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SAM Magazine – Denver, Colo., Feb., 20, 2015 – Business over the Presidents Day weekend and into this week has been a tale of opposites. In the West, temperatures remain warmer than average, and in the Northeast, Midwest, and South, the mercury fell to the bottom of the thermometer. But overall, ski areas are reporting that business for the week has been in the black.

As a whole, the Presidents Day holiday plays a significant role in terms of visitation for the season, particularly in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic where schools have a longer break than just the long weekend, according to Dave Belin, director of consulting services for RRC Associates.

On the East Coast, many ski areas say weather suppressed overall skier and snowboarder turnout for the weekend, but business rebounded during the week. In Massachusetts, Wachusett Mountain president Jeff Crowley likened the weekend to a ski race.

"We got out of the start without issue, but we were late on the next two gates," Crowley said. Reservations picked up later in the week, and conditions should allow the area to remain open for the April 5th Easter holiday and perhaps later.

In Pennsylvania, Anne Weimer, marketing director for Liberty Mountain, said consistent snowmaking had the slopes in good shape for the holiday, but cold temperatures impacted visits. "We have plenty of snow on the mountain and it's in great condition, but weather has been a bit cold for many of the folks in our region. The cold and wind kept numbers down," she said.

Further north, ski areas in Maine received up to a foot of new snow during the week but that's just a fraction of the snow that fell in places like Portland, where nearly five feet of snow has fallen since January, including more than two feet in February.

At Sugarloaf, fresh snow wasn't enough to offset winds and sub-zero temperatures. "Unfortunately the cold, wind, and forecasts for paralyzing snow hurt us quite a bit over Presidents Day weekend, particularly on Presidents Day itself," said Ethan Austin, communications manager. Visits over the weekend were down notably compared to last year. "Overall though, the season has been quite good. We're ahead of where we were at this time last year and are very optimistic for a great spring," he said.

Sub-zero temperatures over the weekend also effected visits in Minnesota. Jerry Wahlin, president and owner of Powder Ridge ski area, said highs peaked at 4 degrees F on Saturday, but more skiers and riders hit the slopes on Monday with a high of 18 degrees.

"It seems if the weather is good, there's a lot of interest out there, so if we can catch a break on the weather we should have a good spring season. Overall we are having an above average season," Wahlin said.

In Quebec, Annick Marseille, public relations manager at Mont Tremblant, said the number of lodging nights sold was up 9.5 percent over last year, and the length of the average stay was up 3.6 percent. Many resorts in Canada are reporting increased visits from the U.S. this season, thanks to the strength of the U.S. dollar compared to the Canadian loonie.



How courteous are people on the slopes?:

- MORE FRIENDLY THAN WALMART GREETERS
- MOST OBSERVE THE "RULES OF THE ROAD"
- MOST VIOLATE THE "RULES OF THE ROAD"
- IT'S BECOME A JUNGLE OUT THERE



