THE LAND STEWARD

Teton Regional Land Trust's Stewardship Newsletter

Spring 2020

Changes to Our 2020 Field Season

Our annual site visit to your conservation easement property is arguably one of the best parts of the job. Meeting with landowners and walking the ground they chose to protect and steward is an invaluable piece of our stewardship program and offers us the opportunity to build relationships and get to know our landowners and their land. However, due to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on our staff capacity and ability to meet with all landowners on the ground safely in 2020, we have decided to do our annual site visits a bit differently this year. TRLT will be employing two alternatives to our annual ground visit this season. The first will be using available 2020 satellite imagery to conduct our annual site visit from space, and the second being aerial flyovers where a member of our stewardship staff will be flying in a small engine aircraft with a skilled pilot, viewing the conservation easement properties from the air. We hope that these methods will provide us with a new perspective in 2020 and we look forward to visiting with you on the ground again in 2021. Please be expecting a call from a member of our stewardship team in late spring / early summer to go over our annual questions regarding any changes or potential changes to your property or ownership, contact information or to address any questions or concerns that you might have.

Digging into Regenerative Agriculture: Soil Armor

The longer we keep our soils covered, the healthier they will be. Soil cover offers protection of this most valuable resource. For starters, a covered soil will reduce the encroachment of sprouting weeds, saving you money, time, and moisture. By keeping our soils covered, we are providing an environment that protects and allows life to flourish, making soils more resilient even in the harshest of conditions and weather events. A good soil cover will limit water evaporation from the sun and wind during a drought and limits the impact of raindrops, which can dislodge particles of soil, that plug up soil pores and prevent water infiltration in wetter years. Did you know that an average raindrop can hit soil at speeds of up to 90 mph? A proper soil cover with both living and decaying root matter keeps the soil pore space open and allows moisture to be infiltrated deep into the subsoil to be stored for future year crops. A diverse mix of plants will release root exudates, or sugars, that feed the microbes in the soil. Those microbes work for us and create soil aggregates, or glues, that trap moisture. So plant with a purpose and don't leave your soil bare. A covered soil is an investment in the future of your soil health and productivity!

Source: Soil Health Resource Guide, 6th Edition

"We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." - Aldo Leopold

inspiring you to protect great places

Teton Regional Land Trust Staff

Joselin Matkins, Executive Director

Jeske Gräve, Development Director

Tamara Sperber, Conservation Director

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ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST

Considering Changes to Ownership?

If you are considering changing the ownership of your conservation easement property, please remember to review your conservation easement for the clause regarding Subsequent Transfers. Most conservation easement documents require that any deed transferring interest of the conservation easement property make specific reference to the recorded conservation easement in a separate paragraph of the deed or lease. Another requirement is that the owner of the conservation easement property notify the Land Trust in writing, usually at least twenty days prior any sale or transfer of interest. This requirement gives the Land Trust time to ensure that the potential buyer understands the conservation easement and to answer any questions regarding the conservation easement. It also allows the Land Trust time to get the needed contact information for the new landowner. Please remember that selling your property is not the only way that you transfer interest. It could also be gifting a property to heirs or transferring the property interest to a Trust or Limited Liability Company. Even in these circumstances, the Land Trust should be notified of the transfer of ownership so that we can keep our records up to date. If you are considering listing your property with a real estate agent, please put the Land Trust in touch with your agent to answer any questions that potential buyers might have regarding the conservation easement. If you have any questions regarding what your conservation easement requires related to property transfers, please give us a call at 208-354-8939.

Setting Boundaries

One of the most common causes of property trespass and encroachment are poorly defined property boundaries. The best method for locating your property boundaries is to have a state licensed surveyor survey your property and mark your boundaries. If you have had a survey of your property completed, or plan to, it is important that you share that survey with the Land Trust so that we too can ensure that your boundaries are being respected by adjacent landowners and the public. If you do not have a survey completed and do not have the means to do so, a good practice would be for you to meet with your boundary neighbors to walk and mark your boundaries together. Besides limiting trespass or encroachment, clearly marking your boundaries also limits the potential for an adverse possession claim. Methods of marking your property boundaries might include flagging, blaze, stakes marked with paint that is easily visible, or private property signs. Let your Land Trust land steward know during your next visit if you would like a Conservation Easement Sign shown here:

When to Give Notice

If you are unsure if an activity requires prior notification and/or approval from the Land Trust, or if you are unsure of the timeframe you need to give the Land Trust to grant approval of an activity,

Give us a call!

We are always happy to answer questions regarding your conservation easement

Planning to build or add on to a structure?
Give Us a Call!

Planning to change your land management practices?
Give Us a Call!

Planning to build a fence or road?
Give Us a Call!

Planning to sell/gift your conservation easement property?
Give Us a Call!

Need to update your contact information or preference?
Give Us a Call!

208-354-8939

TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST

Regional County Weed Contacts

Don't forget to reach out to your local county weed representative to stay up to date regarding any cost-share weed control programs that might be available:

Bonneville County:
Matt Stanger,
Weed Superintendent
208-589-9920

Clark County:
Bo Billman,
Weed Department
208-709-6706

Fremont County:
Bryce Fowler,
Weed Supervisor
208-624-7442

Jefferson County:
Mitch Whitmill,
Weed Superintendent
208-745-9221

Madison County:
Jeremy Johnson,
Weed Supervisor
208-356-3139

Teton County, ID:
Amanda Williams,
Weed Superintendent
208-354-2593

Teton County, WY:
Teton County Weed &
Pest District
307-733-8419

All About Noxious Weeds

What are noxious weeds?

In general, noxious weeds are often defined as a plant that is non-native, is a fierce competitor and pushes out native vegetation, is harmful to the environment, animals, or the public, or is simply not wanted where it is growing. According to Idaho Noxious Weed Law, Title 22 Chapter 24, "Noxious weed means any plant having the potential to cause injury to public health, crops, livestock, land or other property; and which is designated as noxious by the director."

When should I spray noxious weeds?

We all want to maximize our effort, and chemical, when spraying noxious weeds; thus, an important question is: when should I spray noxious weeds? The simple answer is, you should spray weeds when the herbicide will connect with the plant's "sink", or where the plant is focusing its energy stores.

Perennials, such as Canada thistle, leafy spurge, and yellow toadflax spread by seed and root and are best treated in the fall when they are taking their energy into their roots. Biennial weeds such as spotted knapweed, musk thistle, and houndstongue reproduce by seed and are best treated while they are actively growing in the rosette stage. Treatment should be applied before these bolt and flower. In general, younger plants are more susceptible to herbicides than mature plants because both the leaves and the roots are sinks during immature growth stages. Consult the herbicide label and your county weed department for more specific information.

Which chemical should I use?

The first step towards answering this question is to identify what the target weed is and what season you intend to treat it. Next, check the chemical labels and find an herbicide that is effective against the target weed. Commonly used herbicide labels can be read online to aid in choosing the right chemical for the job.

There are two main types of herbicides: systematic and contact herbicides. Systematic herbicides are absorbed into the plant through leaves and roots and move systematically throughout the plant. Contact herbicides must come in direct contact with the plant or soil to be effective. Contact herbicides may move slowly through the target plant, but complete coverage of the target is important for a successful treatment.

What is the environmental fate of herbicides?

Do you wonder what happens to the chemical once it is in the ground? Microbes in the soil break the herbicides into smaller, non-herbicidal parts and use those parts for energy. Herbicides are carbon-based, which allows them to be broken down by microbes into non-herbicidal organic acids that eventually become carbon dioxide. Decomposition of herbicides can be sped up by warm soils and an abundance of plant roots, which attract microbes to the area. Soil moisture and level of compaction are also important factors in determining how quickly the herbicide will be broken down. Moist and/or aerated soil helps the herbicide travel to microbes faster than in dry and/or compacted soil.

What resources are available?

If you want to speak to someone about noxious weeds, treatments, or the state of noxious weeds on your property, please contact your local Weed Department. These subject matter experts are busy tackling weeds in their respective counties and are continually searching for ways to increase effectiveness of different noxious weed control regimes.

Reducing Swan Mortalities

A significant portion of swan mortalities are the result of either powerline collisions or lead poisoning. Powerline collisions are known to occur within a variety of avian species, not just swans. The driving factor behind powerline collisions is that the birds do not see the powerlines soon enough to avoid colliding with them. Unfortunately, deceased swans or other birds found underneath powerlines are indicative of this problem. Powerline collisions occur globally and have captured the attention of various organizations who are working to reduce the potential for powerline collisions. The most common approach is to install powerline diverters on powerlines. The diverters enable birds to see the powerlines sooner and avoid colliding with them. Locally, TRLT has worked with Idaho Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fall River Electric, Lower Valley Electric, BPA, and residents to identify priority areas to install powerline diverters. Burying powerlines, although expensive, is another way TRLT and supporters have helped reduce swan mortalities.

As with many species, lead poisoning can occur when swans ingest lead ammunition or lead fishing tackle. Signs of lead poisoning in swans are drooping of the wings and head, self-isolation, lack of strength, and finally death. The protection and health of swans is yet another reason to be sure and pick up any litter that is found along the river. Another way to prevent lead poisoning for swans, and numerous other species, is to switch to non-lead ammunition or non-lead fishing tackle.

Please remember to report any collared swans that might be part of the Teton Basin Trumpeter Swan Project by calling us at 208-354-8939 or by using the Trumpeter Swan Observation Form on the Teton Regional Land Trust webpage at: https://tetonlandtrust.org/trumpeter-swan-observation-form/

If you are able to, please note the alphanumeric code and color of the collar, and any other information you can provide regarding the birds activity and location.

Source: https://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/what-we-do/swan-health.html

Staff Notes

Spring is usually a time of year that Land Trust staff are busy getting ready for the upcoming field season. This spring has been very different as we have found ourselves under the stay at home order due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So, not only have work days changed, but how we spend our free time has changed too. We thought it would be fun to share some of the entertainment we have found while passing the time.

Kimberly Holmes, Stewardship Coordinator, has been enjoying watching the birds return to her feeders and the plant life starting to bud in her neighborhood. In addition to trying new recipes, spring dog walks and bike rides, she has also been reading “For the Love of Soil” by Nicole Masters, which gives insight on some of the challenges that our producers face and potential ways to reasonably approach regenerative agriculture in our region. In addition to reading, Kimberly has found several new podcasts. One podcast, in particular, that she looks forward to every day is BirdNote, which offers bite-sized tidbits, history and facts about common birds to the US and also has great interviews with a variety of sources, from hobby birders to ornithologists.

BirdNote
Stories about birds, the environment, and more...

Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Specialist, has kept busy reading, exploring the outdoors and honing her photography skills. She has enjoyed getting to spend time with her family and animals during this time and getting some home cooked meals from her mom’s kitchen. Her latest read is “My Place Among Men” by Idaho journalist, Kris Millgate. Nicole especially enjoys the chapter following Teton Regional Land Trust founding Executive Director, Michael Whitfield’s Bald Eagle banding project.

We hope you all are happy and healthy and we look forward to seeing you all again soon!