



water lines

WINTER 2021



Twenty Years of Watershed Conservation



Gini on the Teton River

Our Next Twenty Years

Dear Friends,

Our family visited Teton Valley for many years while our sons were growing up, and in 2015, my husband Clint and I made it our home. Shortly thereafter, I met FTR's Executive Director Amy Verbeten at a nonprofit workshop. She sat down beside me, introduced herself and her organization, and then asked about me. When I responded that I was a "nonprofit nerd," she exclaimed, "Oh, I've been looking for one of those!" Amy then explained how FTR works collaboratively to take care of our water and fish and to keep working lands working, and I was hooked. I also perceived that FTR was at an interesting time in its development and thought that stewarding it through the next few years would be very rewarding. So, I signed on as a board member in 2016, served as treasurer, and now I am the new board president.

FTR is indeed at a very interesting and crucial juncture as we begin our next twenty years. Some of you have been a part of our success and helped us get here over the past two decades, some (like me) have only recently called Teton Valley home, and for those reading our newsletter for the first time—welcome. No matter when you became a friend, partner, or member of this organization, our focus now is to take advantage of the many conservation opportunities before us and ensure that we are here for the long-term. Our mission demands nothing less. We are immensely grateful for your participation and support and we look forward to working with you to take care of this amazing watershed!

Gini Van Siclen

Gini Van Siclen, FTR Board President



Aquifer recharge gallery show



Watershed monitoring



Hog canal upgrades



Friends of the Teton River

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Anna Lindstedt, Grants & Communications
Hannah Orcutt-Mook, Philanthropy
Mike Lien, Fisheries Restoration & Research
Max Lewis, Fisheries Technician
Sarah Lien, Water Policy
Zena Wolcott, Community Education
Dawn Felchle, Operations

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KEY PARTNERS

Bureau of Reclamation
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Department of Lands
Idaho Department of Water Resources
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Teton Water Users Association
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Forest Service (Caribou-Targhee)
Wyoming Game and Fish

Expanding Conservation Opportunities



Amy Verbeten has served as FTR's executive director since 2012, with five years as the organization's education director. Amy's talents for collaboration and communication are well-recognized by our myriad of partners. Her love of community and locally-raised food are only rivaled by spending time with her family on or near the water.

For nearly twenty years, Friends of the Teton River has been working together with our community to protect and restore the Teton River Watershed. Thanks to a best-in-class staff, dedicated partners, and our committed and generous benefactors, we have been able to realize tremendous success over these two decades in river and stream conservation, collaborative conservation, community education, cutting edge fisheries research, and native fish restoration. Together with you, our community, we've made things happen that seemed like impossible dreams when we launched in 2001.

Furthering this legacy and expanding on current conservation and restoration projects takes commitment and focus. It takes science, creative thinking, and the ability to build trust and strong partnerships across groups that sometimes see each other as problems rather than solutions. And it has always taken committed and generous donors, like you, who share these values.

As we look forward to the next two decades, we have a clear and focused vision for the future.

The heart of our organization is our capable, committed staff. These incredibly dedicated, passionate, and skilled people who serve our mission are our greatest asset. Our staff retention rates are among the best in the business, and we intend to keep it that way.

The core of our mission is to implement practical on-the-ground solutions to improve our watershed with and for our community. We are embarking on projects that have been developed with local partners and will have a lasting impact on our watershed.

Top priority projects include:

- Connecting habitat in the immense Canyon Creek drainage for spawning native cutthroat trout;
- Reducing the risk of catastrophic flood damage by continuing to restore the Teton Creek channel and floodplain, with homeowners and local government;
- Increasing water availability and flows for people and fish through aquifer recharge and irrigation infrastructure improvements;
- Demonstrating how scientists, farmers, anglers, and communities can come together to address and solve issues affecting water quality and quantity in a changing climate;
- Creating a community-driven plan for responsible recreation on the Teton River, alongside agencies, business partners, and river users; and
- Engaging with you, our community, and our funding partners to ensure that Friends of the Teton River will remain an effective force for conservation in Teton Valley for years to come.

We are excited for what lies ahead. We are confident that we will continue to build upon our first twenty years, and that the return on your investment—in our watershed and our work—will continue to grow year after year, creating a legacy of clean water, healthy streams, and thriving wild fishery that outlasts us all.

Yours in rivers and conservation,

Amy Verbeten

Expanding What's Possible



What would happen if all the water were restored to a creek after one hundred years?

This is just what irrigators and Friends of the Teton River aim to find out through a two-year pilot project that will increase stream flows in Canyon Creek by as much as 60 cubic feet per second (cfs).

Canyon Creek is a wild and remote tributary to the Teton River Canyon. Its headwaters and most of its 45 stream miles lie within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Among the tributaries in the Teton Watershed, Canyon Creek is a major focus for restoration efforts due to its valuable high-elevation habitat, importance as a Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) spawning tributary, and historic (as well as potential) productivity as a fishery. It is one of the few YCT strongholds in the entire Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem that still has an intact spawning run.

FTR has been working with willing water users and landowners on Canyon Creek for a decade. From 2010-2015, FTR completed several projects to improve fish passage, connectivity, habitat, and stream function. These projects include building fish-friendly step-pools and structures at three points of diversion and stabilizing 1,400 feet of eroding stream banks. Together, these projects re-opened 35 miles of habitat to fish migrating to pristine reaches on the national forest.

The Canyon Creek Canal Company operates a large, century-old concrete canal system 10 miles upstream from the confluence with the Teton River, located adjacent to the Green Canyon campground. Historically, 60 cfs of water was diverted into Canyon Creek Canal to irrigate more than 10,000 acres of valuable farm ground. In addition, the canal company established pump stations in the 1970s at four other locations to help deliver irrigation water to their crops. With aging canal infrastructure and a desire to restore creek flows while

FTR completed a series of step-pools near the Canyon Creek Canal in 2016 to enhance fish passage to the upper reaches of the drainage.

developing alternative points of diversion, the Canyon Creek water users agreed to test a different way of doing things. This summer, they agreed to close the gates at their main diversion and let the water flow in the creek to the pump sites further downstream, ultimately restoring ten miles of natural creek flow.

Throughout the two-year test run, FTR is collecting stream temperature, fisheries, and water use data that will be used to develop a cost-effective, long-term flow restoration strategy that will be a win-win for farmers and fish. Working toward positive ecological outcomes while also maintaining a water supply to support agricultural needs is a tricky balance that requires communication, ingenuity, and trust among the people willing to try something different. This is what makes the effort on Canyon Creek a “once-in-a-century” opportunity.

This work is made possible by funding through the Bureau of Reclamation, the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program, and the Idaho Water Resource Board.



Meet Sarah Lien, Water Resource Director

In her ten years with FTR, Sarah has developed water policy, management strategies, and incentives for increasing water supply and reliability.



Support Canyon Creek with your donation, see the back cover to GIVE.

Expanding Partnerships



Buxton Restoration

Starting with Science

Years before the conservation of the now-named Buxton River Park, FTR had identified this stream reach as a high priority for restoring healthy instream and riparian habitat. Idaho Department of Fish and Game fisheries survey data showed that sections of the Teton River just upstream of the Bates Bridge have trout densities that increased nearly 900% between 2003-2017, from 420 trout/mile to 3,867 trout/mile. Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) densities increased from 14 YCT/mile to a remarkable 936 YCT/mile, during this same time period.

Assessment & Planning

The fisheries data revealed that the river section downstream of Bates Bridge is not as productive a fishery. This reach lacks riparian vegetation and contributes high amounts of sediment to the river, which does not provide healthy or desirable habitat for trout. With this information, FTR worked with Biota Research and Consulting to complete a Geomorphic Assessment to identify specific areas of high erosion and degraded habitat for improvement. Using this assessment, Biota and FTR developed a restoration plan to provide cleaner spawning gravels, improve water quality, and create better habitat conditions for native trout.

Importance of Partnerships

Projects like this one take the support of community partners, landowners, contractors, and management agencies. These projects require long-term planning, which can be challenging for fundraising. Significant funding is also required to pay for equipment, supplies, and people, and it takes years to raise these funds through grant applications and donations.

As this project went from concept to construction, Robert and Morgan Piquet of PK Land and Cattle began working on a plan to restore the stream bank across the river from the access site.

After years of planning and fundraising, on-the-ground stream restoration work at the Buxton River Park began in 2020 to stabilize and replant 610 feet of streambank downstream from the boat ramp—but we still have more work to do!

The way FTR approaches watershed restoration—through long-term scientific research, careful planning, and intentional partnerships—has had measurable conservation impact on the Teton Watershed, and is establishing new standards for native fish restoration work. How we work (and work together) will continue to improve conditions for people and native fish for decades to come.

The first phase of the Buxton stream restoration work was made possible by funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation, and Teton County, Idaho (in-kind materials).



Meet Mike Lien,

Fisheries Research and Restoration Director

Mike is FTR's longest serving staff member of 18 years, which he has spent in almost every corner of the watershed. He stays active by chasing his twin girls around or chasing surf waves outside the Teton Region.



Support Teton River Restoration with your donation, see the back cover to GIVE.

Our Last 20 Years



1 A diverse group of fly fishers, farmers, scientists, and citizens formed FTR in 2001 over concerns about declining water quality and the trout fishery. Lyn Benjamin served as the executive director for the first decade, laying scientific and collaborative groundwork for the years ahead.

2 Without much existing data and lots to learn, FTR established monitoring programs to investigate causes for declines in watershed health. FTR's surface water quality program started in 2001, and continues at twelve established sites, with additional locations for monitoring stream temperature and flows.

3 FTR began a dedicated education program in 2003, with the belief that watershed stewardship is cultivated through sharing knowledge. Early on, FTR hosted field trips and developed a K-12 curriculum for students to engage in hands-on science. This program has grown to engage 500 students and 100 community members in watershed education programs annually.

4 The Teton River is one of the last best strongholds for native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT). Populations declined rapidly in the late 1990s, to as few as a dozen trout per mile. Through FTR's targeted restoration and conservation efforts, native cutthroat have made an unprecedented comeback, rebounding to more than 1,000+ YCT per mile in some places.

5 FTR is recognized regionally and nationally for our scientific rigor and innovative fisheries research. Since 2010, FTR has tagged more than 5,022 adult (fluvial) trout with a unique coded transponder that has helped identify when and where YCT migrate and spawn.

6 FTR is not even half the size of similarly accomplished watershed groups. We collaborate with state and federal agencies, landowners, business owners, municipalities, and other non-profits to achieve big projects together.

7 One of these projects is the Teton Creek Corridor Project and stream restoration. FTR started working with residents in 2006 to restore a mile of stream channel that was bulldozed during illegal development.

8 Now, almost two miles of the stream channel and floodplain have been restored, with more than \$4 million invested in local businesses and contractors. FTR is working with the City of Driggs to secure grant funds that will continue the restoration through impacted at-risk areas.

9 Flowing and connected stream corridors provide fish and wildlife habitat and a valuable amenity for local residents. FTR's stream flow restoration program is providing these connections longer in the season, with improvements on Badger, South Leigh, Teton, and Trail Creeks.

10 Fish passage projects and irrigation diversion improvements provide trout with a connected route into tributaries and spawning grounds, without risk of entrapment. FTR has completed 14 such projects, with the help of local irrigators and water users, creating a win-win solution for farmers and fish.

11 The Farms & Fish Initiative began in 2017 as a joint effort between FTR and Teton Valley farmers and ranchers to improve water quality and quantity and soil health. It started with the purchase of a no-till drill and has expanded to cover crop and conservation farming methods and an aquifer recharge program.

12 The Aquifer Recharge Program incentivizes flood irrigation of spring run-off to replenish groundwater resources. This water slowly seeps into spring creeks and the Teton River in the hot, dry summer months when farmers and fish need it most.

13 Much of our stream restoration work over the past 15 years has been focused on tributary streams, with thirty-two stream restoration projects completed, totaling an estimated 6.5 miles and 14.6 riparian acres restored. FTR now has some mainstream Teton River projects in the works for 2021 and beyond.

14 Teton Valley has grown a lot in twenty years, just as we have. With your support, FTR will continue to work together with our community to conserve this special river we love.



WILL STUBBLEFIELD

Expanding Our Knowledge

In the summer of 2020, the FTR field staff headed to the headwaters to assess native trout populations. With Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) numbers dwindling in the late 1990s, FTR and agency partners ambitiously set out to collect the most detailed dataset to date for native and non-native trout in the tributaries. FTR has repeated this study effort every five years (2005-2020) to monitor changes in trout populations and gauge the effectiveness of projects aimed at improving the fishery.

During the summer of 2020, our fisheries crew and volunteers visited fifty-six of the one-hundred-thirty-three established sites, focusing on tributaries flowing out of the Teton Mountain Range. These west-slope tributaries are some of the best strongholds for cutthroat and are critical spawning habitat.

The crew hiked 150 miles this summer, sampling creeks as far south as Trail Creek, along Teton pass, and as far north as Bitch and Badger Creeks. Access to the streams is rugged and data collection is a challenging prospect. Like so many things in 2020, FTR's summer field work experienced its fair share of hurdles due to COVID-19, but with protocols in place and an eager fisheries crew, we got into the tributaries once the snow melted.

The Teton River Canyon tributaries have some of the highest cutthroat densities (native trout per mile) in the watershed and anywhere in the remaining range for YCT, due to quality habitat and stream connectivity, which is only getting better thanks to prioritized restoration efforts. In the late summer, FTR joined the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to electrofish the river downstream of the Canyon Creek confluence. The survey found trout densities of 1,229 YCT/mile in that stretch of river, up from 389 YCT/mile in 2015—with credit going to significant habitat, fish passage, and stream flow improvements FTR and Canyon Creek stakeholders have completed in the last 5-7 years.

Streams are surveyed using a backpack electrofishing unit, allowing field staff to collect and study trout in remote environments. The bulky electrofishing unit weighs in at 30 pounds and uses a wand, or anode, to pass an electric current through the stream, temporarily stunning the fish. As the crew leader moves upstream they are followed by netters, who net stunned fish and assist with collecting measurements and genetic data, before the trout are returned to the stream unharmed.

The crew also carried heavy gear high into the Teton mountains to assess the conditions of our headwater trout populations. Surveys at the headwaters of North and South Leigh Creeks required hours-long hikes. At those alpine sites, we found healthy populations of YCT. Those fish, high in the wilderness, inhabit some of the least disturbed habitat in their native range.

Trail Creek, which flows down from Teton pass and through Victor, is dominated by non-native Eastern Brook Trout. Generally, Brook Trout displace and out-compete YCT in tributaries where they are present, including Moose, Trail, Fox, and Darby Creeks.

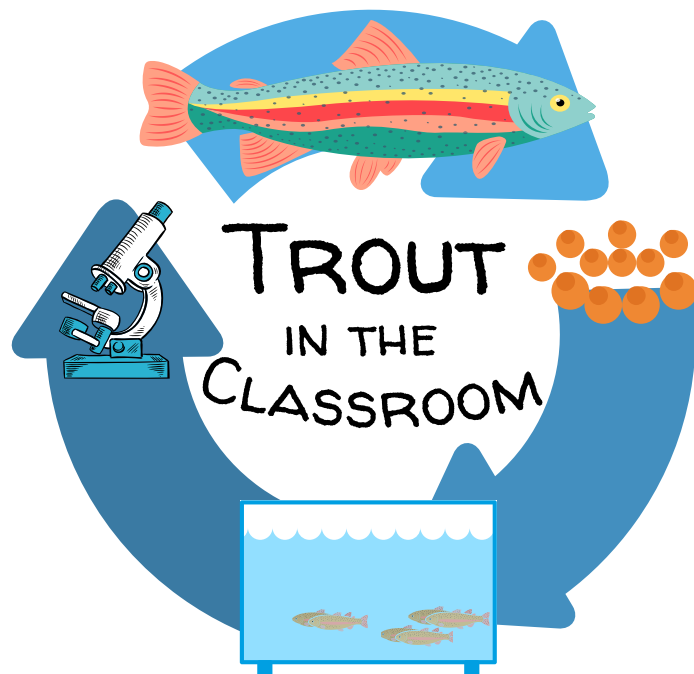
Painstaking monitoring efforts keep tabs on how native and non-native trout populations are changing, allowing FTR to spend our time and funding wisely on the highest priority conservation efforts.



Meet Max Lewis, FTR Fisheries Technician

Max joined the team in 2020. He has previously worked for Trout Unlimited and Wyoming Game and Fish. FTR is thrilled to have snagged this talented addition to the staff.

Sharing Knowledge



Each spring since 2009, classrooms throughout Teton Valley raise rainbow trout, as part of a program called Trout in the Classroom. In early January, grade levels ranging from kindergarten to high school receive their trout eggs from an Idaho Department of Fish and Game hatchery and take care of them until early spring when they are ready to be released into a local pond. Over the course of a few months, students watch as their eyed eggs grow into alevins and start squirming in the gravel in the bottom of their tank and eventually start swimming as fry. FTR provides curriculum and program guidance for teachers and students to take care of their trout like making daily observations, learning about specific habitat require-

ments, and learning about trout anatomy—external and internal! Trout in the Classroom will be up and running in March this year. Seven tanks, supplies, and trout eggs have been made possible each year thanks to a partnership of FTR, IDFG, and the Teton Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited.

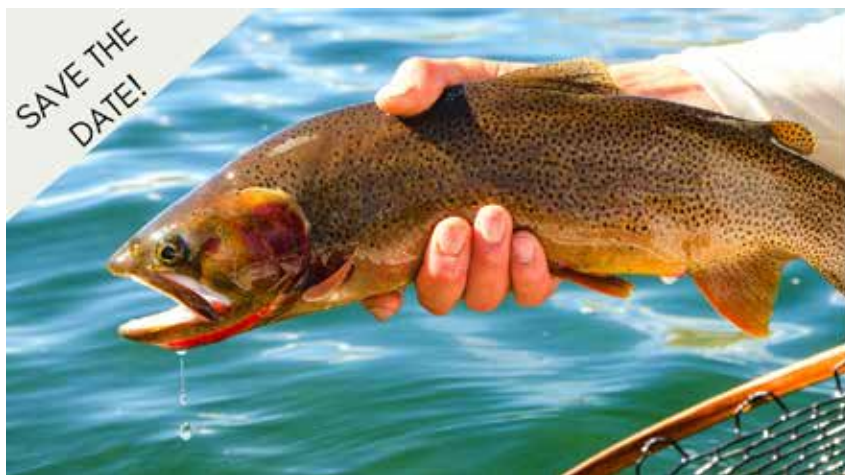


Meet Zena Wolcott, Community Education

Zena joined FTR in 2017 to develop a new era of community education programs at FTR. She grew up on her family's dairy farm in Vermont, and brought her love and knowledge of environmental science and the outdoors with her to the mountain West.



Support our Fisheries and Education Program with your donation, see the back cover to GIVE.



State of the Fishery Update

JOIN US FOR A VIRTUAL PRESENTATION AND Q&A FOCUSED ON FTR'S 2020 TRIBUTARY SURVEY RESULTS.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14TH NOON-1 PM

RSVP ONLINE:
[TETONWATER.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/EVENTS](https://tetonwater.org/get-involved/events)

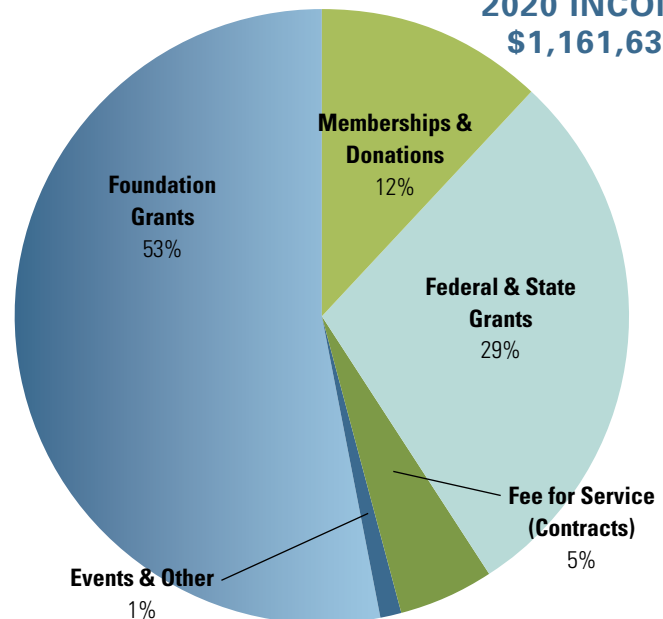
FY 2020 Financials July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:

Federal and State Grants Assistance	\$335,670	29%
Membership and Donations	\$146,632	12%
Foundation Grants	\$612,677	53%
Fee for Service (Contracts)	\$57,260	5%
Special Events (Net of expense)	\$4,876	<.5%
Other (Bank interest, merchandise sales)	\$4,520	<.5%
Total Revenue and Support	\$1,161,635	

Friends of the Teton River raised more than \$1.1 million in total revenue and support in FY 2020, with the majority of funds (86 percent) going to on-the-ground projects and programs, including stream restoration projects and fisheries research, water quality and soil health monitoring, the Farms & Fish Initiative, aquifer recharge, and community education efforts. Revenues were earned from individual donors and events, federal and state grants, foundation support, and fee-for-service contracts.

2020 INCOME
\$1,161,635



EXPENSES:

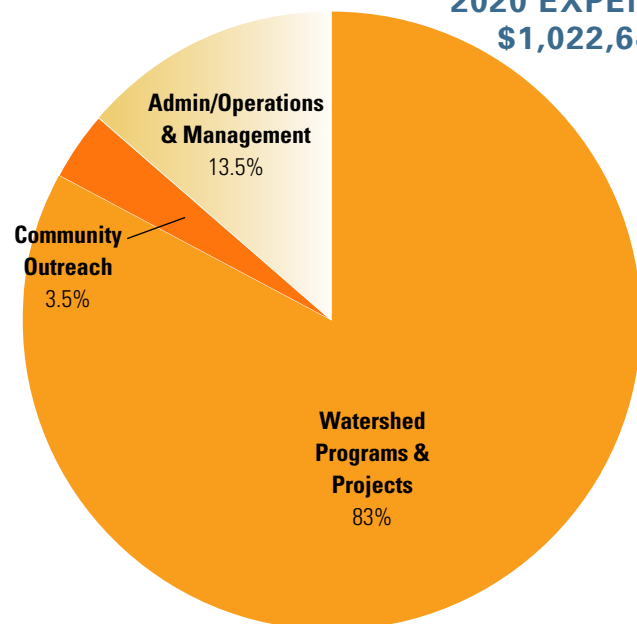
Watershed Projects & Programs	\$846,947	83%
Community Outreach	\$35,073	3.5%
Operations & Program Management	\$140,621	13.5%
Total Expenses	\$1,022,641	

	Unrestricted	Restricted*	Total
FY 2019 Net Assets at End of Year	\$107,895	\$179,449	\$341,600
Change in Net Assets	\$31,728	\$107,267	\$138,995
FY 2020 Net Assets at End of Year	\$139,623	\$286,716*	\$426,338

* Restricted Net Assets held at the end of FY 2020 will be spent on specific programs and projects in FY 2021, as designated, by the grant agreement.

Friends of the Teton River strongly believes in fiscal responsibility and accountability to its membership, project partners, and the general public. This report illustrates FTR's financial position as of June 30, 2020. A copy of our 990 tax form is on our website, tetonwater.org.

2020 EXPENSES
\$1,022,641



With Gratitude

FTR recognizes and gives heart-felt thanks to Foster and Lynn Friess, who have generously contributed to Friends of the Teton River in honor of Jon and Annie Fenn. Their gift will help to leverage more funding for our endeavors and future conservation in the Teton Watershed. ,

You helped us meet our 20th anniversary goal. We raised **\$25,000** this December.



Thanks to our Tin Cup donors for getting us over the finish line in a challenging year, raising over **\$60,000!**



The full listing of donations made after July 1, 2020 will be recognized in our FY 2021 annual report.

**Dave & Lauren Lowman,
lead donors
\$25,000 Challenge Grant**

Thank you Capacity Fund Donors!

Dave & Penny Abbott
Boots Allen
Kevin & Holly Bauer
James & Jeanne Beirne
Brad & Robbie Bradley
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The Shiebler Family Foundation
Greg & Mary Stone
Gini & Clint Van Siclen
Don & Beverly Watson
Jeremiah & Barbara Wolahan
Dave Wood & Jen Pierce
Dave & Susie Work
Greg Young & Anjali Tate

FTR is thrilled to announce that we recently concluded a successful capital campaign that will allow FTR to add an additional staff member in our development department. We are grateful to Dave and Lauren Lowman for their leadership gift to this campaign, and to all of the generous donors who joined them in supporting this important capacity building effort. Our new **Director of Philanthropy, Hannah Orcutt-Mook** will team with our capable board and staff to build a strong revenue stream to complement our highly successful grant-writing track record. Join us in Welcoming Hannah and expressing our gratitude to campaign donors.

Meet Hannah Orcutt-Mook, Director of Philanthropy

Hannah grew up exploring the coastal and mountain ecosystems of Maine, canoeing on lakes and rivers, and wading through mud to explore inter-tidal estuary habitats. This love of the natural world led Hannah to study Environmental Studies and Geography at Middlebury College in Vermont, where many courses, including her senior thesis, focused on the Lake Champlain watershed. In 2012, Hannah moved to the Tetons to pursue a career in the environmental nonprofit sector and follow her passion for the mountains and rivers of the West. While working in the Tetons, Hannah pursued an MBA in Sustainable Business from Green Mountain College, graduating from their online program in 2019 with a background in marketing, stakeholder engagement, and systems thinking. Hannah is pleased to join FTR after nine years at Teton Science Schools as an educator, administrator, and fundraiser and is excited to connect more people to FTR's impactful work in Teton Valley. In her free time, Hannah can be found trail running, mountain biking, skiing or fishing with her husband, two black labs, and her new baby girl, born in February.



Meet Anna Lindstedt, Director of Grants & Communications

Anna moved to Driggs in 2004 to take a job with a promising non-profit called Friends of the Teton River (wink-wink). Sixteen years later, she continues to be awed and inspired by the work we do and the people we get to work with. On her days off she enjoys fishing, floating, and foraging with her family and flat-coat retriever.

Welcome Board Members



Rick Richter, Vice President

For twenty-plus years, Rick has run rivers as an enthusiast, a professional guide, and as an educator, working with the National Outdoor Leadership School and Expeditions India. Rick builds wireless infrastructure in the Florida Keys and he manages the Lazy Triple R, which produces the finest quality asparagus in all of Teton County.



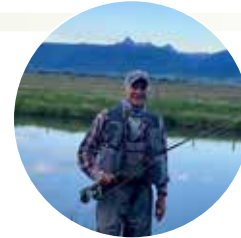
Mark Anderson, Treasurer

Mark is a retired attorney and CPA with extensive experience in corporate and business law. Mark and his wife Robin have had a home in Teton Valley since 2002 and have been full-time residents since 2014. Mark enjoys fly fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and spending time in the beautiful landscape of Teton Valley.



Amber Dewey

Amber and her husband Jesse co-own Crowfoot J Ranch & Meats, which has been family operated in Teton Valley, Idaho, for nearly 100 years. Amber's background is in finance and marketing. She has lived in Teton Valley for ten years and enjoys being outdoors riding her horses or spending time with her family on their cattle ranch.



Doc Frangos

Doc is a Cheyenne, Wyoming, native. He recently retired from a full-time surgical practice in Urologic Oncology but continues to work part-time as physician volunteer for the uninsured. Doc's free time is spent fly fishing and teaching fly casting.

CONTACT US:

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"If one hundred years from now there are healthy, viable family farms in this valley and waterfowl and wildlife and [fish] in the river... if one hundred years from now, all that still exists... everybody wins." -Dave Hedlin, Conservation Farmer (from the Patagonia film *Unbroken Ground*).

We are here because you support clean water, healthy streams, and a thriving fishery. Thanks for twenty years of watershed conservation.

CAMRIN DENGEL

Thanks for giving back

GIVE



BY MAIL

Friends of the Teton River
PO Box 768, Driggs, ID 83422



ONLINE

Make your one-time or recurring donation securely online at tetonwater.org using the 'GIVE' link.



SHOPPING ON AMAZON?

Go to Smile.Amazon.com and choose Friends of the Teton River as your charity and Amazon will automatically donate .5% of your purchase to support our work.



FOR TAX BENEFIT

Receive a tax deduction or avoid penalties while supporting our work by making a charitable gift of appreciated securities or a required minimum distribution from a retirement account.



PLAN YOUR GIFT—FTR CAN HELP.

Designate FTR as a recipient of a planned gift to ensure a lasting legacy and bright future for the Teton River.

Contact Dawn Felchle at info@tetonwater.org and your financial advisor or tax professional to start.



Meet Dawn Felchle, Operations

Dawn keeps our ship running all-forward! With a background in finance and marketing, her care for the community and vibrant presence extend way beyond our office door (photographed with her granddaughter, Sabine).