



water lines

WINTER 2017/2018

Cultivating Community Voices





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Horn, President
Lee Holmes, Vice President
Kim Keeley, Secretary
Boots Allen
Chris Jensen
Jen Pierce
Dean Scheid
Gini Van Siclen

KEY PARTNERS

Bonneville Environmental Foundation
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Idaho Department of Water Resources
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service, Caribou-Targhee
National Forest
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

STAFF

Amy Verbeten, Executive Director
Anna Lindstedt, Development Director
Mike Lien, Restoration Director
Sarah Lien, Water Resources Director
Zena Wolcott-MacCausland,
Community Outreach Coordinator
Dawn Felchle, Office Manager

Cover Photo: Community partners and stakeholders
tour the Teton Creek Corridor Project.
Photo by Anna Lindstedt

Production: PowderMountainPress

Friends of the Teton River
18 N. Main Street, Suite 310
PO Box 768
Driggs, ID 83422
(208) 354-3871 info@tetonwater.org
www.tetonwater.org



Dear Friends,

As a young man growing up in the south end of Teton Valley, my favorite time of year was late spring and early summer. As the snow would recede from the valley floor every plant that could turn green would! I lived for the joy of warmer weather and the chance to get out into the fields with my favorite tractor. It didn't matter if it was the dark, early hours before school or after the last class bell rang, I knew where I wanted to be.

With a full tank of fuel and the radio turned up, there was nothing that could distract me from farming the rich, black dirt my family loves and cares for all season. I can distinctly remember many nights as the sun would fall behind the Big Hole Mountains and tractor lights would begin to appear from all of the neighboring farmers. At times I would count as many as eight tractors in the fields surrounding me. It was like we were in a race to get as much done as we possibly could in a short amount of time.

Now in 2017, many of these old time farmers are no longer around and the tractor lights have been replaced by porch lights in nearby fields. With change comes challenges, but it has also brought with it new neighbors and friends.

As a farmer I still have the opportunity to work in the fields. As the Teton County Farm Bureau president I also have the privilege to work with people from different counties and community groups, (including Friends of the Teton River) through the Teton Water Users Association. These past two years we have worked together to find ways to sustain and increase water levels in Teton Valley, which is something that will benefit farms and neighbors of all backgrounds.

I will admit there is some satisfaction in knowing that a portion of the rockiest fields I have ever farmed are now dotted with houses, and I will not have to move another line of irrigation pipe over them. All joking aside, farming is vital to the health of this community and our natural resources, and I am grateful for all of the new friends and working partners I have made by reaching out to my neighbors—old and new. I encourage everyone to do the same.

Thanks!

Stephen Bagley

Stephen Bagley
Teton County Farm Bureau President

A Message from the Executive Director



Executive Director, Amy Verbeten,
on the oars.

We Hear You!

The mission of Friends of the Teton River is to protect and restore the Teton River watershed. Like many conservation organizations, we are increasingly realizing that our most important focus, even before fish, water, and floodplains, needs to be the people who make this watershed their home. To that end, we have been making a concerted effort to reach out to you—our members and partners—to ask for your opinion, listen to your concerns and priorities, and align our work to reflect what you have said.

Through our process to create a drinking water protection plan for Teton County, we heard that many people knew that septic waste could pose a threat to our drinking water supply, but didn't know how and when to properly maintain septic tanks. In response, we created a Septic Incentive Program, providing homeowner education and a reimbursement to encourage residents to have their septic tank inspected and maintained every 3-5 years. We are raising funds to offer this program again.

We reached out to river users with a survey and questionnaire. We heard your concerns about increased use on the Teton River and the lack of safe parking at the Bates Road/Buxton Bridge access. Construction will begin soon on a new, safer river access. In the coming year we will be reaching out to you again in a concerted effort to begin a community-driven process of defining our hopes, concerns, goals, and priorities for managing recreational use on the Teton River.

We have spent a great deal of time listening to our local agricultural partners who are concerned about changing land use, water management, and hydrologic conditions. We have been actively engaging in partnerships that recognize the irreplaceable value that family farmers and ranchers provide to conservation values in our valley. We will continue to seek ways to share resources and expertise for mutual benefit.

Many of our donors have shared that they want to see more collaboration between conservation organizations. We responded by participating in the Teton Creek Collaborative, which has been wildly successful in protecting natural resources, restoring habitat, increasing access, and redefining development patterns in the Teton Creek Corridor.

So, for all of you who have reached out with your ideas, concerns, and input: We hear you. We thank you. We're here for you. Please keep it up, because we can't do any of this without you!

Amy Verbeten

Amy Verbeten
FTR Executive Director





Project Updates

Teton Creek

For a few weeks this fall Teton Creek once again experienced a “hatch” of large yellow machines, as equipment from MD Nursery and its contractors performed the next phase of stream restoration work. In 2017 Friends of the Teton River and its partners stabilized more than 1,100 feet of streambank and planted 2,600 native willows, resulting in a reduction of 225 tons of sediment per year (the equivalent to 12 dump truck loads) and increasing fish habitat in the project area by 60 percent. This work has also helped to restore a healthy, functioning floodplain in the project area.

Since 2006, FTR has worked with Teton Creek home and landowners, as well as city, county, state, and federal partners to restore the sections of Teton Creek that have been most severely impacted by development activities. More recently this work has become part of the broader Teton Creek Corridor Project.

Alterations to Teton Creek’s stream channel—performed in the 1990s in order to develop along the creek’s banks—caused severe erosion, loss of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout spawning habitat, and degraded water quality. These alterations also impaired the creek’s ability to transport sediment and to convey high flows, radically increasing the threat of flooding and placing more than 250 buildings within the Teton Creek floodplain and hundreds of additional buildings, including much of the City of Driggs, at risk.

FTR’s goal with this work is to re-establish Teton Creek as a dynamic, functioning stream channel that supports a robust fish, wildlife, and plant community. We also aim

to mitigate flood risk by protecting and restoring as much of the natural floodplain as possible. Permanently protected floodplains act as “shock absorbers” that reduce the severity, frequency, and cost of damage that can be expected when streams naturally flood each year. While flooding itself cannot be prevented, areas that have functioning, undeveloped floodplains see the least amount of damage when significant flood events do occur, reducing the impact to individual landowners and taxpayers.

Many thanks to project funders and partners, including Teton Valley Trout Unlimited, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, the Teton Creek Flood Control District, and landowners including Teton Regional Land Trust, Ball Ventures, Coker Ellsworth, and Tuff Holding Corporation. Significant matching funds for the project were provided by MD Nursery.

“This restoration project is important to me not only as a homeowner, but as a community member. It will be nice to have it look and act like a natural creek again, for the [Teton Creek] residents and for everyone.”
Bill Belk, Teton Creek Flood Control District Commissioner





Construction Ramps Up at Bates Bridge

The old single lane ramp at Bates Bridge will be replaced in 2018.

Construction of a new boat ramp at the Bates Road Access point will begin in 2018, as a part of the improvements for this popular Teton River access. Teton County and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) are partnering to fund and install the improvements, which will include a new cement boat ramp, a new parking area and turn-around, and vault toilets. Originally slated for 2017, the project was delayed by high water, permitting delays, and the early onset of winter weather. However, “Idaho Fish and Game continues to be excited about this project, and looks forward to completing it in 2018” says Regional Fisheries Manager Dan Garren.

Exact construction dates will be dictated by spring weather and stream flow. Updates will be posted at Teton River public access points and on the Teton County website www.tetoncountyidaho.gov; and posted on FTR’s Facebook Page and distributed via our e-newsletter, as well as by project partners.

Fisheries Findings

Matt Hively, Friends of the Teton River’s fisheries technician, likes to claim that he has the best job in the organization, and he may be right! Matt spent the summer hiking, floating, and fishing the Teton River Watershed in the name of science, collecting the data that guides FTR’s restoration work. This data is also used by our partner agencies to make science-based decisions about fisheries management.



Fisheries technician Matt Hively holds a radio antennae to track tagged Brown Trout

FTR staff will spend the winter working with our science and agency partners to analyze the data collected in 2017 and draw conclusions. Preliminary indications suggest that the Teton River fishery continued to thrive in 2017, and that native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout populations in the upper Teton River remain healthy. One point of concern, however, is that brown trout saw a significant increase in population and size class distribution in 2015, and that trend seems to be continuing. In response, FTR is partnering with Idaho Department of Fish and Game to conduct a telemetry study to determine how Brown Trout are utilizing the upper Teton River, providing clues about when and where they are spawning, and how they may be affecting the Yellowstone Cutthroat population.

FTR has also been working with scientists and fisheries managers from across the region to analyze data collected over the past 15 years of fisheries research. This is a huge task, as we have one of the most robust, watershed-wide data sets that exists for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. One of the preliminary findings we are most excited about is an initial indication that dramatic improvements in the Teton Watershed’s Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout population over the past 15 years may be directly attributable to conservation projects. Stay tuned for more!

Protect It & Inspect It!

FTR Pilots \$eptic Incentive Program

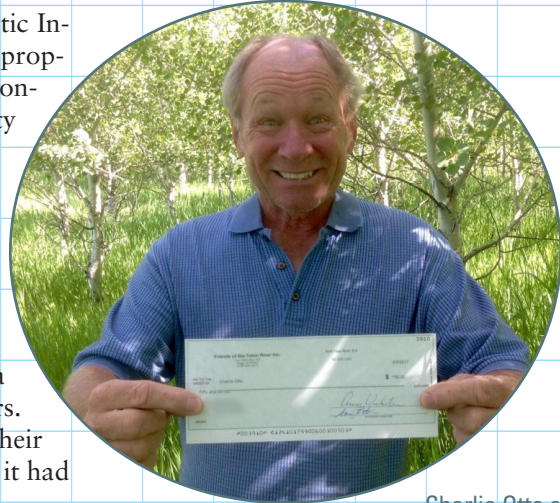
This past summer Friends of the Teton River piloted a new Septic Incentive Program to encourage Teton County, Idaho, residents to properly maintain their septic tanks in order to prevent groundwater contamination. This incentive program was part of the Teton County WaterWise Initiative, a project funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The program had an enthusiastic public response. FTR issued all fifty of the available \$50 reimbursements to residents who had their septic systems serviced.

Rebates were available to Teton Valley residents who had a septic system that had not been maintained within the last three years. Regular septic tank maintenance is recommended every three to five years to reduce the cost of repairing or replacing a malfunctioning septic system, which can cost thousands of dollars. Approximately fifty percent of participants did not know when their septic tank was last serviced, but for those who did have a record, it had been anywhere from three to twenty-four years.

"After twenty-three years of use, it's comforting to know my septic system is now cleaned out and should work well for many more years. Thanks to the Friends of the Teton River rebate program for helping out with the cost. I decided to donate the rebate amount back to their organization at Tin Cup for a win-win," says Charlie Otto, who was the first participant in the program.

"The Septic Incentive Program is vital to raising awareness of proper septic tank maintenance and inspection. Proper and regular septic tank maintenance and inspections not only saves money in the long run (all systems need to be maintained!), but just as importantly, go a long way toward helping protect our ground water, streams and precious Teton River," said Knox Van Zandt, owner of Valley Septic & Drain in Driggs.

After reimbursements issued to the first fifty participants in this pilot year, seventy-five more community members expressed interest and requested paperwork to participate in the program. Due to local support and a continued need for individual septic system maintenance, FTR is seeking funds to continue this program in the future.



Charlie Otto shows off his reimbursement check.



Valley Septic makes a "house call."

\$400

average cost of
septic pumping service

3,500+

number of individual septs in Teton
County* (*estimate based on 2010 Census)

36%

of Idahoans use septic systems
to dispose of household
wastewater, according to the Idaho
Department of Environmental Quality.

We couldn't do our work without YOU!

FTR started seventeen years ago with the financial support of a few individuals. We have grown our budget and our impact from \$50,000 in that first year to a combined (projects and operating expenses) annual budget of more than \$750,000 that supports the community programs and projects we accomplish each year—the projects that are highlighted in the pages of this newsletter.

What remains the same is the amazing and generous support our community gives to these efforts. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without YOUR support. Donor support means more leverage to bring grant dollars into Teton Valley and invest them with local businesses, contractors, and family farms. We are also proud of our ability to use private funding and grant dollars in a fiscally sound, efficient, and impactful way—making your investment go that much further for healthy streams, a thriving fishery, and this community that we love.

Why do you give to FTR?

CHRIS JENSEN

It gives me great pleasure to donate my time to Friends of the Teton River as a board member. FTR is the whole package: education, stewardship, science, protection, planning, and community building. Their most important work will protect the Teton River for future generations, but their mission extends beyond the river to serve our entire community and ecosystem.

DAVE ABBOTT

I've always tried to live by the philosophy of leaving things in better shape than I found them. The Teton River is an amazing fishery and a precious resource that I've enjoyed for 12 years...and plan to enjoy for many more. Financially supporting the work of FTR gives me great confidence that the Teton will be left in better shape than I found it and that generations beyond me will enjoy the same. Thank you, FTR!

40%

of ~\$400K
Annual Operating
Budget

Amount of FTR'S **annual operating budget** that is donated by YOU! (and other private donors)



200+

Donors **give to FTR annually** through the Tin Cup Challenge. This is almost **one-half of all donors** each year.

1:1\$

Ratio by which FTR leverages **donor gifts** to match them with **grant dollars**.

FARMS & FISH CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

Thanks to generous donors* and \$15,000 in Patagonia grant funding, FTR raised \$50,000 for the Farms & Fish Initiative. This money will provide required matching funds for \$765,000 in federal grant money, enabling FTR to provide technical support, incentives, and infrastructure to our agricultural partners to improve water quality, soil health, and conservation-minded farming in Teton Valley. Farms & Fish Initiative projects will be implemented over the next three years, 2018-2020.

**Donors to this program will be recognized in our FY 2017 Annual Report.*

Come in. WE'RE **OPEN**

FTR

OPEN HOUSE

Friday, December 1

4:30-6:30 PM

@ the FTR office next door
to Tatanka Tavern

FREE food & beverage

**RAFFLE*
SHOP
& MEET**

FTR HOLIDAY SALE

WITH FRIENDS & OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS

*WIN a
20-WEEKEND SKI PASS
to JACKSON HOLE
TICKETS \$10/EA
purchase in-person or
@ www.tetonwater.org

CONTACT US:

Friends of the Teton River
PO Box 768
Driggs, ID 83422
208.354.3871
donate by mail or online:
www.tetonwater.org

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Driggs, ID
Permit #8



RIVER NOTES

On the day before the eclipse, we took our visiting family members on a float down the Teton River. There were 14 of us total—most of whom had never paddled down a river—and quite the armada of boats. Near the end of the float, we rounded a bend to find four bull moose standing in the river! The moose seemed to enjoy ‘showing off’ their large antlers, and they remained just feet away from us as we all quietly floated by. For our visitors, seeing these moose was just as exciting as the eclipse the next day (see photo above).

– Chris & Jenny Jensen

During an FTR Interpretive Float this summer, four moose walked by us at the boat launch. Then when we stopped for the entomology talk, a cow moose and her calf foraged while listening intently about Teton River bugs.

–Dave Beach

My favorite sighting this summer was a family of otters swimming and playing in the water on the upper Teton River. You don’t get to see them very often around here, so it was a real treat.

–Karen Scheid

On an exploratory canoe paddle during spring run-off, our family watched an acrobatic porcupine clutching a bush overhanging the river. He blended right in as a tangle of quills and willow branches. We half-expected him to fall in, but he somehow hung on tight.

– Anna Lindstedt

BON VOYAGE & WELCOME

FTR wishes the following staff well and welcomes the newcomers joining our team



ALLISON MICHALSKI, (former) Outreach Coordinator

“I am so thankful for my time with this incredible organization, its talented staff, and all of the many wonderful friends of the Teton River. I continue to look forward to seeing, supporting, and enjoying all of FTR’s amazing work in the watershed.”



SHANNON BRADY, (former) Education Coordinator

“Over the past three years, I have enjoyed getting to know and work with so many students, teachers, partner organizations, and volunteers as the FTR Education Coordinator. I hope that our experiences together have inspired a lasting sense of stewardship for this watershed.”

ZENA WOLCOTT-MACCAUSLAND, Community Outreach Coordinator



DAWN FELCHLE, Office Manager

