



TO: Rorie Watt, City Manager
FROM: George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director
DATE: July 9, 2021
RE: Ironman Triathlon Proposal

Executive Summary

Juneau is being considered to host a three-year series of IRONMAN triathlons beginning in 2022. These events would bring up to 1,500 athletes to the Capital City, along with thousands of friends, family, and support staff. According to Travel Juneau, each IRONMAN race would generate an estimated \$7 million to \$9 million of economic activity in the community, as well as \$35,000 in Hotel Bed Tax revenue. While the event is largely self-supported, the organizers require the host community to make a significant commitment of funding and in-kind support, including a race fee.

Background

A triathlon is a multisport race with three sequential race stages. The most common format includes swimming, cycling, and running over various distances. Races are typically categorized as standard distance (51.5 miles), middle distance (70.3 miles) or full distance (140.6 miles). The most famous full-distance triathlon is called the IRONMAN, which consists of a 2.4-mile open water swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride, and a full 26.2-mile marathon, raced in that order and without a break. Most IRONMAN athletes complete the event in 8 to 16 hours. It is widely considered one of the most difficult one-day sporting events in the world. Athletes qualify for the IRONMAN World Championship in Hawaii by ranking in a qualifying IRONMAN event.

Today the IRONMAN Group manages the IRONMAN brand, operating more than 170 races and festivals around the world each year. There are currently 45 IRONMAN race locations in the United States, including smaller communities like Chattanooga, Tenn., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Maple Valley, Wash. The IRONMAN Group was acquired in 2020 by Advance, a private family-owned business based in New York.

IRONMAN Juneau Proposal

The IRONMAN Group reached out to Travel Juneau in 2020 to explore hosting a race in the Capital City. While a number of local triathlons are held each year in Alaska, this would be the first IRONMAN-branded event in the state. It would also be a qualifying event for the IRONMAN World Championship in Hawaii. Travel Juneau brought CBJ staff into the conversation very early, as well as state agencies such as the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, University of Alaska Southeast, and the National Guard.

The proposed race course extends from the Mendenhall Valley to Point Bridget, and avoids summertime congestion downtown. The running course includes Mendenhall Loop Rd., Glacier Hwy, Montana Creek Rd., and the Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei (Brotherhood Bridge) Trail. The cycling course extends from Auke Bay to Mile 37, requiring multiple laps. The swim course would utilize Auke Lake. A number of road closures would be required for the running course, including Montana Creek Rd. and a section of Mendenhall Loop Rd. between Glacier Hwy. and Glacier Spur Rd. No road closures are required for the cycling course. Dimond Park and/or UAS would likely serve as the start/finish area, transition zones, and expo area.

The IRONMAN Group would provide all race staff and organize a large number of community volunteers. Organizations like Southeast Road Runners and Juneau Freewheelers have already expressed interest, and the National Guard may provide significant resources by using the event as a training exercise.

IRONMAN Group assesses a race fee to recover a portion of its costs to organize these events. Travel Juneau negotiated a reduced race fee of \$100,000 per year, assuming a three-year commitment. Recognizing the financial impact of COVID-19 to Juneau, IRONMAN Group offered to structure the fee as follows:

Year 1	\$50,000
Year 2	\$125,000
Year 3	\$125,000

CBJ Responsibilities & Costs

The IRONMAN Group understands that Juneau is limited in its capacity to provide services to support an event this size. While the Juneau Police Department and Capital City Fire/Rescue would respond to any emergencies, there is no expectation or requirement to staff the event or provide standby personnel. Similarly, Public Works would not be expected to provide any services above normal operations (i.e. street cleaning and repair). IRONMAN Group would be responsible for all event logistics, such as traffic control, security, first aid, sanitation, waste disposal, and communications.

IRONMAN Group has asked CBJ to provide non-exclusive use of municipal lands and facilities during the event, including:

- Auke Lake
- Auke Lake Trail
- Auke Lake Wayside, including parking lot and boat ramp.
- Dimond Park Field House.
- Dimond Park Fields 1-4.
- Dimond Park Concession Stand & Restrooms.

- Dimond Park parking lots (except Dimond Park Aquatic Center and Mendenhall Valley Public Library).
- Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei (Brotherhood Bridge) Trail.
- Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei (Brotherhood Bridge) trailheads and parking lots at River Rd. and Glacier Hwy.
- Montana Creek Road.

IRONMAN Group is also requesting that CBJ waive fees for use of these lands and facilities, as well as commercial use permit fees otherwise required by 11 CBJAC 01.050. These fees are minimal, and it's unlikely that the proposed use would displace a significant amount of earned revenue for the Parks & Recreation Department. There will be some operational impacts to the public, such as relocating adult softball games from Dimond Park and temporary trail closures on race day.

Next Steps

Staff will continue working with Travel Juneau to clarify the scope and logistical needs of the event. If it moves forward, the assumption is that each party's roles and responsibilities would be memorialized in a Memorandum of Agreement.