chambers of Commerce
- Develop “one-stop” information services with video/walk-in kiosks, visitor centers, 1-800 information telephone lines, US West insert on recreation, bulletin boards
- Host travel editor tours and sponsor advertisements featuring recreation and tourism (Trails, scenic byways and adventure roads, sites, cabins, campgrounds, summer and winter recreation activities, and agency programs)
- Produce “Outdoor Idaho” video and other video/print products

## Jan-Oct 1989

Progress reports to IRI, Governor Andrus, and agency leaders indicated steady progress under Lavin’s Idaho Recreation Initiative, including publications; trails working groups; marketing strategy with the Department of Commerce; “All Idaho Outdoor Days” (June) with a Free Camping Day - USFS/BLM/COE/Idaho Power/State Parks, in conjunction with an IDFG Free Fishing Day; statewide meetings of agency personnel to “increase knowledge on marketing, partnership, and customer satisfaction.” University of Idaho provides research assistance and conference planning committee input.

Lavin articulated three main points in a memo to Governor Cecil Andrus staffer Andy Brunelle on 8/10/89:

1. Developing partnerships between agencies/private sector
2. Improving customer service/information
3. Marketing recreation opportunities

*Jack Lavin handwritten memo to Andy Brunelle.*

Initial IRI partners were Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, US Forest Service, and Commerce, Idaho Department of Commerce.

\*These agencies soon were joined by Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Transportation Department, National Park Service. Later, US Fish and Wildlife Service joined. Other partners through the years: Idaho RV Campground Association, Idaho Association of Outfitters & Guides, Idaho Power Company, University of Idaho, Boise State University, Audubon Society, Idaho Department of Lands, Friend of Idaho State Parks, and more. Named IRTI in 1992.



*Cascade, Idaho, courtesy Rachel Pyron; Idaho wildflowers in bloom and famous fly fishing, courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho.*

## Sept-Oct 1989

A major Idaho Recreation Initiative goal is accomplished by Lavin and his IRI team, the first ever *Idaho Governor's Conference on Recreation*, hosted in Sun Valley, 9/30-10/2/1989.

The *Statement of Purpose, Schedule and Activities* document articulated a “two-statement purpose:”

1. Integrating Idaho's recreation providers.
2. Working together to better serve the customer.

It also stated that “Recreation providers are defined as governmental agencies and private companies and businesses that provide facilities, opportunities, and services to people for the purpose of recreation. This definition fully encompasses all those considered to be part of the tourism industry...Customers are defined as any person considered to be a user of recreation and tourism facilities and services. These are residents and non-residents of the State of Idaho.”

The three-day conference hosted four sessions focused on Partnerships, Marketing, Funding, and Customer Service/Information. Daily activities included presentations, facilitated workshops, and field trips, with discussions focused on roles, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses, responsibilities, solutions to problems, and expanding networks.

Governor Cecil Andrus was the second-day banquet host. The conference was a resounding success with about 350 attendees. This proved to be foundational to recreation efforts in Idaho, as annual Conferences on Recreation and Tourism have been hosted for many years since 1989.

A statewide Governor's Recreation Conference was held at Sun Valley, 9/30 - 10/2/89, and attended by approximately 350 people. The purpose of the meeting was to bring recreation providers together to increase networking and improve coordination to better serve people. A major spinoff of this conference is the welding of recreation and tourism interests. Starting in 1991, there will be an annual Governor's Conference on Recreation & Tourism. Sponsoring partners include State Commerce, Parks, Transportation, F&G, the USFS, BLM, BOR, NPS and the Idaho Recreation and Parks Association.

*Excerpt from IRI Coordinator Jack Lavin's Progress Report, November 1989.*





*Fishhook Creek Trail, courtesy Rachel Pyron.*

1990-2019 Idaho Recreation Initiative, later renamed the Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) in 1992, has been instrumental in leading recreation and tourism efforts statewide for years, including:

- Recreation marketing strategy, travel studies, tourism research
- Annual recreation and tourism conferences
- Statewide Scenic and Backcountry Byways system
- Rec fee demo project, VIP passes - evolved into State Passport program, LWCF planning
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation/Tourism report every 5 years (LWCF requirement)
- Watchable Wildlife Program management and associated program, signs, and publications
- Trail designations, historic commemorations (ie; Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial)
- Publications: Idaho campground directory, Scenic Byways brochures, Idaho Watchable Wildlife and Birding Trail viewing guide(s), Watchable Wildlife poster, 101 Things to Do Outside
- Visitor information services at sites, kiosks, 1-800 phone lines, websites, speaker presentations
- Interpretive center, visitor enter, and other visitor location support
- Outdoor public events (ie; Free Fishing Day) and video/TV publicity (ie; *Incredible Idaho*)
- Mapping and GIS information systems (ie; Outfitter & Guides, statewide trail mapping)
- Public outreach campaigns (ie; OHV-ATV awareness, Stay on Trails, Firewood: Find It/Leave It)
- Motorized and non-motorized trails, information, education
- Education programs (*Be Outside Idaho, Bird by Bird, Watchable Wildlife*)

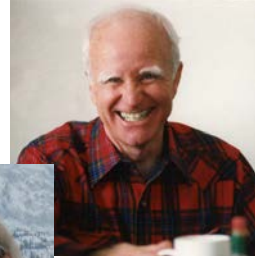


*Courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho.*

# *IRTI Leadership: 1988 - 2019*

## **Jack Lavin**

*September 1988 - September 2007.* First and longest IRTI Coordinator: visionary, planner, motivator, convenor, and collaborator. IRTI “is” because of Jack Lavin. Words of Wisdom: “There are no Junior Partners. We are all at the table.” Jack left this world in 2013, leaving it a better place for us all.



## **Vicki Jo Lawson**

*October 2007 - August 2013.* Second IRTI Coordinator, giving six years of energy and direction to IRTI. She invigorated partnerships, shepherded projects such as GIS/Mapping, Invasive Species and motorized vehicle campaigns; gained health/medical partners for the *Idaho Children & Nature Network (Be Outside, Idaho)* listening sessions; led national visitor use monitoring, rec fee projects, and Visit Idaho Playgrounds. She tirelessly worked with public groups, legislators, agencies, and businesses on the value of collaborating on recreation in Idaho. She helped start “Dark Skies Idaho,” and continues to be involved in outdoor recreation across the US and the world.



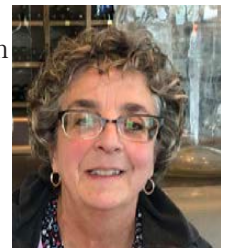
## **Rick Just**

*September 2013 - December 2018.* Rick followed as Coordinator, using his many years in outdoor recreation as the “glue” to hold efforts together. Rick was a member of IRTI before he became a coordinator, using his expertise to lead SCORP; the state outdoor recreation information kiosk system; RV Campground Directory; and communications efforts. He is the Director of the Writers at Harriman program and is the Friends of Idaho State Parks President, as well as an Idaho Writers Guild Board Member. Rick is a well-known Idaho author who has published many books.



## **Meggan Laxalt Mackey**

*January 2019-Present.* IRTI Coordinator Meggan was a longtime IRTI member from her 30-year federal career as a public information officer. Shes helped with IRTI projects such as the *Watchable Wildlife Guide*, Idaho State Access Trail Sesquicentennial, visitor centers, trails, and interpretive signs. She co-founded the *Idaho Children & Nature Network (Be Outside, Idaho)* and *Bird by Bird Idaho* with other IRTI partners. She holds a Masters in Historical Research, is active in the Basque community, and recently published *Lekuak: The Basque Places of Boise, Idaho*. Meggan operates Studio M Publications & Design in Star, Idaho.



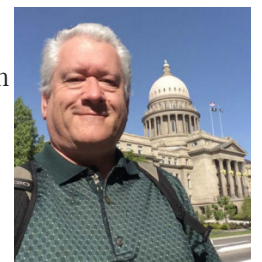
## **Jennifer Okerlund**

*2003-2019, IRTI Project Manager, IRTI advisor and IDPR liaison.* Jennifer has been with IRTI since she started with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, bringing positive energy, communications expertise, and proactive approaches to public access and the growing impact of recreation tourism on our state’s economy. Jenn is another co-founder the *Idaho Children & Nature Network (Be Outside, Idaho)*. She is the Executive Director of the Idaho Forest Products Commission (and proud mom of Hannah).



## **Andy Brunelle**

Andy has demonstrated leadership, guiding IRTI with his public policy and legislative expertise. He has been the capitol city governmental coordinator for the Intermountain Region of the US Forest Service since 2001. Andy witnessed the formation of IRTI in 1988 when he served as former Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus as a natural resource advisor. Andy was instrumental in the collaborative IRTI OHV outreach project, and has provided public policy advice, helping to make IRTI a national recreation model.







*Military Reserve, Boise, Courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho.*

## *IRTI Partners: 2019-2020*

- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation: Chelsea Chambers, Tom Helmer, Jennifer Okerlund (former IDPR)
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game: Deniz Aygen, Vicky Runnoe, Ian Malepeai
- Idaho Department of Commerce: Diane Norton, Matt Borud
- Bureau of Land Management: Robin Fehlau, Shannon Bassista
- U.S. Forest Service: Nell Highfill, Andy Brunelle
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Chris Swanson, Kathleen Hendricks
- Bureau of Reclamation: Justina Thorsen
- National Park Service; Wade Vagias
- Idaho RV Campgrounds Association: Jeannie Bixby, Anne Chambers
- Friends of Idaho State Parks: Rick Just
- Idaho Transportation Department: Cecilia Awusie
- Idaho Department of Lands: Todd Wernex
- Bogus Basin: Susan Saad
- Idaho Heritage Trust: Katherine Kirk
- Boise State University, Andrus Center for Public Policy: John Freemuth
- Drake Cooper Advertising: Jeremy Chase
- Red Sky PR: Jessica Flynn

## 30 YEARS OF RECREATION IN THE STATE OF IDAHO

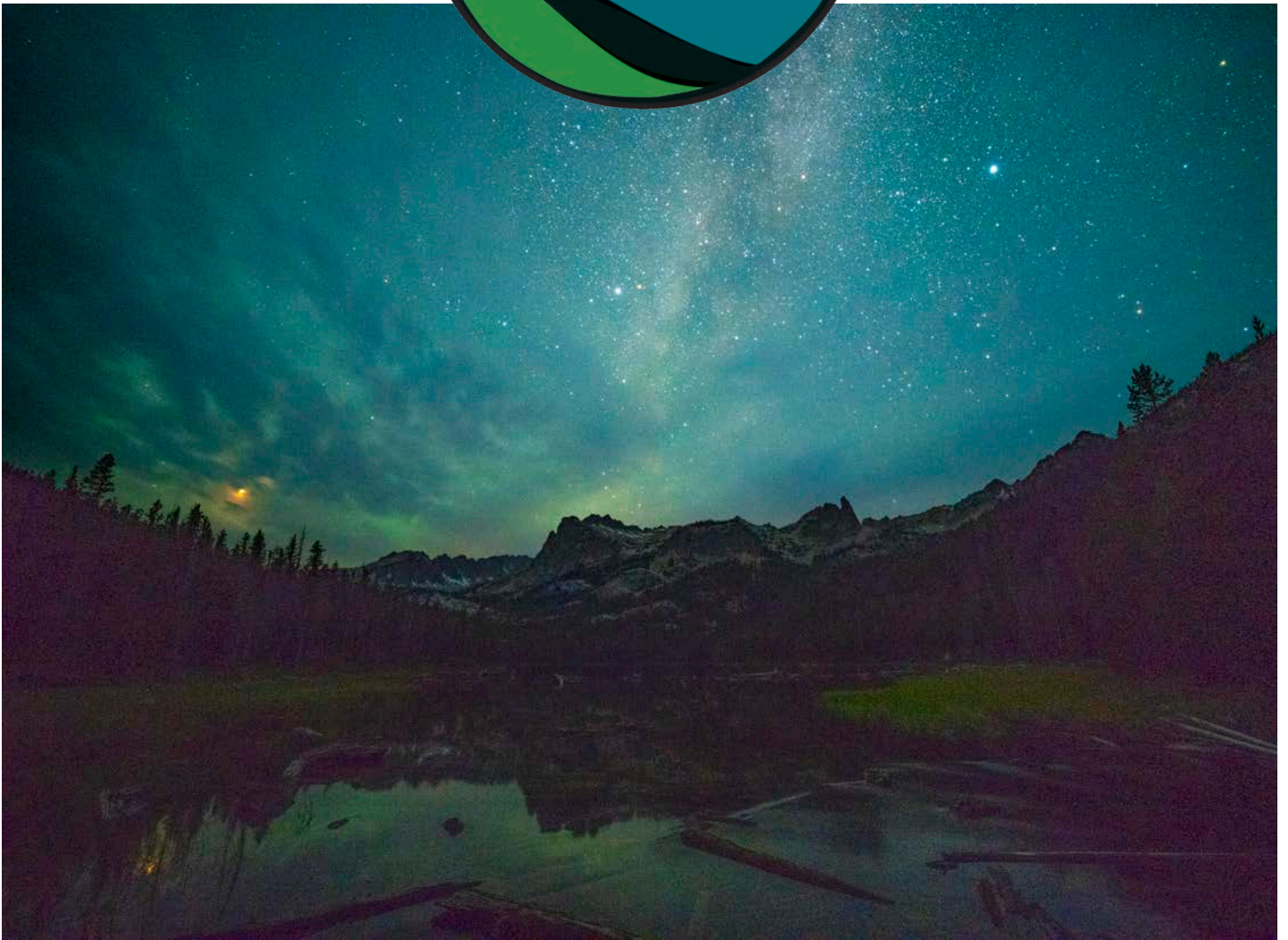
*The Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI), created in 1988, is an enduring coalition of state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations that work together to provide Idaho citizens and visitors with statewide recreation opportunities.*

<https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/idaho-recreation-and-tourism-initiative>



*Harriman State Park, courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.*





*Courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce, Visit Idaho.*



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