

*A rich history but  
a dependent future*

# GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

## Decades in the Making

With the sun peeking through the clouds, the snow melting and Grand Teton National Park reopening its figurative gates, we now have the opportunity to escape our everyday lives into a lush and serene reality, only about 2 1/2 hours from Rexburg.

Grand Teton is not a recently discovered gem — it has been



decades in the making. Its creation was not as simple as taking a piece of land and declaring it protected.

The park was established in 1929, but congress only considered the mountains and glacier lakes part of the national park. Many of the surrounding landscapes were not protected.

According to the National Park Service, the park came to be what it is today through the tireless efforts of Horace Albright, the second director of the organization. He worked his entire life in the service of the program and contributed countless years and efforts into Grand Teton National Park.

## Teton's Development

Albright had a vision that “the park would not just be in protection of the mountains, but the mountain landscapes, the river, the valley, and the wildlife therein,” said C.J. Adams, public affairs specialist for the park.

Adams shared that Albright knew he could not accomplish his vision without financial assistance.

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Stephen Mather, first director of the National Park Service, shared Albright’s vision for the expansion and protection of the Tetons’ surrounding areas.

Mather knew of an extremely wealthy couple, the Rockefellers,

who were traveling to Grand Teton and advised Albright to show them around the park, but Mather warned against asking for funding of any kind. He wanted the Rockefeller family to come, enjoy their time and see the majesty of the park for themselves. The Rockefellers made it to Grand Teton and were amazed by the grandeur of the mountains and the peacefulness of the park. They were inspired to start purchasing land surrounding the park, and wanted to donate it to the federal government.

The government did not act quickly on these offers, leaving Albright and the Rockefellers with an abun

dance of land sitting idle and unprotected. The men wrote a letter stating that if the government was not going to use



the land, Rockefeller would have to begin selling it. The government then began to act, establishing a national monument on the land.

The national park and monument were not combined into one park until 1950, around 21 years after the park was initially established. Since then, the park has continued to grow.

"We are still purchasing inholdings within the park and adding to the park," Adams said. "It is an ongoing thing. The Grand Teton National Park foundation recently purchased the antelope flats parcel and have now purchased the last part of Mormon Row."

No matter how rich the history, its influence pales in comparison to how that history can change the future.

"What does the future look like?" Adams said. "I think that's still something we are working towards."

He shares that the park gets roughly five million visitors

*"It's about meeting and sustaining the park service mission, keeping this place special for future generations to come."*

a year and is in the top five visited parks in the country.

This number has steadily risen since the park's creation in 1929.

## Looking Ahead

According to the National Park Service, Grand Teton "hosted an estimated 351,173 recreation visits in October 2020, an 88% increase compared to October 2019."

The increasing visitation to the park presents new challenges in safety, sanitation, protection and many other factors relating to the future.

"It takes everyone. It's not just the park's responsibility," Adams explained. National parks are a source of pride and beauty in America. They offer a source of peace in a

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