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Teton Interagency Fire Management Junior Firefighter Program Wraps Up For the Season



The Junior Firefighter program offered in Grand Teton National Park concluded this month, ending a six-week season that began in early July. The program gave children an opportunity to learn about fire and its relationship with wildlife habitats and plant adaptations. The 1- 1/2 hour program was offered three times weekly to students ages 8- 12.

Through a National Park Service Fire & Aviation Management Community Assistance Grant, the Teton Interagency Fire Education Office was able to hire a contractor to coordinate and present the sessions. Lessons focused on the fire triangle and basic fire behavior and fire ecology concepts. Students differentiated between fuels that would burn rapidly and those that would burn more slowly, and they role- played different kinds of fire behavior. Other topics included fire history, park fire management zones, and the importance of good communication and safety in wildland fire operations. All sessions concluded with a fire prevention and campfire safety message. Participants earned a cloth patch to commemorate their experience.

In all, 17 programs were given in the park this summer with 179 students attending. The program's success was due in part to interdivisional coordination, teaming the Fire Education Office with the park's Division of Interpretation to develop a curriculum complimenting the Young Naturalist program already offered in the park. The interpretive staff played a critical role in promoting the program and registering students at the Visitor Centers. Park Chief of Interpretation Rich Fedorchak commented, "The Junior Firefighter program was widely successful. Fire education is an extremely important message to convey to visitors. This program not only showed children what fire managers do in the field, it gave them a sense of fire's role in the ecosystem."

Additionally, the Junior Firefighter program was offered at several day camps throughout the community. The Fire Education Office partnered with the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Teton County Parks & Recreation Department, Bridger- Teton National Forest Greys River Ranger District, and the Moose Corner Day Care to offer the curriculum to local students participating in summer programs. This allowed the Junior Firefighter curriculum to reach an additional 54 children.

To learn more about Fire Education programs and materials, visit the National Park Service Fire & Aviation Management Education link at www.nps.gov/fire/educational/education.html, or click on the Fire Education link at www.tetonfires.com.

