



Birkie 2021 – Statement by ABSF Board of Directors

We have heard from health officials in both Bayfield and Sawyer Counties expressing their appreciation at the Birkie's efforts to hold as safe an event as is possible under current COVID-19 conditions, however, also expressing their concern over the potential impact on local health facilities and our communities from visitors traveling to Birkie 2021.

We know that both Bayfield and Sawyer Counties are tourist destinations throughout the year and this winter has been no exception with parks, trailheads, trails, and recreational spaces seeing heavy traffic throughout the winter. We know visitors are and will continue to come to the area.

The Birkie is an annual tradition for thousands of people and we believe that if we were to make the 2021 Birkie a completely virtual event, it is possible that more skiers would travel to the area to ski their virtual event on the Birkie Trail versus skiing closer to their own homes. By providing both virtual and in-person participation options, we are able to control the number of skiers on the trail during Birkie week versus the potential influx of skiers traveling to the area to ski their virtual event with no event safety protocols in place. As of today, approximately one-third of skiers have opted for the virtual Birkie and this number continues to rise.

We know that local skiers, skiers with second homes, and people with long-term plans will ski their Birkie event on the Birkie Trail. Skiers choosing to continue to participate in-person, between February 24 and 28th, must follow all safety protocols including skiing on their assigned day, masking, physically distancing, staying in their family/household bubble both during travel and after arrival in the area, avoiding crowds, being as self-sufficient as possible with their personal foodstuffs or choosing takeout or delivery options while in the area, and avoiding indoor spaces when possible. The ABSF is also encouraging all skiers to have a COVID-19 test and negative result before traveling to the area, and to choose day-tripping whenever possible.

For skiers who are uncomfortable with these safety protocols or who have concern for their own personal health or the health of local communities, we encourage you to switch to the virtual race option and participate in your event as close to home as possible.

The ABSF staff has done a magnificent job of providing options to keep you healthy wherever you race your Birkie, Korte or Prince Haakon events. Stay safe and have fun.