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Grand Teton National Park Media Release

Jenny Lake Rangers and Teton Interagency Helitack Team Recognized Risk-Management Leadership Displayed During Pandemic

MOOSE, WY—Grand Teton National Park Jenny Lake Rangers and the Teton Interagency Helitack Team were recently awarded the 2020 National Park Service Tom Clausing All-Risk Program Award. This national award recognizes work and interaction with others while rendering all-risk services, promotes innovation and professionalism and advances aviation all-risk programs.

National Park Service rangers Scott Guenther and Case Martin, USDA Forest Service interagency helitack team members Mike Bentley and Travis Nichols, and pilot Zaron Welch were recognized for their risk-management leadership and actions during incidents this past year with the COVID-19 pandemic. As quoted in the award recognition, these individuals displayed excellent professionalism and risk-management decision making while rendering aid: ensuring both patients and crew were protected from the virus.

“Grand Teton National Park and Bridger-Teton National Forest staff have a long tradition of providing excellent all-hazard support to the public and employees. Since the inception of the interagency program, the pilots and crewmembers have assisted dozens of people. Their dedication, knowledge and skills will continue to help those in need,” said National Park Service Branch Chief for Aviation John Buehler.

The Jenny Lake Park Rangers are highly skilled climbers and rescuers. In partnership with expert helicopter pilots, they manage remote rescue operations in the high and challenging peaks of the iconic Teton Range. They are members of a broader ranger staff at Grand Teton that have medical and emergency training that respond to all types of incidents.

The Teton Interagency Helitack is a shared National Park Service and Forest Service resource that staffs two exclusive use helicopters contracted by the Forest Service. The helitack crew serves wildland fire and search and rescue needs of the local community while also completing facility and resource management missions for the park and forest. The hard work that supports this interagency program has resulted in significant efficiencies vs traditional single-agency programs.

This national award, named in honor of former Grand Canyon Paramedic Tom Clausing recognizes an individual or organization who shows exemplary qualities in the area of all-risk services. Tom Clausing worked at Grand Canyon for six seasons, striving to advance Grand Canyon’s Emergency Medical Services and the relationship of rangers, firefighters, and pilots. In 2008 Tom lost his life in a helicopter crash in Flagstaff, Arizona while providing care to an injured firefighter. The award that bears his name honors anyone who, like Tom, works tirelessly to improve provider skills and further aviation hazards programs.

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