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Important Habitat In Grand Teton National Park Preserved

By [Newsroom America Staff](#) at 13 Dec 11:00

(Newsroom America) -- The National Park Service purchased a 640-acre tract of land within Grand Teton National Park from the State of Wyoming.

The purchase was made possible by the successful completion of an eight-month fundraising campaign by Grand Teton National Park Foundation and the National Park Foundation that raised \$23 million in private funds. These funds were matched by \$23 million from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The newly protected land, called Antelope Flats, preserves critical wildlife habitat migration routes, and viewsheds, prevents private development within the park boundary, and helps to complete the original vision of the park. The proceeds of the \$46 million sale will benefit Wyoming public school children.

"This is a historic achievement—a true win-win—for Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park and the state's Permanent School Trust Fund," said Leslie Mattson, president of Grand Teton National Park Foundation, a non-profit organization that raises private funds to support Grand Teton National Park.

"The private fundraising effort was unprecedented. We are in awe of the incredible generosity of thousands of people who stepped forward to help protect Grand Teton National Park and support public education in Wyoming."

"This is a great victory for the park and all those who love it," said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation.

"The acquisition of Antelope Flats accomplishes a longstanding goal of the National Park Service by ensuring that this land will forever provide habitat for antelope, elk, moose, wolves, and grizzly bears as well as preserving the outstanding vistas of the Tetons for future visitors to enjoy."

"Raising the \$23 million in private funds in such a short time period is a testament to the power of the partnership between the National Park Foundation and Grand Teton National Park Foundation. Each organization contributed unique, complementary skills and tapped into local and national relationships to ensure that this project was completed before the December 31, 2016 deadline," said Shafroth.

Grand Teton National Park lies at the heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, connecting Yellowstone National Park with the Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee national forests including the Upper Green River Valley and the Wind River, Gros Ventre, and Wyoming Range mountains.

In addition to its outstanding wildlife habitat values, the property supports the park's world-class scenery. The Antelope Flats tract provides unobstructed views of the Grand, Middle, and South Tetons at the heart of the range, Mormon Row and the prominent Blacktail Butte area to the south, and the Gros Ventre Mountains to the east.

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Key conservation partners for this effort include National Fish and Wildlife Foundation via Walmart's Acres for America Program, Jackson Hole Land Trust, National Park Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming. John and Adrienne Mars, the Hamill Family Foundation, Knobloch Family Foundation, The Sage Foundation, Mark Headley and Christina Pehl, and Rocky Mountain Power Foundation contributed leadership gifts to this effort.

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is providing a program related investment in the form of a bridge loan to support multi-year pledge commitments provided by many donors.

Additionally, The Conservation Fund provided real estate expertise to support the transaction, and National Parks Conservation Association long advocated for the property to be included in Grand Teton.

Today's closing helps complete an effort that spanned 30 years to exchange, trade, or sell the school section. Since the late 1990s, Wyoming's congressional delegation, governor, and state legislature have worked to resolve the school section inholding issue.

The late U.S. Senator Craig Thomas passed legislation in 2003 to authorize exchanges, sales, or trades that would compensate Wyoming for the Grand Teton school section inholdings. A Wyoming constitutional mandate requires that school trust lands, created at statehood in 1890, must generate income for the common school trust.

"Antelope Flats sits within Grand Teton National Park. Its sale provides Wyoming a greater return on the land and allows the people of Wyoming and visitors from elsewhere greater opportunities to enjoy the wonders of the park," said Wyoming Governor Matt Mead. "The state will receive the benefit of \$46 million for our schools, and the park will have another 640 acres for people to appreciate. I thank the donors, Grand Teton National Park Foundation, the National Park Foundation, and the National Park Service for their efforts."

"We are grateful for the outstanding efforts of Grand Teton National Park Foundation and the National Park Foundation, as well as the many individuals who donated to this legacy project," said Grand Teton National Park Superintendent David Vela. He added, "It is humbling to see the commitment and passion of all involved to protect this parcel for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations."

This purchase, through a combination of private philanthropy and federal funding, continues the tradition of generosity that helped establish Grand Teton National Park. In particular, it carries on the vision and generosity of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Laurance S. Rockefeller, and the Rockefeller family, who recognized the role of philanthropy in the permanent protection of critical lands for the public.

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