

THE LAND STEWARD

Teton Regional Land Trust's Stewardship Newsletter

Spring 2024

Welcome to the Team!

Niah Pennington joined TRLT as a Stewardship Associate earlier this month. Niah is from Helena, Montana, where she spent her formative years playing outside with her siblings, spending summers at Hauser Lake, and camping as a family in the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. Her passion for wildlife conservation began at an early age, teaching her sisters how to catch frogs and which birds signify the coming of spring. In 2014, she graduated with a B.S. in Wildlife Biology with a minor in Climate Change Studies from the University of Montana. Afterwards, she worked seasonally as a Wildlife Technician for the USFS on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. In 2018, she moved to Jackson, WY to work for the Bridger-Teton National Forest as a Wildlife Technician. In 2022, Niah decided to pursue a Master's Degree in Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology from Colorado State University. She will graduate in December 2024 and is looking forward to using her newly obtained skills to support the conservation efforts of TRLT.

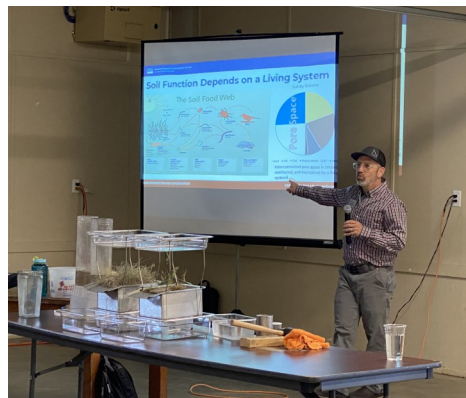


Landowner Appreciation BBQ

On April 30th, we held a Landowner Appreciation BBQ at the Fairgrounds in Driggs. We enjoyed lovely conversations, delicious food, a fascinating presentation by State Soil Scientist, Shawn Nield, useful resources from several partners, and a raffle. Representatives from NRCS, FSA, Fremont County weed department, Jefferson County weed department, University of Idaho Extension Office, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game were present to offer resources and answer questions.

We want to thank everyone who was in attendance (around 60 people!) and everyone who helped to make this event a success! An extra-big thank you goes to our Board President, Bill Rogers and his son Bryan Rogers (owner of the Smokin' Oak in Vancouver, WA) for providing delicious smoked meats and home-made sides, and also to Shawn Nield for travelling from Boise to present soil health information and to give a demonstration on the importance of maintaining living roots in the soil.

We hope that this is the first annual Landowner Appreciation BBQ, with more to come in the following years. Be on the lookout for the invite next year and, in the meantime, we look forward to seeing you during our Monitoring Visits and other events this summer.



Teton Regional Land Trust Staff

Kim Trotter,
Executive Director

Tamara Sperber,
Conservation
Director

Jeske Gräve,
Development
Director

Christine Ford,
Operations Manager

Renee Hiebert,
Conservation
Project Manager

Josh Holmes,
Conservation Project
Manager

Kimberly Holmes,
Stewardship
Director

Mandy Crane,
Events & Outreach
Coordinator

Kristy Smith,
Stewardship
Associate

Anna Naylor,
Development
Associate

Nicole Cyr,
Stewardship
Associate

Niah Pennington,
Stewardship
Associate



inspiring you to protect great places

Spring into Field Season

While it may have come in fits and starts, it looks as though we may eke out a few spring days after all. Despite the variety of seasons we have experienced over the past few weeks, the stewardship staff have been busy getting ready for field season, and are looking forward to scheduling our visit with you! In the past few months, we have welcomed two new Stewardship Associates to our team. In addition to Niah Pennington who was introduced on our cover page, we are also proud to welcome Nicole Cyr back to our team. Nicole worked for the Land Trust pre-pandemic, and came back last summer as a seasonal Stewardship Assistant. We were proud to be able to offer her a full time position as a Stewardship Associate this spring, and since coming on board, she has hit the ground running. We hope that you all will be as excited as we are to welcome Nicole and Niah to the Land Trust family.

As always, if you are planning to make any changes to your property, whether it's rebuilding a fence line, to undertaking a habitat enhancement, please take a moment to review your conservation easement agreement and determine if you need to give prior notification or receive prior approval or consent from the Land Trust prior to undertaking your project. This is a very important part of the process. A majority of conservation easement violations are done unintentionally, but have to be resolved regardless, and that resolve is often time consuming and costly for all involved; so please, before taking action, review your conservation easement and give us a call. We would love to hear from you!

Similarly, if you are planning to list your property for sale, we need to hear from you! We are happy to connect with your agent and field questions from potential buyers. Those conversations can go a long way when transferring your land. Also, your conservation easement requires written notice prior to transferring your land. Also, your conservation easement requires written notice prior to transferring your property and also requires incorporating specific reference of the conservation easement in any deed transferring interest. We can help you with this too! Please just give us a call 208-354-8939.

If you missed our first annual landowner appreciation barbecue, you missed quite a fun and informative event. We had a wonderful speaker, resources, raffle prizes, and Texas barbeque that could not be beat! We certainly hope to be able to host this event in other parts of our service area in future years, but would encourage feedback whether you attended or not in regard to the resources available, timing, location and any other helpful information you can provide. Feel free to share this feedback at your annual visit or during our annual call this year.

Lastly, we were again awarded a second round of grant funding for the Soil Health Stewards training program available through the American Farmland Trust. This allowed two of our staff to attend a weeks' long training. In 2024, we will continue to connect to technical resources in our service area in hopes of being able to connect interested landowners to resources for installing conservation practices related to improving soil health. Please share with us during your annual site visit or call what your experience has been experimenting with different soil health practices, what you would like to try, and what resources you would find most useful.

As always, give us a call at 208-354-8939 or shoot us an email at stewardship@tetonlandtrust.org to schedule your visit, discuss plans for the land, or to chat about soil health anytime! We are here for you!



Nicole Cyr,
Stewardship Associate



Kimberly Holmes,
Stewardship Director

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!

Have you been approached about a commercial lease or utility easement ?

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 weed control assistance that might be available:

Bonneville County:
Judd Elkington,
Weed Superintendent
208-529-1397

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:
Position not filled
208-354-2593

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



Weed Assistance Info by County

Bonneville County: Potential cost-share of 50%, call county Weed Superintendent for more information.

Clark County: Call the county Weed Department for more information.

Fremont County: Contact county Weed Superintendent for more information.

Jefferson County: Potential cost-share, contact county Weed Superintendent for more information.

Madison County: Call the county Weed Supervisor for more information.

Teton County, ID: All programs are suspended until the Weed Superintendent position is filled.

Teton County, WY: Select herbicides are 50% off for Teton County, WY residents. Purchase at office or through website for office pick up. Forms to apply for partial reimbursement of spraying and herbicide cost can be found on the Teton County, WY website.



Staff Picks

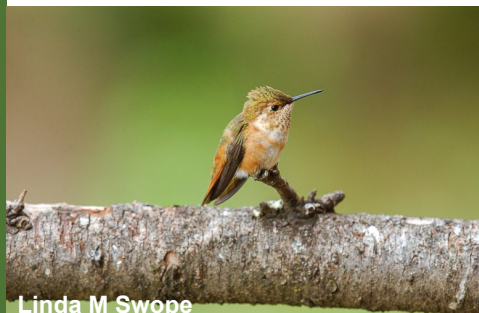
Kristy Smith, Stewardship Associate loves her digital subscription for the magazine *Barnyards & Backyards*, a publication by the University of Wyoming.



Whether you live in a city with not much greenspace beyond your container garden, or are blessed with acres of rangeland, this source provides great tips for environmentally conscious living. Natural resource experts publish articles in each issue, ranging from pasture and grazing techniques, to planting native wildflowers to provide a food source for native bee and bird species. Kristy highly recommends it!

Hummingbirds

As the daylight hours lengthen and the snow starts to recede, you might hear yardwork calling your name. Even though the chore list may be a mile long, take some time to *breathe in* the beauty of nature. Allowing yourself time to *slow down* will enable you to observe small gifts from nature. For example, while pruning a tree or bush in your yard, you might discover a hummingbird nest. Hummingbird nests can be anywhere from 10 to 90 feet high and are often made of plants, hair, feathers, moss, and lichen. Hummingbirds incorporate spider silk into the nest in order to hold the building materials in place. Due to the small size of the nests (about the size of a walnut), and the camouflage provided by moss and lichen, you won't easily spot a hummingbird nest. However, if you are lucky enough to find a hummingbird nest, please refrain from trimming it off of the branch until the hummingbirds are done using it. Hummingbirds do not reuse their nests.



Linda M Swope

While there are approximately 340 different hummingbird species, only five of these species are found in Idaho (rufous, calliope, broad-tailed, black-chinned, and Anna's hummingbirds). Therefore, if you do glimpse a hummingbird buzzing around, or spot a nest, consider yourself lucky and *appreciate the moment!*

- Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Associate

Soil Health Resources

In spring of 2023, Teton Regional Land Trusts' Stewardship Department applied for and received a grant through American Farmland Trusts' Soil Health Stewards Grant Program. The goal of this program is to increase adoption of soil health practices on permanently protected agricultural land in our service area. We have conservation easement properties in Teton, Fremont, Clark, Bonneville, Jefferson, and Madison Counties in Idaho, and the portion of Teton County, Wyoming that lies on the west slope of the Teton Mountain Range. Our Stewardship Associates attended a weeklong online training with others from the Pacific Northwest and Intermountain West in April 2023 where they brushed up on the basics and benefits of soil health, how it is practiced, challenges to adoption, and how to connect agricultural producers and landowners with soil health resources.

So what does "soil health practices" even mean? At its core, soil health is the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. In order to produce nutritious forage for livestock, commercially valuable crops, and grow food to eat, the soil for these plants must be healthy enough to provide water, nutrients, and air. What is more, different plants require different soil inputs. For example, rye is winter-hardy and can survive in nutrient-poor soils, but corn has a comparatively low tolerance for cold and requires higher organic matter content in order to survive. Even across the different counties within our service area, there are differences in soil types, climate, elevation, hard frost period, and annual precipitation that all play into a producer's ability to grow crops.

Simply put, healthy soils tend to produce more nutrient-dense produce and overall healthier plants. Ideally, producers want the soil on their land to yield high quality food and other commodities, capture, filter and store water, cycle and recycle nutrients, be drought-resilient, protect plants from stress and pathogens, store carbon, provide stability, and provide habitat for soil biodiversity. In order to achieve this, one must first understand and address all four soil health management principles (see diagram below). Disturbance to the soil surface can be minimized through the implementation of no-till or minimal till practices, leaving harvest residue in place. When the soil surface is disturbed, carbon that could otherwise be supplied to plant roots is released into the atmosphere, along with vital soil moisture. The soil surface similarly benefits from cover, again in the form of leaving crop residue following harvest or from planting cover crop. This ensures that precipitation slows down as it moves from the soil surface downward through the soil profile, increasing water availability to plants and soil organisms. Soil biodiversity can be improved by planting diverse cover crops (particularly legumes), diversifying crop species within the same agricultural fields, and integrating livestock. Different cover crops supplement the soil with varying minerals and nutrients that are vital to soil health and successful crop production. Lastly, living roots can be maintained by sowing cover crops during the off-season or interplanting during the growing season, avoiding bare ground, managing crop rotations for prolonged cover to maximize nutrient input and minimize disturbance, and increasing the amount of time spent in perennial crops.

This all sounds great, right? But there are huge unknowns about the cost of implementing these practices, local resource availability, and the role that consumer demand plays in what crops are grown. There is a notable lack of information regarding the economic benefits associated with better soil health. And with the ever-present stress of managing crops for weather, insurance, and market demand, implementing a whole new soil health regime might be too large a task to take on. That is the wonderful thing about soil health though, in that it can be tailored to each producer's needs and budget. For instance, if you are managing a 1000-acre potato farm, it is certainly not as easy as purchasing a few bags of fertilizer to amend your crop or picking out some choice cover crop species to sow between your commercial crops. You may decide to set aside an acre or two to experiment with different cover crops, or you may be ready to implement a large-scale plan to improve the health of your soil, starting with minor alterations and amendments to your current operation to better understand how your crop will respond to these changes. There are case studies regarding soil health practices implemented in similar climates to eastern Idaho that can be accessed through the Teton Regional Land Trust website that give great examples of practices that worked, some that did not, and funding and cost-share opportunities used by producers and farmers. <https://tetonlandtrust.org/conservation/landowners/soil-health-resources/>

As part of the grant obligation for the AFT's Soil Health Stewards Program, the Land Trust's Stewardship Department has developed an Action Plan to strategize how our organization can better promote soil health practices on both protected land, and land that we may play a part in protecting in the future. We created organizational touchpoints where engagement and outreach around soil health practices are possible, such as staff and board trainings, landowner communications, and networking opportunities, and have built off these to define proposed actions and describe tasks to be completed for that action. The Stewardship Department also tracked how many landowners and farmers we engaged in soil health discussions over the 2023 field season. Going forward, we plan to use this data to inform where more information and support is needed by the agricultural community and to help identify how the Land Trust can meet those needs, by connecting landowners to federal and state partners, as well as other non-governmental organizations with soil health initiatives.—Kristy Smith, Stewardship Associate

