



water lines

FALL/WINTER 2013-14



**Creating a
Legacy**



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Message from the President

My fly rods are still in the truck in anticipation of a few more days on the river. Sub-freezing temps overnight and the yellow aspens tell me we're headed into winter, signaling my final stretch as President of the Board of Friends of the Teton River. I've enjoyed my three years of service and hope there has been measurable contribution to my FTR legacy.

By all accounts, 2013 has been a notable year for FTR. Amy Verbeten, our executive director, will complete her first full year at the helm. Water Resources Director Sarah Rupp completed the first water transaction in our history with the Tetonia deal. Restoration Director Mike Lien and our seasonal intern Matt Devine made major strides in the fisheries research department, the Teton Creek restoration project and a large-scale project in the Canyon Creek watershed. Also of note, Mike and Sarah tied the knot this September. Development Director Anna Lindstedt had a successful year raising funds in a challenging economic environment and began the most important project of her life this fall with the birth of her daughter, Ava Autumn. In her second year at FTR, Quincy Liby took charge of events and outreach and raised the bar for connecting with our members and the community. Education Program Coordinator Anna Dwinnell initiated "Project Swallow," engaging children in science, technology, engineering, and math through connection with their local watershed. Finally, our overall financial health has improved by rightsizing our staff. We can now focus on a long-term goal of building a Legacy Fund. Specifically, the FTR Board has recently established a restricted fund through the auspices of the Community Foundation of Teton Valley, linked to the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, to leverage professionally managed investments.

As you learned in the spring newsletter edition, my wife, Tina, and I have selected FTR's Legacy Fund as one of the beneficiaries of my IRA. If you care for the future of FTR, our river, and fishery—as we do—join us in making a contribution that will help create a lasting legacy and healthy watershed.

Chuck Iossi
FTR Board President



Executive Director Amy Verbeten.
Photo by Amy Wright.

"I am more convinced
than ever that FTR has
exactly what it takes to
continue building a last-
ing legacy of watershed
protection."

FTR continues to build a legacy
of wild rivers, native trout, and
talented staff. Fisheries Techni-
cian Matt Devine, with a Teton
River Canyon Yellowstone
cutthroat trout. Photo by Mike
Macdonald.

A Message from the Executive Director

by Amy Verbeten

In the spring of 2007, just two weeks after being hired as Friends of the Teton River's education director, I was asked to facilitate a meeting of the Teton Creek stakeholders. The group was reviewing the first draft of a proposal to restore Teton Creek. The need was critical. Creekside property was eroding at more than a quarter of an acre per year, owners were informed that homes could not be insured due to flooding risks, and erosion-induced debris jams threatened to flood the town of Driggs each spring. But with an ambitious scope and a multi-million dollar price tag, the project seemed, to many, like a pipe dream, completely out of our league. Undaunted, FTR's late, founding executive director, Lyn Benjamin, stepped forward and agreed to take on the project.

This fall, one year into my tenure as executive director, heavy equipment is hard at work on Teton Creek. Thanks to Lyn's courage, combined with the tireless work of Restoration Program Director Mike Lien and Development Director Anna Lindstedt, the risk of catastrophic flooding in Driggs will be greatly reduced, 500+ cubic yards of sediment will be prevented from flowing into the Teton River each year, and fish habitat on the most productive spawning stream for Yellowstone cutthroat in the entire upper

watershed will be restored. By the time the project is complete, FTR will have invested more than \$2.5 million in private, state, and federal funds directly into our local economy.

I know that we still face great challenges in the Teton Watershed, including the very real threat of a new Teton Dam and an uphill battle to restore stream flow to Teton Creek and other tributaries. In the past, these challenges, too, may have seemed out of our league. But as I look at our achievements, and to the future of this organization, I am more convinced than ever that FTR has exactly what it takes to continue building a lasting legacy of watershed protection: Namely, strong leadership from an energized board and committed executive director; highly skilled, experienced staff in our development, restoration, stream flow, and education departments; ability to attract talented young leaders, like our fantastic 2013 Fisheries Field Technician, Matt Devine, and Membership and Outreach Coordinator, Quincy Liby; solid financial security; a commitment to investing in the future of the organization; and, perhaps most importantly, the support and encouragement of a community that is deeply dedicated—through fundraising contributions, volunteer work, and public participation—to building a lasting legacy of clean water, healthy streams, and resilient fisheries in the Teton Watershed.



Creating a New Legacy: Balancing the Needs of a River, Irrigators, and Communities

Teton Basin Water Leasing Program

by Sarah Rupp

Making it Happen

Friends of the Teton River is dedicated to restoring streamflow and improving water quality in the Teton River Basin. Over the course of the past decade, FTR and its partners have achieved unprecedented restoration results through the implementation of collaborative projects. This year, FTR completed the first ever water leases in the Teton River Basin and the first water leases for a non-listed fish species in the West.

A Balancing Act

Successful water management in Idaho's headwaters is dependent on finding a mutually beneficial balance between current and future water supplies, and the region's diverse needs for water in agriculture, communities, and rivers.

It's All Connected

The Teton River Basin is bounded by the Teton Mountains to the east and the Big Hole Mountains to the west, and interconnected by the Teton River and its tributaries. Long-term water management strategies will only be successful and can only be sustained if they address the needs of the basin as a whole.

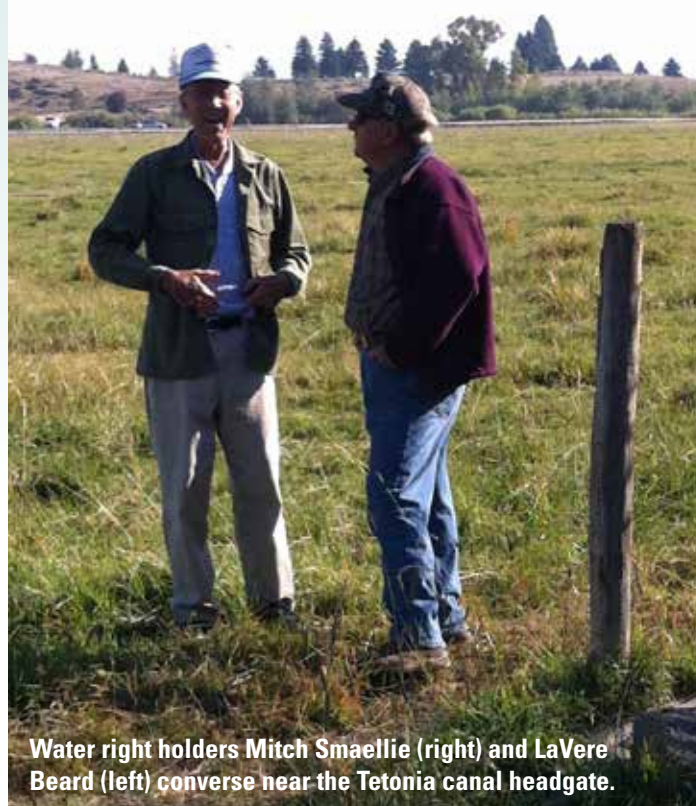
Leasing Water Rights in Teton Basin

FTR works in partnership with the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program to lease water rights from individual landowners and irrigation districts throughout the Teton River Basin. Water leased instream provides significant benefits to fish, wildlife, and riparian corridors, which serve to enhance land values, promote the recovery of native Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and increase water quality. In addition to the instream benefits, the lease satisfies state beneficial-use requirements that landowners not utilizing their water rights need to meet in order to prevent the water right from being forfeited. Water right holders that are actively utilizing their water rights are compensated based upon the historical net income associated with the water right (income from farming or ranching, for example).

You may lease all or part of your irrigation rights.

The lease options available to you include:

- Full season lease – water rights are leased instream for the full irrigation season
- Split season lease – water rights are used to irrigate part of a season and then leased for part of a season in the same year



Water right holders Mitch Smaellie (right) and LaVere Beard (left) converse near the Teton canal headgate.



First Instream Water Leases Completed in Teton Basin

This year, with support from the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program and the Idaho Water Resource Board, Friends of the Teton River completed four landmark projects, the first instream water leases in the upper Teton River Basin. Four water rights holders, including the City of Teton, Mitch Smaellie, Sam and Ella Beard, and LaVere Beard, leased their water rights to help restore 4.35 cfs of water to Spring Creek.

For generations, Spring Creek has helped sustain a robust agricultural economy. It has provided a reliable source of water for the irrigation of hay and the watering of stock for over a century. In fact, some of the first settlers to Teton Valley selected this part of the valley to be their home. In addition, Spring Creek historically provided excellent fish and wildlife habitat, and served as a valuable migratory corridor for a variety of fish and mammals. It wasn't that long ago that children of all ages could be found on the banks of Spring Creek catching large, fluvial Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) migrating up the creek to spawn. Now the creek is listed under the Clean Water Act for flow alteration (low flow conditions), sedimentation, and temperature, and

YCT are rarely found in it. Nearly all YCT have been replaced by non-native eastern brook trout and the occasional rainbow trout. This is yet another indication that the ecology of the Teton Valley is changing in response to land and water management decisions, as well as changes in historic precipitation patterns.

The water leases completed this year are a valuable first step in balancing the needs of a stream, irrigators, and a city. For The City of Teton and Mitch Smaellie, who were not actively irrigating, leasing their water rights provided the assurance that they would not be lost to forfeiture. For the Beard family, who historically generated one cutting of hay and then pastured in the aftermath, leasing their water rights provided an opportunity to generate income at a time when it is becoming more difficult to work the land. For Spring Creek, and the fish, wildlife, and riparian plants that rely upon it, the water leases will help address low flow conditions, sedimentation, and temperature issues currently plaguing the system.

It is safe to say that 2013 will be remembered by Friends of the Teton River as a year of breakthroughs and unprec-

edented progress in the flow restoration department. After five years of working to develop a water leasing program in the Teton River Basin, we've finally done it. More importantly, though, completion of these short-term, pilot leases demonstrates the potential of water transactions to be used as a valuable resource management tool by landowners throughout the region. The Teton River Basin Water Leasing Program is tailored to work with individuals on a voluntary basis to preserve and protect valuable fish and wildlife habitat, while simultaneously keeping land in production. At its best, the program has the potential to keep land working and rivers flowing. It's not easy to allocate scarce water resources in a way that accommodates agriculture, streams, and communities. Yet the Teton River Basin water leasing program provides water right holders with a new opportunity, and the chance to chart a new path into the future.

For more information about the Teton River Basin Water Leasing Program, or to learn how you can lease your water right, contact Friends of Teton River's Water Resources Director and Staff Attorney, Sarah Rupp. sarah@tetonwater.org or (208) 354-3871, ext. 11.

Canyon Creek Legacy: Working together for native trout

By Amy Verbeten



Above: Lower Canyon Creek, near its confluence with the Teton River. Photo by Staff.

Most people know Canyon Creek as a mysterious chasm crossed on Hwy. 33 en route to Rexburg, or perhaps as the lively little stream that flows past Green Canyon Hot Springs. A lucky few have fished for large Yellowstone cutthroat at its confluence with the Teton River Canyon. Many, however, are surprised to learn that this wild and remote stream, which spans more than forty-five river miles from its headwaters in the Big Hole Mountains to its confluence with the Teton, is a critical spawning stream for large, river-run (or fluvial) Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Historically, each spring, large numbers of native cutthroat made their way to the headwaters of Canyon Creek to spawn. However, as the land was settled and used for agriculture and recreation, numerous factors combined to drastically impact spawning runs. While a few fluvial fish are still able to make it up Canyon Creek to reproduce, their numbers have been severely reduced. Road building, beaver dam removal, and grazing produced sediment that clogged spawning gravels. Irrigation diversion dams and dewatered stream reaches blocked upstream movement of spawning adults and downstream migration of fry. Non-native brook trout, introduced for recreational fishing, devoured and out-competed native cutthroat.

Friends of the Teton River has been working with stakeholders on Canyon Creek to develop a suite of strategies that will improve conditions for Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Rather than focusing on a single issue, this group of landowners, irrigators, and state and federal government agencies is seeking to address a range of interrelated conservation goals, including removing

barriers that prevent fish migration; restoring degraded habitat; addressing water quality concerns; and, eventually, working with willing water right holders to re-water dry reaches during critical periods for fish. Long-term electrofishing sites, together with “interrogation sites” that track tagged fish, will monitor project success.

By the fall of 2013, the first steps toward reopening more than thirty-five miles of Canyon Creek to migrating fish will be completed, thanks to an irrigator willing to modify irrigation pumping structures. Farther upstream of the pump stations, the Lazy Triple Creek Ranch is working with Confluence Consulting and FTR to stabilize 1,650 feet of eroding stream bank, and restore water quality in the process. These projects have been made possible by funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation, National Forest Foundation, Western Native Trout Initiative, and Lazy Triple Creek Ranch.

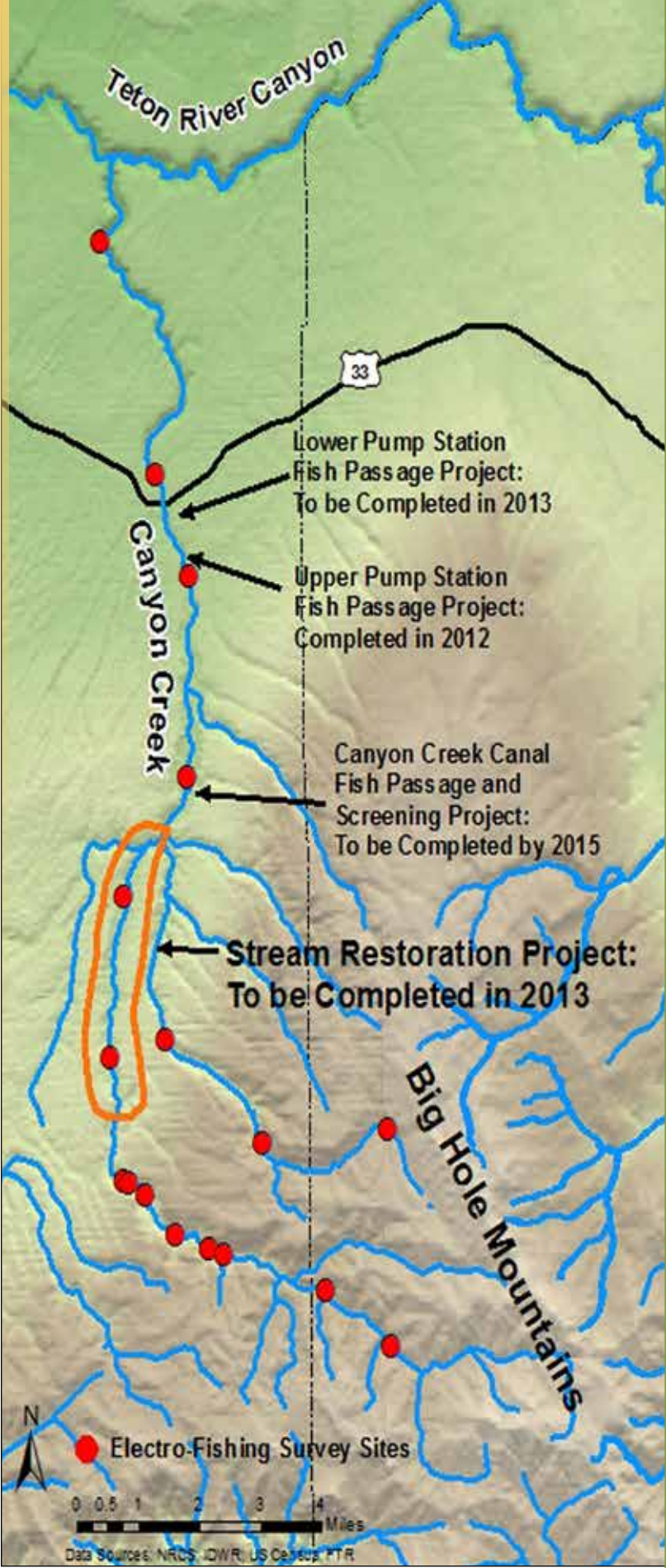


AFTER



BEFORE

In 2012, FTR worked with irrigator Conn Crapo to build a series of step pools that allow fish to migrate past this irrigation pump structure.



Above: Current and proposed future projects will restore many miles of habitat and passage on Canyon Creek.

Taking Care of Teton Creek in Perpetuity

By Amy Verbeten

Recent devastation in Colorado has prompted Friends of the Teton River members to ask whether similar floods could happen here. While the answer, unfortunately, is that floods can happen anywhere there’s water, FTR and Teton Creek stakeholders have been working together to create a legacy of reduced flood risk for Driggs and properties along Teton Creek.

The multi-million dollar Teton Creek Restoration Project, currently underway, will significantly reduce the potential for flooding. However, funds raised to date will only cover project construction for the most degraded, one-mile section of stream, located upstream of Cemetery Bridge. Funds to support long-term maintenance, and restoration in other stream reaches, have yet to be procured.

Bill Powell, a homeowner on Teton Creek, took on the task of researching long-term solutions for stream maintenance, flood protection, and restoration funding. Creating a Flood Control District (FCD) for Teton Creek was identified as the best way to do this. Idaho law specifies that FCDs may tax properties within the designated FCD boundary at a rate of .06 percent, or \$60 per \$100,000 worth of property. Based on current property values, the Teton Creek FCD would raise approximately \$18,000 per year, which can be matched by grants, thus potentially providing \$36,000 to \$40,000 annually.

Over the past year and a half, Powell and FTR presented the idea of forming an FCD to homeowner associations, landowners, the county commissioners, and the City of Driggs, most of whom have supported the idea. University of Idaho Law Professor Jerry Long worked with Powell and FTR to draft an FCD Petition, which officially requests the formation of the district. The petition, supported by more than 50 percent of registered voters who reside within the proposed district, was submitted to the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) in July.

If approved, the FCD would be administered by IDWR, and managed by individuals who live within the FCD boundary. For more information about the Teton Creek FCD, please contact FTR’s Water Resource Director and Staff Attorney, Sarah Rupp.



In the spring of 1981, Teton Creek spilled over the road at Cottonwood Corner, sending floodwaters into the City of Driggs. Photo by Mike Merigliano.

Citizen Science Takes Flight

by Anna Dwinell

I remember the first research project I ever worked on, and the feeling of meaning that came with it. My learning was authentic; I was contributing to relevant and up-to-date scientific research that was making a difference for our natural world. I was proud, engaged, and learned more than I ever could in the classroom. Unfortunately, this experience of real-world science application didn't happen until my sophomore year as an undergraduate.

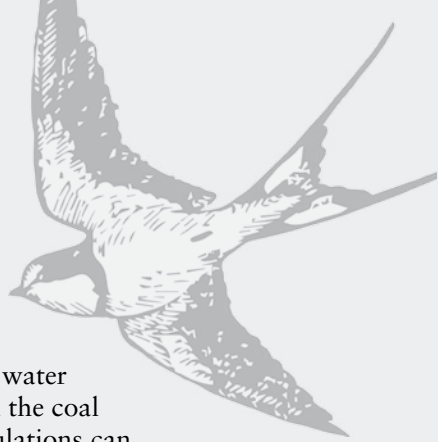
My desire to provide these types of research experiences for youth is what initially got me interested in K-12 education, and ultimately inspired me to work toward my master's degree. That was when I first heard the term "citizen scientist." Citizen science is a fast-growing paradigm where scientists and citizen volunteers work together to collect and interpret research data. Researchers benefit from the low cost of volunteer monitoring and expanded outreach of their projects. Volunteers benefit by engaging in relevant and meaningful research projects, while also connecting to their local place. Projects can be large and small, and vary widely based on their goals, from water quality monitoring to tracking pika populations.

In the spring, FTR partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to pilot and implement a citizen science program in Teton Valley. This project monitors populations of tree swallows across southeast Idaho,

using volunteer citizens to collect the data. Tree swallows are highly sensitive to water quality. Like "canaries in the coal mine," tree swallow populations can indicate the overall health of a watershed.

Through collaboration with private landowners, FTR helped U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists install forty tree-swallow nest boxes throughout Teton Valley, many of which will be closely monitored by the landowners. However, several of these boxes will be monitored by the third and fourth grade class at Teton Valley Community School. This will serve as our pilot program as we begin to implement citizen science programs in the classroom. This fall, FTR will work closely with Community School teacher Vanessa Bergmann, and develop a curriculum for the project that promotes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, while also aligning with Idaho's Common Core State Standards. Next spring, the students will continue to closely monitor the nest boxes and contribute to this regional research project.

The Tree Swallow Project will provide students with a unique and authentic educational experience by allowing them to actively participate in a real-world research project. FTR continues to enhance Teton Valley education in innovative ways, truly creating a legacy for years to come.



Teton River Canyons: Raising awareness through social media

Because of their remote location, limited access, and white-water sections, few people know just how extraordinary the Canyons of the Teton River really are. While remoteness is part of what makes the Canyons special, the downside is that a lack of public awareness could result in the loss of these unique and valuable stretches of the river.

This fall, Friends of the Teton River joined together with a coalition of landowners, non-profits, and fly fishing-related businesses to raise awareness of the Teton River Canyons and their economic and recreational value. The goal is to proactively generate public awareness and interest in the Teton River and its tributaries, and to help influence decision-makers to

consider alternatives to rebuilding Teton Dam. Through this project, we will be inviting YOU to help us gather compelling images and stories about the Teton River, its canyons, history, and the humans and wildlife that use it.

FTR believes that public awareness and participation are the keys to sustaining a legacy of wild places and native species in the Teton River Canyons. We hope you will join us in this effort!



1% for the Teton River Canyons provided important start-up funding for this project.

A Legacy of Drinking Water Protection for Teton County

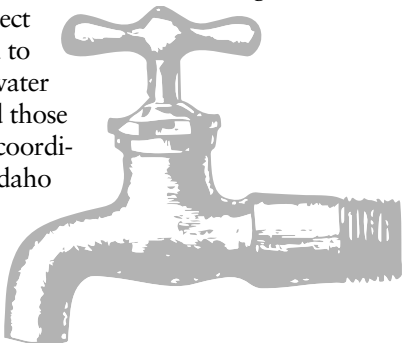
By Amy Verbeten



Representatives from Teton Valley's cities, county government, subdivisions, irrigation districts, public health district, and agricultural organizations, together with regional advisors, have been working to create a Source Water Protection Plan for Teton County, Idaho, which will protect our community's drinking water sources far into the future.

A Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP) is a voluntary effort, implemented by a community, to protect the wells and springs that provide drinking water to cities, subdivisions, schools, churches, and restaurants. Benefits of an SWPP include protection of public health; fiscal responsibility through coordination of efforts and avoidance of costly cleanup and treatment of contaminated water; and increased access to funding for public water systems.

At the recommendation of the planning team, Teton County's SWPP will focus primarily on community education about actions that can help to protect groundwater, such as regular maintenance of septic tanks, and proper disposal of household, commercial, and agricultural chemicals. The planning team has been working to improve communication among the various agencies and organizations that protect and manage land and water in the county, and to promote additional testing so that trends in water quality can be detected and the reasons behind those trends identified. Friends of the Teton River is coordinating this effort, thanks to a grant from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.



Get Involved! *

*Teton Canyon social media launch in Winter 2014

Invite your friends to connect with the Teton River Canyons educational campaign through social media links on **FACEBOOK, TWITTER, and GOOGLE +.**



Share your photos of Teton Canyon fishing, floating, hunting, and hiking adventures on an **INSTAGRAM** site that will be linked to the website.



Visit the project **WEBSITE**, which will serve as a central hub for information, stories, and images of the Teton River Canyons. Look for an announcement of the website launch this winter!

Thank You 2013 Donors!

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Creating A Legacy

Dear Friends,

This year, we have focused on a theme of “legacy” and what it means to create one with the work we’re doing in the watershed. By actively looking forward, toward ways to create our legacy, we will also be able to move toward a more sustainable and healthy future for our water resources and, ultimately, the next generation. We sincerely thank you for your contributions to this legacy and hope you will renew your support as we enter another year.

How are we creating a legacy for the Teton Watershed?

At FTR, we recognize that water plays an essential role in the lives and livelihood of our community. The work we do today to protect and improve these resources will have a positive impact that lasts well beyond our lifetime.

We work closely with a diverse group of stakeholders—agricultural producers, homeowners, and downstream neighbors—to better *manage and conserve water for a variety of needs, and for the future demands on this precious resource.*

We educate the community, of all ages, as a cornerstone of our work. By incorporating the core subjects of science, technology, engineering, and math at the K-12 level, and engaging adults on a variety of water-related topics, *we are cultivating a community of river stewards and informed decision makers.*

We use *cutting-edge technologies and a science-driven approach*, providing our regional and national partners with the information they need to help us conserve this “last best” refuge for native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

We develop appropriate protections and plans with our county and state partners that *safeguard our drinking water sources, wild river corridors, and fishery.*

We invest your contributions and grant dollars locally on priority projects that will have a *long-term impact* and the *most benefit* to our fishery, drinking water, and stream corridors.

It all started with you...

FTR was founded by a group of individuals like you, who believed that they could make a real difference in the health of their river and fishery. From this grassroots beginning, we have grown into an organization that is recognized for our impactful work at the regional and national levels.

Be a part of the legacy.

We all know that Teton Valley is a special place—that’s why we care about conserving it and its resources for the future. This is also why the Friends of the Teton River Board of Directors have recently opened a Legacy Fund with the Community Foundation of Teton Valley. Contributions to this fund will grow, untouched, so that the future dividends can be used to protect and restore our watershed for many generations to come. Look for more information about our Legacy Fund in 2014, or contact us if you would like more details.

This truly is a watershed worth preserving!

As we continue to meet the current challenges facing our watershed, help us to also create a legacy of clean water, healthy streams, and a thriving fishery, by making a year-end donation. Please use the enclosed envelope or contribute via our website, www.tetonwater.org. Your contribution will give us the resources and resolve we need to meet our goals today, while protecting our water resources for tomorrow. Your support has been, and will continue to be, a gift that will benefit us all.



Anna Lindete
Development Director



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Join us at Warbirds Café in Driggs, Idaho,
for our 6th annual "Wine for Water" wine
tasting & auction on
Wednesday, January 29, from 5-9pm.

The tasting will feature regional wines paired with Warbirds' delectable appetizers, and a silent auction offering wine selections that both the novice and connoisseur will enjoy, at prices that fit all budgets. All proceeds will benefit conservation of the Teton River fishery. Tickets are \$25/person in advance and \$30/person at the door. Space is limited, so reserve your ticket by calling the FTR office before they all fly out the door. (208) 354-3871

We have something for everyone
summer or winter...



fly guy to small fry...



Stop on by to pick up your FTR gear
for your friends & family. We have
new t-shirts, tech shirts, onesies,
hats, beanies, and more.
We want to see you in our gear!