

THE LAND STEWARD

Teton Regional Land Trust's Stewardship Newsletter

Fall 2025

Farewell, Kimberly

Please join us in saying goodbye to Kimberly Holmes, Stewardship Director and TRLT family member for almost a decade. She began to transition out of her role in mid-August to focus on her health during her prolonged battle with ovarian cancer. Kimberly is dearly missed by all who have had the privilege of working with her.

Kimberly wrote, "This decision was one of the hardest I've had to make along this journey. I'm not just walking away from a job, but a huge part of my life, a place that holds a big space in my heart, and has brought me close to so many amazing people, connected deeply by our shared values and a love of this land in eastern Idaho, as well as the friendships I'll cherish well past my last day at TRLT."

Kimberly and her husband, Josh, also a former employee at TRLT, plan to stay in Driggs and be involved with the organization as much as possible. She plans to reenter the field of conservation once she is fully rested and restored to health. She is very proud of her stewardship team and knows that they are more than capable of rising to the occasion in her absence. Kimberly explained that working for TRLT "has been one of the most rewarding life experiences I could hope for. I've been able to work alongside, or come up behind some of the most devoted, passionate, and knowledgeable conservationists in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, working together to strategically protect critical acres of prime farmland, family ranches, and wildlife habitat through a period of ever-increasing development pressure. The Land Trust's work is more important now than ever."



Welcome, Amanda

Originally from Virginia's northern Shenandoah Valley, Amanda grew up playing outside and cultivating an early fascination with natural resources. She earned a BS in Environmental Science from the University of Virginia with a specialization in Biological and Environmental Conservation. After college, she had the pleasure of working in beautiful places around the country, spending time in the deserts of Arizona and California and the forests of Montana before returning to Virginia. Her career has included a blend of sustainable agriculture, conservation, and land use management. From seasons with the forest and park service, to years working in agricultural research and departments of agriculture, Amanda has experience with balancing the competing demands of agriculture, outdoor recreation, and environmental sustainability. Prior to embarking on the role of Stewardship Director, she gained leadership experience as the Field Operations Manager for the Virginia Department of Agriculture, where she was responsible for projects and staff across the entire state, and, most recently, as a supervisor for the USDA in Idaho.

In 2024, Amanda relocated to Idaho Falls and has since migrated over to Jackson. During the warmer months, she is a part-time wildlife guide in the Tetons. She derives enjoyment from sharing the beauty of this slice of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem with visitors from all over the world while educating them about environmental stewardship. In her free time, Amanda loves to be outside and enjoys hiking, skiing, climbing, viewing wildlife, mushroom hunting, paddleboarding, and the occasional hot spring. She is a budding angler, curious about birding, and is making baby steps toward back-country skiing. When indoors, she enjoys reading and sewing.

Amanda is excited to join the TRLT team and honored for the opportunity to help conserve the landscapes of this wildly beautiful and vital region.



Teton Regional Land Trust Staff

Kim Trotter,
Executive Director

Tamara Sperber,
Conservation
Director

Renee Hiebert,
Conservation
Project Manager

Amanda Bly,
Stewardship
Director

**Katie Gabel-
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Finance & Operations
Manager

Lydia Hanson,
Staff Attorney/
Conservation Project
Manager

Mandy Crane,
Events & Outreach
Coordinator

Kristy Smith,
Stewardship
Associate

Nicole Cyr,
Stewardship
Associate

Niah Pennington,
Stewardship
Associate

Anna Naylor,
Engagement
Coordinator



inspiring you to protect great places

Sandhill Crane Monitoring

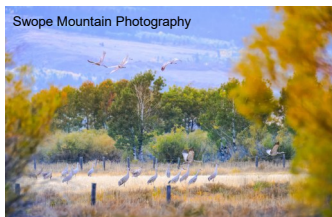
As part of an ongoing survey effort, TRLT monitored sandhill cranes with the help of Idaho Master Naturalists and conservation volunteers again this September. Monitoring is an important part of a broader conservation initiative aimed at protecting critical pre-migration staging habitat for sandhill cranes in Teton Valley.

Since 2003, the Land Trust has worked to understand the behavior and habitat needs of cranes during their pre-migration staging period, when they gather in Teton Valley to prepare for their long journey to wintering grounds in the southern U.S. and Mexico. With over 90,000 observations made, we've learned that harvested grain fields near secure wetland roost sites provide essential resources for cranes to build energy reserves and ensure a safe passage south.

Teton Valley is one of the most important pre-migration staging areas for the Rocky Mountain Population of sandhill cranes due to its wetland proximity to grain fields. To maintain and enhance these habitats, the Land Trust, through its Greater Yellowstone Sandhill Crane Initiative, works with local farmers and landowners to establish crane food plots and protect roosting habitats. By managing grain fields and wetlands in a strategic manner, the initiative ensures that cranes have access to both food and secure roosting sites as they prepare for their migratory journey.

This vital monitoring effort would not be possible without the dedication of volunteers and partners. During a survey in 2024, the US Fish and Wildlife Service recorded a total of 1,167 cranes in Teton Valley. Our volunteer counts closely matched this aerial count, highlighting the value of citizen science and commitment of our volunteers. This fall, the peak count by volunteers and staff was just over 1,100 cranes. Over 9 days of crane monitoring, volunteers logged a total of 95 hours. As we continue to gather data on sandhill crane populations and habitat usage, this program plays an important role in conserving this spectacular species and ensuring future generations can witness their annual migration spectacle in Teton Valley.

-Niah Pennington, Stewardship Associate

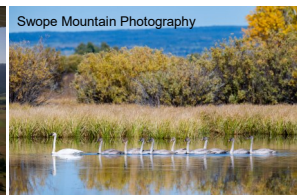


Trumpeter Swan Monitoring & Release

Over the summer, TRLT partnered with LightHawk, a nonprofit conservation organization based in Colorado, to monitor trumpeter swans in Teton Basin. Historically, TRLT staff and volunteers have conducted on-the-ground monitoring, but the observation rate has been relatively low. The main challenges with on-the-ground monitoring are access to private property, volunteer availability/scheduling, and time commitment. However, the access to a volunteer pilot, who was experienced in wildlife surveys, enabled us to efficiently and effectively perform aerial monitoring of a large stretch of Teton Basin.

This fall, TRLT completed the 12th trumpeter swan release in Teton Basin since the Teton Basin Trumpeter Swan Restoration Project began in 2013. To date, 64 trumpeter swans have been released through this project. Recent observations include a swan released in 2023 that is living in the Harriman State Park area and a swan from the 2024 cohort, which overwintered in Teton Basin, and is now acting as a "foster parent" for the nine trumpeter swan cygnets that were released this year. If you see a collared trumpeter swan, please let us know! You can report observations to Nicole Cyr via email at nicole@tetonlandtrust.org or phone at 208-354-8939 ext. 11. We are grateful for all of our partners and supporters who make this project possible!

-Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Associate



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 contact preference?
Give Us a Call!

Have you been approached about a commercial lease or utility easement?
Give Us a Call!

208-354-8939



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
208-881-1706

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:

Cameron Hieronymus
208-821-0984

Teton County, WY:

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



Announcement Regarding Potential Buyer Inquiries

TRLT would like to inform you about a change of policy that will impact inquiries from potential buyers. After consultation with legal counsel, TRLT will no longer be answering hypothetical questions from potential property buyers regarding easement interpretation, particularly questions about potential future uses of the property. This does not include general inquiries regarding what an easement is, how it impacts the property, the relationship with TRLT, etc. This new policy does not apply to those general inquiries.

Without a formal, live request from a current landowner, TRLT is speculating without full information or analysis. We appreciate that potential landowners want to understand how the easement works and take the obligations of the easement seriously. However, we now ask that potential buyers work with the current landowner and their own legal counsel, as well as examine the plain language of the easement, to determine if their specific pondered actions are appropriate or if they are comfortable with the constraints of the easement. TRLT's legal obligation is to the current landowner and so we are confining communications about the particular activities on properties to current landowners.

Should landowners wish to facilitate a discussion with a potential buyer, specific inquiries can come through the current landowner. We are also happy to provide a copy of the easement as it is public record or speak with them generally about conservation easements and working with TRLT.

-Lydia Hanson, Staff Attorney/ Conservation Project Manager

Lost Rivers Grazing Academy

Thanks to an American Farmland Trust Soil Health Stewards grant, this September, TRLT was able to provide a scholarship to the Lost Rivers Grazing Academy in Marsing, Idaho. The recipient of the scholarship, Russell Clark, owns and operates Roots and Grow Farm LLC in Fremont County, Idaho. Russell raises grass-fed beef cattle on approximately 50 acres of rotationally grazed pasture and 40 acres of irrigated alfalfa. Prior to attending the Lost Rivers Grazing Academy (LRGA), Russell's approach was rooted in regenerative principles such as no-till, no chemical inputs, and an emphasis on soil health, biodiversity, and sustainability. Through attending LRGA, Russell hoped to strengthen his grazing system, maximize pasture productivity, and improve water and labor efficiency across his operation. Regarding LRGA Russell wrote, "The instructors framed Management-intensive Grazing (MiG) as an umbrella term for a family of approaches (cell grazing, short-duration/high-intensity grazing, AMP, mob grazing, UHSD, regenerative grazing, Voisin/Rational grazing, etc.) and emphasized that MiG is proven both anecdotally and empirically; it's simply under-used today, but by no means new, instead just seemingly forgot and fallen out of current favor. However, and pun intended, a grass-roots movement is emerging as more people recognize the importance and impact of holistic agricultural practices and value livestock can have when managed properly!" Russell also reported that stock density is the single most important factor to keep in mind. According to Russell, "using higher stock density for short periods and then giving pastures adequate rest optimizes photosynthetic efficiency, soil biology, water infiltration, soil temperature, and overall resilience. The "Take half, leave half" (or other target residuals based on context) is a practical rule of thumb to keep plants in their most productive growth phase." Going forward, Russell wrote "by combining higher stock density moves with better rest, improved water/fence infrastructure, and careful economic planning, I expect to increase my pastures' carrying capacity, extend the grazing season, reduce winter feed costs, improve soil and water outcomes, and increase net income while building long-term resilience." We wish Russell the best of luck in his endeavors. We would love to discuss *your* pasture management goals during a future site visit.

-Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Associate



Planning Changes to Your Property?

If you are planning to make changes to your property in the coming year, please keep your Conservation Easement document and our Stewardship staff in mind. As a reminder, the Conservation Easement is legally binding and determines what actions are permitted, and what actions are prohibited, on the property. The Conservation Easement (CE) also dictates which actions need prior approval from the Land Trust. As a general starting point, please review your Conservation Easement (Permitted and Prohibited Uses sections) and provide the information relevant to your specific request and your Conservation Easement to our Stewardship Team. If you are unsure if an action is permitted or prohibited by your Conservation Easement, please reach out to us. As an example, if you want to construct a structure on the property, send us the following information: type and purpose of structure, proposed location, restrictions within your CE pertaining to the size or height of structures, the size and height of your proposed structure, if utilities will be installed to the new structure, if a road will be installed, and any other pertinent details. **Providing all of the relevant information will help stewardship staff process your request!**

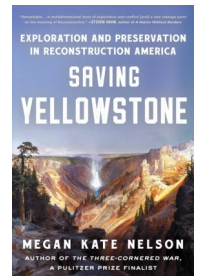
PLAN AHEAD! TRLT staff are committed to reviewing landowner requests as promptly as possible. However, we are often managing multiple landowner requests at any given time. To help ensure your proposal is reviewed on schedule, we strongly encourage you to plan ahead. Please understand that requests submitted without sufficient notice will follow our standard review timeline and will not be expedited.



Saving Yellowstone: Exploration and Preservation in Reconstruction America

Megan Kate Nelson

The year is 1871. The United States is still reeling from the Civil War. A team of scientists and explorers enter Yellowstone Basin, one of the last unmapped places in the country. One year later, it is made the world's first national park. This nonfiction book tells the stories of key players in the tumultuous creation of the beloved Yellowstone National Park: Ferdinand Hayden, the geologist-explorer who led the first scientists and white folks into the area; Sitting Bull, the Lakota leader who advocated for his peoples' right to their land; and Jay Cooke, a railroad tycoon looking to secure his reputation. It also discusses how the Grant administration and Congress were exploring federal reach and how national parks were debated on a national level. This book is one of science and adventure but also explores the Indigenous resistance to encroachment on their lands and nineteenth-century technology. It makes the reader think about the lasting legacies of these choices on the lives of Americans today.



Review by Lydia Hanson

Fence Removal Along Teton River

On September 10th of this year, Teton Regional Land Trust teamed up with Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation plus 19 amazing volunteers to remove 0.8 miles of fence in Teton Basin, along the Teton River, near Nickerson Bridge. Over 1,100 pounds of barbed wire was removed from approximately 200 acres of private land, which was conserved in partnership with Teton Regional Land Trust. By removing the barbed wire, the wires no longer hinder wildlife movement in the Teton River riparian corridor for big game species such as mule deer, elk, and moose. Removing un-needed wires from this area also benefits waterfowl, such as ducks and trumpeter swans.

These two privately conserved properties boast riparian habitats consisting of emergent wetlands and willow communities, which support a diverse array of songbirds and wading birds, such as greater sandhill cranes, many species of waterfowl, big game species, and a host of other wildlife. Thank you to Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation and our volunteers for completing such important work.

-Kristy Smith, Stewardship Associate

