

***For Immediate Release:***

**MWC2018: One Year To Go!**

Coming January 19-26, 2018 the biggest age-group competition in skiing will visit Theodore Wirth Park in the heart of Minneapolis, Minnesota, as the 2018 Masters World Cup (MWC2018) returns to North America.

The MWC2018 will be the culmination of five years of planning by local organizers, The Loppet Foundation, and the American XC Skiers (AXCS) non-profit masters association.

Well over one thousand masters from nearly two dozen nations spanning the entire cross-country ski world are anticipated to take part in the MWC2018. With no qualification process required, adult skiers ranging from 30 to 90+ years of all abilities will enjoy up to three individual races (in their choice of technique) plus a national team relay in all age/gender categories. Opening and closing ceremonies, social events, and Olympic-style medal ceremonies for each race are also part of the annual MWC program.

All MWC2018 racing will take part at Theodore Wirth Park located just a few miles west of downtown Minneapolis. Major improvements will be made, including expanded snowmaking capability at the park; a redesigned stadium configuration; a new event and administration building; and new trail access for the MWC2018 connecting the park golf course trails to two lakes on park property. Construction of all the planned improvements have begun with completion anticipated by Summer/Fall 2017.

"The new infrastructure is going to be great for World Masters, but also for everyday skiing," says Isaac Kasper, the Loppet Foundation's Trails Superintendent.

Part international ski festival and part world championship, the Masters World Cup is a celebration of cross-country skiing as a sport for life spanning over decades of competitor ages. All race events start in 5-year age groups making the MWC perhaps the only time adult skiers can actually take part in a ski event with a representative group of their exact peers.

Rotating around the ski world, the annual event was last hosted in the United States by McCall, Idaho, in 2008, with the last North American host site being Sovereign Lakes/Silver Star, British Columbia in 2011. It is anticipated that next North American hosting slot will be no earlier than 2022, making the MWC2018 an incredibly unique event for any North American master skier.

Longtime USA National Director and current World Masters Association President, J.D. Downing, believes the Masters World Cup should be seen as welcoming and inclusive as any major ski marathon. "Every year we have USA skiers attend the MWC from a huge range of abilities and fitness levels. The beauty of the MWC format is that everyone has a wonderful time."

According to Downing, the selection of Minneapolis and specifically Theodore Wirth Park to host the MWC2018 was the result of a strong desire by both American XC Skiers (AXCS) and the World Masters Association to leverage a big city environment to build interest in both the MWC as an event and cross-country skiing in general.

“This really is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for skiers from around the world to experience our sport in a true big city setting,” says Downing. “After skiing on really great trails at the park, participants will have their choice of literally hundreds of dining and entertainment options just minutes away. From NBA and NHL games, to world-class cultural events, to the Mall of America — this is going to be anything but the same-old ski experience. This is going to be the biggest XC ski party ever held!”

Loppet Race Director Mike Erickson thinks this will be really exciting for the whole Loppet community. “We can't wait to share our great trails with skiers from around the world.”

Understandably, the reliability of snow for the MWC2018 has been the single greatest point of focus in the event bid and development process over the past several years.

“The MWC2018 will be the first Worlds in history that has multiple plans in place for low or no snow situations, says Downing. “The Loppet Foundation has already tested lake ice grooming technology plus remote snowmaking systems so that in low or no snow they can incorporate the extensive Park lake ice into the courses plus surrounding terrain into the expanding golf course snowmaking loops. The fantastic natural snow courses at Theodore Wirth Park are obviously our preference, but everything will be in place for a great MWC2018 regardless of what Mother Nature provides us.”

Registration for the MWC2018 will begin in Fall 2017 via the official website [MWC2018.com](http://MWC2018.com) with extensive information already available via [xcskiworld.com](http://xcskiworld.com) and other AXCS membership media over the coming year.

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Things to note ahead of the MWC2018:

— Although there is no qualification process required for the MWC2018, all USA racers will need a current 2017/18 membership in American XC Skiers (AXCS). Visit [xcskiworld.com](http://xcskiworld.com) for details on joining AXCS.

— All MWC2018 races are wave starts by age/gender categories. USA racers that have taken part in the 2016 or 2017 Masters World Cup events will automatically have World Masters Association seeding points. USA skiers without points will have the option to petition the USA National Director in Fall 2017 for discretionary seed considerations.

— The MWC2018 relay (2 classic and 2 freestyle legs x 5km each leg) is a national team event with every nation limited to just one team per nation in each age/gender relay category. With a very large USA contingent expected, the AXCS National Director will have the responsibility of selecting all relay teams and alternates immediately following the first three days of MWC2018 racing.

— The 2017 AXCS National Masters will be held on many of the same courses as the MWC2018 and thus will represent an excellent opportunity for North American skiers to preview the venue for the “home” Worlds.

***For more information:***

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