



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## St. George to host 2021 IRONMAN World Championship, prestigious event moves from Hawaii for the first time since 1978

*In addition to the 2021 and 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships, IRONMAN turns to Greater Zion to host their postponed Championship, bringing millions more in economic impact to Washington County*

**St. George, Utah** (September 23, 2021) – On the heels of the prestigious IRONMAN® 70.3® World Championship held in St. George last week, IRONMAN announced today that it is bringing its 2021 IRONMAN World Championship event, traditionally held in Kona, Hawaii, to St. George on May 7, 2022.

The IRONMAN World Championship is the longest running and most distinguished endurance event in the world, but due to Covid-19 restrictions in its home state, the culminating experience in IRONMAN's full-distance triathlon (140.6-miles) circuit has not happened since 2019. The 2020 race was scrapped entirely and in early August, the 2021 event slated to happen on October 9, 2021, was postponed. As travel restrictions and accessibility in Hawaii continued, IRONMAN executives looked for solutions and found one in Greater Zion.

"We are fortunate to have built such a strong and trusted relationship with our friends in the greater St. George region over the past 10-plus years," said Andrew Messick, President & Chief Executive Officer for The IRONMAN Group. "St. George stepped up to ensure IRONMAN athletes will have a 2021 world championship, even if delayed into 2022. We all just witnessed why this special place has been dubbed the 'Land of Endurance' and we are confident that we will have an outstanding championship in May."

"The honor to host the first IRONMAN World Championship outside of Hawaii is as humbling as it is glorious," said Kevin Lewis, Director of the Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office. "There are few events that hold the prestige and respect of Kona. To be chosen as the destination with the capacity and character to host this event takes my breath away."

"Hosting the IRONMAN World Championship is yet another example of the Utah Sports Commission's sport and Olympic legacy efforts that showcase globally why Utah is known as the



State of Sport," said Utah Sports Commission President and CEO Jeff Robbins. "Together with our partners, we look forward to welcoming the world to Utah."

The 2021 IRONMAN World Championship will replace the previously scheduled IRONMAN North American Championship on May 7, 2022. The 2022 World Championship is slated to return to Kona in October 2022.

"I think we understand the weight and responsibility we now have to carry forward the cherished significance of Kona and we don't take that responsibility lightly," said Lewis. "We have the deepest respect for the IRONMAN legacy and all that has gone on before – the passion, the dreams, the gut-wrenching persistence and the human spirit of caring for one another, as we push forward to build something better. We now have the opportunity to truly honor that legacy in a place where the land holds a familiar spirit and the people comprehend what it all really means."

With continuing uncertainty of travel around the world, officials felt confident in the opportunity in St. George. Moving the race to St. George in 2022 gives world-class international athletes another chance to race in the Land of Endurance, and it rewards the local efforts and the community's commitment to success.

"It's clear that IRONMAN officials respect and appreciate St. George and our surrounding communities," Lewis said. "They have confidence in our ability to host a World Championship. They have witnessed the professionalism in our communities and the agencies that support the race. They've seen our capabilities, they've felt the spirit of our people and they've reveled in the beauty of our landscapes. In a time when many things in the world are unclear, IRONMAN officials are certain of our hosting abilities and our hospitality."

With today's announcement, St. George will now play host to three World Championship events over a 13-month period bringing millions of dollars in economic impact to the region. Last week's IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship brought an estimated \$18 million in economic impact to Washington County. The event featured over 3500 athletes and brought more than 12,000 visitors to the area. Next year, St. George will host two additional World Championship events. On May 7, the IRONMAN World Championship is slated to host 4,000 athletes, and up to 20,000 guests and spectators. An independent study for the IRONMAN World Championship in Kona estimated economic impact of more than \$70 million to the island annually. Then on October 28 and 29, the 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship will feature nearly 7,000 athletes in an expanded two-day race format. Economic impacts from that race are estimated at \$20-\$25 million. Since its first event here in 2010, IRONMAN has infused more than \$118 million directly into the local economy. With the World Championship events in 2022, that number could easily rise to over \$200 million.

"We're already seeing substantial benefits from the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, not just economically, but in positive exposure throughout the world," Lewis said. "Much like what the Winter Olympics did for northern Utah in 2002, hosting these three back-to-back world championships showcases the qualities of this area and strengthens the fundamental economic



value of our communities in an unrivaled way. Through them we gain credibility and respect across the globe. The benefit to our overall economic development efforts from the media exposure we gain is unlike anything this area has ever seen."

"This is an incredible privilege and we are grateful that we've earned the confidence and trust of the IRONMAN organization," said Gil Almquist, Chairman of the Washington County Commission. "The positive characteristics symbolized by IRONMAN blend perfectly with the qualities of the people in our communities. The enduring effort of athletes and volunteers inspires us to be better people, to be more caring and to support each other through challenges and adversity. Throughout history, our communities, agencies and volunteers have accomplished remarkable feats by working together. Those who've been here understand what makes this place so special. Those who haven't are about to find out."

"In spite of challenging conditions in the world, we're honored to be able to host these elite and prestigious events," said Lewis. "We live in a ruggedly beautiful place. It's a place where hearts beat with passion, sweat weeps for the good of others, and blood flows with determination. I think we understand the weight and responsibility we now have to carry forward the cherished significance of Kona and we don't take that responsibility lightly. We have an enduring legacy of success here, and once again, we will rise to it."

#### **Upcoming IRONMAN events in St. George**

2021 IRONMAN World Championship – May 7, 2022

2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship: – October 28 and 29, 2022 (Women's Race Friday; Men's Saturday)

IRONMAN 70.3 North American Championships: 2023, 2025

IRONMAN North American Championships (140.6): 2024

#### **About Greater Zion**

Located in the southwest corner of Utah, Greater Zion is a destination that offers more than 2,400 square miles of adventure and inspiration. Zion National Park, the fourth most visited National Park in the United States, is the premier attraction, but Zion is only the beginning. Four state parks and a multitude of year-round recreational lands set the stage for a burgeoning mountain biking scene, some of the best off-highway vehicle riding in the country, scenic and challenging play at 13 top-rated golf courses, world-class cultural performances at Tuacahn Center for the Arts and so much more. The vibrant communities of St. George, Springdale, Hurricane, Ivins and towns in between offer a wide range of lodging options, dining experiences and access to outdoor pursuits through local outfitters and tour companies. Home to the 2021 and 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, and the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship, Greater Zion also is a world-class destination for sporting events, conferences and meetings. The Greater Zion Convention and Tourism Office is a transient-room-tax-funded entity of Washington County, Utah. For more information, please visit [GreaterZion.com](http://GreaterZion.com).