

TOURIST CHARTER SERVICES

IN

IDAHO

By

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In March, 1951, the University of Idaho Research Council approved Project 30 entitled "A Study of Tourist Resource Development in Idaho". Part A of the study was concerned with an analysis of selected charter services in Idaho's tourist industry oriented toward operation in the central portion of the state. Of primary interest were the packer and aircraft charter services. The study was conducted in the period from April 1, 1951, to December 1, 1951, and it restricted its coverage to the years 1949 and 1950.

The term packer includes any person operating from a temporary or permanent base for compensation who may provide saddle and/ or pack animals as well as equipment for hunting, fishing or scenic trips. The term outfitter refers to the packer who rents out the equipment or animals, but who does not personally accompany parties. Guide refers to an employee of a packer or outfitter whose responsibility is that of guiding parties, though it may include wrangling, cooking, or even the retrieving and dressing out of game. These definitions differ from those mentioned in a recent Idaho law,¹ but they were found more applicable to the existing situations.

Study has been confined to operations in Idaho, but it was necessary to include 13 Montana packers who pack into Idaho and two aircraft concerns whose Idaho flights originate in adjacent states. In some instances the aircraft operators were found to work in conjunction with packers, guides, ranches, or river boats. The ranches selected for special treatment were located within central Idaho on isolated tracts of land inaccessible by road.

¹Senate Bill 145 as enacted by the 31st session of the Idaho State Legislature.

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Methodology

The absence of any prior study of these charter services within the Rocky Mountain area suggested the need of a pilot study. Questionnaire, interviews and field observations constituted the core approach. First questionnaires (Appendix A and B) were distributed to all known packers, guides and aircraft operators doing business in the state. These led to obtaining the names of additional operators, who were then contacted. In all, one hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to packers and guides and 60 to aircraft operators. If replies were not forthcoming within three weeks, a follow-up questionnaire was sent. From these replies, incidental correspondence, and later field interviews, it was determined that 103 packers were in business during 1949 and 105 in 1950. Similarly, it was determined that 24 aircraft operators in 1949 and 27 in 1950 were engaged in tourist charter flights.

Both an explanatory letter and base map were attached to each questionnaire and each recipient was requested to indicate on the map his trip destination areas. The map data was compiled, verified and supplemented by reconnaissance. Through these methods the seasonality, nature, size and working locale of each operator, as well as the number, origin and trip purpose of his clientele were determined. Though the questions asked concerning gross income generally produced the expected unreliable results, it was possible to reach some estimate of gross income by knowing the average size of the party, the rates charged, the number of parties conducted during the season and the average length of stay per party. Except in a few areas the reported number of animals removed by packers and aircraft

operators provided a satisfactory secondary check on income or else permitted the writers to postulate a probable gross income where complete data was lacking.

Two field investigations were undertaken in an attempt to contact personally numerous packers and aircraft operators for additional data and to rectify or verify preliminary findings. The field work provided a further opportunity to view equipment used. It was also necessary to explain the recent Idaho outfitters law to many individuals unfamiliar with its details. Interviews provided insight that was otherwise unattainable into the problems and competitive aspects of the industry for each area.

Packer and Guide Industry

Two areas in Idaho are of major importance in the packing and guide industry, though trips are made to many other portions of the state. The Clearwater River, especially its Selway and Lochsa tributaries (Fig. 1), constitutes the major packing area in the northern part of the state with the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area as its nucleus. The other major area includes the main Salmon River, its tributaries (Fig. 2), as well as the headwaters of the Payette and Boise Rivers. Both the Idaho and Sawtooth primitive areas are included in this territory.

From these two general areas, eight well-defined packing districts (Fig. 3) were delineated according to the traffic flow pattern. They are not all of equal importance, though there appears a decided trip preference for several of the primitive areas.¹ Idaho contains

¹Though the U.S. Forest Service prefers the use of the term "wilderness area", the word primitive area is used in this study because of its wide acceptance in the state.

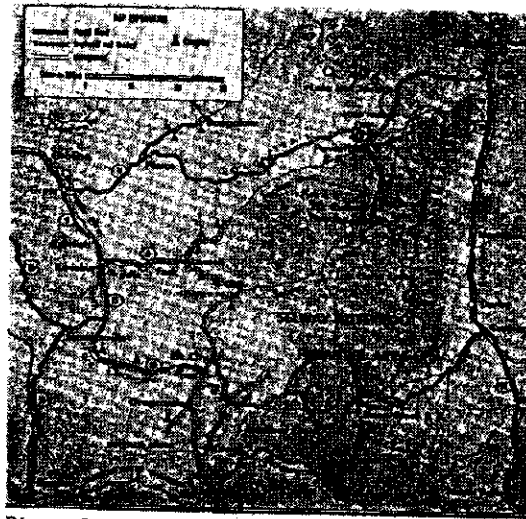


Figure 1. SUNSET MAGAZINE July 1951
North Central Idaho Copyright Lane Publishing Co

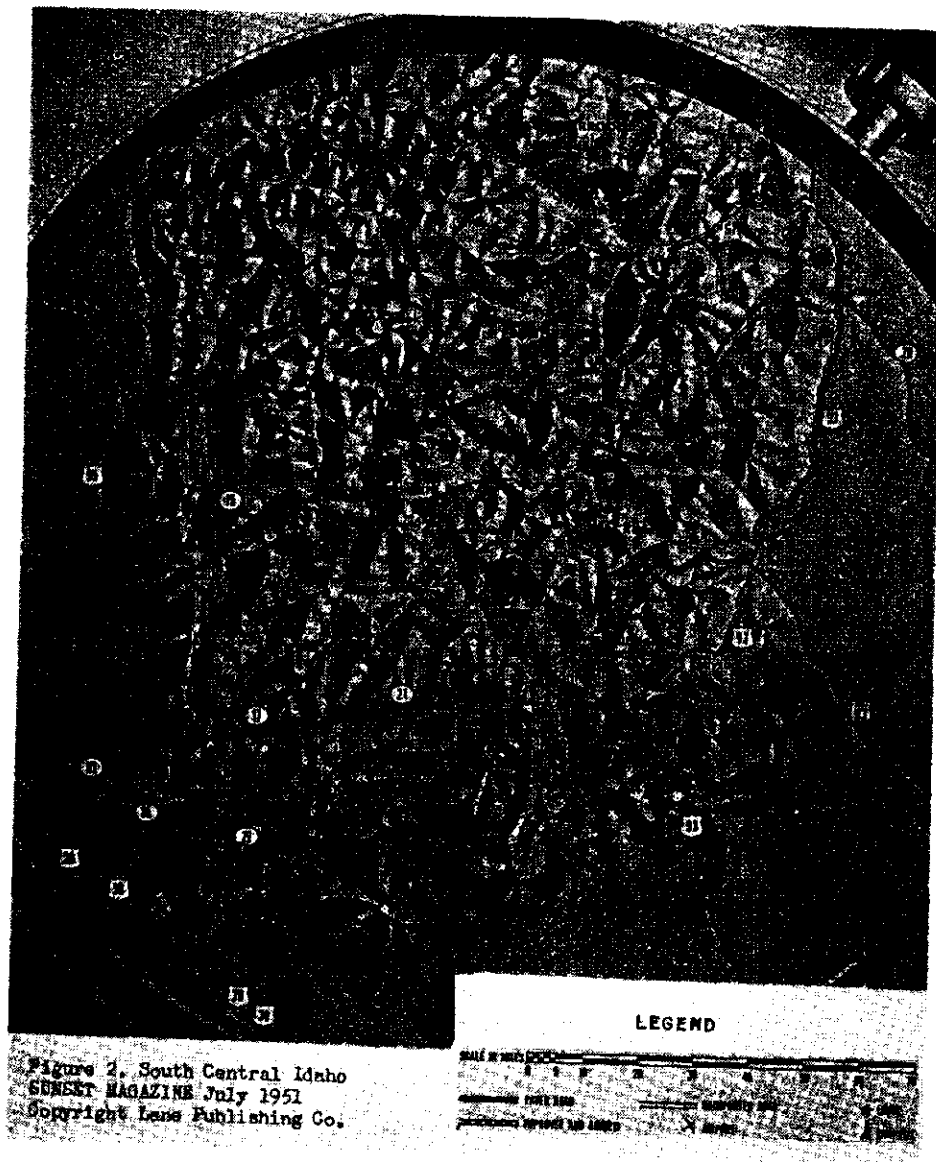


Figure 2. South Central Idaho
SUNSET MAGAZINE July 1951
Copyright Lane Publishing Co.

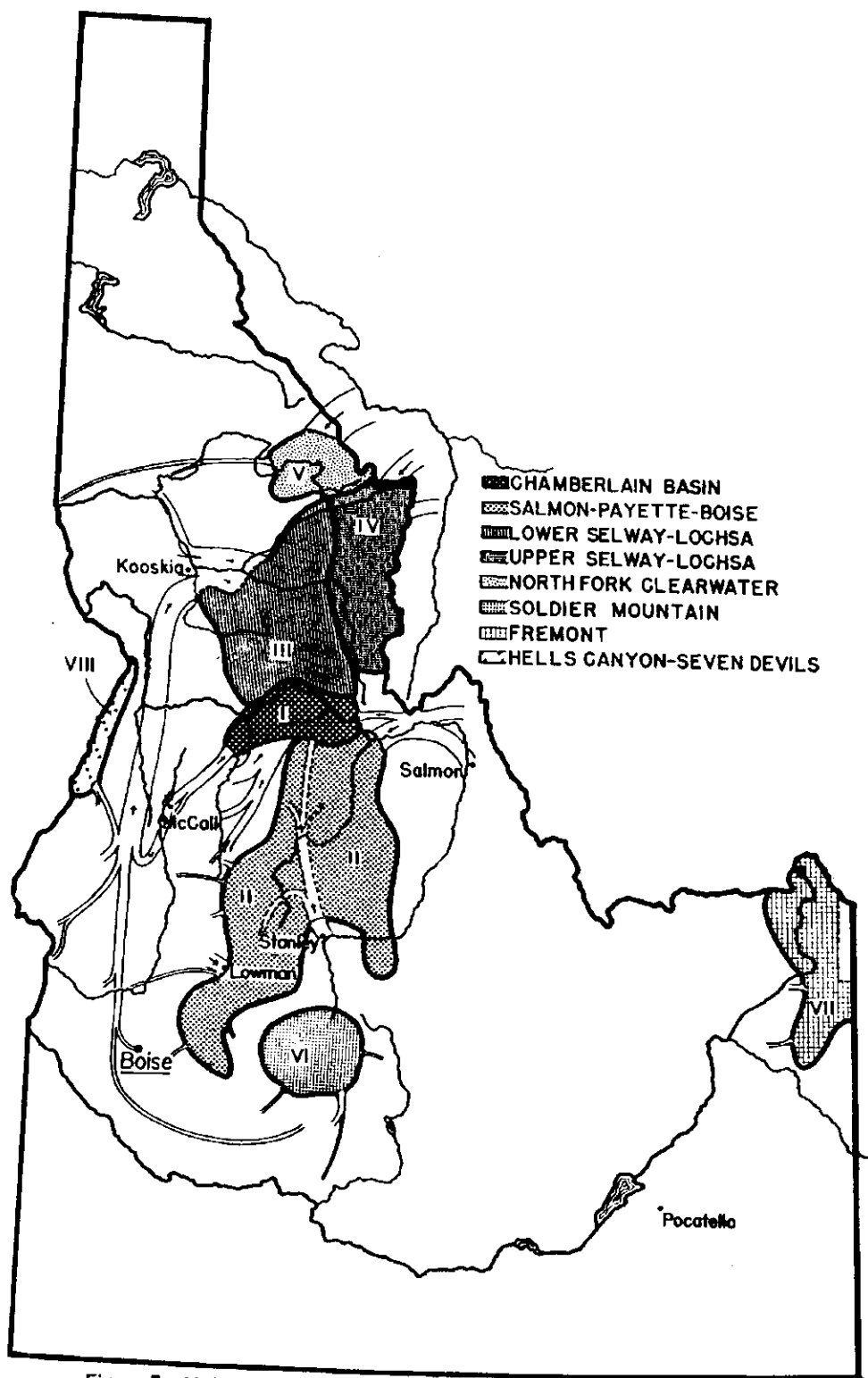


Figure 3. Major Idaho Packing Districts.

three of the 77 primitive areas within the U. S. National Forests that have been established with stringent regulations designed to maintain these areas in their approximate natural state. However, as wildlife, except for migratory waterfowl, are governed by state law, these areas are opened for fishing and hunting to the public. Roads and airstrips in the primitive areas are generally prohibited except where facilities preceded the creation of these areas. There are several private parcels of land within Idaho's primitive areas where original ownership was based on homesteading or mining claims. Where homesteading was limited or mining opportunities proved unprofitable, many of these sites were sold or reverted to state or federal agencies. A few remaining ones were favorably located in regard to possible landing strips, and they have developed into commercial sites catering to fishing, hunting and scenic-conscious tourists who reach these sites mainly by private and commercial charter airplane, as well as by pack trips.

The seasonal nature of packing in Idaho is most pronounced. In early summer the emphasis is on fishing and scenic trips, while the months of October, November and December constitute the main period for hunting trips. Some packers concentrate solely on hunting trips, but most cater to fishing, hunting, and enjoyment of scenery.

Though packing is concentrated in the eight designated areas, many packers live at considerable distances from these areas. During the fishing or hunting season, these packers move their stock and equipment close to the sites of initial departure. This category of operation has been termed "migrant" packing to differentiate it from "resident" packing wherein the packer maintains year around residence

close to the site of initial departure on pack trips. The highest incidence of migrant packing noted was in the Selway-Lochsa area. Migrant packers from southern and southwestern Idaho come to this area with their stock and compete with the resident packers living in Orofino, Kooskia, Grangeville and Elk City.

The type of packing varies with the locale and with the purpose of the trip. Two types are dominant. On the regular trip the tourist is provided with guide service and necessary camping equipment, while food and cooking services may or may not be provided. The tourist is always expected to provide his own gun, fishing gear and sleeping bag. In the other category called "spot packing" the tourist provides all of his own equipment and food, which is transported for him to his base camp, after which the packer leaves to contact another party, thereby leaving the tourist alone. Generally no other services are provided except the packing out of the party and its game at the end of the trip.

At a time when road access was more limited and when relatively few individuals possessed the necessary equipment for an extended period of camping in isolated areas, packers were called upon to provide all the necessary accoutrements for camping. The growing road network lessened the need for reliance on the packer and thereby encouraged the development of the roadside hunter and fisherman. Roadside activities became crowded with the popularity of the automobile, and then the roadside sportsmen called upon packers for short trips away from the road. This led to spot packing, which since has become a significant factor in the packer and guide industry that will continue to expand where roads penetrate close to desirable areas. Spot

packing is now common in the readily accessible western entrances to the Bitterroot Mountains. A relatively small incidence of spot packing was indicated in the Chamberlain Basin and Salmon River district except where roads abutted the packing areas (Fig. 2).

A third type of packing is engaged in by individuals located at ranches close to or within the primitive areas. However, as this group works primarily with aircraft charter services, it has been included in the second portion of this study as part of the aircraft charter business.

Until 1951 there was also a group of semi-commercial packers only working in the hunting season. They consisted of individuals with small strings of animals and limited camping equipment adequate for their own trip. Upon completion of their hunt, these individuals would solicit trade from new arrivals at below market rates for packer services primarily with the purpose of defraying the cost of their own hunt. In most cases, these individuals were unable to accommodate satisfactorily hunting parties because of their lack of adequate equipment, packing inexperience and general unfamiliarity with the area. The semi-commercial operator, almost always a migrant, functioned as a parasite on the reputation of established packers in the region. In some instances their stock was reportedly improperly cared for and even occasionally abandoned to eliminate feed and transportation costs. This practice also has been noted among private hunters using their own pack and saddle animals.

The income of the semi-commercial packers has not been ascertained because the individuals involved could not be identified and isolated. They generally remained in the hunting area only for a

short period of time and rarely took more than one party on a pack trip.

Commercial packers range from the so-called "shoestring" packer whose gross packing income rarely exceeded \$1000 to the largest operators whose gross packing income reached \$15,000. Virtually all of the larger packing activities were found to be associated with ranches or resort areas close to or within the primitive areas. In most cases packers depend upon various sources of income with packing constituting merely a secondary source.

Commercial Aspects

Tourist, packer, and state viewpoints merit consideration in a discussion of commercial aspects of the industry. From the viewpoint of most tourists, the packer and guide industry is insignificant as their contacts are mainly with service groups providing food, lodging, entertainment and transportation along the highways. It is the exceptional tourist or sportsman who is interested in the more remote areas available only by horseback. The primary reason for the generally small pack trips appeal to tourists stems from ignorance or disinterest concerning the availability and character of this service industry. Some are disinterested because of an exaggerated notion as to the expense involved,

Illustrative of this is an incident recounted concerning a tourist who was informed that the pack rate was \$150 per person. In all seriousness he believed that the rate was only applicable to packing into the desired area and then suspiciously inquired further as to the fee charged for packing him out of the area. Ignorance of the rate structure has led unethical packers to charge what the traffic will bear. On occasion, rates have been changed between the in-

initial correspondence and the beginning of a trip. This was frequently found justifiable when additional services were provided or when parties demanded or brought excessive amounts of equipment, food or alcoholic beverages.

Most packers refrain from announcing rates in folders or advertisements as their industry is highly competitive and open price competition could be detrimental to a business which relies heavily on personal recommendations.

The price range is based on differences in territory, competition, size of pack strings and the varying length of pack trips. Where food, camping equipment and supplies were furnished by the packer, charges ranged for \$175 to \$200 per man per trip on hunts up to 10 days. Where food, camping equipment and supplies were furnished by the tourist, charges ranged from \$75 to \$100 per man per trip. On a per diem basis these fees are the equivalent of \$15 to \$25 a day and compare favorably with normal daily vacation expenditures. Deposits ranging from \$25 to \$50 per man were generally required as expressions of good faith.

Prices paid for services to the packer may include field dressing of game and usually include packing out of the game. Occasionally a packer charges less for packing hunters in and out of an area with an added fee of \$15 to \$25 for each game animal packed out. This rate system is sometimes favored, as it places a slightly higher cost upon the successful hunter.

Pack trips for fishing parties range from 1-3 days and are generally priced somewhat lower than hunting trips. In many instances fishing trips are carried out only with saddle horses or parties are

"spot-packed" at a fishing site and are brought out by the packer at the end of the prearranged period.

Spot packing rates range from \$50 to \$100 per man per trip and generally include the packing out of game. With few exceptions, distant out-of-state tourists prefer regular packing while local sportsmen familiar with the terrain express a preference for spot packing.

Based on a study of several hundred successful and unsuccessful spot and normal pack trips, it appears that the average cost of an elk and/or deer per hunter ranges from \$150 to \$200 from the point where the pack trip starts. This figure excludes the initial cost of personal equipment, food, lodging and transportation prior to and following the trip. These figures have been validated by several cross-checking methods.

From the packer's viewpoint, there is generally a small margin of profit because of the short season, labor costs, high initial cost of equipment, and high maintenance costs on stock and equipment. In general, packers who maintain their stock in southern Idaho utilize the animals part of the year in farm or ranching operations and are able to spread their overhead over a longer period of time. The warmer valleys in the southern sections permit packers to keep stock on winter range and thereby eliminate high winter feed costs. On the other hand, local resident packers in the northern areas are forced to pay winter feed costs and frequently maintain their stock during the entire year solely for the short tourist season. To offset their high expenditures, sale of stock at the close of the hunting

season appears to be increasingly popular as a means of reducing winter overhead. Prior to the next hunting season new stock is purchased. Despite the financial benefit in this mode of operation, it leads to the downbreeding of the stock quality. Where packing is conducted in conjunction with ranches or lodges, there is still an additional overhead, but there is a more favorable distribution of labor costs.

The method of post-season animal disposal consists primarily of the sale of the horses or mules at auctions, known as "barnyard" or "chicken-feed" sales, where the price received for most pack animals is most frequently two or three cents per pound. This seasonal procedure frequently is followed by both small migrant and small resident packers. Many semi-commercial packers and private hunters exploit this opportunity by purchasing stock immediately before the hunting season and disposing of the stock following their trips. In this fashion their total stock expenditure can be expressed in the weight loss by the animal in the time interval.

Despite the growing popularity of this practice, there are still numerous packers who keep good stock throughout the year and who endeavor to improve the quality of the stock.

Packers are reluctant to advertise as they feel this to be an unnecessary expense without persistent and immediate financial benefit. In most instances observed, this has been a short-sighted policy retarding expansion. Several attempts have been undertaken for organized advertising programs under the organizational leadership of the larger operators. The only organized group of packers operating in Idaho are those living in Mineral County, Montana.

Packers, other than ranch operators, catering to intra-state tourists tend to have a greater number of parties and emphasize spot packing. On the other hand, packers primarily catering to out-of-state parties tend to charge higher rates and conduct fewer parties per season. In general, packers prefer out-of-state tourists.

Tourists enroute to the primitive areas stay in the state for a minimum of three days. Consequently, one primitive area-bound tourist is of greater value to the state than three interstate transient tourists. It is the latter group that are, logically, most numerous. Notwithstanding this fact, state agencies have made little effort to encourage tourists to use the primitive areas. State agencies have not been alone in their neglect of this potential resource. The U. S. Forest Service, somewhat fearful of the summer fire hazard, and numerous state hunting sportsmens' groups, fearful of out-of-state competition, have both contributed to the retardation of an effective development program.

On the basis of adjusted reports received from 48 packers in 1949 and 50 in 1950, it has been determined that the gross income to the state from packer and guide charter services alone amounted to \$181,000 in 1949 and \$201,000 in 1950. This represents a per capita gross income of \$3780 and \$4030 in the years of 1949 and 1950 respectively. When these per capita values are multiplied by the number of known packers operating in 1949 and 1950, one obtains a total value of \$390,000 and \$420,000 respectively. This figure excludes the income of the ranch operations but does include the income of packers operating in Idaho from a Montana residence. This represents an average expenditure of between \$70 and \$75 per person per pack trip. The Montana packers alone accounted for \$49,000

of this sum for 1949 and almost \$53,000 in 1950.

The packers operating in Idaho conducted a total of 1227 parties averaging 4.6 persons per party in 1949. This averaged about 12 parties per packer per season. Almost the same number of parties were recorded for 1950. Consequently, the 7.7% dollar volume increase for 1950 over 1949 was due partly to increases in rates and a probable increase in the length of stay.

Tourist Origins

From an analysis of data concerning 572 parties taken on packing trips for the purpose of hunting, fishing or scenic enjoyment, Table I was compiled.

Table I __ Tourist Origins

	No. of Parties	% of Total
Idaho	253	44.2
California	126	22.0
Washington, Oregon and Utah	76	13.3
Others	117	20.5
Total	572	100.0

A study of Table I indicates that 55.8% of the parties have an out-of-state origin. It might further be pointed out that the out-of-state parties expend more per capita than intrastate tourists. This helps explain why most packers prefer non-Idaho packing parties. Tourists from adjacent states pack into areas closest to their home state, while distant out-of-state tourists were scattered throughout Idaho packing areas. The lower Salmon River provides a fairly

reliable divide between north and south Idaho origins for intrastate tourists. North Idaho tourists generally pack on the Clearwater, Selway and Lochsa drainage systems entering via Elk City, Kooskia or Mineral County, Montana. South Idaho tourists generally concentrate on the areas south of the Salmon River and along the upper Boise and Payette Rivers.

Of the eight major packing districts delineated (Fig. 3), the Chamberlain Basin (I) has the greatest packer density in the state. It is an amorphous unit that extends roughly from the South to the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. It is the hub of the Idaho Primitive Area wherein north and south Idaho tourist patterns intertwine and become blurred. The heart of this area is the drainage system of Chamberlain Creek, known for its large elk and deer herds.

There are three major approaches to this area from the western side, one each from the south and east. The main western entrance route is via Big Creek (see Fig. 2), which accounts for about 50% of the parties entering the district. From the road terminals at Dixie and Warren, there is also some packing traffic. Salmon, North Fork, and Shoup are the main starting points from the east, while packers in the Stanley areas occasionally bypass the Middle Fork of the Salmon River to participate in Chamberlain Basin hunting.

Second in importance is the Salmon, upper Payette and Boise district (II), which is dominated by the drainage basin of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. Of secondary importance are the upper reaches of the South Fork of the Payette River and the North Fork of the Boise River. Packing into this district is associated with elk and deer hunts, fishing, boating and scenic trips. The eastern entrances account for 40% of the trips that funnel through Salmon,

North Fork and Meyers Cove. Part of these trips are destined for the Bighorn Crags. Stanley dominates the southern gateway while Lowman, with 25% of the trips in this area, is the most important western entrance.

The drainage systems of the Clearwater, Selway and Lochsa Rivers have been divided into three separate districts based on pack trip routes and cluster patterns. The two southern districts lie partly within the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area. Of these the lower Selway-Lochsa district (III) is most important. It is served by a substantial number of resident packers as well as migrant packers from southern and southwestern Idaho. There are two main routes into this area; one proceeds up the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River past Orofino and Kooskia and thence up the Selway and Lochsa drainage while the other goes east from Grangeville and then proceeds up the South Fork of the Clearwater River. About 70% of the pack trips into this district enter via Kooskia.

The upper Selway-Lochsa district (IV) is next in importance and is entered almost exclusively from the Montana side, east of the Bitterroot Mountains. From the towns of Lolo, Victor, Hamilton and Darby packers organize their trips which then enter the area mainly over the Lolo Pass road.

Along the North Fork of the Clearwater River and its tributaries there is another important packing district (V) accessible from both Montana and Idaho. Though some pack trips move in the region from the west, over 80% of the trips start in Mineral County, Montana. The Montana packers have the advantage of a shorter pack trip to the desired area.

South of the Sawtooth Primitive Area and the town of Atlanta (Fig. 2), there is located the Soldier Mountain district.(VI). This constitutes a minor though significant packing area served by Idaho packers located primarily on its periphery, such as at Hill City, Fairfield and Obsidian.

Of lesser significance are two outlying districts on either side of the state. One district (VII) is located mainly in Fremont County, the other covers the Hells Canyon-Seven Devils district (VIII) along the Snake River west of Riggins. The Fremont County area is noted mainly for fishing, though during the fall of the year this district contains the only moose hunt in Idaho. The Seven Devils-Hells Canyon district caters mainly to deer hunting, fishing and scenic parties.

Locally there are other small areas where pack trips are taken, but their relative role is too minor to be indicated on the maps.

Problems of the Industry

Most packers regard their packing activities as a supplementary income and regard their work, which is highly seasonal in character, at best an uncertain and insecure way of making a living. Most of the packers live in isolated places, which leads them in many instances to maintain attitudes of independence about official agencies. Any regulation which affects them directly or indirectly is therefore likely to be suspect and looked upon as possible interference with the legitimate exercise of their enterprise. They have a proprietary feeling about their hunting or fishing areas stemming from long standing familiarity with these places, and they seldom appreciate the character of overall regulations intended to improve game management or hunting conditions.

Few innovations have been introduced into the traditional packing business. Trails cleared one year may be littered next year through windfall, new growth or washouts. With few exceptions packing today operates like it did 30 or 50 years ago with essentially the same techniques and materials, and it gives way only reluctantly to compromise with modern means of transportation. Noteworthy changes in this industry include increased emphasis on part-time packing rather than full-time packing and the introduction of spot packing, which provides packers with less income from each party but gives them more time and thus a larger number of parties.

The question of spot packing has provoked considerable discussion among packers. There is near unanimous opposition to this development, but the opposition varies in expression depending on the area and the degree of competition. In general, the incidence of spot packing has a direct relationship to the amount of competition in any area. Packers object to spot packing as it renders itself susceptible to abuses and it is generally accompanied by a reduction in the quality and variety of services that the packer is capable and desirous of providing. Spot packing leads to the dispersion of parties in an area without the knowledge and guidance of a packer, thereby increasing the likelihood of accidents caused by heavy snowstorms, getting lost, improper clothes, a poor selection of food or equipment and careless handling of firearms in an unsupervised area. It tends to cause overcrowding by parties in one area while another area may not be occupied, and it also favors the development of disagreements concerning the periodic visits by the packer to the camp site¹ and the roadside hunter. The latter profits from

Generally packers visit hunting parties at intervals to dress game or pack it from the hunting site to the camp site.

the packer-maintained trails and he regards packing merely as a fixed adjunct and service industry in remote areas to be called upon only in emergencies.

Another problem concerns the necessity of packers to purchase camp site permits from the U. S. Forest Service for the operation of a base camp. Also, they are required to pay grazing fees according to the number of stock brought into the area. On the other hand, semi-commercial packers and independent hunters with their own strings of animals are not required to purchase these permits and consequently did not do so and were not charged grazing fees. Further, commercial packers were held responsible for the care and maintenance of the camp site, though the same area might have been used by numerous semi-commercial packers or private hunting parties. The current outfitters law is designed to eliminate the semi-commercial packer, and it should solve part of this problem.

The reluctance of the packer to accept change is obvious in his negative attitude toward advertising and other promotional media. With few exceptions the packer depends on word-of-mouth recommendation as the basis for his continued operation or expansion. This grapevine system has been surprisingly successful over a period of years. This success is attributable, in large part, to the fact that it caters to the individual's sense of "exclusiveness" or the romantic attitude of private contacts around these remote areas.

The state of Idaho has many and varied interests in the operation and development of the packer and guide industry conducted within its boundaries. These services provide the only mode of transportation currently possible in reaching numerous otherwise inaccessible

areas for the proper harvesting of fish and game resources, the cutting and maintenance of forest trails, and the removal of parachuted forest fire fighters. A future development that might greatly disrupt the present orientation of packing in primitive areas concerns possible future timber or mine access roads. Tourists utilizing packer and guide services generally spend more money on a per capita basis than most categories of Idaho tourists because of their length of stay in the state. At the same time, they leave the resources virtually intact during their stay and hence should be encouraged within the limits inherent in the principles of wise game management. This is especially true for out-of-state tourists, who can select from several states with comparable attractions. This factor is worthy of additional promotional emphasis, and it will serve somewhat to divert the currently heavy volume of transient trans-Idaho motor tourists from the major highways into the more scenic portions of the state.

Though most pack trips are successful tourist ventures, there have been periodic violations of ethics by the packers and tourists in their conduct toward each other and their attitudes toward fish and game resources reflecting poorly on the industry as a whole. The thirty-first session of the Idaho Legislature enacted into law, a bill providing for some measure of regulation and control in this industry. The law provides for the bonding and licensing of packers, guides and outfitters operating in Idaho and the revocation or suspension of the license where violations of fish and game laws or agreements occur. This places a premium on established ethical packers and packers with well-defined contracts or agreements with their clientele. The law encourages the observance of fish and game

laws by tourists.

Except for the large operators, the interviewed packers generally opposed the law mainly on the basis that it offered them little or no protection in case of tourist misconduct or their failure to meet financial commitments. The financial difficulties might easily be overcome by simple contracts between the packers and the tourists. None of the packers interviewed used a contract, though many were favorably impressed when the suggestion was presented to them. The absence of law enforcement officers in the primitive areas, their general scarcity in remote areas, and the problem of personal misconduct and fish and game violations still pose problems to the packer who feels a certain measure of responsibility for the behavior of tourists in his care. In an attempt to overcome this difficulty, Montana has deputized its packers as game wardens, but this has been only partially successful.

Some packers felt that the law was an infringement upon their traditional business freedom and that it represented an initial step toward further regulation and control. One type of control might include the apportioning of packing areas. Though this provision is not included under the present law, some packers felt that enforcement of the law would lead to it. Areal apportionment was generally favored by the older packers, who viewed it as partial protection against other packers or aircraft services operating in their traditional area or as a medium of exclusive rights in agreements with aircraft concerns operating on isolated landing strips in remote hunting areas.

The most favorable reaction to the law was based on the feeling that it would keep less responsible packers out and thereby improve the standing of the recognized operators to their benefit and that of the tourist charter industry of the state.

Undoubtedly, revisions of the current law are necessary and desirable. It is hoped that the above noted observations will be studied and used as a guide in further amendments of the existing law. On the basis of the studies conducted both by correspondence and field observation in Idaho as well as by contacts with individuals who have operated under Montana and Wyoming laws, there appears an immediate need for redefining the duties and obligations of both outfitters and guides under the present Idaho law. It might further be recommended that any revision of the existing law consider a provision compelling guides or outfitters to report to the appropriate state agency, the number of days he was employed, the number of persons guided, their name and residence, the hunting or fishing license number of each, the number of each kind of game killed and the number of fish caught, all of which information is now required by the older Wyoming law. This would provide sufficient statistical information for more accurate studies of the packer and guide industry, hunting habits, tourist origins, and expenditures as well as fish and game harvests.

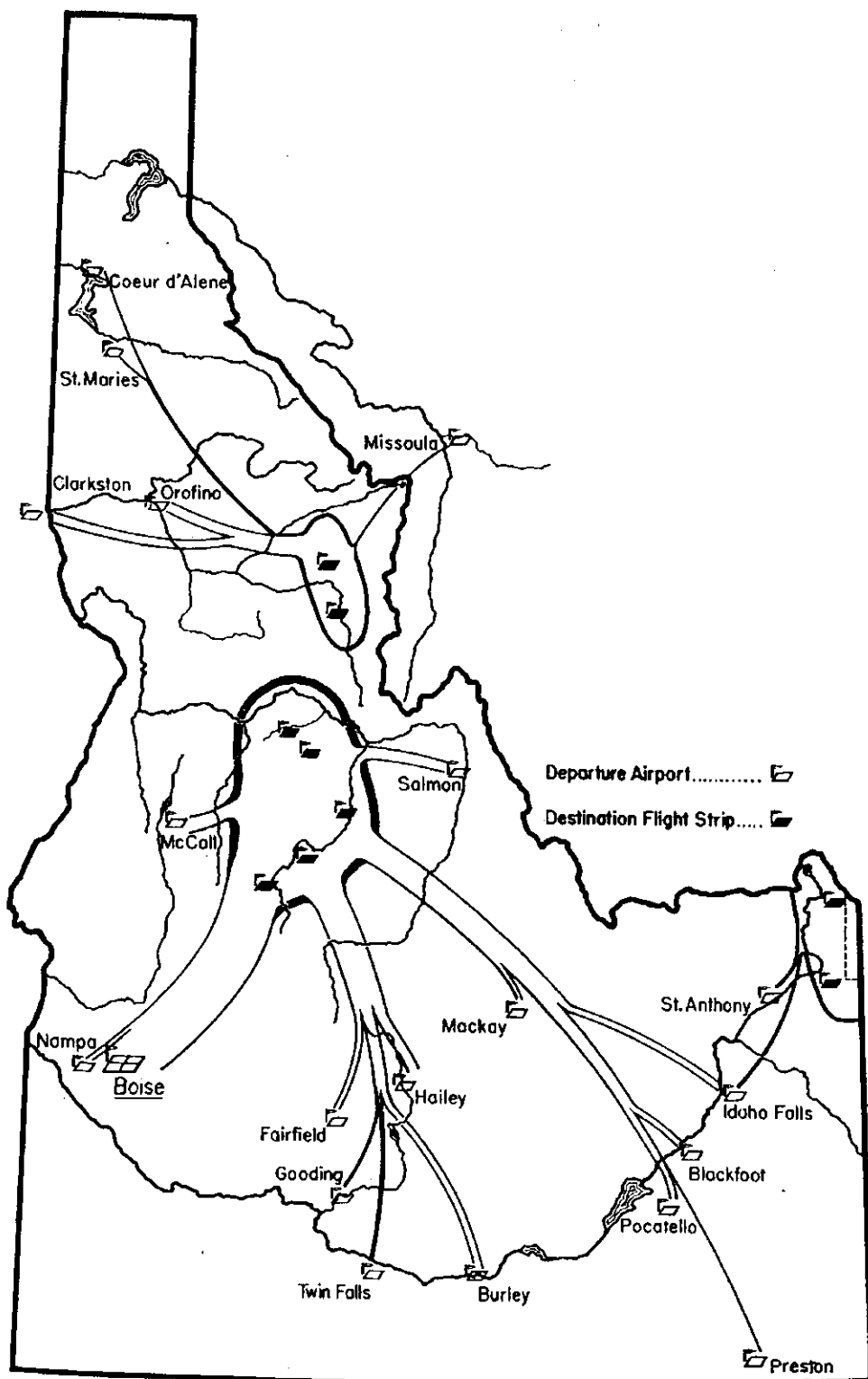


Figure 4. Idaho Air Charter Traffic Flow

Summary

The charter services based on packer and guide activities in the state of Idaho have been relatively neglected by the various private and state tourist planning and development organizations. These activities provide an excellent appeal for diverting transient Idaho tourist traffic from the main highways. For the years 1949 and 1950 there were over 100 packers operating within the state whose gross income from pack trip operations alone averaged over \$400,000 per year. This sum is exclusive of income from ranch-aircraft-packer combinations and other expenditures made by tourists in the state prior to and following their pack trip. Other states are making active attempts at the encouragement and evaluation of their tourist attractions, and with the growth of competition in the tourist industries throughout the nation, the state of Idaho should not fall behind in promoting all its valuable assets.

Airplane Charter Industry

Comparable to the packing activities already discussed, there are over twenty-five aircraft operators who solicit flights by tourists into the less accessible portions of Idaho. Persons chartering these flights have as their objectives hunting, fishing, boating, or scenic trips. The major destination areas for these hunting and fishing trips are landing strips located in various national forests north and south of the Salmon River. Of twenty-five isolated landing strips in this central core of Idaho, five having tourist accommodations constitute the principal destinations for these flights. At these ranches, fishing, hunting or boating trips are organized. The boating trips are most popular on the turbulent Middle Fork of the Salmon River, where three organizations compete for this trade. The precise role of the boating trips is not within the scope of this study, but flights to the starting point of these trips have been included under the air charter services.

In addition to the operators who make distant charter flights, there are some near the larger towns or along more heavily traveled highways who restrict their tourist charter work to short scenic flights, in their immediate vicinity. This kind of operation leads to a large number of flights but to a small margin of profit per flight. Most commercial tourist charter flights made into Idaho's remote areas originate at Idaho airports. An occasional flight is made from Missoula, Montana, and numerous flights from Clarkston, Washington.

Two destination landing strips with associated tourist ranches are located in the Selway-Lochsa drainage, and three are in the Salmon River basin (Figure 4). All five ranches depend heavily upon

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tourists flown in by aircraft for a large share of their income. In these remote areas there are also several independent or pilot-owned pack strings maintained at other landing strips such as those in the Chamberlain Basin, from which points pack trips start.

In addition to the commercial operations, several hundred private planes also utilize these same primitive areas. No attempt was made to ascertain the exact number of flights made by private planes. However, flights by private planes augment the income of the commercial operators through the purchase of services and supplies.

Tourist chartered air flights are made from June to December with fishing, boating and scenic trips predominating in the first four months of activities, while from October to December most trips are for hunting. As the summer months in Idaho are characterized by good flying weather, private flights are mainly for fishing and scenic trips. During the hunting season, commercial flights by experienced mountain pilots are of prime importance, and private planes virtually disappear from these areas. The seasonal destination of commercial flights varies with salmon and steelhead runs up the rivers and with the migration of game along slopes which depends upon browse availability or snow conditions. Only the airplane provides sufficient speed and flexibility to enable the sportsman to find near optimum conditions for hunting or fishing at any locale during all seasons.

The pattern of tourist origin in the air charter service corresponds to the findings previously noted in the packer and guide study. The major flow routes used by the aircraft operators on over seven hundred representative charter flights, wherein the departure airport differed from the destination flight strip, served as the

basis in compiling Figure 4. As noted in the packer and guide study, the Salmon River constitutes a dividing line between the flights originating in either northern or southern Idaho. The flight destination areas generally show a smaller extent than the packing districts because the localized nature of landing strips limits the number of possible destinations. Only three distinct flight destination areas could justifiably be delineated on the basis of established traffic flow.

The Salmon River district, which includes the Chamberlain Basin, is the most important destination area. It accounts for eighty-three per cent of the total flights made. Of lesser significance is the Selway-Lochsa district, which receives fourteen per cent of the flights, while the Fremont County district, which only receives three per cent of the flights, is of least significance. Of the total charter flights made in the state (again excluding all local scenic flights), five Boise aircraft companies operating at four airports account for thirty per cent. Of the flights made into the Salmon district, Boise, McCall, Salmon and Hailey are the main departure airports. Boise alone accounts for over one-third of the flights into this district.

Flights into the Selway-Lochsa district are dominated by the Clarkston, Washington and Orofino, Idaho airports. Despite the fact that Clarkston is located in Washington, the main body of tourists utilizing its facilities are from Idaho.

Commercial Aspects and Problems of the Industry

The questionnaires returned by aircraft operators were rather complete. The data received were interpolated primarily in accord with the number of flights made, the average charge per flight, and

the number and variety of game animals flown out by the operator. The questionnaires received from the ranch operators were too few in number and too incomplete to form any reliable conclusion. Consequently, the values for tourist expenditures at the ranches were extrapolated through information obtained from aircraft operators (Table II).

The 1400 flights indicated for 1949 and 2000 for 1950 include many flights made for fishing and local scenic purposes, as well as for hunting trips. The average number of passengers per flight was 2.5.

On the basis of all available and adjusted data, it has been estimated that \$100,000 was spent by tourists for charter flights in 1949 and \$140,000 in 1950, representing a gross income increase of forty per cent, although only three additional operators were involved. Estimated ranch income for the same years amounted to \$70,000 and \$100,000 respectively. This represents an increase of 42.9 per cent over the same two-year period. This outstanding growth is attributable to increased promotion and advertising by both ranches and aircraft operators as well as to increased rates.

Just as tourists were found to have numerous misconceptions regarding the cost of pack trips, comparable lack of information was found to be widespread relative to the cost of tourist air charter services. Findings show that the average cost of a charter flight per person ranged from \$27 to \$28. This figure is considerably higher when the factor of local scenic flights is eliminated.

The use of air charter facilities by tourists eliminates many of the inconveniences and discomforts of driving over poorly maintained and frequently dusty or muddy mountain roads and provides a

Table II

	1949	1950
Number of aircraft operators	24	27
Number of flights made	1400	2000
Estimated gross tourist income from all flights	\$100,000	\$140,000
Average income per aircraft operator	\$ 4,166	\$ 5,185
Number of remote commercial tourist ranches	5	5
Estimated ranch gross tourist income	\$ 70,000	\$100,000
Average income per ranch	\$ 14,000	\$ 20,000
Total aircraft charter and ranch gross income	\$170,000	\$240,000

more efficient use of time when the length of stay is limited. For hunting or fishing parties, the game or fish is flown out by the fastest possible means, thereby avoiding unnecessary spoilage. This is further aided by refrigeration facilities available at the several ranch locations.

Prior to World War II, the volume of charter flights was mainly restricted to local scenic jaunts with only a few more daring tourists or pilots utilizing the several available landing strips in the remote areas for hunting or fishing ventures. Since 1945 there has been a steady increase in the use of air charter facilities by hunting and fishing parties, although the bulk of the aircraft operators has been primarily concerned with providing flight training to veterans of World War II under Public Law 346. In the same period, there was also an increased emphasis on crop dusting and forest

service contract flying. Only locally was there a major effort made to promote available tourist charter business. In the summer of 1951 the veteran flight training program terminated, and many of the operators, who depended upon this program for between seventy-five and ninety per-cent of their income, became aware of the problems resulting from their lack of diversification. This group seemed to feel that greater promotion on their air charter facilities for tourists would be a desirable direction for expansion. Smaller operators expressed the belief that their communities had not yet come to regard aviation as a practical means of transportation other than for emergencies (such as air ambulance work) and that expansion would be slow until local support was forthcoming. Operators with diversified interests showed less concern about the end of the flight training program. Their diversified interests usually included air ambulance flights, crop dusting, insect control, freight contracts, fire, power and pipe line patrol's, sales and services for local private and transient aircraft and hangar rental. The larger operators make periodic shipments of supplies to the remote ranches, thereby reducing the number of flights without a pay load.

Part of the reluctance of some aircraft operators to enlarge their tourist charter trade into the mountainous areas stems from the lack of suitable aircraft for mountain flying, the problem of replacement parts for older equipment, and the general dearth of qualified pilots capable of mountain flights in small planes. Since World War II, new small planes have been designed primarily for use by private pilots in relatively level areas. As a consequence, there is a premium on several models of pre-war aircraft that have disappeared from the new plane market and that are only rarely found in

the used plane market. These models are still in demand for mountain flying because of their ability to carry heavy loads while using short landing strips. This has forced operators to resort to repeated reconditioning of these old planes.

Mountain flying is demanding on pilots and planes, but numerous safety devices on new planes and improved weather and map information permit the use of the mountain strips by an increasing number of private pilots during the good flying months of June, July and August. The beginning of poor flying weather in the latter part of the year usually marks the end of the private flyer's activities in the mountainous area. It is in this same period that the greatest demands are made upon the skill and experience of commercial charter pilots.

Summary

Aircraft charter flights by tourists have increased considerably since World War II. Though the study was restricted to the years 1949 and 1950, it can be assumed that these were fairly representative post-war years.

Because the major expansion in Idaho community airport operation has been dominated by flight training programs, forest patrol, and agricultural use of airplanes, the potential tourist trade into the remote areas has been only partially realized. Despite this fact, tourist parties spent about \$100,000 in 1949 and \$140,000 in 1950 solely for air charter services in Idaho. This expenditure was spread among twenty-four operators in 1949 and twenty-seven in 1950. In addition ranch income accounted for \$70,000 in 1949 and \$100,000 in 1950. Adding these values to those previously ascertained for the packer and guide industry, the total gross value of the tourist

charter services in the state of Idaho amounted to \$560,000 in 1949 and \$660,000 in 1950, representing an increase of 17.8 per cent.

In this period of increased competition for tourist trade between states, it is evident that the maximum potential income from this activity can only be realized by closer cooperation between the state and the operators, as well as by a more aggressive commercial attitude on the part of the operators.

On the basis of the findings in this study, it is safe to assume that the air charter services will continue to expand and alter the character of the remote areas unless some limitations are imposed on the use of aircraft by tourists in the national forests. Now is the propitious time for the various federal, state and private agencies in Idaho to give some thought to the desired future of these same remote regions and to establish a plan for their development.

If expansion is contemplated by flying a greater number of hunting or fishing parties, such expansion must be planned carefully in advance to adjust to the larger concepts of proper wildlife management and conservation.