

Dear Junior Nationals Hopefuls & Families,

It's hard to believe, but we're already looking ahead to **Junior Nationals 2026**, and planning is underway to prepare for a fantastic race trip for our PNW Skiers!

The [2026 Junior National Cross Country Ski Championships](#) will take place March 9–14, 2026 at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead in Cable, Wisconsin.

Skiers will compete as part of the [Pacific Northwest \(PNW\) Division](#), one of ten [US Ski & Snowboard](#) regions across the country.

Before diving into the logistics, I want to emphasize what an incredible experience Junior Nationals are! They are a huge goal, requiring setting big intentions, learning resilience, building confidence, supporting one another, and also end up creating memories that last a lifetime. Achieving a top 30, 20 or All-American Podium is a huge accomplishment that we celebrate with great enthusiasm! This experience is also about growth, friendship, sportsmanship, and discovering what you're capable of when you commit fully to something hard and meaningful. Your 2026 PNW Leadership Team are looking forward to supporting you each step of the way to achieve your goals!

2026 JN's PNW Coaching Team will include:

- Christie Wilder - Trip lead
- Angie Stay - U16 female age group coach
- Jason Lemieux - U16 male age group coach
- Heidi Loewen - U18 female age group coach & Race logistic lead
- Henry Gorman - U18 male age group coach
- Pete Leonard - Wax room lead & PNW leadership planning team
- Reitler Hodgert - Wax coach & PNW leadership planning team
- Lydia Youkey - Wax coach
- Kelly Ryan - Wax coach
- Tom Echelberger - Wax coach
- Isak Larson - Wax coach

How to Qualify for the PNW JN Team

To be selected, skiers must:

- Meet the age requirement
- Hold a US Ski & Snowboard Competitor Membership with PNW affiliation
- Qualify through JNQ races and be selected by the PNW
- Complete all post-selection requirements by the deadlines

Age Eligibility (2025–26 Season)

- U20: Born 2006–2007

- U18: Born 2008–2009
- U16: Born 2010–2011
- Second-year U14s (born 2012) may race as U16 only if the point tallier is notified before the first qualifier

Membership Requirements

- Skiers must hold a USSS Competitor Membership (\$135/year) to race Junior Nationals
- Skiers must list PNW as their division, even if attending school elsewhere
- General Members may upgrade mid-season
- Please talk with your coach if you're unsure which membership you need

JNQ Qualification Schedule

Selection is based on a skier's best results on qualifying races.

** More details to come once the NCC determines whether or not there will be a replacement for the cancelled Mt. Bachelor JNQ.

Confirmed JNQ races:

- Jan 23–24: Soldier Hollow — UT
- Jan 31–Feb 1: Winthrop, WA
- Feb 14–15: Spokane, WA

Standings will be posted after each race on the PNW website.

Team Size

- U16: 9 + 1 alternate (M/F)
- U18/20: 10 + 1 alternate + auto-qualifiers (M/F)

The final team will be announced after the last qualifier in Spokane.

Team Announcement & Critical Deadlines

Team Announcement:

Sunday, Feb 15 — Spokane (after awards)

Skiers must accept or decline immediately.

Key Deadlines & Dates

- Feb 15 (Sunday night) – Order PNW suit & jacket (hard deadline)
- Feb 20 (Friday) – Trip payment due + all PNW release forms
- March 6 (Friday) – Fly to Minneapolis (arrive by 1:30 pm)
- March 15 (Sunday) – Depart Minneapolis between 12–3 pm

Cancellation Policy

- \$25 processing fee for all cancellations
- Cancellations within 14 days are responsible for non-refundable costs
- Appeals may be made to the PNW Executive Board

Trip Details

PNW Trip Fee Covers:

- Lodging
- All meals
- Coaching & waxing
- Race entries
- Local transportation

Not Included:

- Travel to/from Minneapolis
- Team uniform & puffy jacket
- Snacks & personal spending

Lodging:

[Holiday Inn Express](#), Hayward, WI

15586 County Road B, Hayward, WI 54843

- 2 skiers per room, separate beds
- Breakfast provided; lunches self-packed; dinners prepared nightly by our hired cook

Transportation:

Families arrange travel to Minneapolis. PNW handles everything once skiers arrive.

Flights:

Please plan to book flights as early as possible. Even if you are still on the bubble, I strongly recommend reserving a refundable ticket now rather than waiting until the team is named in February — this consistently saves families stress and money. If you need help thinking through flight options, your head coach is a great first point of contact.

The Junior Nationals trip officially begins when skiers are passed from their head coach to their JN Age Group Coach at the Minneapolis airport.

Below are the planned arrival and departure windows for regional airports:

Seattle - Minneapolis

March 6: ~8am departure from Seattle, arrive by 1:30pm in Minneapolis

March 15: No earlier than noon and no later than 3pm departure from Minneapolis

Redmond, OR - Minneapolis

March 6: 6am departure from Redmond, arrive 1:30pm in Minneapolis

March 15: No earlier than noon and no later than 3pm departure from Minneapolis

Spokane - Minneapolis

March 6: 6:30am departure from Spokane, arrive 11:30am in Minneapolis
March 15: No earlier than noon and no later than 3pm departure from Minneapolis

Uniforms

All skiers must have a PNW suit & jacket (older versions OK).

Optional hats, buffs, and headbands will also be available.

Ordering deadline: Sunday, Feb 16

*Ordering details to follow

Required Forms

** Will be sent in a separate email*

All skiers must submit:

- Medical Release
- PSIA Release
- Athlete Code of Conduct

Parent Volunteers

We will need nightly dinner helpers and dessert providers.

** Sign-up Genius will be sent in a separate email.*

Thank you in advance! This is a fun way for parents to plug in:)

Final Step — Please Read Carefully

If you consider yourself a Junior Nationals hopeful, please complete the [2026 JN Google Form](#).

This is essential for planning, uniforms, and roommate assignments.

We are looking forward to another fantastic **Junior Nationals trip this 2026!** Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

~ Christie & the JN Leadership Team