



TETON STEWARDS

WINTER
2019/2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION





TIMELESS TRANSFORMATION IN THE HEART OF GRAND TETON

“The walk up to Hidden Falls has been my path of roots metaphorically and, in the last decade or so, physically,” author and conservationist Terry Tempest Williams said at the Jenny Lake ribbon cutting celebration in early July. “This path of roots is now a path of pilgrimage. Restored in place, built with vision and care, stone by stone...and it is beautiful.”

After years of planning and fundraising—and thousands of hours of labor—the Jenny Lake Renewal Project is complete. The outcomes that were accomplished are well beyond what anyone anticipated when Grand Teton National Park Foundation launched the

Inspiring Journeys campaign in 2012. “If you have not had the chance to see the end result of this partnership, it will blow your mind,” National Park Service Deputy Director, Exercising the Authority of the Director, David Vela said at the ribbon cutting in July. “It was as if the

Civilian Conservation Corps came back and built these assets, but current generations built them. And they were built to last lifetimes.”

Jenny Lake’s trails, bridges, key destinations, and visitor complex have transformed into a portal for discovery



Over the years, the area became greatly deteriorated as millions of visitors sought the famous views that define Jenny Lake. The cumulative damage threatened fragile habitat and prevented people with limited abilities from exploring all the area has to offer.

Enhanced pathways, lake overlooks, educational displays, 3-D relief maps, and more now welcome and orient the 1 million people who visit the park's most popular destination every summer.

Photos: Ryan Sheets and NPS

and now allow people to more easily connect with the park in meaningful, memorable ways. National Park Service crews dramatically improved access to favorite destinations like Inspiration Point and Hidden Falls by building new stone steps, smoothing and leveling trails, and ensuring better drainage for rainwater and snowmelt. Work completed also reduces congestion and ambiguity by creating suggested directional trails, larger boat docks, increased restroom facilities, and designated areas to rest and take in the stunning views.

Most importantly, hands-on interpretive elements like bronze 3-D relief maps, new signage, peak identifying scopes, and a mobile app blend both traditional and modern platforms to enrich the Jenny Lake experience for visitors of all ages and abilities.

The project received the 2018 National Park Service Architectural Design Achievement Award for superior accomplishments in advancing park opportunities for persons with disabilities. All of the elements in the frontcountry were designed and constructed with universal accessibility in mind. Trail crews also realigned pathways and made paved trails less steep. The route now clearly circulates and orients visitors to Jenny Lake with a series of unique overlooks, plazas, and access points at the water's edge. Areas of shoreline that were formerly eroded are now accessible lakeshore viewpoints, giving people with a wider range of mobility a chance to enjoy the iconic views of Grand Teton National Park.

“This project at Jenny Lake is at the heart of this magnificent park,”

Terry Tempest Williams said. “Diversity. Inclusion. Restoration. These gifts are now in full view. Something beautiful is being modeled here—the leadership of care.”

By offering an enhanced understanding of the people, place, and preservation efforts that shaped Grand Teton, the Foundation and park hope the outcomes achieved in this project will inspire the next generation of park supporters and stewards for years to come.

“Thank you to our partners and friends who supported us and worked with us to make this vision a reality,” Grand Teton National Park Foundation President Leslie Mattson said. “We could not have accomplished this without you, and for that, we are incredibly grateful.”



CELEBRATING JENNY LAKE

In early July, the Foundation, Grand Teton National Park, friends, and supporters cut a ribbon to mark the completion of this multi-year, multi-million-dollar project. We are grateful for everyone who was able to join us for this joyful occasion!





BY THE NUMBERS

Quantity of materials purchased for trail and masonry construction: 2,575 tons

Total square footage of dry-stacked stonewall completed: 5,271 cubic feet

Total miles of trail reconstructed: 5.5 miles

Total number of stone drains installed: 70

Total cubic feet of stone causeway finished: 4,738

New bridges built: 5

Historic structures rehabilitated: 3

Total NPS trail crew hours worked: 118,000



2019 HIGHLIGHTS

Raised **\$6,213,806** from **1,615** donors to enable 26 high-impact programs and projects in Grand Teton National Park.



Purchased the Moulton Ranch Cabins in the Mormon Row Historic District for inclusion in the park and currently preparing the property to be utilized for park workforce housing next summer



Restored over 1.5 miles of trail and removed 138 downed trees to improve access to the remote, northern section of Grand Teton that was damaged by the Berry Creek fire in 2016

Photos: Ryan Sheets, Diana Stratton, and NPS

Documented the activities of 5 individual grizzly bears, logging 699 bear days and nearly 17,000 locations to better understand when, where, and how they interact with their environment and the people that share it

Installed 46 bear-resistant food storage boxes in campgrounds and picnic areas to protect both bears and visitors



Launched the *Snake River Gateways* campaign that will enhance facilities and protect resources at 3 heavily-used access points on the river in Grand Teton National Park



Deployed GPS collars on mule deer that recorded more than 18,500 days of activity and 127,500 locations along migration routes, on summer ranges, and throughout winter ranges to help provide insight into their seasonal movements throughout the park and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem



Introduced 104 teens to the outdoors and NPS career opportunities through 5 innovative programs—Youth Conservation Program, NPS Academy, Pura Vida, Mountains to Main Street, and Tribal Youth Corps



Installed roofs on 2 key structures at the Bar BC Dude Ranch so visitors can safely explore this famous historic site

Groomed the 14-mile stretch of road between Bradley-Taggart trailhead and Signal Mountain Lodge 29 times during winter for Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and walkers to enjoy



Educated countless park visitors about resource protection and safety through 3 programs—Wildlife Brigade, String Lakers, and Snake River Ambassadors—whose volunteers contributed nearly 14,000 hours of their time



Started an interagency partnership with the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center by supporting a park meteorological technician and 2 winter weather stations that improved the avalanche forecast



Message from President
LESLIE MATTSON



Another year is coming to a close and, as I look back on the last twelve months, I'm filled with immense pride for all that Grand Teton National Park Foundation was able to achieve in partnership with the park.

A highlight from the summer was celebrating the completion of the Jenny Lake Renewal Project. We launched the *Inspiring Journeys* fundraising campaign in 2012. In the last seven years, we raised more than \$14 million, completed five construction seasons, and transformed visitor facilities and backcountry trails at the park's most popular destination. The extraordinary outcomes we achieved with our partners in Grand Teton are highlighted in the pages of this newsletter and truly demonstrate the margin of excellence that private philanthropy brings to projects in the park. I hope you had the opportunity to experience the renewed area this summer. If not, be sure to

put it on your list to visit after the snow melts—it is incredible.

Earlier this fall, we had the pleasure of hosting the National Park Friends Alliance meeting here in Jackson in partnership with the National Park Foundation. Nearly 200 people who work for nonprofit partners of public lands and staff from other national parks came together to discuss challenges and best-practices for working on our important missions. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues and share our successes with others.

The end of 2019 marks my fifteenth year leading Grand Teton National Park Foundation, and I have the

privilege of working with an amazing team. In partnership with our friends in Grand Teton, we oversaw the execution of twenty-six projects and programs in 2019 ranging from trail restoration to youth programs to wildlife research. Our impact is far-reaching, and our success would not be possible without our passionate supporters. Thank you for your continued enthusiasm for all we do and caring so deeply for one of the most beautiful places on the planet—Grand Teton National Park.

Leslie Mattson

Leslie
President

STRING LAKERS- Protecting Visitors and Wildlife

“The Grand Teton mountains have a sense of permanence, but the land and wildlife that surround them are fragile and subject to the pressures of human beings,” String Lake Volunteer Bob Weiss said.

“I volunteer to help visitors understand that care is needed to preserve what we have now in the park, and ensure that going forward the beauty and strength that exists today is there in the future for others to enjoy.”

String Lake is a busy summertime destination in Grand Teton National Park because of its breathtaking views, access to water activities, and proximity to hiking trails. Last summer, researchers found that over 4,000 people visit the area each day during the busiest part of the season. Near the parking lots, the lakeshore can become chaotic with hundreds of people and their picnic lunches. This is a challenging situation as black bears and other wildlife also frequent String Lake. Leaving food unattended, even for a moment, can lead to a bear or other animal obtaining a food reward. Past human-black bear conflicts, primarily due to poor

visitor food storage practices, have necessitated the removal, relocation, and euthanization of nuisance animals.



Grand Teton National Park is addressing this challenge with a unique solution for the successful management of this multiuse area. In 2016, a pilot volunteer program was implemented to attempt to minimize human-black

bear conflicts and provide a uniformed, on-the-ground presence at String Lake. The mission of the volunteers is to provide an opportunity for a safe and enjoyable visitor experience while protecting the lakeshore and wildlife. Comprised of approximately thirty individuals, the volunteers—called the Lakers—concentrate on bear and food storage education. Lakers actively patrol the shoreline, surrounding trails, picnic areas, parking lots, and backcountry campsites, securing unattended food and making contact with visitors. Serving as educators and not enforcers, Laker visitor interactions exceeded 47,000 in 2019. Through this boots-on-the-ground initiative,



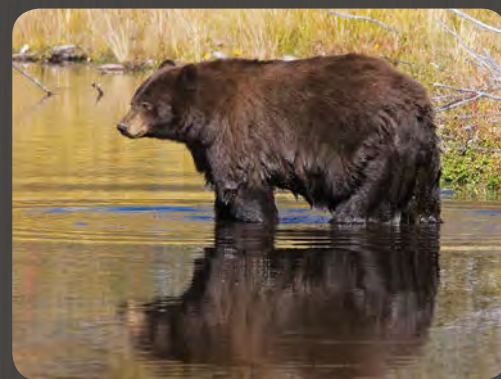
volunteers increase visitors' understanding of park rules; provide wayfinding, wildlife, and resource information; and significantly enhance visitor experiences.

Piloted in 2016 and 2017 and made permanent in 2018, the Laker program has been a resounding success. Grand Teton park management has used observational and scientific data collected by the team to increase safety, decrease congestion, and reduce resource damage. The park has already implemented several management tools based on the Lakers' findings. These include parking delineators to channel traffic and protect pedestrians, increased messag-

ing about proper food storage practices, barriers to protect sensitive wetland and riparian habitats, and more.

The Laker program is a model for low-cost management of high visitation, multiuse areas in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem—the park is grateful for the Foundation's generous support of this impactful effort.

“What we do is much more than just dealing with food storage violations,” String Lake Volunteer Bill Rietscha said. “We create special experiences for people that become lasting memories. And, sometimes they touch us in ways that open our



hearts and make our spirits soar. Experiences like this are why I love being a Laker.”

Jess Erwin
String Lake Volunteer Supervisor
Grand Teton National Park

Photos: Scenic—Brad Schwarm/Alpenglour Tours,
Black Bear—Diana Stratton, String Lake Volunteers—NPS

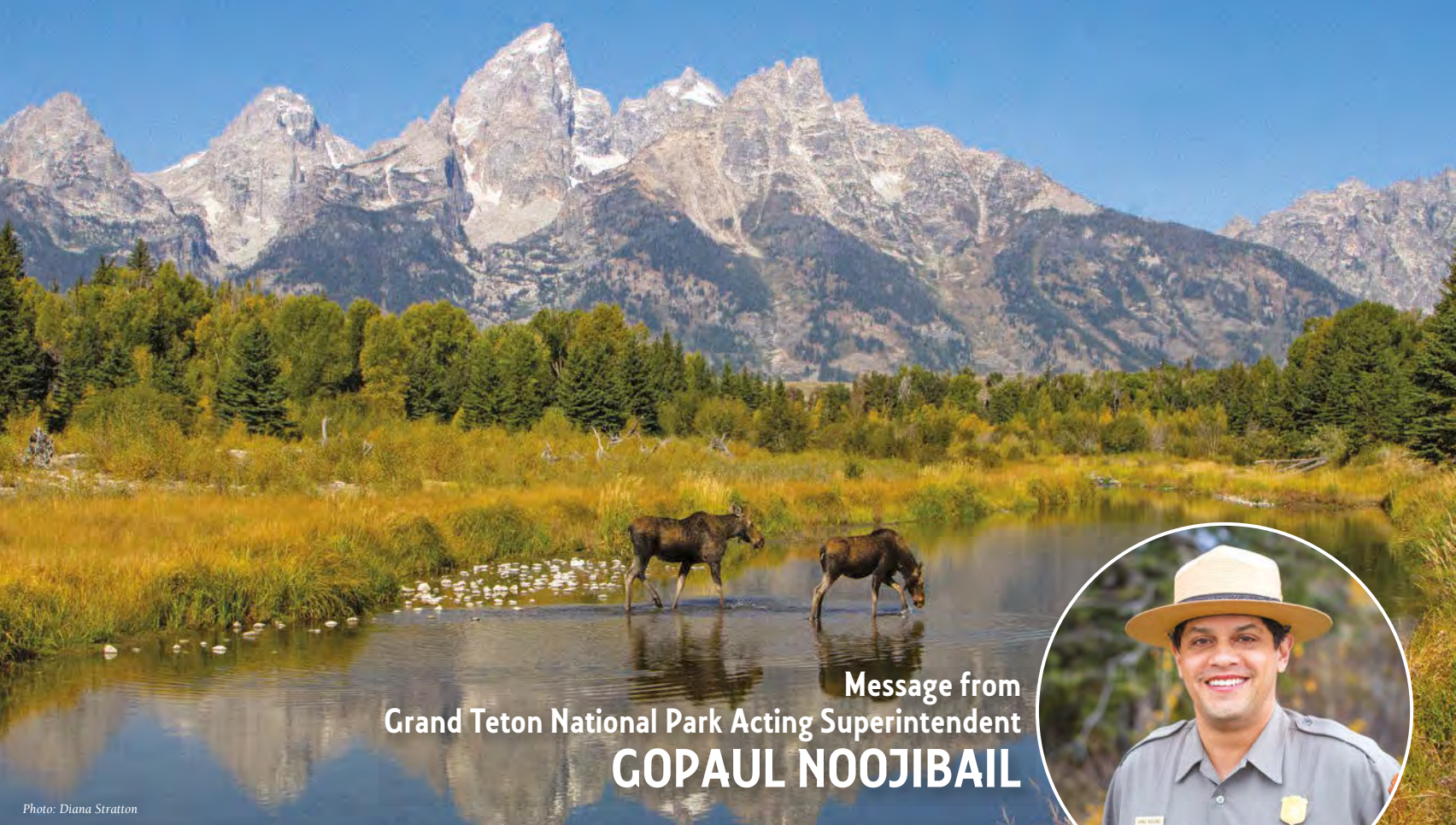


Photo: Diana Stratton

Message from
Grand Teton National Park Acting Superintendent
GOPAUL NOOJIBAIL



Grand Teton National Park Foundation recently hosted the biannual Friends Alliance gathering in Jackson in partnership with the National Park Foundation. It was an excellent opportunity to focus on the importance of partnerships and philanthropy to our national parks.

Hundreds of individuals from across the country came together to share with and learn from each other. The passion and commitment of these leaders was evident and clearly enhances what can be accomplished in all units of the National Park Service.

As I listened to presentations, reconnected with familiar faces, and met others, it was a reminder of how significant Grand Teton National Park Foundation is to Grand Teton National Park and the value of their leadership and professionalism in the National Park Service. The partnership and collaboration that we have is a national model. It is a testament to the value of relationships and strategic planning to accomplish desired outcomes.

Through this exemplary partnership, we have been able to amplify the work of the National Park Service and enhance the visitor experience, advance protection and conservation of the park's cultural, historic, and natural resources, and help others learn about and protect all that is special in the park. We have had generations of engaged and passionate individuals, active leadership, and a legacy of stewardship. Without this, Grand Teton National Park would not be the park it is today.

This past year has once again brought significant milestones in our collaborative work. The completion of the Jenny Lake Renewal Project is a shining example of thoughtful partnership. Enhanced access, improved wayfinding, quality craftsmanship, and the use of new technology is

outstanding. The String Lake Volunteer Program continues to provide an opportunity for a safe and enjoyable visitor experience while protecting natural resources. Our outreach to youth and new audiences is something we should all be proud of. We are engaging the next generation with public land stewardship and career possibilities. As we look ahead, we are excited to work together on the *Snake River Gateways* project to improve the visitor experience and provide protection of our wild and scenic river. Later this year we look forward to celebrating the transfer of the Moulton Cabins and adding this significant cultural treasure to the Mormon Row preservation effort.

Thanks to everyone involved with the Grand Teton National Park Foundation.

BEAR BOXES

A Special Gift For Your Favorite Wildlife Enthusiast

\$1,500 funds a bear-resistant food storage box in Grand Teton National Park, with a 3 x 5" stainless steel plaque to honor your special person. They'll receive a teddy bear and information about why bear boxes are so important, wrapped in a box and tied with a bow. Your bear box will be installed at one of the park's many beautiful campsites and will help keep Grand Teton's bears wild and visitors safe. Thanks to donors, more than 550 boxes have been installed to date, moving us closer to our goal of installing 1,000 bear boxes throughout Grand Teton National Park.



Visit www.gtnpf.org/bear-box-program to learn more about these life-saving lockers.
Contact Alex St. Clair at **307-732-0629** or alex@gtnpf.org to get your bear box today!



2020 WINTER GROOMING

Grab your cross-country skis and get ready for another winter in Grand Teton National Park! We are pleased to share that we will be grooming the Teton Park Road three times per week this season, weather permitting. This 14-mile track follows the base of the mountains, providing cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and walkers access to one of the most scenic winter destinations in the West.

Weather permitting, grooming is slated to begin in mid-December and will continue through mid-March—but we need your support to meet our \$32,000 goal. Donate today by visiting gtnpf.org/donate and list “grooming” in the comments field. Thank you!



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Photo: Diana Stratton