



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

PO Box 170
Moose, Wyoming 83012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2006 06-26

Joan Anzelmo/Jackie Skaggs
(307) 739-3415 or 739-3393

Grand Teton National Park News Release

Further Update on Snake River Boat Accident in Grand Teton National Park

On Friday morning, June 2, 2006, at 10:53 a.m., Teton Interagency Dispatch Center received a phone call from the Grand Teton Lodge Company reporting that one of their scenic raft trip boats had tipped over in the “Many Moose” area of the Snake River, one-half mile downstream of the historic Bar BC dude ranch. Twelve passengers were spilled out of the raft and into the Snake River as the boat became lodged against a root ball of a live tree that had recently flushed into that section of the river during spring run-off. The 15-passenger raft, carrying 12 people and one boatman, had launched earlier that morning to float a ten-mile stretch of river within Grand Teton National Park.

Boatmen from four commercial float trip raft companies, who were in the vicinity at the time of the accident, assisted in getting nine passengers out of the water and onto the riverbank. As previously reported, three people drowned in this accident: Elizabeth and John Rizas from Beaufort, South Carolina, and Linda Clark from Shreveport, Louisiana. Park rangers, a Teton Interagency contract helicopter, Jackson Hole Fire/EMS, and Teton County Search and Rescue volunteers also assisted in the search and rescue operation.

The section of the Snake River below Bar BC ranch braids into three narrow channels. The center channel, where the accident occurred, takes a slight curve to the right, making it challenging to get a clear downstream view until a boat has fully entered into the channel’s flow. A live tree had recently been uprooted and flushed into this channel, where it was temporarily snagged on a submerged gravel bar. The tree was swept away with the river’s flow by the following morning.

The force of the river current pushed the raft toward the tree, where it bumped into the exposed root ball and became pinned by the current. The swift flowing water then pushed the boat up and into a vertical position, leaving the passenger compartment facing the upstream flow. As the boat tipped onto its side, the passengers fell into the water.

The Snake River is a natural, multi-channeled river with woody debris deposits and gravel bars scattered across along the length of its route. Along the 25-mile river corridor from Jackson Lake Dam to the Moose Bridge, there are only four river landings, spaced several miles apart. Much of the river course lies remote from any road access. The river current can be strong enough to push debris and load debris at river bends or gravel bars.

The investigation of this boating accident is continuing.

Statistic update: After further research into previous river accidents – resulting from swimming, fishing, hiking, and boating activities – it is estimated that there have been 20 fatalities associated with recreation on the Snake River in Grand Teton National Park since record keeping began in the 1930s.

-NPS-

www.nps.gov/grte

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.