



# JACKSON HOLE AIRPORT STAFF UPDATE

April 2020

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## Employee of the Month

We are happy to announce that Tony Human Resources Director, was awarded Employee of the Month. In Tony's 5-1/2 airport he has steadfastly put together support an enhanced working and benefits for all employees. He makes being available for anyone needing and is committed to working to help us benefits or unexpected situations.



Cross, our April's years at the programs to environment a point of information, navigate

Recently he has worked with various Departments of Public Health related to COVID-19 to make sure that employees had what they needed during their time away from the airport, as well as during their transition back to work. As Jim Elwood stated, "at one point he even drove groceries to someone in Idaho who was not able to get out to the store. He's just a terrific guy."

Tony, we appreciate your ongoing focus in working with the Board to make Jackson Hole Airport an employer of choice in our area. Congratulations on your selection as Employee of the Month.

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## Latest on the Runway Reconstruction



Andrew Wells photo

Airport staff, Aviation, the FAA and WYDOT have been working on the runway project since last year. We are excited to share that we have received direction

from the FAA and the airport Board, and the runway reconstruction is slated for spring of 2022.

The runway project was initially planned as a more simplified rehabilitation or resurfacing, but based on the geotechnical investigation, engineers realized that it will require a full reconstruction. This is a much more involved process and requires taking out the base material. The runway is currently safe for operations and data shows that runway surface should continue to hold up until 2022. The main issue is that underlying layers make a resurface impractical. The runway has been resurfaced a number of times, but the last time a reconstruction was done was in 1987 and that was just the center 75 feet.

All the runway surfaces, A1, A4, lighting, signage, Runway Safety Area grading, drainage and work on impacted FAA navigational aids will be performed as part of this project. Additionally, installation of trench drains will be installed along the edges of the runway to capture surface runoff.

The runway reconstruction will occur in the Spring of 2022 and will require a closure of the runway. The amount of time the closure will remain in place is yet to be determined, but an initial estimation predicts a 3 week closure at this time. Depending on FAA funding, there may be the possibility of stockpiling materials or completing some construction during the summer/fall of 2021. In general, the plan is to better position ourselves for the spring/summer of 2022 so the closure and impact to the community and the airport is minimized. More information and updated timelines will be available as we get further along in the planning process.

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## Heli-Tour Information



Below you will find an overview of the history of the Wind River Air's request to operate helicopter tours from JHA, the Board's response, and how we will be working with this operation in the future.

## Background

- The Jackson Hole Airport must comply with both Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, and its agreement with the Department of the Interior (DOI) under which the Airport operates in Grand Teton National Park (GTNP).
- Among other things, FAA requires that the Airport be open to “all types, kinds and classes of aeronautical uses.” This prohibits the Airport from picking and choosing the type of aeronautical activity it will accept.
- Exceptions exist for safety, but safety decisions are reserved to FAA alone. FAA has found that the Robinson R-44 helicopter is safe to operate at the Airport.
- FAA also prohibits the Airport from granting anyone an “exclusive right to provide a particular type of aeronautical activity.” Because two agreements already allow commercial scenic tours from the Airport, and others allow the operation of helicopters, it would be discriminatory to deny a new operator the same rights.

- In most cases, under the DOI agreement no scenic flights may originate at the Airport and fly over noise sensitive areas of GTNP, as those areas are defined in the agreement. The Airport Board is prohibited from otherwise regulating the routes of aircraft which land at or depart from the Airport.
- Generally, scenic air tour flights may overfly GTNP only if they comply with the federal Air Tour Management Act of 2000 (ATMA).

### How We Got Here

- In 2001, FAA clarified that scenic flights that overfly GTNP, only for the purposes of landing and taking-off, do not trigger the ATMA, and must be permitted at the Airport.
- In August 2018, the Airport received an application from Wind River Air LLC (WRA) to provide out-and-back helicopter flights to and from the Airport. This original application proposed dedicated ramp space and flights over GTNP.
- Since dedicated space could not be provided by the Airport, and clearance under the ATMA would be required for flights over GTNP, WRA modified its application.
- The modified application excluded dedicated ramp space and avoided GTNP overflights. The Airport Board recommended that WRA consult with GTNP, the National Wildlife Refuge, the Town and the County regarding noise concerns before pursuing its application.
- Scenic air tours, by either fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters, are allowed to operate over private lands in Teton County, national forests, National Elk Refuge and wilderness areas. So long as aircraft maintain an altitude of 2,000 above ground level, federal law permits and protects them.
- Since Congress has given the FAA exclusive jurisdiction over aircraft in flight, state and local governments, and even federal land management agencies such as the Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife Service cannot prohibit scenic flights.

### Moving Forward

- On April 24, 2020 the JH Airport Board approved Wind River Air's permit to operate scenic tours from the Airport, but shortened the term from three-years to one-year. Moving forward, most Airport contracts for commercial aeronautical operations will be limited to one-year.
- Wind River Air agreed to participate in the Fly Quiet Program <https://www.jacksonholeairport.com/airport-guide/environmental-initiatives/> and will work with Airport staff to continue to adapt its operations to adhere to best practices.
- Wind River Air will also participate in discussions with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, FAA, the National Elk Refuge, and the Wyoming Game & Fish Department toward the adoption of voluntary air tour management plan designed to identify and mitigate the impacts of scenic air tours.
- Before the vote, several Airport Board members spoke of wrestling with this decision. However, Board members also spoke of their responsibility to uphold contractual obligations, abide by the law, and be fair and equal to all aviation users.

- Moving forward, the Airport will continue to work with Wind River Air to ensure that best practices are being followed, and with the Wyoming Congressional Delegation toward new measures to protect public lands.

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## All Teams Meeting



Last week the airport held its first virtual meeting for the entire staff via Microsoft Teams. Individuals working on site joined Jim in the Board room, but many attendees watched remotely. Jim spoke in depth about the budget, the government CARES grant for the airport, runway reconstruction, and Wind River Air's permit to operate helicopter tours from JAC.

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## Getting to Know Jerry Blann



To say that skiing has been a part of Jerry Blann's life is an understatement. The ski industry has been a common thread that has woven through his childhood, education, family, and all his professional accomplishments.

Born in Bend, Oregon, Jerry is one of four children, including a twin sister Sherry and two younger brothers. His father was the General Manager of Mount Bachelor Ski Resort and Jerry grew up in the business, learning from his father's work ethic while working at the ski area from the age of ten. He was awarded a scholarship to the University of Denver, where he graduated with a business degree. As part of the university's ski team he went on to win the national NCAA title three years running, and Jerry was voted All-American Athlete and served as Captain on the ski team during his senior year.

After graduating, Jerry was offered a management trainee position with Aspen Skiing Company where he rapidly rose through the ranks to become President. After 18 years at Aspen he moved to Bear Mountain Ski Resort in California for 5 years, and then began to work on the design of a new ski area in Steamboat, Colorado.

In 1995 Jerry was offered the Presidency of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort where he served for 23 years and grew annual skier visits from 200,000 to over 700,000. He managed \$200 million in investments including the aerial tram, Sweetwater gondola, a high-speed quad, Rendezvous Lodge and the via ferrata rock challenge. Being at JHMR was more than just managing a major ski resort. Jerry was part of the creation of a new resort district at Teton Village and was committed to expanding the economy beyond the winter months to enable a seasonal balance.

Shortly after joining JHMR Jerry saw how important the airport was to the ski industry and applied to join the Jackson Hole Airport Board. He has served on

the Board for 20 years and is currently President during a final two-year term. As he looks back over the years, highlights of his tenure include evolving a positive relationship with Grand Teton National Park, growing the environment ethos, and the development of our beautiful terminal building. He is also proud of how the airport brought the TSA security function in-house, which helps contribute to the great culture at the airport: People helping people, the emphasis on safety, customer service and strong internal and external partnerships including our relationship with the FAA.

Jerry is married to Rebecca, an accomplished musician and singer, and has 4 daughters who reside on the west coast. In raising his children Jerry carried forward what he learned from his father by instilling a strong work ethic and teaching the importance of being accountable. In recent years Jerry has been dividing his winters between skiing in Jackson and living in Arizona where Rebecca performs; and spending his summers in Jackson where they like to walk, hike and golf while enjoying the beauty of the area.

Jerry is very committed to his community and keeps busy. In addition to the JHAB, Jerry serves on the Bank of Jackson Hole Board, was a founding member and continues to serve on the JH Air Board, and recently began a six-year term with the Wyoming Aeronautics Commission.

From his first visit to Jackson during a Christmas ski trip at the age of five, to today, Jerry has maintained a positive attitude and outlook. He looks forward to what will come and is grateful to be able to live a life focused on who and what he loves.

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## The Power of 5 Minutes: Teton County NEEDS you!

United States®  
**Census**  
**2020**

Currently Teton County has a very low response rate on for the National 2020 Census. The Census occurs once every decade and the numbers reported will impact funding that our community will receive for the next 10 years. **Filling out the census takes only 5 minutes** online and helps ensure our community will receive its fair share of critical federal and state funding for infrastructure, schools, clinics and hospitals, transportation, parks, and other public facilities.

You don't need a "Census ID" or code to complete the survey now. Here's a quick walkthrough on how to **fill out the Census right now** without a code:

1. Go to <https://my2020census.gov/>
2. Click "Start Questionnaire"
3. Click "If you do not have a Census ID, click here."

Please share this information with everyone you know in Teton County!

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## Thank You Team JAC!

- For your flexibility in helping us respond to the unprecedented change in traffic arriving and departing from the airport
- For taking extra measures to ensure the health of our co-workers and customers
- For your willingness to adapt your work schedule and assignments
- For putting in the extra effort needed to enable communication and productivity when working from home
- For distancing 6 feet from each other and wearing a mask to protect those you meet at work or in the community
- For continuing to work under the added pressure an international pandemic puts on your work and professional lives
- Continuing to support your co-workers and embracing the “People Helping People” mind set we share throughout our organization
- Participating in additional working groups to ensure we remain on the best path forward for all departments and airport functions
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And a big thank you to the Board and senior staff for maintaining full employment, being proactive with medical leave, and your ongoing support of us as individuals and Team JAC!

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