



For Immediate Release:

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JH WILD Bridges Media and Academia to Pioneer Innovative Research

September 8, 2017, Jackson, WY – Jackson Hole WILD is once again poised to bring world leaders in nature, science and conservation media production to the Tetons, with the 2017 Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival & Conservation Summit taking place Sept. 24-29. This year, among the executives and filmmakers from the most recognizable names in the film industry, academic researchers will be attending the gathering to engage in a unique exploration.

JH WILD and partners from Colorado Mesa University have been awarded a prestigious grant from the National Science Foundation (AISL # **1713601**) to conduct ground-breaking empirical research on communicating science to public audiences, through media. With a success rate of less than 5% for proposals to NSF, this is no small feat. Leveraging the Festival's extensive reach to an international cadre of top content producers, the National Science Foundation is supporting a two-year study examining the role of documentary media as a tool for science communication and increased STEM literacy.

“This is about bringing together the right people to have the right conversations,” says JH WILD Executive Director Lisa Samford. “We’re building a legacy that will extend far beyond our industry conference. Better programming means we are able to better prepare the public to make important decisions about the environment, conservation, climate change and other science and nature topics that are increasingly part of mainstream news and everyday experience.”

Collaborator and NSF project manager Ru Mahoney agrees. “Research shows that people rely heavily on media – such as TV shows, documentary films, podcasts – for information about science-centered topics. These programs influence how people think about science and have a significant impact on how they assess societal issues they encounter through traditional, digital and social media platforms.”

Communication Science experts from leading universities including MIT and Yale are integral to assuring quality programming to inform the public. “We are interested in learning more about what the world’s leading communication experts are saying about evidence-based practices in crafting rigorous, informative, and factually-based messaging,” Samford explains, “and then comparing the practices to what the media industry is currently implementing.” Mahoney adds “It’s not just about making science storytelling interesting or engaging, it’s about making media

products that nurture critical thinking and ultimately prepare the public to be informed stakeholders on science issues they face daily.”

The NSF funded program will support participation of eight STEM-Media Fellows from around the country. Selected from a highly-competitive pool of 350+ nominees, the Fellows represent emerging leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and Media professions. Their learning experiences through Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival 2017 and Science Media Awards & Summit 2018 will provide valuable insight about the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in science storytelling and media development.

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About Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival: Recognized as the premier event of its genre, the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival is an unparalleled biennial media industry gathering. Hosted in Grand Teton National Park, over 750 international delegates participate in an exceptional slate of leading-edge equipment demos, hands-on workshops, panel discussions and state-of-the-art screenings.

About Colorado Mesa University: Founded in 1925, Colorado Mesa University is a comprehensive regional public higher education institution offering liberal arts, professional, and technical programs at the master's, bachelor's, associate and certificate levels. Colorado Mesa's focus is on providing quality academic programs, built on a strong liberal arts core that support students' interests and regional employment needs, as well as technical programs that respond to vocational workforce demands.

About the National Science Foundation: The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, its budget is \$7.5 billion. NSF funds reach all 50 states through grants to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities and other institutions. Each year, NSF receives more than 48,000 competitive proposals for funding and makes about 12,000 new funding awards.