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**PIONEER LEAGUE DESIGNATED PARTNER LEAGUE OF MLB
Eight-Team League Will Continue Operations as a Professional League in 2021**

Major League Baseball and the Pioneer League jointly announced today that the Pioneer League has been designated a “Partner League” of MLB. Starting in 2021, the Pioneer League will transition from affiliated status to an independent professional MLB Partner League that continues to provide high-quality baseball to the states of Idaho, Montana, Utah and Colorado. All eight members of the Pioneer League – the Billings Mustangs, the Grand Junction Rockies, the Great Falls Voyagers, the Idaho Falls Chukars, the Missoula PaddleHeads, the Ogden Raptors, the Northern Colorado Owlz and the Rocky Mountain Vibes – will continue participating in the league and will maintain their existing team names and brands.

As a Partner League, the Pioneer League will collaborate with MLB to provide organized baseball to communities throughout the Western U.S. and Canada. MLB will provide initial funding for the league’s operating expenses, as well as install scouting technology in Pioneer League ballparks to provide MLB Clubs with first-class scouting information on Pioneer League players. The agreement will also include a procedure for player transfers to MLB Clubs. The Leagues also will explore joint marketing, ticketing and fan engagement opportunities.

Today’s announcement follows the late September announcement of the Appalachian League’s evolution into the premier college wood bat league for the nation’s top rising freshmen and sophomores, as well as today’s unveiling of the new MLB Draft League in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia and Ohio. These are both part of MLB’s broader efforts to modernize player development while preserving baseball in the local communities in which it is currently played.

Morgan Sword, MLB’s Executive Vice President, Baseball Economics & Operations, said: “Over the past year, we have worked closely with Pioneer League owners and elected officials to ensure the continued success of baseball in the Mountain West. We’re excited to support this new initiative and look forward to Pioneer League baseball returning in 2021.”

The Pioneer League joins the Atlantic League, the American Association and the Frontier League as an MLB Partner League. Each Partner League covers a different geographic area in the United States and Canada and attracts players of varying levels of experience. All Partner Leagues provide communities with high-quality professional baseball and share MLB’s goal of growing participation and engagement with baseball and softball.

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT MLB'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PIONEER LEAGUE

- **UNITED STATES SENATOR MIKE CRAPO OF IDAHO** said: "The agreement between the Pioneer League and MLB is great news for baseball fans across our state. Baseball is one of America's favorite pastimes, and I wish the Idaho Falls Chukars a successful home run-filled 2021 season to add to their 2019 championship year!"
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR JIM RISCH OF IDAHO** said: "This newly announced partnership between the Pioneer League and MLB is great news for coaches, players, and baseball fans across the Mountain West. Over the last year I have worked with MLB leadership to ensure their affiliation with the Chukars in Eastern Idaho meets the needs of the Idaho Falls community. I thank MLB for their commitment to finding a workable solution and am confident that this new partnership will provide a path for the Pioneer League to continue their 80 year legacy in Idaho Falls. Congratulations, and I look forward to cheering the Chukars on to another successful season!"
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR JON TESTER OF MONTANA** said: "Big Sky Country is professional baseball country, which is why I am pleased to announce that I successfully worked with MLB and our minor league teams to keep America's favorite pastime in Montana. The roots of our Pioneer League clubs run deep, and I'm going to keep working to strengthen MLB's relationship with our state so that baseball will continue to thrive in our communities and across rural America."
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR STEVE DAINES OF MONTANA** said: "Professional baseball in Montana helps bring our communities together and drive our local economies. I'm very glad that after months of negotiations, MLB and Montana's minor league teams have come to an agreement to allow Great Falls, Missoula, and Billings to continue playing professional baseball in their communities. It was my privilege to fight for the future of Montana's minor league teams, and I look forward to seeing the success of the league."
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR MITT ROMNEY OF UTAH** said: "This is great news for Ogden, for Utah, and for 'America's Pastime.' With this decision, the Raptors will continue to provide baseball for fans of all ages throughout our state and the region. I look forward to seeing them play professional baseball next year and for years to come."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN MIKE SIMPSON OF IDAHO** said: "I am pleased to see Major League Baseball will be partnering with all eight Pioneer League teams including our Idaho Falls Chukars. Nearly a year ago we created a Congressional task force to address this issue because communities, like my hometown, depend on these organizations. I believe MLB is making the correct decision and I applaud them for that. Congratulations to the Chukars organization for their hard work and determination to secure a future where we can all meet at the ballpark and root for the home team."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN CONGRESSMAN SCOTT TIPTON OF COLORADO** said: "I couldn't be more excited for Grand Junction to remain a home for Professional Baseball. I wish the Rockies the best of luck this upcoming season and am excited for a bright future for baseball-loving fans in Western Colorado."

- **OGDEN CITY MAYOR MIKE CALDWELL** said: "Baseball has deep roots in Ogden, UT and we're proud to say Baseball Hall of Fame Manager Tommy Lasorda managed the Ogden Dodgers from 1966 – 1968. Our community is deeply invested in our minor league team. The Ogden Raptors keep us connected to MLB, provide affordable family entertainment, and spur economic development in our downtown corridor."
- **IDAHO FALLS MAYOR REBECCA CASPER** said: "I am excited and grateful to learn that the future of the Chukars and the Pioneer League is secure. Idaho Falls has enjoyed continuous professional baseball in the Pioneer League for 80 years. We are fortunate to have many more years to look forward to. Team spirit and home games give thousands of fans the opportunity to rally at beautiful Melaleuca Field. This wholesome, good clean fun has always been a perfect fit for Idaho Falls. Hats off to the Elmore Sports Group for a successful conclusion to the negotiations with Major League Baseball."
- **COLORADO SPRINGS MAYOR JOHN SUTHERS** said: "I was so excited to hear of the partnership between the Pioneer League and Major League Baseball. The Rocky Mountain Vibes are an integral part of our community and we can't wait to see the team back out at the ballpark next summer."
- **GRAND JUNCTION MAYOR DUKE WORTMANN** said: "This is a proud moment for the Pioneer League and Grand Junction. After a tough year economically, we couldn't be happier to hear the news of the team staying here. We can't wait to get out and support our local baseball team next summer."
- **PETER DAVIS AND SUSAN CRAMPTON DAVIS, CO-CHAIRS OF THE MISSOULA PADDLEHEADS**, said: "We are very pleased that professional baseball is alive and well in Western Montana. The decision to extend the decades long relationship between MLB and the Pioneer League is not just great news for our communities, but also for the players and the game of baseball. Through this partnership, we see ourselves contributing to player development in more substantial ways, while also developing baseball fans for life."
- **D.G. ELMORE, PRESIDENT OF ELMORE SPORTS GROUP, WHICH OWNS THE IDAHO FALL CHUKARS AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN VIBES**, said: "The Elmore family has had teams in the Pioneer League for over 35 years. We are excited to partner with Major League Baseball to maintain a tradition of professional baseball in communities throughout the Rocky Mountains."
- **JEFF KATOFSKY, OWNER OF THE NORTHERN COLORADO OWLZ**, said: "We look forward to serving the Northern Colorado community and providing high level competition and affordable family fun, alongside youth sports and entertainment. This new MLB Partnership League lays a strong foundation for a revamped Pioneer League, and we look forward to competing with fellow teams -- and hopefully winning a championship! -- next season."
- **VINNEY PURPURA, CEO & PRINCIPAL OWNER OF THE GREAT FALLS VOYAGERS**, said: "The Great Falls Voyagers are excited about the new partnership agreement the Pioneer League has with Major League Baseball. We look forward to the resumption of America's pastime in our community and region."
- **SCOTT REASONER, PRESIDENT OF THE GREAT FALLS VOYAGERS**, said: "We're thrilled to be a part of the newly revamped Pioneer League, welcoming in a strong new partnership with MLB and giving our fans the opportunity to continue to come out and enjoy high level professional baseball in Great Falls! We could not be more appreciative of all the support we have received during the past year and look forward to many more summer nights of family fun and community out at Centene Stadium."
- **MICK RITTER, PRESIDENT OF THE GRAND JUNCTION ROCKIES**, said: "The Grand Junction Rockies are excited to partner with Major League Baseball on the next chapter of professional baseball in Grand Junction. We can't wait for Opening Day 2021!"
- **CHRIS PHILLIPS, PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN VIBES**, said: "We're thrilled to be partnering with Major League Baseball to keep high level professional baseball in Colorado Springs. We're keeping the Vibes alive and are excited to announce new upgrades and initiatives for the 2021 Season in the coming months!"
- **MATT ELLIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE MISSOULA PADDLEHEADS**, said: "We are excited to welcome the players back to Missoula this Spring. This agreement with Major League Baseball will give future generations of Missoula fans the continued opportunity to enjoy professional baseball and affordable family entertainment that they've come to know and love. We are already hard at work to make the newly rebranded PaddleHeads inaugural season the best yet."