

Narrative

Development Narrative for Conditional Use Permit

Idaho Wilderness Yurts - 325 Crooked River Road

Outline:

- Background and Project Description
- Construction Timeline and Phasing
- Impact Analysis
- Site Compatibility and Compliance
- Fire Mitigation Plan
- Emergency Services Action Plan
- Noxious Weed Control Plan

Background and Project Description:

Outdoorsmanship is a cultural value in Idaho. We love open spaces, public lands, beautiful vistas, and the freedom to explore and subdue our unique surroundings. Weekends, for many Idahoans, consist of backpacking, hunting, fishing, four-wheeling, biking, skiing, and camping in the outdoors. Despite our year-round longing for adventure, most of our camping adventures are only feasible in the warm season. Idaho winters can be harsh and unpredictable, and the roads that allow us to access our favorite destinations are buried in snow. Further, most of the places we could park a car, RV, or camper do not allow overnight parking, because shoulders and turnouts need to be kept clear for snow removal. For these reasons, most Idahoans who enjoy camping limit it to the warm season.

Idaho Wilderness Yurts aims to open opportunities for year-round adventures by establishing camps in areas that are accessible by vehicle in the summer but are only accessible via over-snow travel during the cold season. These camps will provide amenities that make the backcountry accessible in the winter: shelter, warmth, fuel, restrooms, and a place to cook inside their wood-heated yurts. Additionally, the camp will offer some "backcountry luxuries," including a covered outdoor pavilion, low-voltage photovoltaic system for lighting, and a wood-fired sauna - all found in a remote location that offers a wilderness experience, seasonally accessible only to those with an adventurous spirit.

Idaho Wilderness Yurts is slated to be built in separate "villages", each of which will consist of:

- Three yurts, each with sleeping quarters for 4-8 people, a basic cooking area, and table
- A restroom that will either be:
 - Integrated into each yurt
 - OR, a separate multi-stall restroom building that serves all three yurts
- An outdoor, covered pavilion, with a vented fire pit, bar-style cooking countertop, and seating for most of the people who would occupy the yurts in the village.
- A two-room, off the grid, wood-fired sauna for a hint of luxury in the wilderness

The components of each village will be spread out to give relative solitude to the occupants of each yurt but close enough to share facilities, having buildings located within roughly 200 yards of each other.

Each yurt will be offered as a nightly rental, reservable by the general public on a first-come-first-served basis. The amenities offered in each village will be available only to the paying guests. All occupants will be expected to exercise Leave-No-Trace ethics and leave the premises and surrounding National Forest land better than they found it. Warm season guests will be able to drive to their village and take a short walk to their yurt. Cold season guests will be made aware of the wilderness nature of the camp - namely that the yurts are only accessible via personal over-snow travel and that backcountry skills and judgment will need to be exercised at all times during their self-led Idaho Wilderness Yurts adventure. Access to Idaho Wilderness Yurts is made possible in the cold season via use of the existing Whoop-Em-Up Park-N-Ski parking area that is located approximately 4 miles from the property. Occupants will need to purchase a Park-N-Ski pass or coordinate their own dropoff/legal parking from Highway 21.

Idaho Wilderness Yurts is to be a primitive camp that is completely off the grid. The yurts will each have a small photovoltaic system to power lighting and an exhaust fan for the toilets. Guests will need to purify their own water, dispose of their own graywater (except human waste), pack out their own trash, and be responsible for their own safety/emergency preparedness. These practices are in-line with modern wilderness camping standards (i.e. Leave No Trace Principles).

The toilets will consist of a urine drainage field combined with a solid waste composting/storage area as offered by [Toilet Tech Solutions](#) (TTS) in their "Decompose" system. This system of human waste disposal sets the standard for sanitation in the backcountry and is pre-approved by Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and is listed in their [Technical Guidance Manual for Individual and Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems](#), section 5.14.

Construction Timeline and Phasing:

The construction of Idaho Wilderness Yurts is to take place in phases, each consisting of one or two villages at a time, and this CUP application is for up to four villages. The current plan is to build a single village in phase 1, work on marketing and building demand for the product, and then build successive villages in phases 2 thru 4 as demand allows. If more than four villages are ultimately desired, another CUP application would follow for the construction of additional villages.

This application defines specific locations for all of the structures in Phase 1 of construction. Idaho Wilderness Yurts seeks to create a new and unique experience through the construction of these yurt villages. Since this type of backcountry camp has never been done before (to our knowledge), we expect to "learn as we go." As such, this CUP application designates areas in which the future villages could be constructed, and the final location/layout of the future villages will be based upon feedback from phase 1 and is to be reviewed/approved during the permitting process for each subsequent village.

Impact Analysis:

Expected impacts of Idaho Wilderness Yurts are as follows:

- **Environment, economy, social:**
 - Idaho Wilderness Yurts are to be located in a place that many might expect is public land. Exercising private property rights to construct on this land will establish it as private and could detract from the feeling of remoteness that users in the area currently experience. Idaho Wilderness Yurts minimizes this impact by maintaining a natural appearance (no landscaping) and limiting construction to just a few, small yurts and pavilion as compared with a larger resort-style lodging that could be constructed on the property.
 - Guests may be inclined to leave trash around the property and pollute the Crooked River with poor environmental hygiene practices. Idaho Wilderness Yurts aims to minimize these impacts by educating all guests on Leave-No-Trace principles. Further, sinks will be provided in the yurts with buckets to collect greywater that can be dumped away from the river, and toilet facilities will be provided so human waste does not end up in the river. Guests will be provided with trash bags for their trash and the trash cans will be marked to "pack it out," meaning that guests need to take their own trash with them offsite. Properly disposing of greywater and packing out the trash will also be part of the check-out checklist.
 - Idaho Wilderness Yurts will bring more people into Boise County and will nominally increase business at local service stations, restaurants, and attractions.
 - Idaho Wilderness Yurts will augment the existing recreational opportunities in Boise County and may attract interest and tourism from travelers across the US.
- **Adjoining property impact:**
 - All adjoining property is public land. Idaho Wilderness Yurts will complement public land users' experience by offering increased recreational opportunities on private land which would otherwise be off-limits to the public. Adjacent campers may experience smoke from campfires and noise from the guests, however, given the relatively small number of occupants (less than 100 total) and size of the property (143 acres total, of which 31.67 acres will be zoned as a campground), this impact is minimal and is in line with the impacts public land users already experience in the area from hikers, four wheelers, snowmobilers, hunters, and skiers.
- **Natural resources impact:**
 - Some guests may draw water from the Crooked River to purify for drinking.
 - New structures and access roads/trails will somewhat reduce wildlife habitat in the area, however one goal of the project is to maintain a natural appearance to the site and minimize this impact.
- **Impacts to law enforcement, fire departments, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), transportation department:**
 - In the event of summer emergencies, the fire department and/or EMS would be asked to respond. First responders are as follows:

- Fire: US Forest Service
 - EMS: East Boise County Ambulance District (EBCAD)
- In the winter, guests are expected to come prepared to handle emergencies that could arise, as would be the case for any group camping in the backcountry and located four miles from the nearest road.
- Guests will be made aware of wilderness safety practices and subscription-based services that offer GPS, satellite-based texting, and air evacuation during a medical emergency. Examples are Wilderness First Aid/First Responder (WFA/WFR) Training, Garmin inReach (satellite-based texting), GlobalRescue (rescue service), SPOT (rescue service), and Air St. Luke's (medical transport service).
- Impacts to school: taxes will generate revenue for schools

Site Compatibility and Compliance:

Given that 325 Crooked River Road is completely surrounded by National Forest land, Idaho Wilderness Yurts aligns with current recreational land use in the area. Within 2 miles of the property there are existing ski/snowshoe trails, snowmobile trails, hiking trails, and campgrounds.

According to Boise County's Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 10 on Recreation, "Recreation and open space opportunities are a major interest to the people of Boise County." Further, the County's stated goal for recreation is "To encourage the development and maintenance of quality facilities to provide for sustainable recreational opportunities." Thus, the Boise County Comprehensive Plan supports the creation of Idaho Wilderness Yurts, and Idaho Wilderness Yurts will help the County achieve their recreational objectives.

Idaho Wilderness Yurts proposes to build up to 12 campsite units, accommodating up to 96 guests on a parcel of 143 acres. The Site Plan designates 31.67 of the 143 acres to be zoned for campground use. Neither the Boise County Building Code nor the Unified Land Use Ordinance (ULO) define limitations for occupant density in a campground. The proposed density for this project is very sparse, equating to approximately 3 individuals per acre of campground-zoned land.

Idaho Wilderness Yurts intends to comply with all applicable sections of the ULO and Building Code.

Fire Mitigation Plan:

Fires at Idaho Wilderness Yurts will only be permitted in the following areas:

- Inside the wood stove in each yurt. Wood stoves will be installed on a hearth and vented per code.
- Inside the vented fire pit in the pavilions. The fire pits will be installed on the concrete floor and vented per code through the pavilion roof.

- Inside the wood-fired sauna stove located inside the saunas. This stove will be installed and vented per code.
- In designated fire rings located outside of each yurt. The fire rings will be surrounded by non-flammable material in a 6' radius from the center of each ring.

The following tools will be available to guests for fire fighting:

- 10 lb. ABC fire extinguisher in each yurt, pavilion, and sauna
- Size 0 shovel located at each yurt
- Bucket for drawing water from the river to have on hand prior to starting fires

Access to Crooked River as a water supply will be made available to the fire department.

Emergency Services Action Plan:

Emergency services and standard passenger vehicles will have access to Idaho Wilderness yurts during the warm season via Crooked River Road, also known as NF-384. This road is graded gravel and supports 2-way traffic from ID Hwy 21 through the proposed site for Idaho Wilderness Yurts.

Crooked River Road is closed to vehicle access at Hwy 21 during the cold season. During this time, the Yurts will only be accessible via foot (snowshoe/ski), snowmobile, snow cat, or helicopter.

Guests will be made aware of the backcountry nature of Idaho Wilderness Yurts and are expected to be self-sufficient during their stay, including, but not limited to:

- Having an evacuation plan that does not rely on EMS, as would be the case with any backcountry adventure
- Being prepared with additional food and water
- Being confident in their wilderness survival skills prior to staying in the yurts

In an effort to make guests' experience as safe as possible, Idaho Wilderness Yurts will:

- Notify guests of the necessity for self-sufficiency in the wilderness prior to the start of their stay.
- Provide (1) satellite phone with emergency SOS and satellite texting features. This phone is to be located in the pavilion of Village 1 and will be available to guests should an emergency arise.
- Notify guests of the availability of air evacuation subscription services to which they can subscribe prior to the start of their stay. Examples of such services are: GlobalRescue (rescue service), SPOT (rescue service), and Air St. Luke's (medical transport service).
- Recommend that guests share their plan and anticipated return date with an accountable party that can coordinate help/rescue should it be necessary.

Noxious Weed Control Plan:

Idaho Wilderness Yurts will monitor for noxious weeds in the areas of the property that are designated as part of a yurt village. If noxious weeds are found, they will be minimized/limited in the manner most appropriate for the type of weed present. The property currently hosts a robust flora consistent with the adjacent National Forest land. There are no areas that are slated to be landscaped, so the existing natural flora stands a good chance of maintaining dominance across the property. The general philosophy of management - should the need arise - is to identify issues early, limit noxious weed flowering/spread, and to overseed with natural varieties to smother and eventually eliminate any noxious weeds.