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*For Immediate Release*

## **Unified Interagency Coordination Credited with Swift Response to Wildlife Museum Wildfire**

**Monday, August 5, 2019 Jackson, WY** – An afternoon lightning strike on Sunday, August 4, 2019 sparked a wildfire near the acclaimed National Museum of Wildlife Art, just north of Jackson. By sunset, the fire activity and immediate threats had decreased enough that residents were allowed to return to their homes and back to the 'Ready' stage of *Ready, Set, Go!*, a program that helps residents: be *Ready* with preparedness understanding and mitigation; *Set*, with critical preparations when fire threatens; and *Go!*, evacuating immediately upon request.

The quick, successful response to the fire, dubbed, the Wildlife Museum Wildfire, did not happen by chance. The credit can be given to the proficient manner in which multi-agencies across Teton County came together to coordinate an effective strategy to combat the wildfire. Bridger-Teton National Forest Fuels Specialist for the Jackson District, Andy Hall and Teton County Fire Marshal Kathy Clay assumed a shared incident Commander role, making joint decisions on operations under the Unified Command structure.

While the Jackson Hole Fire/EMS, Grand Teton National Park, Teton Interagency Dispatch, Bridger-Teton National Forest and National Elk Refuge staff were fighting the fire on the ground, aerial resources provided help from the sky. Both helicopter bucket drops and tanker retardant drops were used in suppression efforts.

On the road, the Teton County Sheriff's Office was busy directing traffic on U.S. Highway 89, which closed for a short period of time due to smoke, visibility and safety from just south of the National Museum of Wildlife Art to Gros Ventre Junction.

A handful of Community Emergency Response Team Volunteers (CERT) assisted the scene, providing a meal for personnel working the fire late into the evening.

Additionally, six volunteers and staff were at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) south of town, informing the public of evacuations, advisories and road closures through the emergency alert system. The EOC was also fielding questions and concerns about the evacuations from the public.

"Incidents like this only go smoothly due to planning, training, exercising, and a little luck," said Rich Ochs, Teton County Emergency Management Coordinator.

Thanks to the united multi-agency effort, no lives were lost, and no structures were damaged. The Wildlife Museum Wildfire burned roughly 60 acres. Crews from multi-agencies stayed on the scene overnight to monitor hotspots and will remain on the hillside to monitor and mop-up smoldering grass and sagebrush until the fire is declared contained and controlled. The Museum of Wildlife Art was closed Monday to keep the smoke from entering the museum.

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