



2023-24 TETON COUNTY

Human-Wildlife Coexistence Report





Contributions

Thank you to the following individuals for their time and contributions throughout our coexistence work: Tanya Anderson, Jackie Arnal, Jason Baldes, Patti Baldes, Matt Bambach, Bryan Bedrosian, Mike Boyce, Carson Butler, Susan Clark, Karyn Chin, Chris Colligan, Kristin Combs, Alyson Courtemanche, Mark Daluge, Sarah Dewey, Meta Dittmer, Ashley Egan, Sawyer Finley, Steffan Freeman, Drew Gath, Morgan Graham, Olivia Graykowski, Kristin Hayes, William Hutt, Steve Kilpatrick, Kyle Kissock, Wyatt Klipa, Anna Knaeble, Erik Kramer, Scott Kosiba, Arlen Lancaster, David Lee, Emma Leither, Max Ludington, Sue Lurie, Fain McGough, Holly McKinney, Linda Merigliano, Erin Monroe, Chris Neubecker, Alex Norton, Tim O'Donoghue, Heather Overholser, Raena Parsons, Taylor Phillips, Kalisa Poinsett, Luther Propst, Sarah Pruden, Melissa Salafia, Jonathan Schechter, Skye Schell, Jenalee Schupman, Justin Schwabedissen, Renee Seidler, Maria Sengle, Katie Smits, Leslie Steen, Ian Tator, Kevin Taylor, Dan Thompson, Kelly Thompson, Madison Webb, Dawn Webster, Ben Williamson, Kate Wilmot, Cat Wood and Nate Yorgason.

Cover Artwork

The cover art is a piece from Larry Moore's series *Intrusion*. Thought provoking and visually captivating, the series seeks to spur the viewer to ponder the question 'Who is intruding on whom?' As human population grows and development expands, many species are pushed to the fringes or even forced to coexist within human landscapes. Coexistence is, to many, still a novel a concept. Larry's images encourage exploration and understanding of human wildlife relationships, or lack thereof. Visit LarryMooreStudios.com or @Larry_Moore_Studios for more information.

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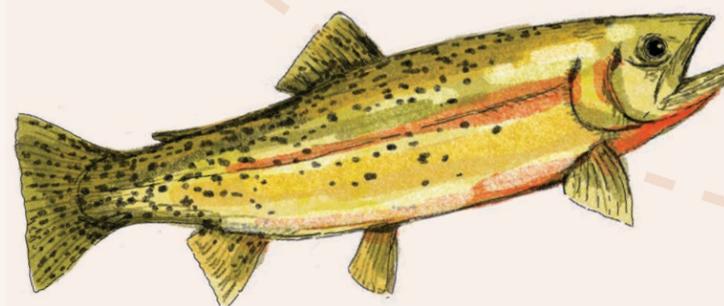
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Summer Idyll // Madison Webb

Acknowledgments

Humans and wildlife have coexisted on the land currently known as Teton County, and throughout the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, for at least the last 10,000 years. Indigenous people are the original and ongoing leaders in human-wildlife coexistence. The Indigenous people of this land, including but not limited to the present-day Eastern Shoshone, Northern Arapaho, and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have lived alongside the bison, sagebrush, water, air, and other non-human relatives for generations. The metrics and dialogue presented in this report are intended to be complementary and deferential to the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of the many Indigenous people and cultures with connections to this land.



Introduction

Human-wildlife coexistence is at the core of the ecosystem, economy, and social dynamics of Teton County, Wyoming. To make informed decisions concerning human-wildlife coexistence, it is important to establish metrics to track our challenges, successes, and opportunities over time. Although many organizations collect data on singular aspects of human-wildlife coexistence, our community lacks a centralized resource to holistically evaluate community-level coexistence. With over 45 years of experience protecting the wildlife, wild places, and community character of the Valley, the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance is appropriately positioned to fill this gap.

This second edition of the Teton County Wildlife Coexistence Monitoring Report compiles 20 metrics of human-wildlife coexistence. Metrics were determined through engagement of 40+ stakeholders, including land-mangers, elected officials, conservation professionals, scientists, and long-time residents, among others. Chapter 1 presents metrics related to **Land Use**, including *Habitat Protection and Threats* and *Landscape Permeability*. Chapter 2 focuses on **Human-Wildlife Interactions** from *Bear Conflict*, *Wildlife Feeding*, and *Recreation*. Finally, Chapter 3 highlights the **Human Dimensions of Coexistence**, evaluating *Strategies*, *Monitoring*, and *Funding*. This report is intended to inform and advance **Ecosystem Stewardship**, our community's #1 common value. The 20 metrics presented here represent a starting point for monitoring and stewarding the incredible natural capital of this area. By establishing this baseline, future monitoring, research, dialogue and action can be targeted toward root challenges, evolving opportunities, and a united community vision of wildlife-human coexistence in Teton County.

This Is A Time For New Heroes To Step Up

WORDS FROM TODD WILKINSON

It was late summer in 1986 and I literally had been on the ground only a matter of hours in Jackson Hole when I was sent on my first local assignment, one that would shape my perspective deeply about not only this community, but how its heart and soul have been shaped by conservation.

For a few years, I had been a violent crime reporter in Chicago, working for a legendary outfit called the City News Bureau. I was anxious to get back out West, to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, where I had worked as a cook during breaks from college.

On one impactful day long ago, I met with Sandy Shuptrine, a young mom and citizen who was fighting off a possible sanitary landfill proposed near her neighborhood up Game Creek south of Jackson. A few years later, she would successfully run and serve as a Teton County Commissioner.

Not long afterward on that same day, I joined a young guy my age named Len Carlman who soon would take the helm of the then Jackson Hole Alliance For Responsible Planning. We piled into a car along with Teton County Commissioner Bob Lalonde, a military veteran and classic fiscally conservative Republican.

Together, we headed south, through the Hoback and Bondurant to the Upper Green and then south some more through the Red Desert to Rock Springs where we met with Rick Robitaille, an energy industry lobbyist working for the Petroleum Association of Wyoming. Our conversations were riveting, our strolls through a tangle of differing gas fields enlightening

The purpose was a fact-finding mission. I was there as a journalist assigned to dig deep into the potential threat that oil and gas drilling might pose to the environmental health of the Cache Creek drainage in the Gros Ventre Range just east of the town of Jackson. In particular, there were concerns that the exploratory gas wells being proposed, and potential full-field development if commercial quantities were found, could result in

dangerous levels of hydrogen sulfide—sour gas—being released into the air.

Sour gas is heavier than air and accumulates in low-lying areas. Were it ever to be released by energy development, especially during winters when there are temperature inversions, there were concerns it could be perilous to townfolk in Jackson.

In addition, of course, energy development is never a quaint endeavor and Cache Creek was then, and still is, beloved by the community as a ready place of escape for people who want to recreate in the mountains and as a home for a variety of wildlife species.

Ultimately, the discussion we had on that road trip helped convince Teton County Commissioner Lalonde that concerns being raised by Carlman, the Alliance Board and a strong outpouring of citizens who supported the Alliance, were justified. No gas drilling would occur, and that decision came on the heels of another local conservationist, Phil Hocker with the Sierra Club, who was working then to halt proposed energy development at several other locations rimming Jackson Hole. Notably, Phil's wife, Jean, was then leading the Jackson Hole Land Trust. She would go on to be a national leader with land trusts and Phil founded the Mineral Policy Center.

“ Jackson Hole has amassed a remarkable record of incubating a titanic group of big picture conservation thinkers whose influence extends around the world.

What I remember, looking back now, nearly 40 years later, was how effective the Alliance had been in raising public awareness about issues of such vital importance to the character of this community and the larger valley. Not only was it an organization that worked assiduously on public land issues, but it operated dually on another

front, private lands. In those years the Alliance played a key role in scrutinizing local land use planning decisions and its tenacity helped influence ongoing iterations of the Teton County Commission to assemble what has become a comprehensive plan widely referenced across the American West.

It's guiding principle is to “preserve and protect the area's unparalleled natural ecosystem while meeting our community's human needs in an environmentally responsible manner that celebrates this significant and unique place on our shared planet.” Read that again. It establishes the health of the ecosystem as the foundation for pondering how to best serve human needs.

Nowhere else in the rural West are there more visionary words written into a county plan that foremost recognizes what the famous Jackson Hole naturalist Olaus J. Murie called its special “spirit of place.” Just as the ensuing years have brought deeper reflection and mounting human pressures on Jackson Hole—which I will forever regard as my first true home in the West—so too has thinking evolved. We know far more about the needs of wildlife than in the 1980s. We know how important wildlife is to having a sustainable economy. And we've witnessed place after place in the West lose it's wildlife and identity.

The Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning, which started as an ad hoc organization, morphed into a powerhouse whose work was also emulated by groups that sprang up in other communities. Unfortunately, most of the major national and regional environmental organizations have refrained from entering into the difficult realm of scrutinizing sprawl and yet many prominent conservation biologists, I know, say it is the major threat, more than climate change, to Greater Yellowstone's ecological wellbeing.

Eventually, the Alliance became the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance and over the years I've been privileged to know so many good passionate people who worked for it, served on its board or rallied behind its pleas for support when needed. It's almost unbelievable the number of large issues it's taken on and innumerable smaller ones.

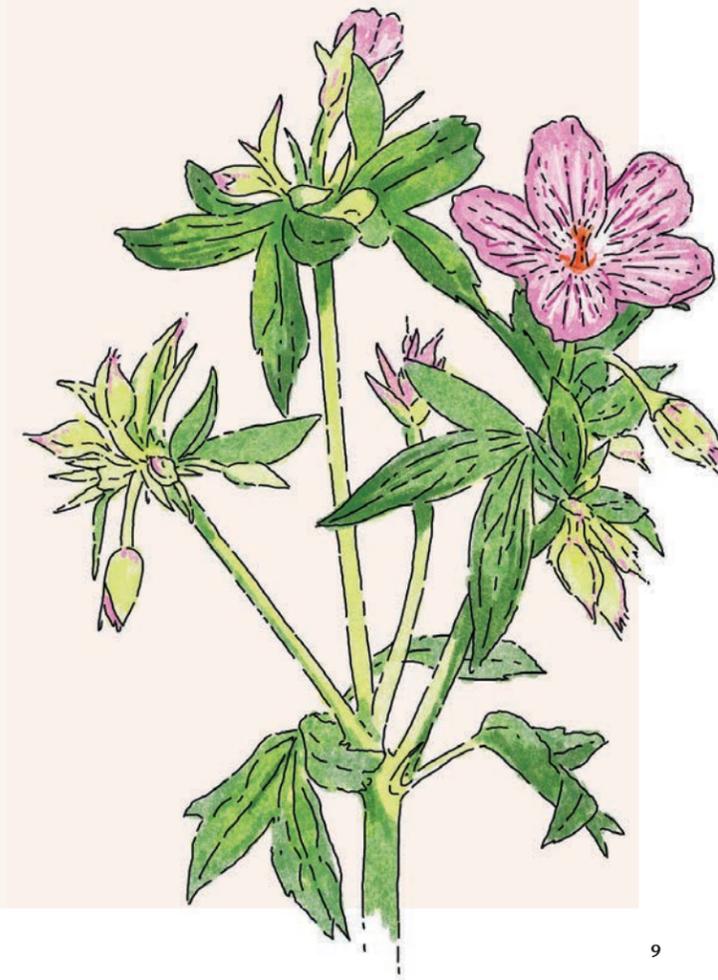
In hindsight, this humble journalist can say with conviction that many of the attributes most beloved about Jackson Hole would not exist, or at least be pale reflections of what they are now, if a group of concerned

citizens, united by the Alliance, did not inconvenience themselves, risk their popularity and step forward to put the best interest of the community ahead of self-interest. The Alliance served as an emblem of what I, as a conservation journalist, grew to expect a grassroots organization to be. What some readers here may not realize is how incredibly difficult it can be to work on both public and private land issues simultaneously—to do it well, to maintain one's focus and keep it going over a long period of time.

As my friend, the late legendary American conservationist David Brower once said, “All of our victories are temporary, and all of our defeats are permanent.”

“ Jackson Hole, like it or not, is today at a perilous crossroad, one at which it is highly vulnerable to a convergence of forces that could leave it permanently impaired

Continued on pg. 11





Frosted Tips // Madison Webb

and down a path from which it can never go back. As in many corners of Greater Yellowstone, growth issues related to sprawl are out of control.

While it's true that Teton County, Wyoming is 97 percent public land and three percent private, it's what happens on a small ratio of undeveloped private ground that will determine if this astoundingly remarkable place on Earth slouches toward becoming just like any other mountain town in Colorado, or chooses instead a different destiny.

My 40 years of being an investigative journalist have given me insight about a couple of things:

First: free market forces and weak planning and zoning have never come close to saving a valley as precious and fragile as this one. Those who argue for loosening regulations, claiming they will solve or go a long way to fix the affordable housing crisis are advancing a myth that holds little truth. Moreover, what they propose will result in more gridlock, more water quality challenges, and wreak havoc on what remains of Jackson Hole's signature wonder—its wildlife. By and large, it has been free market forces, capitalizing on limited land, that have exacerbated the social tensions. The claim that Jackson Hole can develop its way to a better future has no data to back it up.

Secondly, sprawl makes every problem worse. The need to raise taxes to support rising costs of services imposes a disproportionate burden on working class families. It is indeed a tragedy that so many young people who grew up in or near Jackson Hole have lost all hope of ever being able to afford to live here. That's how one destroys community heritage, tradition and sense of place. An existential question staring this community in the face revolves around whether it wants to be only a luxury retreat for outsiders and short-term thinking or a place of deeper meaning?

Thirdly, while the nature of the wicked problem above suggests that it will never be fixed, there is a way forward for which its world-class wildlife and local people could still have a chance to be here. That path involves having honest adult discussions about taxes and making serious investments in things that live up to the essence of the virtuous language in the Comprehensive Plan. This involves the state legislature creating a funding mechanism for a robust implementation of transfers of development rights. The most obvious funding tool—hold your breath—could be a real estate transfer tax.

Many places in the country have this. Call it a resource depletion tax imposed upon those in the best position to pay it. At present, only the ultra wealthy can afford to buy property (often vacation homes) in Jackson or obtain undeveloped tracts and put trophy homes on them. That latter pattern does two things: it displaces wildlife and harms populations of species that are beloved by the community and if kept healthy, is an economic engine; and it further widens the gap between rich and service class.

A modest one percent tax on billions of dollars of real estate sales could generate a strategic fund that could be applied to safeguarding the most crucial wildlife habitat, vital for migration corridors and seasonal terrain, that remains. It could also help town and county governments underwrite the costs of apartments for essential professionals and service workers so vital to the fabric of the community. Some of it could be earmarked to nearby communities having to grapple with the spillover effects of Jackson's Hole's housing conundrum.

Real communities have discussions that are both difficult and honest, that aren't based upon shibboleths. Real communities also know what makes them special and here that is the nature of place. Unless Jackson Hole has such conversations soon, and unless the community rallies again around organizations like the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance which grasps better than most groups the connection between public and private land, it's not a matter of if the one-of-a-kind character of Jackson Hole goes away forever, but how fast.

Four decades ago, I met a remarkable group of people, whose ideologies spanned both sides of the ideological and political aisle yet they came together to fight off a threat which loomed on the edge of their town. They put community before a blind adherence to rational self-interest.

We are living today in landscapes previous generations of Jackson Hole passed along to us protected. They made tough decisions that made us the beneficiaries.

Are we up to taking on the same kind of challenge? Or are we content to be the first generation that allowed the permanent de-wilding of southern Jackson Hole, all because we refused to rally when we heard our name called?



CHAPTER 1

Metrics Of Land Use

The physical landscape forms the foundation of human-wildlife coexistence in Teton County. For humans and wildlife alike, the land is a source of many essential needs, including shelter, food, water, open space, and corridors for movement. Just as humans need shelter to live in, moose need suitable habitat to survive the winter. Mule deer can migrate hundreds of miles from season to season, but increasingly need to navigate barriers such as fences and roads along the way. The respective relationships humans and wildlife have with the land influence our relationships with each other. That is, the land-use decisions that Teton County and the state of Wyoming make will underlie the future health of our iconic wildlife.

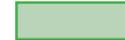
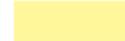
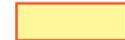
movement corridors while promoting permeability and human safety on our roads and the maintenance of our working lands? In this chapter, we present metrics of human-wildlife coexistence related to land use, organized into subsections of **Habitat Protection and Threats** and **Landscape Permeability**.

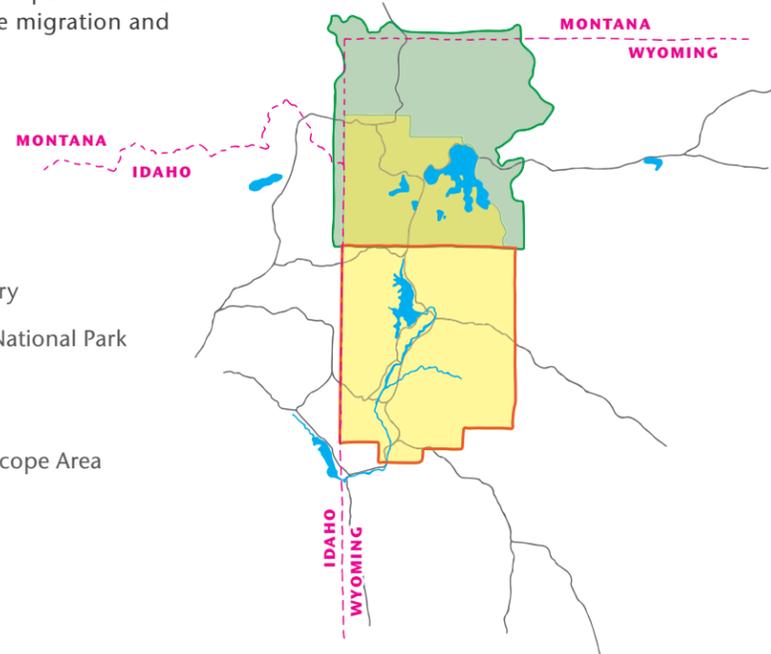
Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of this report consists of the boundaries of Teton County, including data regarding both public and private lands, but excluding the section of Teton County that overlaps with Yellowstone National Park. Excluding Yellowstone, this scope consists of approximately 1.8 million acres (730,000 hectares).

Are we protecting wildlife habitat and connectivity while responsibly managing human impacts on the landscape? Are we conserving wildlife migration and

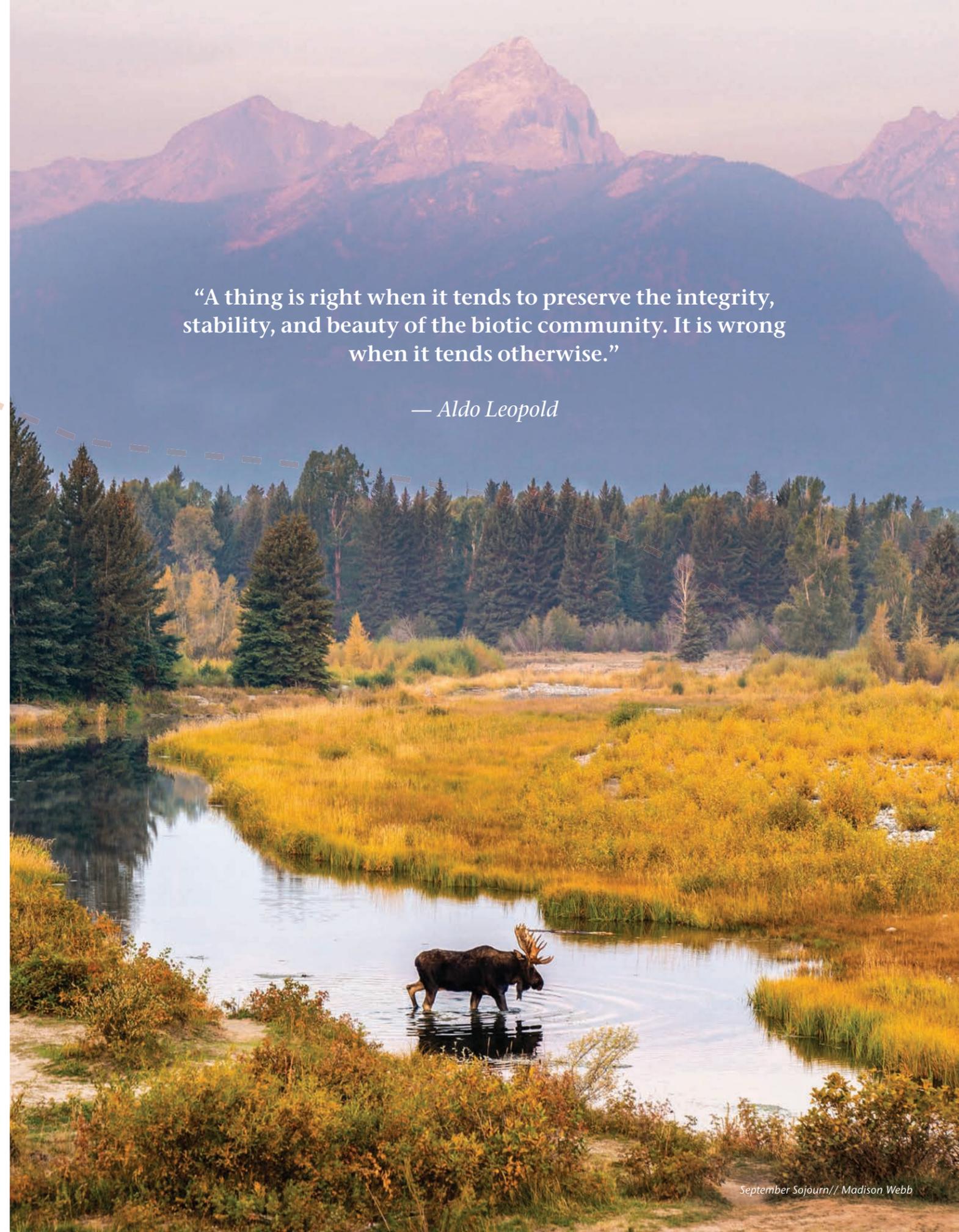
LEGEND

-  — State boundary
-  — Yellowstone National Park
-  — Teton County
-  — Geographic Scope Area



“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

— Aldo Leopold





Crossing Paths // Madison Webb

METRICS OF LAND USE

Habitat Protection & Threats

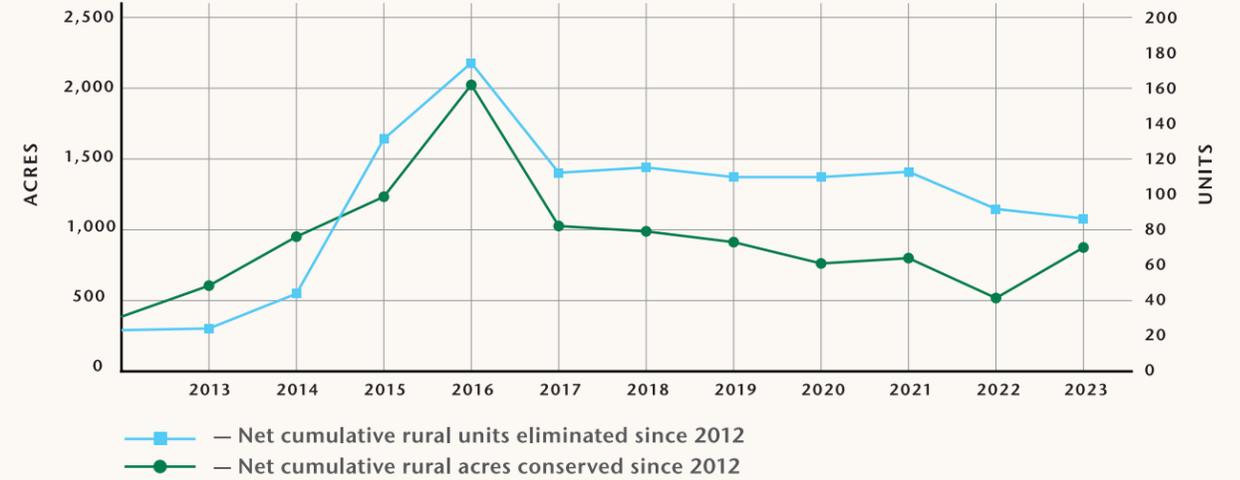
Human land-use practices have the potential to protect or threaten critical wildlife habitat. **Conservation Easements** and **Winter Wildlife Closures** are two land-use tools that protect habitat and open space for wildlife when and where they need it most. Development and rural sprawl pose significant threats to habitat. We can monitor these trends

by comparing **Conservation vs. Subdivision of Rural Areas** and monitoring the **Location of Actual Growth**, encouraging density in complete neighborhoods instead of sprawl into available habitat. As human activity spreads, **Habitat Affected by Invasive Species** can be of lower quality, which can be mitigated through the **Treatment of Invasive Species**.

Conservation Vs. Subdivision Of Rural Open Spaces

89 RURAL UNITS ELIMINATED

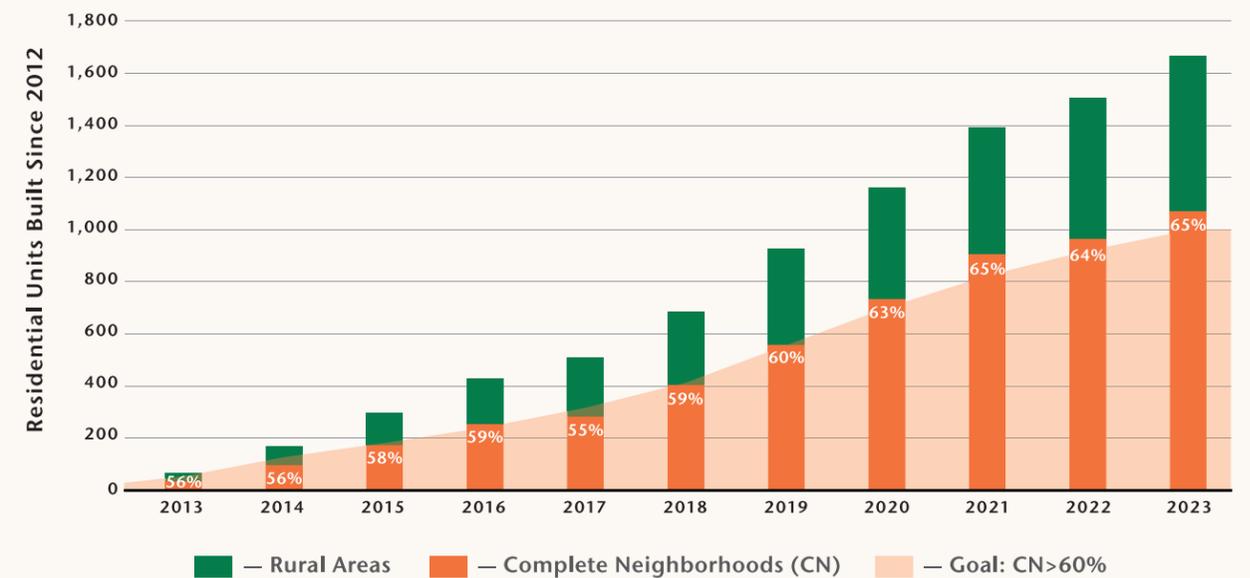
830 RURAL ACRES CONSERVED



Source: Jackson / Teton County 2024 Annual Indicator Report

Location Of Actual Growth

64% GROWTH IN COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS since 2012.

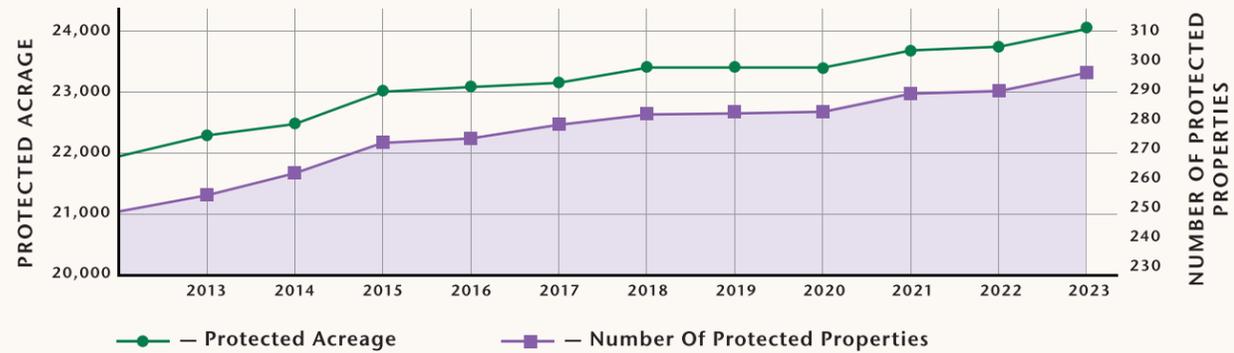


At least 60% growth in complete Neighborhoods indicates protection of natural and scenic resources in Rural Areas and increased ability to provide service to new units.

Source: Jackson / Teton County 2024 Annual Indicator Report

Private Lands Protected Through Conservation Properties

5 NEW CONSERVATION PROPERTIES totaling **366.5** ACRES



Source: Teton County Planning Dept., Jackson Hole Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Teton County Scenic Preserve Land Trust, Wyoming Game & Fish Dept.

Public Lands Protected Through Winter Wildlife Closures

170,047 ACRES of public land protected through winter wildlife closures (12% of 1,391,526 total acres of public land).

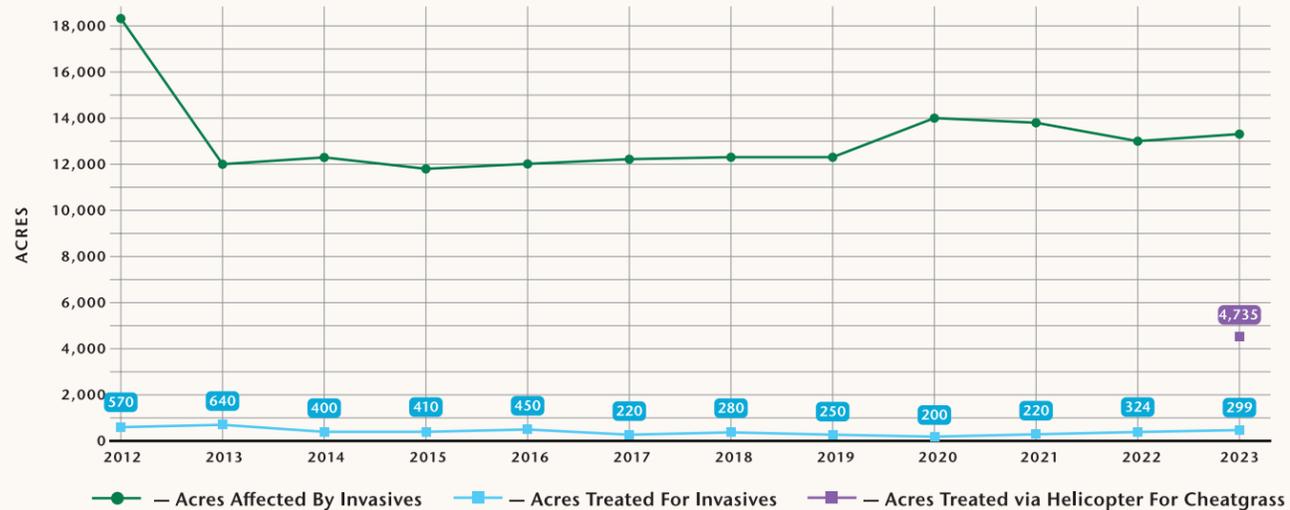
*An additional **762,579 ACRES** of public land (55% of 1,391,526 total acres of public land) are managed as Wilderness and are permanently closed to motorized use, both in the winter and summer.

Source: Teton Conservation District

Habitat Affected By & Treated For Invasive Species

13,336 TOTAL ACRES of public lands affected by invasive species

299.61 ACRES of weeds treated from the ground
4,735 ACRES of Cheatgrass treated via helicopter



Source: Teton County Weed and Pest

METRICS OF LAND USE

Landscape Permeability

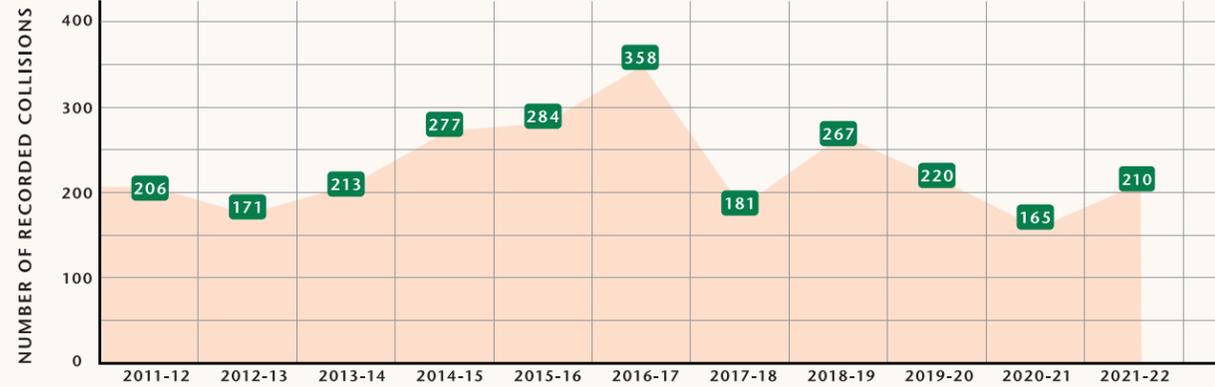
Most wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem do not stay in one place; they follow instinctual patterns of migration and movement. However, human modifications, including roads and fences, can make the landscape less permeable, restricting wildlife movements, cutting them off from habitat and other populations, and creating opportunities for conflict. **Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions** can be lethal and costly

for wildlife and humans alike, and they are one of the most well-established coexistence metrics in Teton County today. We can mitigate these tragic occurrences by making **Progress on Wildlife Crossings**. Likewise, through **Fencing Removal and Improvement**, we can reduce the number of wildlife that get caught in or deterred by non-wildlife-friendly fencing.



Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions

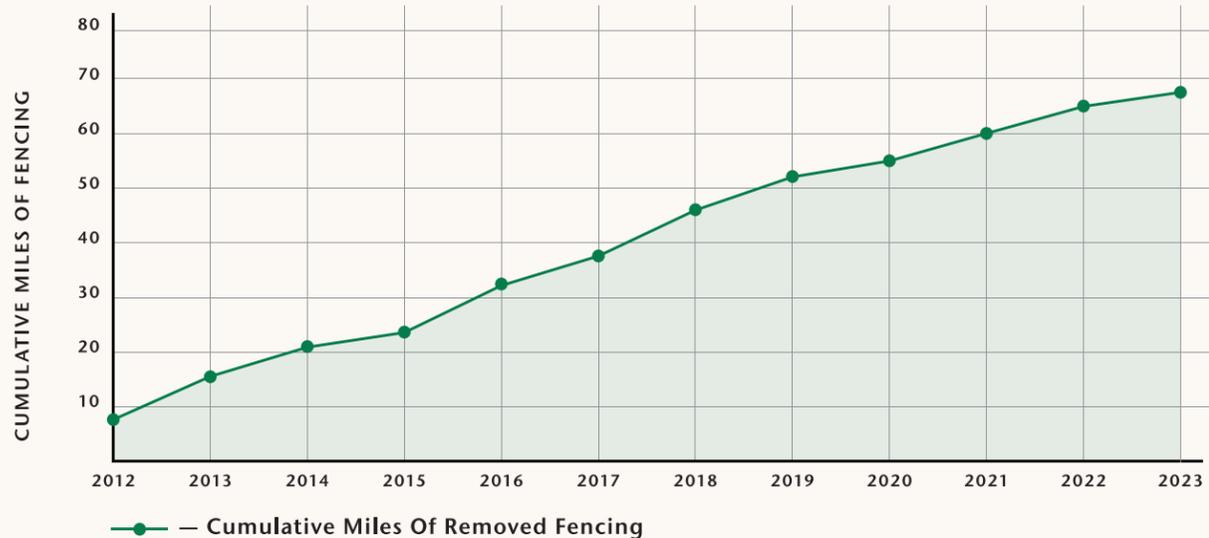
210 WILDLIFE-VEHICLE COLLISIONS in 2022 (An increase of 45 collisions from 2021)



Source: Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation

Fencing Removal & Improvement

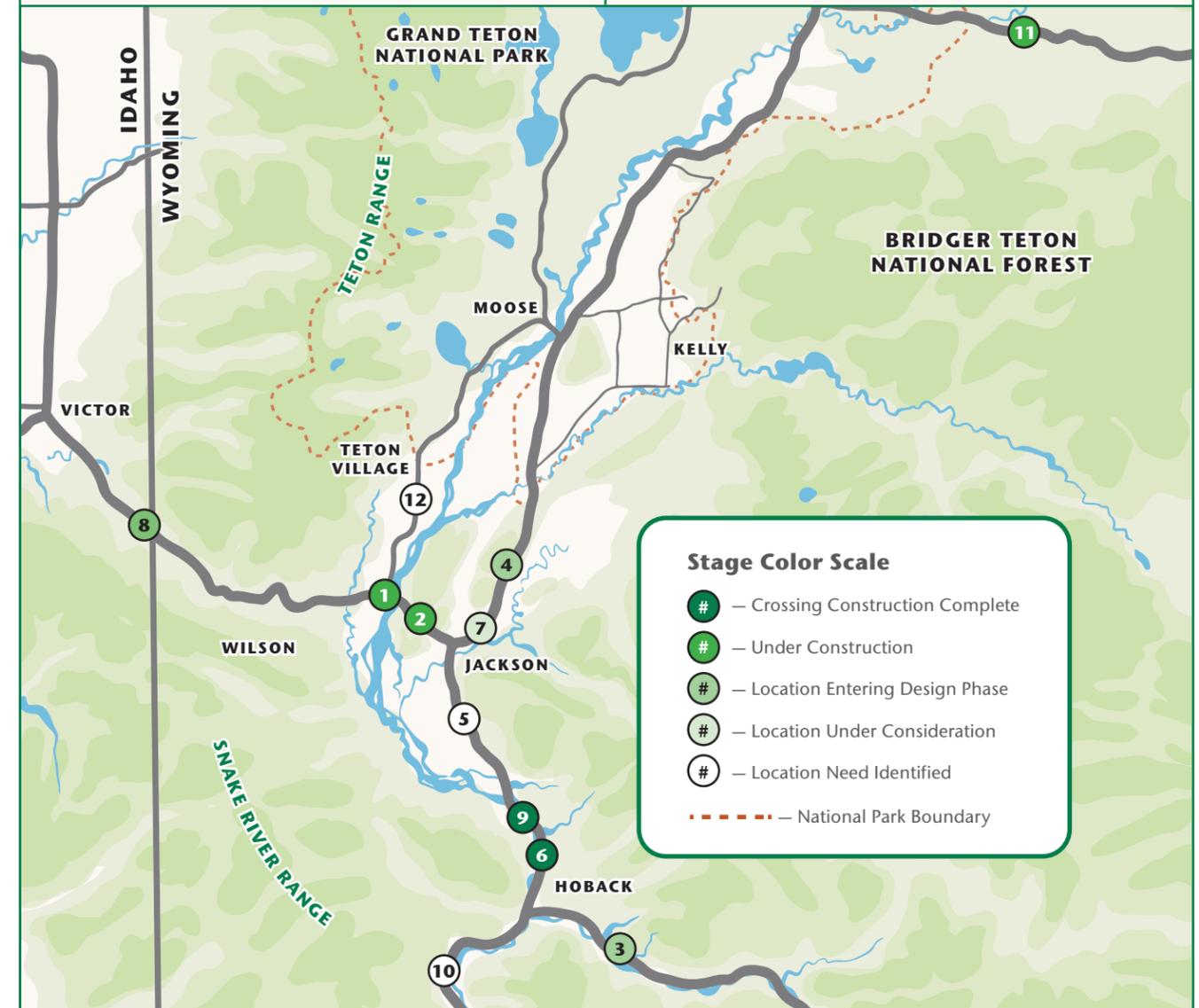
2 ADDITION MILES of fencing removed or modified to be made wildlife friendly in Teton county in 2023, bringing the cumulative length of removed or altered fencing to 67.14 miles.



Source: Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation

Wildlife Crossings Progress

The projects below are numbered in their priority ranking in the Teton County Wildlife Crossing Master Plan.



- 1 Hwy 22/390 Intersection / Snake River Bridge:** Under Construction
- 2 Hwy 22 Spring Creek to Bar Y:** Under construction included in WYDOT Hwy 22 Corridor Plan
- 3 Camp Creek:** Under contract for conceptual designs
- 4 North of Jackson to Fish Hatchery:** Under contract for 30% design plans
- 5 South of Jackson to Rafter J:** Low feasibility currently / Needs land-use planning
- 6 Horse Creek to Hoback Junction:** Construction complete, monitoring began November 2022
- 7 Broadway Flat Creek Bridge:** Looking at lighting as part of Town inventory process
- 8 Teton Pass West Side:** Under contract for 30% design plans
- 9 Game Creek:** Construction and monitoring completed
- 10 Dog Creek:** No progress
- 11 Blackrock/Togwotee:** Completed in 2012
- 12 WY 390:** This stretch is not a good candidate for crossing structures and fencing per the Teton County Wildlife Crossings Master Plan
- 13 (Not on Map) Aquatic Passage:** Multiple locations under consideration (Cabin Creek, Boyles Hill Road/Spring Creek).

Source: Teton County Public Works Department

“We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don’t have to avert our eyes with shame, so that we can hold our heads up high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of the earth’s beings.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (botanist, author, and professor)



CHAPTER 2

Metrics Of Human-Wildlife Interactions

In recent Teton County discourse on human-wildlife interactions, two recurring sources of human-wildlife conflict emerge again and again: wildlife accessing human food, particularly as it relates to conflicts with grizzly bears, and recreation in wildlife habitat. For both topics, following best practices can reduce the chances of wildlife conflicts, while promoting human safety.

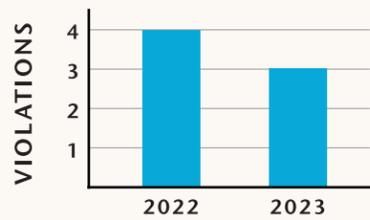
Are we securing food and other attractants sufficiently to reduce the risk of attracting wildlife into our communities? Are we recreating responsibly to mitigate disturbances to wildlife, especially in critical habitats and seasons? In this chapter, we present metrics of human-wildlife coexistence related to these interaction hotspots, organized into subsections of **Feeding and Bear Conflict** and **Recreation**.

Feeding and Bear Conflict

With shrinking habitat, an increasing development footprint, rising populations, and an expanding home range, interactions between grizzly bears and humans are predicted to increase, especially on private lands. In 2020-2021, residents of Teton County became accustomed to seeing Grizzly 399 and her four cubs outside of Teton County’s public lands and roaming through residential neighborhoods in search of food—ultimately finding sources such as livestock feed, birdseed, trash, and honey from domestic beehives. We don’t have to look far to see the results of these incredibly intelligent bears learning that human developments can provide food – in summer 2022, grizzly 1057, one of 399’s four cubs was euthanized

after 13 documented conflicts with humans. **Human-Bear Conflicts** occur when food attractants are improperly stored and managed, giving bruins motivation to come into our communities and become habituated to human food sources. When bears expect food rewards in human-dominated areas, it can lead to behaviors that are threatening to all parties, in some cases resulting in **Bear Captures, Relocations, and Removals** (euthanasia). **Bear-Resistant Trash Cans** are one well-established method of reducing wildlife feeding conflicts. Likewise, enforcement of **Feeding Compliance Violations** may be a useful coexistence indicator as new wildlife feeding regulations take effect.

Feeding Compliance Violations



3 WILDLIFE FEEDING VIOLATIONS in 2023*. Most of these conflicts occurred at Teton Village and involved unsecured garbage, cooking grease and human food.

**We recognize that this metric does not capture unreported cases and likely does not adequately represent the scale of this problem county-wide. We chose to include this metric as a baseline to track future enforcement of wildlife feeding regulations.*

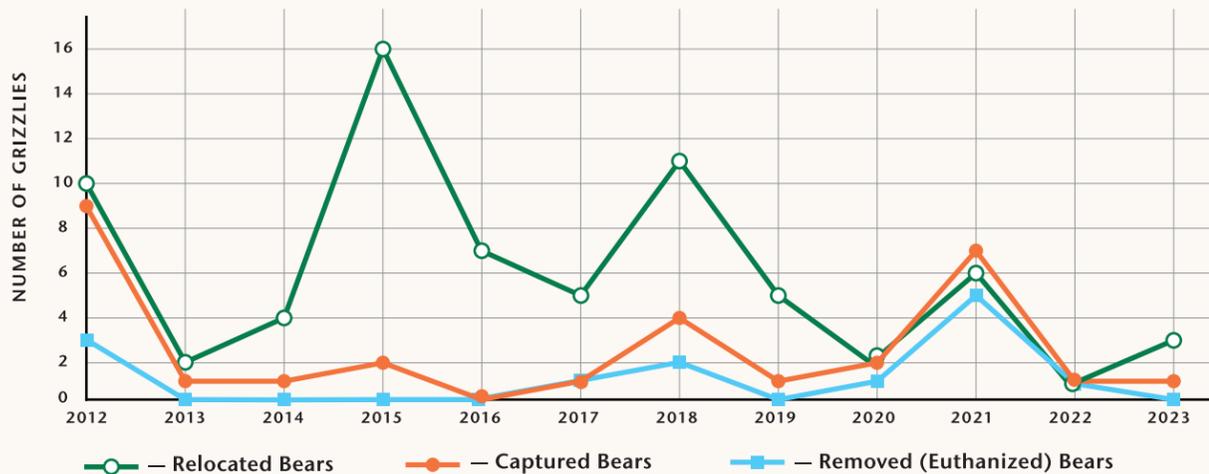
Source: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Grizzly Bear Captures, Relocations & Removals

1 BEAR CAPTURED in 2023.

0 BEARS REMOVED in 2023.

4 BEARS RELOCATED in 2023.



Source: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Bear-Resistant Trash Cans

SUMMARY OF THE COMPLIANCE OBSERVED IN TETON COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS DURING AUGUST 2023:

| Location | Existing Requirements? | | In Compliance / Total Bins | % In Compliance |
|---|------------------------|--------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Wilson and Moose-Wilson Road | yes | Jul-09 | 194 / 199 | 97.43% |
| Airport and JH Golf and Tennis Area | yes | Jul-09 | 149 / 150 | 99.33% |
| South of Town (Game Creek, Hog Island, Hoback | yes | Jul-10 | 172 / 229 | 75.11% |
| Rafter J | yes | Nov-22 | 156 / 200 | 78% |
| South Park Ranches | yes | Nov-22 | 30 / 57 | 52.6% |

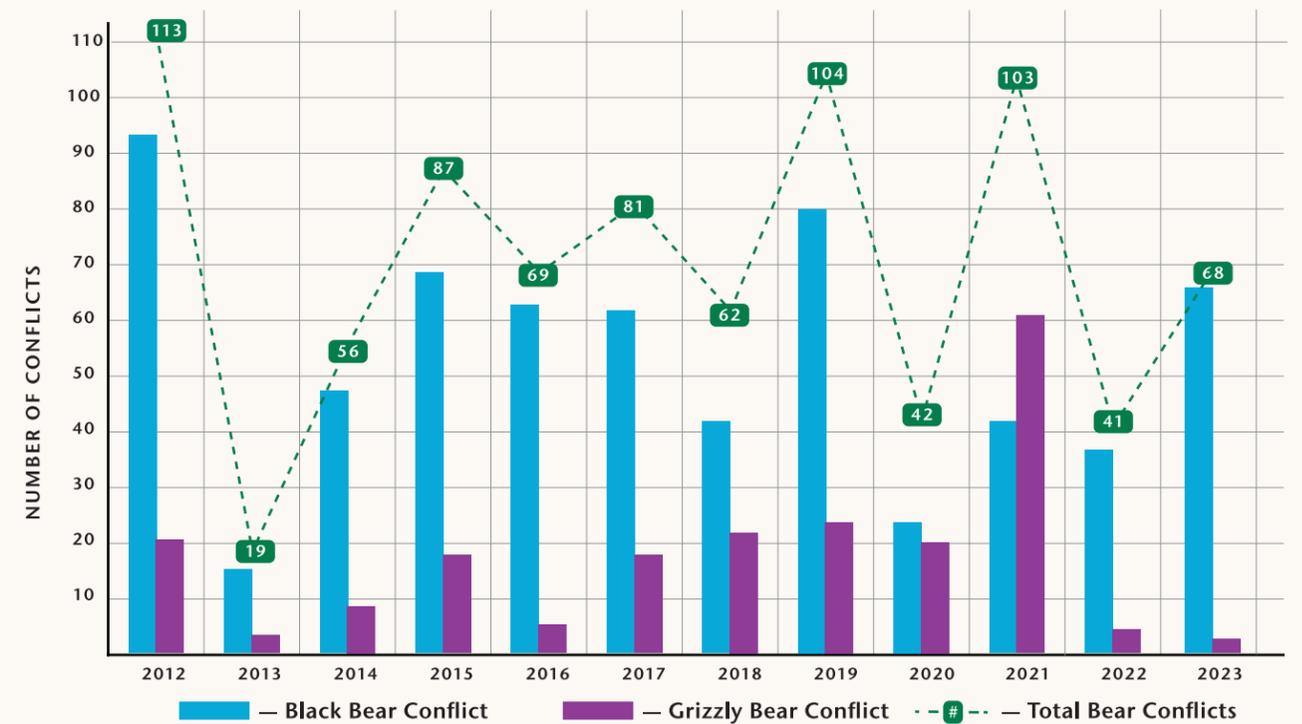
Source: Teton County Public Works and Planning Departments

Human-Bear Conflicts

Human-bear conflicts are any circumstances where a bear’s conduct endangers people’s safety, their property, or bear conservation. This includes bears obtaining human food as well as actual physical conflicts.

66 BLACK BEAR CONFLICTS in 2023

2 GRIZZLY BEAR CONFLICTS in 2023



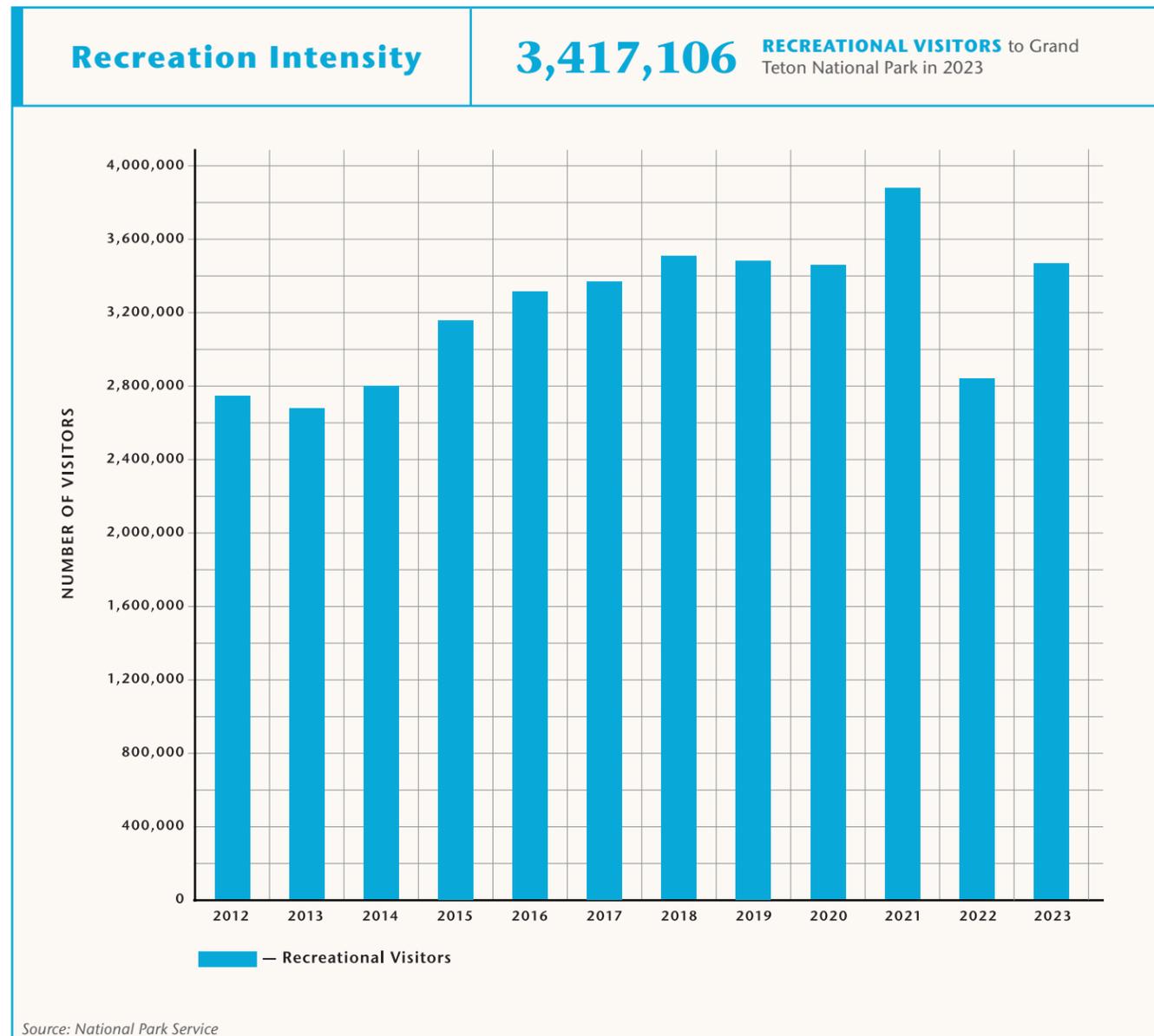
Source: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Recreation

Teton County is a world-renowned destination for outdoor recreation. Much of this takes place in or adjacent to wildlife habitat, creating opportunities for conflict between humans and wildlife or the shrinking of available habitat to wildlife as they attempt to avoid humans. Managing recreation behaviors and areas to be sustainable for people, wildlife, and the land is a key challenge for Teton County's coexistence future. In part, a central factor in this balance is the raw number of **Recreational Visitors**. Recent research conducted on the Bridger Teton National Forest showed that wildlife were 3.1 to 4.7 times more likely to flee and exhibited vigilance behaviors for 2.2 to 3.0 times longer when exposed to recreation noise compared to natural sounds or no noise (Zeller et al. 2024). Not only did the animals flee from

recreational noise, but they were 1.5 times less likely to return to those same areas within the next week, clearly showing how wildlife can be displaced from quality habitat merely by the noise of human recreation.

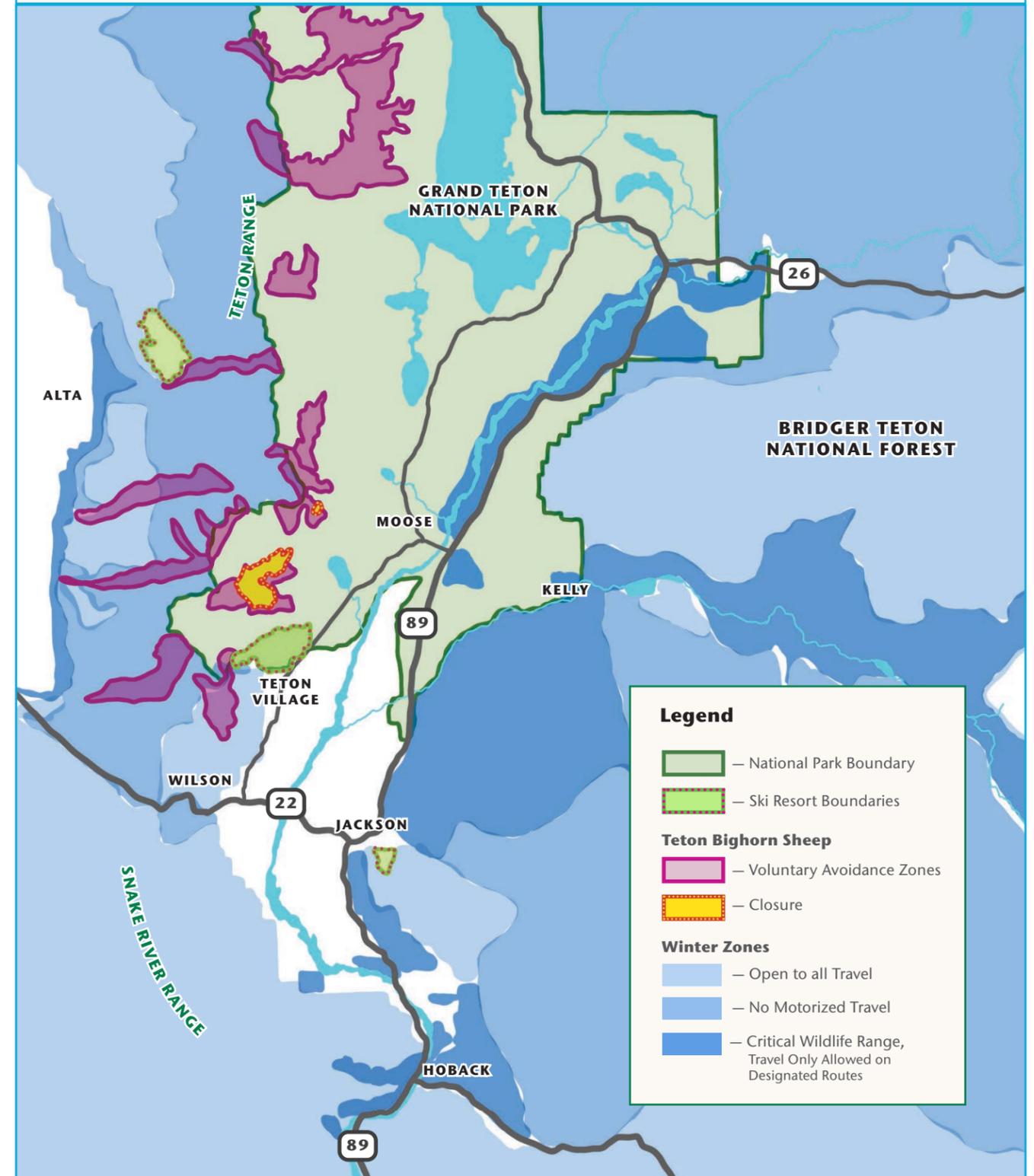
Successful wildlife-recreation coexistence will depend on awareness of and compliance with best practices, such as adherence to **National Park Winter Recreational Closure for Bighorn Sheep**. Ultimately, land managers and recreation stakeholders must look for compromise, protecting both wildlife habitat and recreation values for the benefit of future generations of humans and wildlife. This is highlighted in the case study of **Bighorn Sheep Habitat and Backcountry Ski Terrain**.



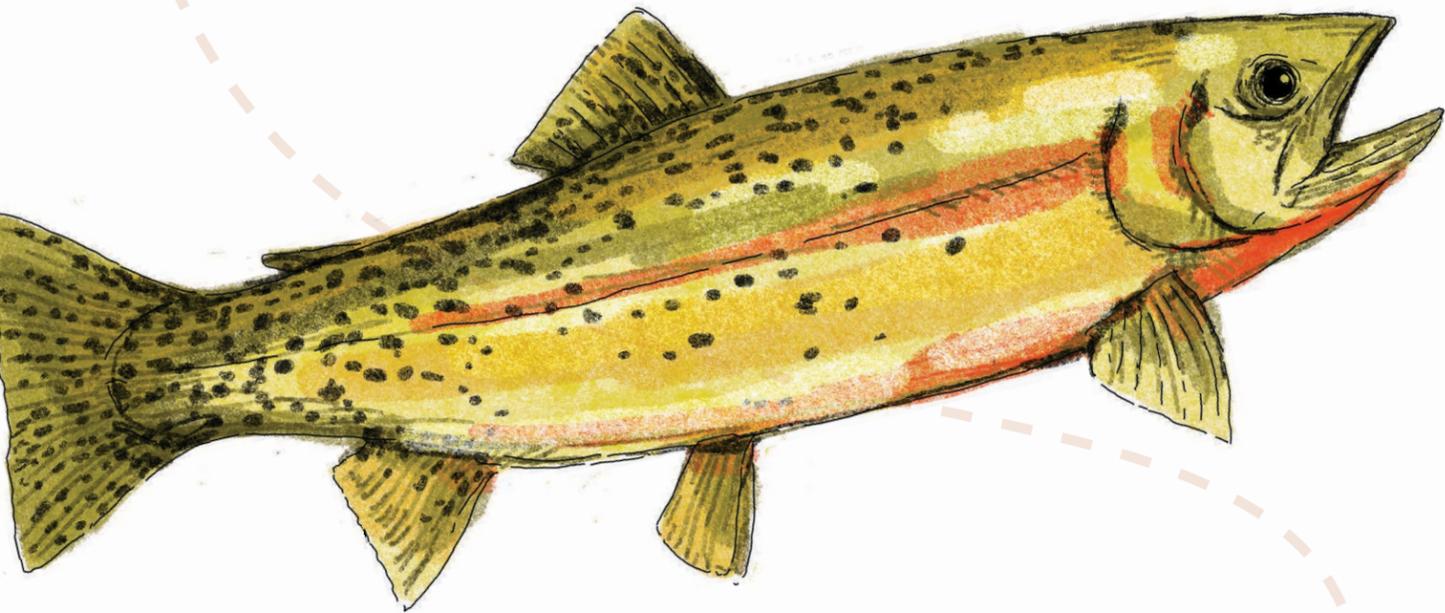
Source: National Park Service

Bighorn Sheep Habitat & Backcountry Ski Terrain

4% OF THE TETON BIGHORN SHEEP HERD winter habitat is protected from winter recreation disturbance through winter closures in Grand Teton National Park (yellow in the map below). **Voluntary avoidance zones cover over 40% of Teton Bighorn Sheep winter habitat** (shown in purple below).



Source: Teton Bighorn Sheep Working Group



CHAPTER 3

Metrics Of Human Dimensions Of Coexistence

Our individual and collective relationships to wildlife and wild places are rooted in social, political, and economic paradigms. To holistically understand coexistence, Teton County must consider and develop metrics that go beyond the purely ecological, incorporating the critical human element.

Are we adequately measuring **ecosystem health**? How are we putting our limited **SPET (Special Excise Tax) and lodging tax resources to work for ecosystem stewardship**? How well is our community **progressing on Ecosystem Stewardship Strategies from the Comprehensive Plan**?

“Most counties are not ready or equipped to deal with what’s quickly descending upon Greater Yellowstone and we have one chance to get it right.”

— Robert Liberty (sustainable and equitable development guru)





Bohemian Waxing // Anna Knaeble

METRICS OF HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF COEXISTENCE

Strategies, Monitoring & Funding

The governments of Teton County and the Town of Jackson are important stakeholders in local human-wildlife coexistence. The elected officials and staff that make up these entities play a significant role in setting public policy and direction, establishing monitoring systems for community goals, and allocating funds to realize those policies and goals. With ecosystem stewardship and “maintaining healthy populations of all native species” as central tenets of the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan (2020), metrics of coexistence strategy, monitoring, and funding can hold local governments accountable to these values. The **Progress on Ecosystem**

Stewardship Strategies tracks how well we are pursuing coexistence strategies as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The Town/County Annual Indicator Report seeks to track progress toward the Comprehensive Plan’s goals, and here we track nascent and developing **Town/County Coexistence Indicators**. Our community also benefits from a fraction of the revenue generated from a **Lodging Tax that the Travel and Tourism Board Grants** to local entities fitting the funding requirements of the state. **Special Excise Tax (SPET) funds** have also been approved by county voters in recent years for ecosystem stewardship projects.

Progress On Ecosystem Stewardship Strategies *(General And Principle 1.1)*

The Strategies listed below are intended to accomplish The Teton County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1 Goal of Ecosystem Stewardship and Principle 1.1 - maintaining healthy populations of all native species.

| STRATEGY & DESCRIPTION | STATUS | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---|
| | 2020 | 2020 | 2023 |
| 1.G.S.1 Identify appropriate indicators that measure achievement of the Chapter goal. For example, measuring stewardship of natural resources may include establishing indicators for percent change of site development within the Town and County, or tracking contaminant loading from wastewater discharge at the Town of Jackson treatment facility. | Incomplete | In Progress | In Progress |
| 1.G.S.2 Establish an Ecosystem Stewardship target for an Adaptive Management Program that will be used to track the Town and County’s progress toward goals related to this chapter. | Incomplete | Incomplete | Incomplete |
| 1.1.S.1 Create a vegetation cover map that can be used to help inform the identification of relative criticalness of habitat types. In the interim, as focal species are being identified, work with Wyoming Game and Fish and other partnering agencies and entities to update the mapping that provides a general indication of the location of the Natural Resources Overlay (NRO), based on current protection of critical “species of special concern” habitat. | Complete | Complete | Complete |
| 1.1.S.2 Identify focal species that are indicative of ecosystem health and determine important habitat types for those species. Evaluate habitat importance, abundance, and use to determine relative criticalness of various habitat types. The study is completed, but the products have not yet been incorporated into the planning process. | In Progress | In Progress | In Progress* <small>*Will be Complete when products are implemented into the planning process.</small> |
| 1.1.S.3 Establish a monitoring system for assessing the singular and cumulative impacts of growth and development on wildlife and natural resources. Implement actions in response to what is learned to provide better habitat and movement corridor protection. | Incomplete | In Progress | In Progress |
| 1.1.S.4 Evaluate and amend wildlife protection standards for development density, intensity, location, clustering, permeability, and wildlife-human conflict. | Incomplete | In Progress | In Progress |
| 1.1.S.5 Evaluate mitigation standards for impacts to critical habitat and habitat connectivity and update as needed. | Incomplete | Incomplete | In Progress |
| 1.1.S.6 Identify areas for appropriate ecological restoration efforts. | Incomplete | Incomplete | Incomplete |
| 1.1.S.7 Identify areas appropriate for roadway underpasses, overpasses, speed reductions, or other wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation measures in heavy volume wildlife-crossing areas. | Complete | Complete | Complete |
| 1.1.S.8 Develop an ecosystem stewardship education program to further the goals of the community and establish community buy-in. | Incomplete | Incomplete | Incomplete |
| 1.1.S.9 Explore hiring a staff ecologist and/ or additional staff infrastructure and capacity to promote the implementation of strategies and plans. | Incomplete | In Progress | In Progress* <small>*This has been done in the Town, but not yet in the County</small> |

Source: Teton County Comprehensive Plan.

Town/County Coexistence Indicators

3 COEXISTENCE (WILDLIFE AND HABITAT) RELATED INDICATORS AS OF 2023:

- Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions
- Conservation Vs. Subdivision Of Rural Open Space
- Location Of Actual And Potential Growth

COEXISTENCE METRICS YET TO BE DEVELOPED:

- Health of native species
- Water quality
- Air quality.

An Ecosystem Health Report will be published by the Town Ecosystem Stewardship Administrator for the first time in 2025.

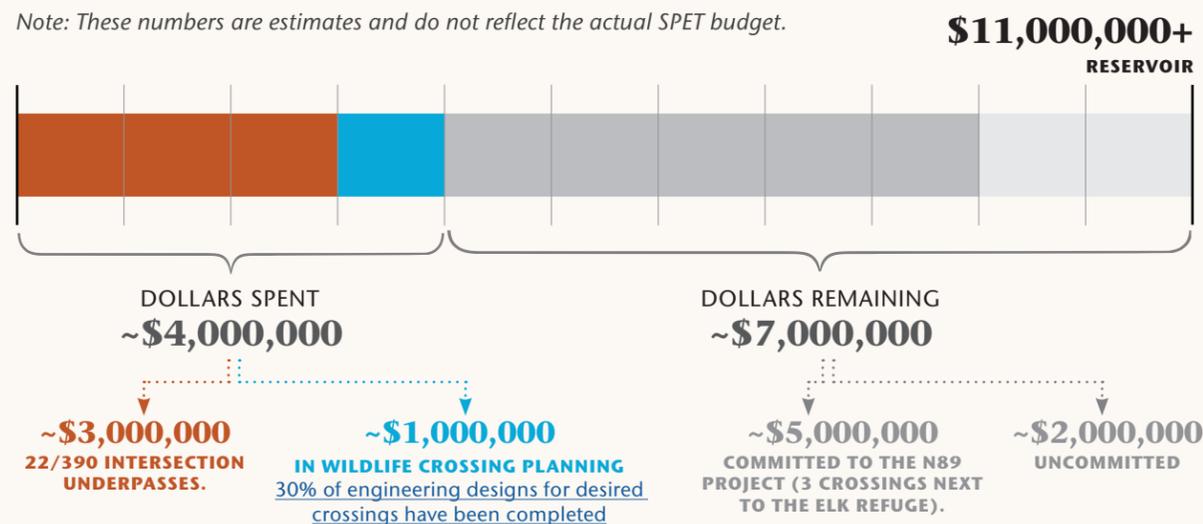
Source: Jackson/Teton County 2023 Annual Indicator Report

SPET Funds For Wildlife Crossings

\$11,000,000

RESERVOIR to fund wildlife crossings in the county. \$10 Million SPET - approved by 79% of Teton County voters in 2019 + \$1 Million Match from Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT).

Note: These numbers are estimates and do not reflect the actual SPET budget.



Source: Teton County Public Works Department

SPET Funds For Water Quality

\$10,000,000

APPROVED by 81% of county voters in 2022 to fund water quality projects that will protect and improve surface and groundwater resources in Teton

*To-date we haven't spent any of this fund yet, there is a verbal commitment to the Hoback Water District

Source: Teton County Public Works Department

Teton County Land Conservation Opportunities

\$8,000,000

APPROVED by 65% of county voters in 2022 for the Teton County Scenic Preserve Trust to acquire interests in state trust or private land to conserve wildlife habitat, protect open space, protect historic agricultural uses, protect scenic values, and protect public access.

*It has not yet been spent, so still has full \$8M remaining. The BCC committed to funding the Munger Parcel lease out of this fund, but we are unaware of the fiscal impact right now.

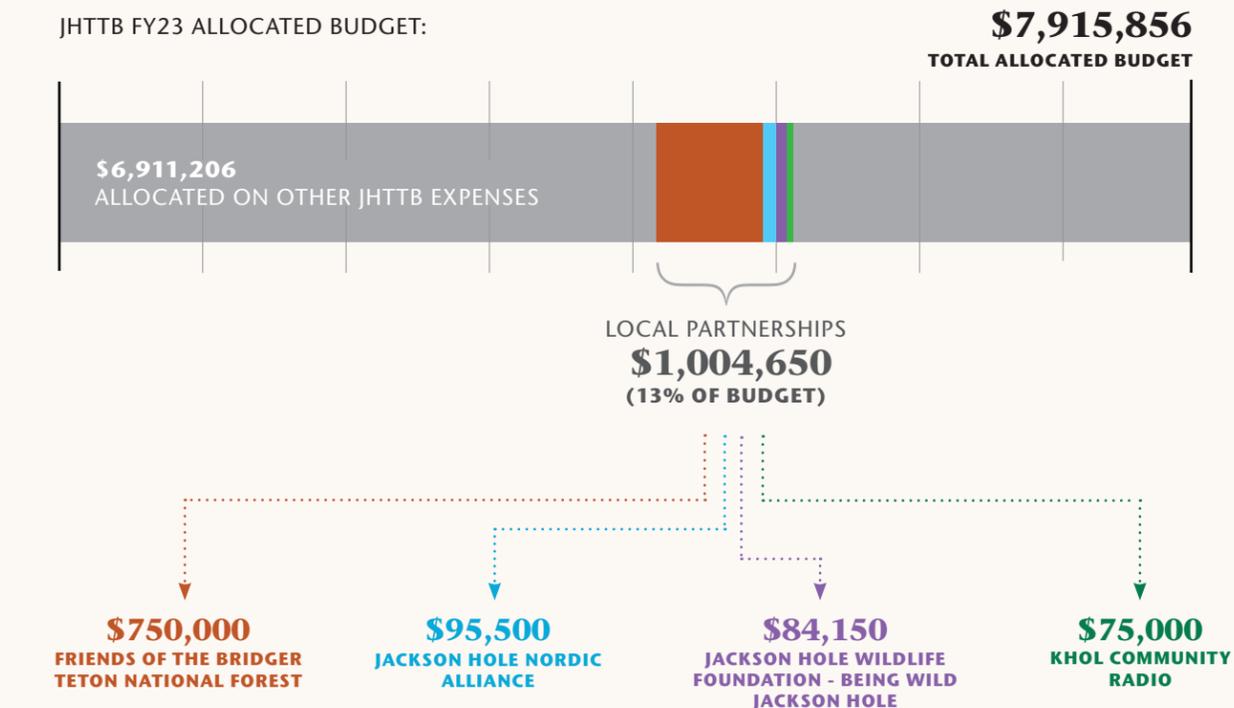
Source: Teton County Public Works Department

Travel and Tourism Board Grants

\$1,004,650

(13% OF BUDGET) allocated toward conservation-focused organizations

These community grants support destination management, development, marketing, and stewardship. These awards are now also open to activities that meet the goals of the [Sustainable Destination Management Plan](#) and that meet the requirements of Lodging Tax State Statute.



Source: Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board 2023 Annual Report



The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance has been **working for over 45 years** to protect:

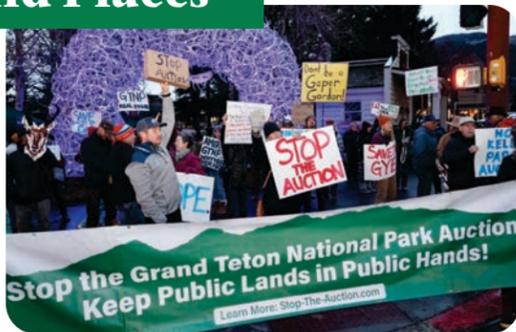
Wildlife



Stilson

On July 16th, 2024 the Board of County Commissioners voted to approve the federally granted Stilson Transit Center. At the same meeting intentions were set to put the 8.5 acre County Parcel at Stilson under conservation easement, as well as restoring the floodplain cottonwood forests that used to exist on the western wildlife corridor at the Stilson site. The likely resulting conservation easement and restoration are, in part, due to the efforts of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance educating our community, building a coalition of partner organizations and individuals, writing intelligent public comments with substantive criticisms and valuable recommendations, and engaging with our county electeds and staff to find enduring solutions for people and wildlife.

Wild Places



Kelly Parcel

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance led the “Stop the Auction” campaign and rally in late 2023. The result was a unification of Wyoming citizens behind a conservation solution of the most valuable state parcel in the nation. This year the Wyoming legislature opened the door for the eventual sale of the Kelly Parcel to Grand Teton National Park – the outcome JHCA and most of Wyoming (and the nation) was hoping for. An example of JHCA’s core competency – critical advocacy at the critical time!

Community Character



Rejection of the Mogul Capital Behemoth

When a Utah-based developer proposed a 365,980-square-foot project that encompassed 11 properties and consumed almost an entire city block at the northern gateway to Jackson, it was a wake up call. Jackson Hole is experiencing unprecedented growth and change. We recognize and accept that change is inevitable and sometimes necessary, however, the Alliance is always here to protect wildlife, wild places, and community character. We rallied a swift and strong resistance to the Mogul development that helped persuade the Town Council to call for a 120 day emergency moratorium on large commercial development and to deny Mogul’s sketch plans.



Teton Glow // Melissa Salafia

WHAT’S NEXT? Conclusion

Building upon generations of coexistence efforts in the Teton Region, this 2nd annual Coexistence Report is only a beginning, as the people of Teton County push for more comprehensive protection and monitoring of ecosystem health – the primary reason people live here (in a recent survey, Greater Teton respondents rated the importance of Environment = 9.1, Community = 8.4, and Economy = 8.0, averages reported from a 0-10 scale; Schechter, 2023).

We hope this report can help establish a common baseline upon which future monitoring and action can build. We intend to continue this work with community partners as well as new environmental professionals working in the Town of Jackson (the Ecosystem Administrator) and Teton County (the Water Resources Coordinator). We hope in coming years, other civic departments and entities will have staff ecologists and environmental professionals. Our community has a rich history of protecting our ecosystem; it is paramount that this cultural value be reflected in our government and be passed to residents and visitors as well.

The future of human-wildlife coexistence in Teton County rests in our collective hands. Will it be one of irresponsible growth, population decline, ecosystem collapse, and loss of community character?

This question was tested this year, as the Town of Jackson contemplated a 365,980-square-foot proposal from Mogul Capital at the northern gateway to Town. Fortunately, our community raised their collective voice to say, “Community First!” Town electeds responded accordingly, denied the

application, and enacted a moratorium on big buildings. As this report goes to publication, the Town is planning changes to Town Land Development Regulations to enact a building size maximum. We know there are other reasons Jacksonites were outraged by Mogul’s proposal. Time will tell if the town council chooses to put community first and address the larger impacts to local quality of life and protect our community character.

We are clearly at a tipping point, where we must be vigilant to protect and progress our ability to coexist with wildlife who do not exist in most other mountain towns. For the past 50 years, the GYE has been a beacon of success for grizzly bears, wolves, migrations, wildfire management, and for being the original emblem for protected public lands.

What the future holds we can only speculate. Current trends tell us that challenges such as development, habitat fragmentation, increased human population and recreation, wildlife disease, and climate change will challenge many species and ecological processes critical to the GYE. To call the GYE a success is to ignore the many critical challenges today and around the corner. This report is intended to keep the picture in mind and to keep us vigilant to threats and focused on solutions to the area’s ecosystem.

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance has been dedicated to coexistence for the last 45 years and we look forward to the next 45! Visit our website at: www.jhalliance.org and sign up for our **mailing list**. Thanks for being our partners in coexistence!

References:

Zeller, K. A., Ditmer, M. A., Squires, J. R., Rice, W. L., Wilder, J., DeLong, D., Egan, A., Pennington, N., Wang, C.A., Pluciniski, J., & Barber, J. R. 2024. Experimental recreationist noise alters behavior and space use of wildlife. *Current Biology*.

Schechter, J. Like Asking a Dog To Climb A Tree: Pursuing Hope in Chaotic Times. 2023. Teton Leadership Center, October 24.

Table Of Coexistence Metrics

CHAPTER 1: METRICS OF LAND USE

Habitat Protection and Threats

Pages 15-16

| METRIC | STATUS | SOURCE |
|--|--|---|
| Conservation Vs. Subdivision Of Rural Open Spaces | 89 rural units eliminated and 830 rural acres conserved in 2023. | <i>Jackson / Teton County 2024 Annual Indicator Report</i> |
| Location of Actual Growth | 64% of new residential units built in complete neighborhoods vs. 46% built in rural areas since 2012. | <i>Jackson / Teton County 2024 Annual Indicator Report</i> |
| Private Lands Protected Through Conservation Properties | 5 new conservation properties totaling 366.5 acres in 2023 | <i>Teton County Planning Department, Jackson Hole Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Teton County Scenic Preserve Land Trust, Wyoming Game & Fish Department</i> |
| Winter Wildlife Closures | 170,047 total acres of public land protected through winter wildlife closure (2023). | <i>Teton Conservation District</i> |
| Habitat Affected By & Treated For Invasive Species | 13,336 total acres of public lands affected by invasive species in 2023. There was 299.61 acres of weeds treated from the ground, 4735 acres of Cheatgrass treated via helicopter. | <i>Teton Count Weed and Pest</i> |

Landscape Permeability

Pages 18-19

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions | 210 wildlife-vehicle collisions between May 2021-April 2022. | <i>Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation</i> |
| Fencing Removal & Improvement | 67.14 cumulative miles of fencing removed or modified to be made wildlife friendly in teton county, 2 miles removed or modified in 2023. | <i>Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation</i> |
| Wildlife Crossing Progress | while the status of the project has not changed since 2022. The Hwy 22/390 Intersection / Snake River Bridge project has made major progress and is nearly complete. | <i>Teton County Public Works Department</i> |

CHAPTER 2: METRICS OF HUMAN-WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS

Feeding & Bear Conflict

Pages 22-23

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Feeding Compliance Violations | Three wildlife feeding violations in 2023. | <i>Code Compliance Officer, Teton County</i> |
| Grizzly Bear Captures, Relocations & Removals | One grizzly bear captured, no grizzly bears removed, four grizzly bears in Teton County in 2023. | <i>Wyoming Game and Fish Department</i> |

| METRIC | STATUS | SOURCE |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Bear-Resistant Trash Cans | Of those homes surveyed in August 2023, 83% (701 out of 843) were compliant in zones requiring bear-resistant trash cans. | <i>Teton County Public Works and Planning Departments</i> |
| Human-Bear Conflicts | 66 black bear conflicts and 2 grizzly bear conflicts in 2023 | <i>Wyoming Game and Fish Department</i> |

Recreation

Pages 24-25

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Recreation Intensity | 3,417,106 total recreation visitors to Grand Teton National Park (2023). | <i>National Park Service</i> |
| Bighorn Sheep Habitat & Backcountry Ski Terrain | 4% of bighorn sheep winter habitat protected from winter recreation disturbance through winter closures. Up to 40% of Teton bighorn sheep habitat is protected through voluntary winter avoidance zones. | <i>Teton Bighorn Sheep Working Group</i> |

CHAPTER 3: METRICS OF HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF COEXISTENCE

Strategies, Monitoring, and Funding

Pages 29-31

| METRIC | STATUS | SOURCE |
|---|---|--|
| Progress on Ecosystem Stewardship Strategies | Two ecosystem stewardship strategies completed, six in progress, and three with no progress by the end of 2023. | <i>Town of Jackson Ecosystem Stewardship Administrator; Town of Jackson/Teton County Long-Range Planning Department; Teton County Comprehensive Plan</i> |
| Development of Coexistence Indicators | Three coexistence indicators in the Jackson/Teton County Annual Indicator Report. | <i>Jackson / Teton County 2024 Annual Indicator Report</i> |
| SPET funds for Wildlife Crossings | \$11,000,000+ reservoir to fund wildlife crossings in the county (~\$4M has been spent with about ~\$7M left). | <i>Teton County Public Works Department</i> |
| SPET funds for Water Quality | \$10,000,000 reservoir approved by 81% of Teton county voters to fund water quality projects. | <i>Teton County Public Works Department</i> |
| Teton County Land Conservation Opportunities | \$8,000,000 reservoir approved by 65% of Teton county voters for the Teton County Scenic Preserve Trust to acquire interests in state trust or private land to conserve wildlife habitat, protect open space, protect historic agricultural uses, protect scenic values, and protect public access. | <i>Teton County Public Works Department</i> |
| Travel and Tourism Board Grants | \$1,004,650 (13% of Budget) allocated toward destination stewardship. | <i>Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board 2023 Annual Report</i> |



“who is invading who?”

- Larry Moore

Larry Moore, the painter, generously contributed this cover art, which is part of a larger collection entitled “Intrusion.”



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