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SQUIRREL MEADOWS-GRAND TARGHEE LAND EXCHANGE COMPLETED

- **Exchange ensures protection of prime grizzly bear, other wildlife habitat**
- **Enhancements to Targhee base area now under county control**

ALTA, Wyo. – May 28, 2004 – The completion of the Squirrel Meadows-Grand Targhee land exchange was announced today at U.S. Forest Service offices in Idaho Falls, Idaho, ensuring that more than 400 acres adjacent to Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park will forever be saved from potential development.

The protection of Squirrel Meadows has been a long-held public objective of federal land managers, area residents, government officials of both Teton County, Wyo. and Teton County, Idaho, and the environmental community for more than two decades. The protected land is an isolated wetland meadow habitat, ecologically rare for the grizzly bears, sand hill cranes, trumpeter swans, spotted frogs and great grey owls it supports.

“It is an honor to recognize the Forest Service today, which had our full support during a long and comprehensive public process,” said Grand Targhee general manager Larry Williamson.

“The Forest Service’s unwavering commitment to protect Squirrel Meadows, one of the largest private in-holdings within the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem grizzly bear recovery zone, is to be commended.”

Williamson noted this may be the most studied public land trade in history and said that Targhee was pleased to actively participate in the extensive analysis in order to meet the high standard of expectation for the protection of public lands.

The U.S. District Court of Idaho’s ruling in 2003 that the Forest Service had complied with the

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) gave the final nod of approval necessary for the land exchange. Based on its ruling, the court lifted an injunction, which had blocked the land trade, and dismissed the entire lawsuit that had sought to stop the land exchange.

In the trade the public receives more than 400 acres of critical ecosystem habitat in exchange for 120 acres of land that has been used for three decades for recreational and resort commercial use in the operations of Grand Targhee Resort.

The exchange allows the original vision of Targhee to be realized, with county control of development at Targhee and continued Forest Service management compliance on the lease of the ski mountain.

“As we have stated throughout the land exchange process, we are dedicated to maintaining Targhee’s unique character and we look forward to turning our focus to the county approval process of a phased resort plan,” Williamson said. “With county input and guidance, our resort plan will ultimately reflect our vision to protect the environment as well as to develop a one-of-a-kind base area that retains Targhee’s spirit and better serves our guests.”

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