

our place

INSPIRING YOU TO
PROTECT GREAT PLACES



TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST

WINTER 2020

Fall along the South Fork of the Snake River

A Note from our Executive Director

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING LOCAL LAND



My family, like many early settlers in the region, came west in search of arable land and the opportunity to establish their new life. They settled in eastern Idaho because of the rich soils and abundant water. They were not alone in seeking land in valley bottoms and along waterways. These areas were much more conducive to farming than the region's rugged mountains and sagebrush steppe, much of which is now public land.

Because of the vast public lands in our region, it may seem like we have plenty of habitat protected for wildlife and enough opportunities for people to recreate and connect with nature. However, thanks to the Homestead Act and early settlers, some of the most valuable habitat for wildlife and the most sought after for development is on private land along our rivers and streams.

Riparian areas—those areas surrounding rivers and streams—while only a small portion of the landscape, are critically important to wildlife and ecosystem function. They are some of the most biologically diverse and important habitats for species providing food, refuge, and corridors for animals to move across the landscape. Maintaining the ecological integrity of these areas is also important for reducing catastrophic impacts of flooding and for our ability to recreate and connect with nature along some of the world's most iconic rivers. Like riparian areas, wetlands and working lands are important elements of the landscape tapestry. Wetlands contribute to clean drinking water and provide important habitat for an array of species. In addition, working lands maintain permeable migration pathways for big game and contribute to our economy.

The ecological significance of waterways, wetlands, and working lands are examples of why private land conservation is so important in an area fortunate to have abundant public land. Knowing we have already lost 50 percent of the species on the planet and are seeing a reduction in 60 percent of the animals on earth, I feel a sense of urgency to act to protect these critical areas. We are losing habitat and working lands at an alarming rate, and without proactive action to sustain the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem there is no doubt that the wildlife and open spaces we treasure will be lost, not just for future generations, but within our lifetime.

I hope you will join me in doing what you can to make a difference for the future of our region. Your support of local land conservation and the Teton Regional Land Trust makes a tangible and perpetual impact, showing that you don't take this place for granted. Our work results in permanent habitat protection that ensures species have the habitat and resources they need, while helping to sustain local agriculture and community heritage for this and future generations.

Joselin Matkins

Conserving working farms and ranches, fish and wildlife habitat, and scenic open spaces in eastern Idaho for this and future generations.



A Treasure Worth Preserving

BUILDING ON DECADES OF CONSERVATION ALONG THE SOUTH FORK

Davis Property near the Heise Bridge

Every conserved property has its own unique character and connection to the greater landscape. The Davis Conservation Easement along the South Fork of the Snake River, closed in October, is no exception. The Davis family has a long history along the river. In the early 1900s, Al Davis' grandparents built their home and operated one of the first ferries across the South Fork, just downstream of Heise Hot Springs. For Al, seeing so many special places transformed by development inspired him to conserve the land in its natural state. "It had sentimental value and now that my mother's family is gone, the sentimental value has only grown," he says. "There was a time when I had an ill-formed idea that maybe I'd build a house someday, but as the years passed and I've seen so many wild places destroyed, I realized that I wanted to just leave the property as it was. Knowing that the land is now preserved in perpetuity is a great feeling."

This project conserves approximately one-third mile of river frontage lined with cottonwood trees. Situated within the west's largest intact cottonwood gallery, this area is considered one of the most biologically diverse habitats in Idaho.

The property adjoins public land and allows for public access along the river. The conservation easement also ensures unobstructed views of the river and the mountainside, which is home to a Golden Eagle nest. Beyond the scenic values, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game recognizes the property's importance for wintering mule deer and provided financial support for the project through their Mule Deer Initiative program.

Fond Memories

"The land has always been special to me," Al Davis says. He fondly remembers his time along the South Fork. "My mother was the youngest of seven children and all but one had kids, so there were lots of cousins. Summers were spent romping around the property with only three rules: 1) don't fall in the river, 2) watch out for rattlesnakes, and 3) stay away from the poison ivy along the creek. We managed to keep to rule #1. It was a wonderful place to be a kid and the experience left an indelible mark, shaping some of what I would eventually become."

Building on decades of conservation along the South Fork, this 154-acre project adds to our work that helps protect the conservation values and world-class recreation experience along the river—a river surrounded primarily by private land. As part of the South Fork Conservation Partnership, Teton Regional Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, and the Bureau of Land Management have worked together for almost thirty years to leverage private funding,

easement donations, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund to protect the majority of the South Fork and the South Fork River Canyon. The result of this effort is the permanent conservation of more than 20,000 acres, keeping this remarkable river relatively undeveloped.

Rivers, Wetlands, & Wildlife Migrations

The work of the Land Trust provides permanent conservation outcomes that directly address the pressures faced by the natural world, including habitat loss, fragmentation of migration corridors, and other harmful impacts to ecosystems. Here, in the Greater Yellowstone region, we are fortunate that the ecological function of our ecosystem is still intact. We have the incredible privilege of observing wildlife on a daily basis. The spring floods and periodic wildfires we experience result in a landscape mosaic of successional habitats like aspen, cottonwood, and lodgepole stands. The landscape is truly alive and our efforts to sustain habitat and migration corridors on local and privately held land is a key component of our region's ecological vitality.

Our work to protect the rivers, wetlands, and wildlife corridors aims to safeguard the lands and waters our communities and wildlife rely upon by focusing on preserving the land along the rivers and tributaries of the Upper Snake River Watershed and the migration corridors between them. The protection of private lands ensures permeable open spaces for thousands of mule deer, elk, and pronghorn that migrate out of high elevation public lands to survive the long snowy winters. Habitat conservation also benefits many species of migrating birds that rely on riparian areas and flooded wetlands stopover and nesting habitat.

We ensure the land we conserve protects land of high conservation value by utilizing our Strategic Conservation Plan as a guide. This plan identified key umbrella species of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, including grizzly bear, Sharp-tailed and Sage Grouse, Greater Sandhill Crane, big game, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout. By protecting habitat for these species, we protect habitat and ecological function for the suite of species in the region. This ensures that our investment in permanent conservation is put to use in those areas of most value to our communities and to the iconic and irreplaceable species of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Since 1990, the Land Trust has worked with more than 150 property owners to permanently protect nearly 35,000 acres. This has resulted in significant protection of our river corridors, wetlands, and working farms and ranches highlighted in dark green on the illustration. The areas in white represent private land and other colored areas represent public lands such as U.S. Forest Service (light green), Bureau of Land Management (yellow), state lands (blue), and other lands such as those under conservation easements with partners like The Nature Conservancy (orange).

The High Divide along the Idaho/Montana border is a critical link for grizzly bears, wolverines, and other animals traveling between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Northern Rockies and Frank Church Wilderness Area.

Sage Grouse and other species like pronghorn rely on intact sagebrush steppe habitat like that found in Shotgun Valley for breeding and rearing of their young.



The rivers of the Upper Snake River Watershed, including the Henry's Fork, the South Fork, and the Fall, Warm, and Teton Rivers, host world-class fisheries, iconic scenery, and unrivaled recreational opportunities.



Deer Parks Wildlife Management Unit and the area around the confluence of the South and Henry's Forks of the Snake River host abundant wildlife, including over half of the wintering population of Rocky Mountain Trumpeter Swans.



The Tex Creek area hosts diverse habitat, including critical winter-range for big game, an active beaver population, and important Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat.



Snake River

IDAHO FALLS •



YELLOWSTONE
NATIONAL PARK

WYOMING

Thousands of elk, mule deer, and moose migrate out of Yellowstone National Park each fall to lower elevation winter range in the Sand's Desert. The sagebrush steppe habitat hosts the largest documented wintering population of moose in eastern Idaho.

Agricultural lands in eastern Idaho are the lifeblood of the economy. Productive agriculture not only sustains our local economy, but also helps maintain an open and permeable landscape for migrating wildlife.

GRAND TETON
NATIONAL PARK

Teton Valley provides key habitat for spawning Yellowstone cutthroat trout and migrating waterbirds, raptors, and neotropical songbirds.

Wetland habitat along the Teton River provides a home for a vibrant moose population. Thanks to the close alignment of wetlands and productive farmland west of the Teton River, Teton Valley also hosts the largest population of staging Sandhill Cranes in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The South Fork hosts one of the largest intact cottonwood forests in the lower 48 states and is the most biologically diverse habitat in Idaho. It is home to 126 bird species, including 21 species of raptors and a robust nesting population of Bald Eagles.

Greater Yellowstone Sandhill Crane Initiative



CRANES IN HUMAN CULTURE AND HISTORY



The Greater Yellowstone region is home to the largest intact ecosystem in the lower 48 states of the U.S. This means that residents and visitors alike have the opportunity to view wildlife regularly and experience all that nature has to offer, including observing iconic species such as the Greater Sandhill Crane. In 2018, the Land Trust began hosting the Greater Yellowstone Crane Festival. The purpose of the festival is to create a community-wide celebration of the Greater Yellowstone region's exceptional wildlife, irreplaceable natural resources, and the fall migration of the Sandhill Crane.

Much like crane festivals around the world, we come together as a community to honor and respect the wildlife with which we share this special place. Because of their captivating song, expressive dances, and complex, human-like social behavior, cranes have captured our attention and reverence for centuries. Across the world, cranes are honored as signs of hope, resilience, and renewal and their annual migrations are celebrated with crane festivals that include song, dance, and community gatherings.

Our festival's proceeds will support the efforts of the Greater Yellowstone Sandhill Crane Initiative, which works to protect crucial habitat and resources for Sandhill Cranes in the Greater Yellowstone. By protecting habitat that Sandhill Cranes rely on, we are also protecting habitat for the wide variety of species that call the region home.

OF THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE

Here in the Greater Yellowstone region, we are lucky to see cranes from March to October. Each year, thousands of Sandhills return to nest and raise their young. As fall approaches, Sandhills seek out staging habitat so they can fuel up for the long migration to their wintering grounds. Because of the Teton River, its associated wetlands, and the agricultural productivity on the west side of the Teton River, Teton Valley is ideal staging habitat and hosts the largest staging population of Sandhill Cranes in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

To guide our conservation efforts to protect critical staging habitat, the Land Trust, along with partners and volunteers, have monitored staging Sandhills every fall since 2003. These efforts have identified the majority of night roosts (shallow wetland areas where cranes gather overnight), as well as their preferred food sources.

The results also show that staging Sandhills prefer to forage on cut grain leftover from harvest within no more than two miles of their night roosts. This proximity enables them to efficiently build up the energy resources they need to make the long migration south. An understanding of their preference has enabled the Land Trust to protect the majority of the valley's wetland roosts and has guided our Grain for Cranes program, both in terms of the location of the plots and their management.

Photos: Top, Linda M. Swope; middle, celebrating Crane Fest in the rain, photo by Lina Marquis; bottom, Teton Valley Dance Academy Crane Festival performance, by Linda M. Swope; right, Amy Day.



ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH SCIENCE, ART, AND EDUCATION

IN THE CLASSROOM

In spring 2019, we launched *Cranes in the Classroom*, an educational and art program aimed at inspiring a love of Sandhill Cranes and engaging youth in the protection of our natural resources. Central to our presentation in the second grade classrooms at Driggs Elementary School was educating them about the habitat needs of Sandhills and highlighting the interaction between cranes and humans over thousands of years. They learned what cranes represent to different cultures and how cranes have been depicted throughout human history, including today.

Deirdre Morris, the art teacher at Driggs Elementary, added to the program by leading a three-week art project in which the students created crane artwork. The children were exceptionally engaged during the project and were invited to exhibit their artwork in the Crane Festival Art Show presented in collaboration with Teton Arts Council at the Driggs City Building in September and October.

We are excited to expand *Cranes in the Classroom* into an annual program available to all second graders in Teton Valley. We hope they will be inspired to help sustain efforts to protect these magnificent birds throughout their lives.



Thanks to Our Project Partners:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Intermountain Aquatics Inc.
LegacyWorks Group
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund

Leaving a Lasting Legacy

CULTIVATING CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY



Tilt Family at Memorial Bench on the Teton River

Thirty years ago, a small group of citizens interested in proactively working to protect the Teton Valley's natural resources came together to form the Teton Valley Land Trust. At the table was Albert "Skip" Tilt, co-owner of the Teton Ridge Ranch. Albert and his wife, Chrissie, were instrumental in the early days, committed to establishing an organization that would have a positive impact on the valley. Hearing from those close to Albert, it is clear that he had a profound influence on them, as well as the Teton Valley community.

Among those that considered Albert a friend was Michael Whitfield. "Albert Tilt was a vitally important founding Board Member of the Teton Valley Land Trust, which later became the Teton Regional Land Trust," Michael says. "Albert participated in the early discussions that led to the Land Trust's founding in 1990, and served on the Board for fifteen years, including three years as Board President. Albert was our early champion of philanthropy in Teton Valley, connecting potential donors with the fledgling organization. Albert and Chrissie were hosts to many of the Land Trust's early foundational events including the Taste of the Tetons. He and Chrissie also contributed greatly to Teton Valley's future through efforts to build a new hospital and to bring greater economic vitality to the area."



Albert "Skip" Tilt

intern in the summer of 1994. He helped with conservation mapping, education, and property resource assessments. Upon Albert's passing, the family, including Chrissie, Alex, Whitney, Tye, and Tysh, wanted to do even more to ensure that the legacy of conservation is continued in Albert's name.

In September, the family and early founders of the Land Trust got together to celebrate Albert's life and legacy in Teton Valley. They shared stories, dedicated a bench along the Teton River that was hand-crafted by Tye, and established a scholarship fund in Albert's name. The family wanted to establish this fund to reflect the legacy Albert left on the valley. The fund will provide annual scholarships to Land Trust employees, partners, and volunteers that are seeking higher education to further their impact as conservationists and who have demonstrated commitment to the mission and vision of the Land Trust. The Tilt family, like the Land Trust, believe that inspiring the next generation

of conservationists is key to ensuring the wildlife and wild places that make eastern Idaho so special is crucial to ensuring the natural resources of this place are passed on.

To support the scholarship fund, you can provide a tax-deductible gift to the Teton Regional Land Trust. When doing so, please indicate the donation is to the Tilt Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Innovative Steward Conservation

EMPLOYING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO MONITOR PROTECTED LANDS

*Stewardship visit: Renee Hiebert with
Landowner David Breckenridge*

With each acre the Land Trust protects comes the perpetual responsibility of ensuring that the conservation values remain forever intact. In 2019, our stewardship staff visited 166 properties across eastern Idaho, totaling more than 34,000 acres. Each year, we visit every property and meet with the landowner to discuss any changes or challenges in property management and ensure that any changes to the land will not affect the conservation values such as habitat, scenic views, and farmland.

During the stewardship visit, our staff walks the land, taking care to note any areas that may pose a risk to the integrity of the protected land. We document this information with GPS coordinates, photographs, maps, and GPS tracks. This information is used to generate an annual report that also includes observations of wildlife and other sensitive species, weather conditions, and summaries of the conversation with the landowner. These reports give the Land Trust a view of the property over time and help to ensure that the conservation values are upheld year after year.

Each year, we add to the number of properties protected and have recognized the need to both improve our efficiency in the

field and to maintain high-quality stewardship of the land. In 2019, we began using LANDSCAPE, a software application developed by a professional from the Land Trust community. LANDSCAPE is a cloud-based database that holds all of the pertinent data related to conservation easement stewardship. We have been able to customize this database, including an application used for completing our annual site visit reports while we are in the field. This application and associated database saves the Land Trust time. As we continue to refine and customize the application, we will be able to improve the efficiency of our internal processes, thus giving our staff more time for boots on the ground.

Our next phase will be to customize the database to automate the processes involved in conservation easement acquisition, which will streamline our work and enable our land protection staff to generate proposals and better keep track of deadlines and project progress.

Land conservation software

LANDSCAPE

WELCOME TO NICOLE CYR STEWARDSHIP TECHNICIAN

Growing up in Colorado, Nicole loved being outdoors, exploring, and seeing wildlife. In high school, she either wanted a job that revolved around wildlife or wanted to be an animal rights lawyer. Nicole attended Adams State University in Alamosa, Colorado, where she earned her B.S. in wildlife biology and minor in environmental science. While in college, she interned for the Student Conservation Association (SCA) partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After college, Nicole worked for the Forest Service and the National Park Service for a season. She enjoyed both of those positions, but was still looking for the right fit. One of these searches led her to learn about the opportunity at the Land Trust. She was inspired by the accomplishments of the Land Trust and she quickly realized that the Land Trust was doing important and permanent work that she wanted to be a part of. "I feel very blessed to call Teton Valley home and to be actively working toward protecting land for future generations and for wildlife," Nicole says.



Protecting Idaho's Wildlife Through Statewide Partnerships

MAKING AN IMPACT ON WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

The Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation (IFWF) has been a great supporter of many of the Land Trust's projects across the region. IFWF is a statewide nonprofit organization that works with Idaho Fish and Game and other non-government organizations and state agencies to hold and manage funds for conservation projects throughout Idaho. In August, IFWF hosted their board meeting in Teton Valley making it a perfect opportunity for them to see first-hand how their support has made an impact on Teton Valley's wildlife.

Highlights of their support include the Fox Creek and Teton Creek projects. Along Fox Creek, their support helped restore a significant section of the creek, greatly improving habitat for native Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Along Teton Creek, they provided funding to restore the area within the corridor once occupied by farm buildings and a modular home. They supported this project not only because of the benefits to wildlife, but because it provides public access for our community to

enjoy and connect with nature. They also sponsored the 2019 Greater Yellowstone Crane Festival, a celebration of the region's exceptional wildlife heritage.

Hilarie Engle, IFWF's executive director, explains that the Foundation's primary objective is to educate Idahoans to preserve and sustain the state's fishing, hunting, and wildlife heritage. "We think it's important to educate Idahoans about protecting wild spaces and wildlife, as we believe this is the best way to grow the next generation of conservationists. Projects like along Teton Creek that provide public access cultivate a broader appreciation and understanding of the importance of these lands and the wildlife that depend on them."

For more about the work of the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation across the region and the state, visit ifwf.org. Check out their work at the Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area to reduce bear and human encounters and conflicts.

Thank you to our 2019 Event Sponsors:

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Teton Valley News

Letter from Our Board President

TRANSITION TIME



As we close the year, on the eve of our 30th anniversary, the Teton Regional Land Trust continues to be a respected leader in regional conservation. Our standards and practices are often cited as a gold standard within the land trust community. After a two-year term as Board President, my constant takeaway is that it's our passionate staff and dedicated Board of Directors that are the secret ingredient. I personally want to communicate to you, our stakeholders, that we are vigilant stewards of your support.

On January 1, 2020, John Nedrow, our current Board Vice President, will take the gavel. Like myself, John's first introduction to the Land Trust was placing a conservation easement on his family land. John's been a passionate advocate for our work. John, a multi-generation farmer from Ashton, brings a lifetime of experience in agriculture and the region to bear. He will be a great leader. Personally, I'm grateful to him for being my "wingman" the past few years.

—Bill Graham

Introducing Our Next President – John Nedrow

STEPPING UP AND GIVING BACK

In the 1940s, John's parents began buying land as it became available and as they could afford—land prices back then were \$10 an acre. They worked hard to turn the land into a productive farm, and started a Hereford cow-calf operation that afforded their family a living. When John and Sheila bought the farm, they looked forward to working the farm and raising their family.

Growing up, John simply could not imagine a life behind a desk. He believes farming provides a sense of independence and self-reliance. It's what he knows and loves. "Conserving this land made a whole lot of sense to me and my family. The conservation payment our family received when we signed the conservation easement helped out tremendously when malt barley contracts, yields, and production were unstable for several years. And, by working with the Land Trust, we know that no matter what, this land will never be developed," John says.

Thanks to the funds received for putting their farm in a conservation easement, John and Sheila were able to send their two sons, Scott and Greg, to college and invest in the farm. Today, that has come full circle. Last year, Greg and his wife Kate returned to the banks of the Henry's Fork. They recently had their first child and intend to car-

ry the family legacy forward. John and Sheila are happy to have a place where their two sons and their growing families can come together. As John reflects, "The river and the land are part of our family."



John and Sheila Nedrow on their family farm on the Henry's Fork.

In 2015 John was asked to join the board of the Land Trust. After some consideration, he decided to say yes. Starting in 2020, we are excited to announce that John will step into the role of Board President.

TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST
1520 SOUTH 500 WEST
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2019 Holiday Party

Celebrate the holidays with a festive evening of music, drinks, food, and friends!

Moose Creek Ranch, Victor, ID
Thursday,
December 5, 6-9pm



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Teton Regional Land Trust has been accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, meeting national standards for excellence, upholding the public trust, and ensuring that conservation efforts are permanent.

A copy of the latest Financial Report and Registration filed by this organization may be obtained by contacting us at: PO Box 247, Driggs, ID 83422; (208) 354-8939
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