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By: Tom Horrocks

Anticipation Builds for Minneapolis World Cup 2020

Park City, Utah (July 18, 2019) — Over a pair of warm and muggy summer days, while a number of the athletes of the U.S. Cross Country Ski were enjoying summer skiing on the Eagle Glacier in Alaska, members of the International Ski Federation (FIS) and staff from U.S. Ski & Snowboard were hosted by the Loppet Foundation - organizers of the Fastenal Parallel 45 Winter Festival - for in-depth planning meetings around the first FIS Ski World Cup Cross Country event on American soil since 2001.

When the best cross country athletes gather at Theodore Wirth Park, just a few miles west of downtown Minneapolis, on March 17, 2020 (also St. Patrick's Day) they will be greeted by thousands of fans and a challenging 1.7k freestyle sprint course for an exciting evening event that will cap a four-day festival featuring amateur races and live music.

Eight months before miles of television and timing cable is placed, the finish stadium is built and the athletes arrive, FIS Cross Country Race Director Michal Lamplot already feels the excitement of a successful event.

“What we have seen here shows that both U.S. Ski & Snowboard and the local organizing committee are well on their way to hosting a very successful event. Everyone is enthusiastic and very well prepared. It was a great meeting, these two days, and we are sure that the event will be a success and we are very optimistic about the first (cross country) World Cup event in the U.S. after a lot of years,” said Michal Lamplot, FIS Cross Country Assistant Race Director.

“The impression I received from the FIS folks is that we’re on the right track,” said Mike Bono, chairman of the local organizing committee comprised of Loppet Foundation staff and volunteers. “We have a path to get there, and we have very competent people that will get us there.”

Already more than a year of planning has gone into hosting the World Cup event, from course design to transportation planning to facilitate the arrival of the expected 20,000 fans. But the Loppet Foundation is no stranger to big events. They host events annually that draw an excess of 25,000 participants and spectators to the 759-acre park that features not only cross country skiing but snowshoeing, tubing, sledding, fat biking, and a snowboard/freeski terrain park.

This season's event, which organizers hope will be the first of many, comes on the heels of the FIS World Cup freestyle and classic sprints March 14-15 in Quebec City, a frequent stop on the World Cup circuit. After the Minneapolis event, a number of athletes will travel on to Canmore, Alberta, Canada, March 20-21, for the final three events of the World Cup season, including a freestyle mass start, classic pursuit, and mixed relay events.

With a jammed-packed schedule for the final week of the World Cup season, and a challenging sprint course at Wirth Park featuring a trio of short, punchy climbs, the athletes will need to be on their best form.

"I think it's going to be a good course," Lamplot said. "Good uphill, technical downhill, so I think it is going to be a really good sprint course for sure."

With a late-afternoon start time, fans will have the opportunity to experience the event and all the surrounding festivities from beer gardens, to the expo village and live music. In addition, they will enjoy an up-close view for cheering on world-class athletes throughout many areas of the course with both free and paid admission ticket opportunities. In creating a festive atmosphere for spectators, the Loppet Foundation hopes the event will introduce many new fans to the sport.

"We want the spectators to have a great time, and we want to get more people interested and involved in cross country skiing," Bono said. "There are a number of people that are not aware of the sport, and I think when they see the World Cup athletes here, they will come away with a much different idea and feeling about the sport."

Tickets for the 2020 Fastenal Parallel 45 Winter Festival FIS Cross Country World Cup go on sale next month. For more information about the event, visit the official event website at mnworldcup.com.

About the Loppet Foundation

The Loppet Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that creates a shared passion for year-round outdoor adventure in the Minneapolis area, focusing on underserved youth and families. Since 2002, the Loppet Foundation has worked to create high-quality public events,

youth education, and outdoor recreation programs for the local community. Learn more at loppet.org.

About U.S. Ski & Snowboard

U.S. Ski & Snowboard is the Olympic National Governing Body for ski and snowboard sports in the USA. One of the oldest and most established sports organizations worldwide, directly tracing its roots back to 1905, the organization, based in Park City, UT, provides leadership and direction for elite athletes competing at the highest level worldwide and for tens of thousands of young skiers and snowboarders in the USA, encouraging and supporting all its athletes in achieving excellence wherever they train and compete. By empowering national teams, clubs, coaches, parents, officials, volunteers and fans, U.S. Ski & Snowboard is committed to the progression of its sports, athlete success and the value of team. U.S. Ski & Snowboard receives no direct government support, operating solely through private donations from individuals, corporations and foundations to fund athletic programs that directly assist athletes in reaching their dreams and achieving the shared goal of being Best In The World.

About FIS

FIS is the governing body for international skiing and snowboarding, founded in 1924 during the first Olympic Games in Chamonix, France. Recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIS manages the Olympic disciplines of Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Ski Jumping, Nordic Combined, Freestyle Skiing and Snowboarding, including setting the international competition rules. Through its 130 member nations, more than 7'500 FIS ski and snowboard competitions are staged annually. Specific initiatives are undertaken by FIS to promote snow activities as a healthy leisure recreation, notably for the young. For more information, please visit www.fis-ski.com.