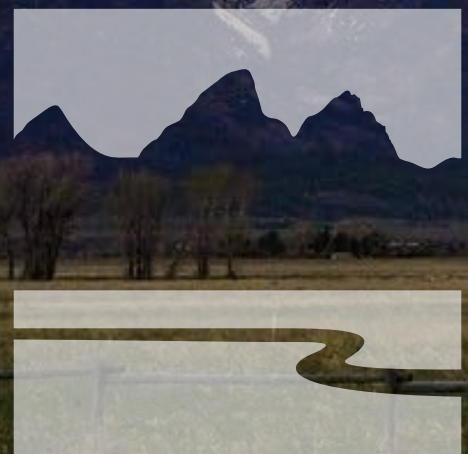


2020 Impact Report



GRAND TETON

ASSOCIATION

Reflections from a year like no other



The Grand Teton Association (GTA) team entered 2020 inspired for a year of innovative programs and projects in support of agency partners and visitors to public lands. And then, COVID-19 arrived and as a result, many planned projects and programs did not materialize as anticipated. Instead, 2020 provided an opportunity for GTA and our partners to demonstrate our adaptability and resilience in the face of the unexpected.

Innovation was critical to support partners with limited staffing and resources, manage evolving health and safety recommendations, and build a new vision for a year filled with uncertainty.

As the world experienced unimaginable challenges and loss, people sought solace in public lands and wild places. Visitation on all public lands was at record levels and the need for education, support, and safety was critical. Against the odds, GTA succeeded in supporting our partners, driving increased sales per customer and retaining a high percentage of total sales with only three of fifteen interpretive retail locations open for business.

GTA was inspired and honored to stand with our agency partners as they led through the months of pandemic visitation with resilience and adaptability, continually illustrating the power of partnerships

and shared commitment to public lands. Specific examples of our agency partners' successes include:

- With GTA support, the team at the National Elk Refuge relocated and renovated a donated house through a partnership with Shacks on Racks to provide housing for permanent employees.
- The Bridger-Teton National Forest team on the Snake River stewarded hundreds of thousands of people through the Snake River Canyon with very little viral spread through commercial outfitting or private boating trips.
- Grand Teton National Park provided support, education, and resource management to over 3,200,000 visitors (97% of 2019 visitation) with only 60% of its seasonal staff.

I am most grateful to the GTA staff and Board of Directors who led through the challenges of 2020 with vision, optimism, and unwavering commitment to supporting public lands.

With admiration,

April Landale
Executive Director



2020 by the numbers

REVENUE

\$2,204,707

FY 2019 **\$4,169,947**

FY 2018 **\$4,222,205**

FY 2017 **\$4,291,886**

DIRECT AID

\$327,792

GTNP **\$181,058**

NER **\$114,450**

BTNF **\$32,284**

INDIRECT AID

\$262,404

GTNP **\$245,725**

NER **\$15,689**

BTNF **\$989**

Overcoming the odds

Even during a global pandemic, GTA succeeded in its mission of supporting our public land partners, through interpretation and maximizing sales to provide financial support during a time of need.

Increased visitor spending

Impressive sales numbers were achieved due to increased visitor spending: sales per customer was up by between **8-45%** over 2019.

Craig Thomas Discovery Visitor Center

2019 sales per customer	\$24
2020 sales per customer	\$31

Jackson Hole Airport

2019 sales per customer	\$24
2020 sales per customer	\$26

Colter Bay Visitor Center

2019 sales per customer	\$20
2020 sales per customer	\$29

High sales for few locations

With **only 3 of 15** retail locations open, reduced operation hours, and reduced visitor numbers in stores to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission, GTA achieved **56%** of 2019 total sales, a revenue of **\$2,204,707**.

Paycheck Protection Program funds supported partners

In 2020, GTA was awarded a Paycheck Protection Program loan of \$273,861. **51%** of this loan, or **\$138,961** was directed to our agency partners.

Grand Teton National Park	\$92,396
Bridger-Teton National Forest	\$32,284
National Elk Refuge	\$14,281

Highlights from troubled times

Despite unanticipated challenges facing partners and staff, GTA supported high-impact programs and projects in collaboration with our partners. In 2020, GTA...



Printed and distributed 250,000 copies of the Grand Teton Guide, 10,000 backcountry guides, and 7,000 Junior Ranger Booklets and Badges to national park visitors | NPS

"GTA provided funding to keep us well stocked in these popular orientation and safety publications, even in a low revenue year.

National Park Service Staff



Enabled data collection on elk movements: 44 GPS collars for cow elk purchased with GTA funds in 2019 were deployed during the winter of 2020 | NER



Educated visitors through volunteers at the Snake River, helping it lead the nation with its river operations-COVID-19 safety standards | BTNF



Developed messaging for changing visitation through support of a Media Associate | NPS



Supported interpretive programming on the National Elk Refuge by funding three Naturalists, who hosted 1,500 participants for programming both on- and off-site | NER



Supported delivery of distance learning programs to school children throughout the country through support of Education Associates | NPS



Enabled cultural programming in the national park in the form of the Guest Artist Program, one of the only cultural programs to run in 2020 | NPS



Funded the movement of a historic structure to fulfill permanent single-family housing needs for agency staff | NER



Ensured stability for partners through management of interpretive outlets in an uncertain time | BTNF

2020 Case Studies in...

Adaptability

Innovation

Resilience

Partnership

We got a chance to sit down with our agency partners and discuss the challenges, silver linings, and overwhelming successes of the past year.

Hear their stories.



Innovation in Grand Teton National Park

Supporting visitors through creative solutions

This year was a tough one. What were the greatest challenges you faced as you worked through a pandemic year?

As the country looked to natural places for respite from the stresses of a pandemic, we worked to welcome an increasing and changing style of visitation with fewer summer team staff members, all while public health guidance and the COVID-19 situation was constantly changing. It was a challenge to serve visitors in a way that was also working to be very protective of the staff and their health.

Despite all of the challenges you faced, what is something you're proud of from this year?

Hands down, we are most proud of the creativity and resilience of the NPS team and our park partners like the Grand Teton Association. Amidst rising visitor numbers and many new and interesting behaviors, each one of the people involved in the park rose to the occasion and responded to each new challenge with curiosity and creativity. As a result, we were able to adapt our operation to safely provide visitor services to 3.3 million visitors in 2020!

It's often the case that adversity drives the type of innovation and creativity you mentioned; how were you able to innovate this year with the help of GTA?

You were fundamental in helping us serve visitors—the GTA-run outside table at the Craig Thomas Discovery Visitor Center was great and helped share key messaging around recreating responsibly. It was just one of many different strategies that we tried in our two open visitor centers for reducing crowds and giving space for people to social distance if they chose to.

This year pushed us to collaborate in new ways that we will retain as we plan for future summers. There is now more integration across interpretive districts in the park, and based on what we learned last year, we are putting staff where the people are in a more mobile fashion. We are excited to see success with the new mobile bookstore for GTA. With the support of our partners, we are leaning into the reality that we truly can adapt to changing visitation and try new approaches that are fundamentally different from how we have served the visitors in the past.

A discussion with Vickie Mates, Chief of Interpretation and Partnerships



The power of partnerships at the National Elk Refuge



Pandemic-era partnerships provided permanent housing

What challenges did the past year bring to the NER?

The challenges that the National Elk Refuge encountered involved navigating through the unknowns, uncertainties, and fears that come with a global pandemic. There were significant changes to refuge operations throughout the majority of 2020, including a period focused on work deemed mission essential or mission critical. There were closures to public-facing facilities and popular, long-standing public programs were cancelled.

Yet, at the same time we were able to collaborate on a large project to support NER employee housing. How did partnerships play into that project?

The National Elk Refuge relocated the historic Simpson House in 2020 to fulfill permanent single-family housing needs for NER staff. This project would not have been possible without the partnership of two local non-profit organizations, GTA and Shacks on Racks. It was really a partnership trifecta because without GTA we couldn't have financially fulfilled this project, and without Shacks on Racks'

facilitation, expertise, passion, and tenacity we wouldn't have even known about this opportunity.

Partnerships go a long way, and in this case helped save a piece of history. Tell us a bit more about the historical Simpson House.

The Simpson House has many existing historical connections to the National Elk Refuge and the Jackson community. The Simpson House is the work of a local master craftsman, and was formerly located at 10 E. Simpson. For perspective, that same craftsman built log cabins for the Bar BC and AMK Ranches in Grand Teton National Park, which are still standing today and serve as historic sites. Several prominent members of the historic Jackson community owned the Simpson House, including former (and longest serving) National Elk Refuge Manager Almer P. Nelson.

A discussion with Kari Cieszkiewicz, Education Specialist & Eric Cole, Senior Wildlife Biologist

“The Grand Teton Association was adaptable and communicative, with an emphasis on the health, safety, and wellness of staff and visitors.”

*Kari Cieszkiewicz,
National Elk Refuge Education Specialist*

Resilience in the Bridger-Teton National Forest



Support for the Snake River stays strong

Tell us about the unprecedented challenges you faced this year.

Morale was a huge challenge as our employees were uprooted from their jobs, daily routines, and social settings in the office. At the same time, lapsed contracts for janitorial services in the middle of a health pandemic, lack of government issued phones, and access restrictions on databases and systems further exacerbated the difficulty of working through COVID-19.

You must have been incredibly resilient to make it through this past year. How did resilience help guide your successes?

The Bridger-Teton National Forest team had a strong desire to keep the community engaged with places to spend time outdoors while keeping the outfitter and guide industry working, if it could be done safely and concerns could be overcome. We worked with staff to put in place a number of changes in the Snake River Canyon, such as ramp adjustments, gear and equipment decontamination, extra bus and boat seating, and, very importantly, extensive visitor education and communication. As a result,

the Snake River Canyon was the first large river program to “open up” in the country with its river operations-COVID-19 safety standards being adopted nationwide.

It sounds like your ability to patiently engage with visitors and communicate best practices was key to your success on the Snake River?

Absolutely. Trail volunteers supported by GTA were useful in educating the same messages to locals and visitors alike—wear a mask, wash your hands, stay 6-feet apart, and recreate locally. We learned that we really did have the best and most correct communication objectives around the Recreate Responsibly campaign and we will continue to carry those this upcoming season.

A discussion with Mary Cernicek, Bridger-Teton National Forest Public Information Officer & Dave Cernicek, Bridger-Teton National Forest Wild and Scenic River Coordinator





Adaptability at the Grand Teton Association

Success through constant change

During 2020, GTA's staff went above and beyond the call of duty, adapting and evolving to endless challenges. Well over half of our locations were not operational, forcing us to maximize impact where we could by targeting staff time to certain retail locations and adapting to changing national, local, and agency-specific health and operations guidance.

Online seasonal trainings were developed to support operations and build team culture, while agency partners collaboratively adapted budgets to reflect reduced aid projections. Our sales numbers from this year demonstrate the immense success of our adaptations: over the course of the year, GTA earned \$2,204,707 in total revenue (5% higher than projected).

IN THE WORDS OF OUR PARTNERS

"In some ways adaptation was the theme of the entire summer. With the support of our partners, we were able to still host, in a scaled way, important programs like NPS Academy and the Guest Artist Program at Colter Bay Visitor Center."

Grand Teton National Park Staff

"The best support GTA gave to the Forest in 2020 was its consistency. Communications with GTA never lapsed. The Forest could rest assured knowing GTA was there to help and carry out its mission as soon as the Forest got clearance to do so."

Bridger-Teton National Forest Staff



Onwards, upwards

In spite of the enormous health, economic, and operational challenges of COVID-19, the perseverance and commitment of GTA staff, board and agency partners resulted in a year of success and support.

Impacts of the novel COVID-19 virus will continue to reverberate throughout GTA's operations for the foreseeable future. In 2021, we and our partners will continue to face challenges. However, we are excited to venture into the continually evolving public health and public lands visitation landscape in the same way we did in 2020: with adaptability, innovation, resilience, and a reliance on the power of partnerships.

Together, we will emerge even more prepared to serve and support our beloved public lands.



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GRAND TETON

A S S O C I A T I O N