



# water lines

SUMMER 2017



## Cultivating Community

Farms & Fish • Partners • Stewardship • Support



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## Dear Friends,

**After returning from Spring Break** in the Utah desert, I am happy to be back in the comparably lush Teton Valley. If we were to measure wealth by water resources, we could consider ourselves rich. From ski bums to farmers, homeowners to wildlife enthusiasts, we are lucky to live in a place with an abundance of clean water that supports our pastimes and our livelihoods. We are also fortunate to live in a community that works together to honor and protect our collective riches in order to become a stronger and more resilient community.

As a Teton County Commissioner, I am proud to be involved in projects that benefit fish and wildlife habitat, enhance recreational opportunities, and provide economic resiliency. But none of these projects would be possible without first building relationships and trust among community members. Friends of the Teton River (FTR) is a local leader in building effective partnerships and cultivating community around common values to accomplish big results.

The Teton Water Users Association (TWUA), which FTR helped initiate, is a “collective impact” effort that is making more headway than any one organization could accomplish on its own. With representatives from conservation, agriculture, and government entities, TWUA is developing locally based, collaborative solutions that address our declining aquifer, while maintaining the viability and health of working lands.

The Teton Creek Corridor project that FTR helped plan and implement demonstrates the value of partnerships and persistence for the successful restoration of disturbed riparian areas and the protection of private property.

Last fall, Teton County was able to purchase 80 acres on the Teton River for a river access park at Bates Bridge. FTR was a key partner in the collaborative efforts to complete the purchase and planning for Phase I (a new boat ramp, bathroom, and parking lot). Without the help of multiple non-profits, state agencies, businesses, and private funders, the county would not have been able to secure this safe and permanent public access to the river.

Projects like these are not just valuable for fish and wildlife; they bring people together around a common goal, and build relationships and trust among community members. I have learned a great deal from FTR about cultivating community and I am grateful that this organization works on behalf of everyone in our county.

*Cindy Riegel*

Cindy Riegel  
Teton County Commissioner



# Cultivating Community



“Working together isn’t the easy way to do watershed conservation, but it’s the only truly effective way”

This spring, I will celebrate my 10th anniversary of working for Friends of the Teton River. Over those ten years, one particular lesson stands out: Working together isn’t the easy way to do watershed conservation, but it’s the only truly effective way. That’s because, by working together, we are able to accomplish things that none of us could ever get done alone.

The No-Till Farming and Cover Crop initiative, which will get off the ground (or, perhaps more appropriately, into the ground) in earnest this spring, is a perfect example of this. Lynn Bagley, president of the Teton Soil Conservation District (TSCD), first approached me about this project a little over two years ago. The Soil Conservation District board, together with NRCS District Conservationist Lindsay Markegard, was interested in a soil health initiative, and wanted to know if Friends of the Teton River would be interested in partnering.

It didn’t take much research on my end before two things became clear. First, the use of no-till farming and cover crops has the potential to result in significant improvements to water quality by reducing the amount of sediment washed into streams and nitrogen infiltrated into groundwater, providing real and quantifiable benefits to people and fish. And second, there is absolutely no way that FTR could accomplish a project like this without the leadership of the Soil Conservation District board. The TSCD board members, unlike me, actually know how to use a seed drill to plant crops; they know how to manage agricultural business practices and returns; and they have the necessary relationships with farmers and ranchers who own and manage the 53 percent of our county’s lands that are currently in agricultural production.

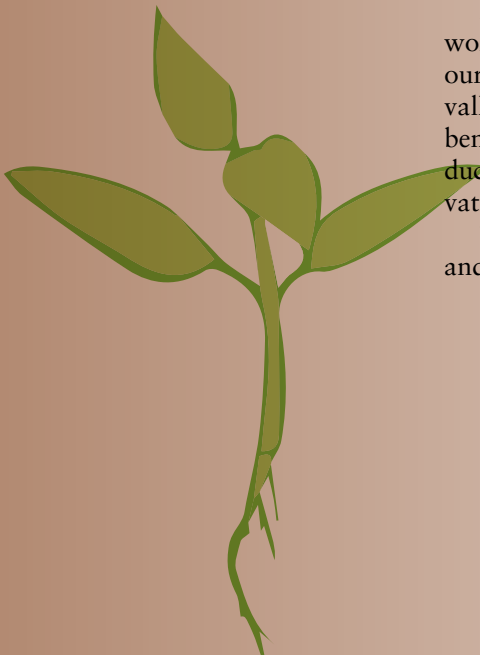
FTR’s role has been to leverage our fundraising resources and relationships to bring this project to fruition. Last August, I had the great honor of handing over a \$43,000 check that allowed the Soil Conservation District to take title to a brand new Great Plains No-Till Drill that will be rented to local farmers at very low cost starting this spring. We continue to garner even more funding to support implementation and monitoring. We will soon be announcing another successful grant award—representing an even broader partnership—that will provide direct payments to producers willing to experiment with the no-till drill and cover crops, while also covering the cost of researching and quantifying water quality and agricultural benefits.

As most of you know, FTR and the farming and ranching community have not always worked together as effectively as we should. I believe that the trust built up through our Farms & Fish Initiative (see pages 4-5), and other collaborative efforts like it in the valley, are re-setting our community’s perception of the ways we can work together to benefit farming and ranching families who depend on water for crop and livestock production, municipalities that require clean and adequate water for residents, and conservation interests seeking healthy land and water for fish and wildlife.

This project is one of the accomplishments I’m most proud of in my ten years at FTR, and I believe it’s just the start of what we can cultivate by working together.

*Amy Verbeten*

Amy Verbeten  
FTR Executive Director



# Farms & Fish

The Farms & Fish Initiative builds upon relationships cultivated between Teton Valley's farming and ranching community and conservation interests, supported by fifteen years of watershed science and research. Friends of the Teton River, together with the Teton Soil Conservation District, Teton County Farm Bureau, Teton Regional Land Trust, and Henry's Fork Foundation, as well as local elected officials, agricultural producers, and water managers, are developing locally based solutions for maintaining the viability and health of our working lands, open spaces, and stream corridors, while improving surface and ground water resources for the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife.

*Agriculture remains a crucial and widely valued part of the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the community*

## Improve soil health and crop yields

FTR and project partners have secured funding, equipment, and assistance for agricultural producers to implement farming practices that improve farm productivity and soil health. This includes the acquisition of a no-till drill, cover crop seed, and monitoring equipment.



## Invest in local infrastructure

FTR and project partners have secured funding and assistance for water right holders to improve or replace outdated head gates and other canal infrastructure. This improves irrigators' ability to manage water, so it can be delivered to farms where and when it's needed most, and ensures that irrigators can divert their full legal water rights.



## Support agricultural livelihoods

FTR and project partners are working to incentivize the practice of diverting water into canals and flood irrigating fields during the early spring, when water is abundant. This boosts aquifer levels, protecting farms from changes in water availability and increasing water reliability, especially during times of drought. Our goal is to keep working lands working and help sustain farming in Teton Valley.



Partnerships, trust, and effective collaboration have been fundamental to FTR's success as an organization. Our vision is to be a model for watershed conservation that puts science into practice, celebrates a diverse culture of stewardship, and implements locally based solutions that support our valley's economy, community, and culture.

# Cultivation and Conservation go hand-in-hand

Over the past fifteen years, FTR has led the field in watershed restoration and fisheries research in order to protect and improve water resources and native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout populations in one of the “last best” strongholds for this iconic species. We will continue doing projects in streams that benefit the native trout fishery, water quality, and stream habitat, while also focusing on strategies that improve the overall health of the watershed, support the local economy, and cultivate a community of water and land stewards.

## Improve water quality

Farming with no-till methods and cover crops reduces soil erosion and nitrogen fertilizer use. This means less sediment eroding into streams and improved spawning habitat (cleaner gravel) for trout and other aquatic animals. It also means less nitrogen in drinking water and in streams, improving and protecting the health of humans and aquatic organisms.

## Enhance fish and wildlife habitat

Rebuilding or replacing irrigation head gates with fish-friendly ones prevents trout from getting trapped in canals and ditches. Upgraded canals can help recharge the aquifer in early spring, storing cold, clean spring water that wells up in the river in late summer. More efficient water delivery and water management in late summer can help keep tributary streams connected during critical periods for native trout.

## Promote sustainable solutions

The aquifer becomes a natural “reservoir” for storing water underground. This water slowly seeps into the river over a period of several months, resulting in more water in the river during the late summer, when trout need it most. This spring water provides cooler temperatures that fish and aquatic organisms need to thrive, and also provides plentiful water for residential and municipal wells. Storing water in an underground reservoir provides a safe, affordable alternative to rebuilding the Teton Dam.

*Teton Valley's farms are actively sustaining, stewarding, and improving the unique wetland and riverine habitats in the local ecosystem*

For more information about how you can support the Teton Valley Farms & Fish initiative, visit our website, [www.tetonwater.org](http://www.tetonwater.org), or email [info@tetonwater.org](mailto:info@tetonwater.org).



# Cultivating Community Through water awareness



Above: Students participating in various Water Awareness activities led by local professionals. A special thanks to a 2016 USFS Conservation Education grant for providing our education program with materials to teach students about water resources; these materials are vital to conduct hands-on field science during our fourth grade Stream Study, fifth grade Geology, sixth grade Water Awareness programs, and beyond!

The first week in May was **Idaho Water Awareness Week**, recognizing the many roles that water plays in our lives and the need to protect this precious resource. Friends of the Teton River hosted our twelfth year of Water Awareness Week field trips for Teton Middle School sixth graders thanks to support from an EPA Environmental Education grant. Education coordinator Shannon Brady worked with the Teton Middle School six-grade science teacher, Stephanie Sandell, to organize the program.

Together, they have coordinated volunteers and community partners to teach students hands-on lessons about various aspects of our watershed. Students had an opportunity to model the movement of groundwater, collect and identify aquatic macroinvertebrates, electro-fish for trout in the river, perform the ancient Japanese art of gyotaku (print-making), and build cover crop “seed bombs,” all offering an interdisciplinary approach to water conservation. Stations were run by volunteers, local businesses and organizations, and some EPA subaward recipients (see below), highlighting how science, education, and individuals can come together to cultivate a vibrant community.

## EPA Subawards in action

**FTR was pleased to provide EPA grant funding this March to community organizations with projects that will improve drinking water resources in Teton County. Below are updates from subaward recipients, some of which participated in Water Awareness field day activities.**

**Valley Advocates for Responsible Development** is updating their guidebook, “Common Sense Guidelines for Living in Teton County, Idaho,” to include proper well and septic tank maintenance to prevent groundwater contamination. This guide will be a primary resource for VARD’s Continuing Education Course for Teton Area Realtors this fall.

**Teton Valley Community Recycling** is offering a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) training event for the Teton County, ID, Solid Waste Department this summer. This training may also be offered to other government agencies and businesses that would benefit from training their staff on how to handle HHW (e.g. municipalities, building contractors, or medical personnel). TVCR will also produce informational handouts and stickers about proper HHW disposal to prevent groundwater contamination.



**Teton Arts** has scheduled a week of free summer camp in mid-June for 100 campers that will focus on creating a mural about clean drinking water protection. Teton Arts has been working with the beautification committee of the City of Driggs on this project. The current plan is to install the mural at the 5th Street Skate Park, a location that is highly visible to residents and tourists alike. Teton Arts also helped with Water Awareness Week by leading a gyotaku fish print activity.

With the growing season, **Teton Soil Conservation District** is starting up their No-Till Drill Lease Program, aimed at renting this farming implement at a low cost to interested producers. Contact the TSCD office for more information, or to find out how you may qualify for cover crop/no-till incentives. TSCD joined FTR for the field days to simulate sediment run-off and soil structure differences from bare-tilled ground, a field of stubble, and a cover-cropped field.



Celebrate Campaign Success | Land and Water | Community Collaboration | Agricultural Heritage

# Save the Date!

## Farms & Fish Benefit

Kathleen Hanson

**Friday, August 4th**

Field Tour Reception in Victor, ID

**RSVP required**

### Patagonia grants \$15,000 to Farms & Fish

Help us match their support, and raise an additional \$30,000 for this campaign.

We will celebrate donors making lead gifts (\$1,000+) or matching contributions over \$250 at this event.

### Want to know more?

Learn about our agricultural partnerships, initiatives, and ways to support Farms & Fish in Teton Valley by contacting us at 208-354-3871.

For event details:  
[info@tetonwater.org](mailto:info@tetonwater.org)

# 17th Annual River Party

Rainey River Access (aka the Big Eddy)

**3-7pm** **SATURDAY**  
**July 8**

**Come and get it ...**

**Pay per plate Knotty Pine BBQ & cold beverages**

**Purchase raffle tickets & renew your membership**

**Demos: Tenkara Rods, paddleboards, and more**

**Arrive by boat, bike, or car.**

**Bring your picnic blanket & chairs.**

**Celebrate summer and the Teton River!**

**Info: 208.354.3871**

Sue Tyler



## Tinny turns 10!

The Tin Cup Challenge, Teton Valley's biggest nonprofit fundraising event, is in its tenth year. Join FTR and the community in celebrating a decade of philanthropy with a fun run and festivities on Saturday, July 15, at the Driggs City Center.

Donations to FTR through the Community Foundation of Teton Valley are matched by Community Challengers—making your donation go even further! FTR has raised \$677,290 through your generous Tin Cup contributions since 2008. Help us make this the best Tin Cup yet.

**Donations accepted NOW through July 21 at 5pm @ [www.cftetonvalley.org](http://www.cftetonvalley.org).**

## Coming soon.

FTR will launch a new website  
this summer!

[www.tetonwater.org](http://www.tetonwater.org)  
Don't miss the boat.



## CONTACT US:

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donate by mail or online:  
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## JUNE

### 7 Fishing Season Kick-Off, 6-8pm

Join FTR for a new take on our annual Guides Night event. Everyone is welcome as we kick off the fishing season right! Featuring a fisheries report for all and giveaways for fishing guides.

### 10 Idaho Free Fishing Day

Idaho's Free Fishing Day is held the second Saturday in June. All anglers, residents and nonresidents, can celebrate the day by fishing Idaho's waters without a license.

### 19 Non-profit Pint Night, 5-8pm

Join The Teton Regional Land Trust, Valley Advocates for Responsible Development, Teton Valley Trails and Pathways, and FTR for this classic evening of fun, food, and pints at Grand Teton Brewing in Victor. Pint sales benefit each organization through the Tin Cup Challenge.

## JULY

### 8 River Party, 3-7pm

New date and location! This year's River Party celebration will take place on the full moon and feature BBQ by the Knotty Pine, demos by Tenkara, and more! The party goes from 3-7pm. Bring your good cheer and your picnic gear (see details on page 7).

### 15 10th Annual Tin Cup Challenge

Celebrate a decade of non-profit philanthropy at the Driggs City Center with a fun run, activities, and more! (see details on page 7)

## AUGUST

### 4 Farms & Fish Reception, time/location TBA

This is an RSVP-only event to benefit FTR's Farms & Fish Campaign. Donors will enjoy a field demonstration and outdoor reception with locally sourced farm fare and refreshments. (see details on page 7)

### 21 Solar Eclipse

Wishing everyone in the valley safe and happy viewing! The FTR offices will be closed for this once-in-a-lifetime natural event.

Save the Date!  
2017 Summer Events

Stay tuned for more information about our FREE community floats on the Teton River by checking [www.tetonwater.org](http://www.tetonwater.org) and Facebook. Dates and times TBA!