



# water lines

WINTER 2022/2023



## Gently Down the Stream

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## Guest Column

### Dear Friends,

In the Dr. Suess fable *Horton Hears a Who*, a dust speck that is home to the population of Whoville is in danger of being dropped in a vat of Beezlenut oil unless everyone does their part to make enough noise to be heard. With almost the entire town yelling at the top of their lungs, their salvation comes down to:

“...a very small shirker named Jo-Jo. Standing. Just standing. And bouncing a yo-yo. Not making a sound. Not a yip, not a chirp.

Dr. Hoovey asks him, ‘Can’t you yip? Can’t you yopp?’

Jo-Jo replies, ‘I just don’t know, sir. I never have tried.’

Dr. Hoovey urges, ‘You better try soon or you’re going to be fried!’

‘I think I’ll try a yopp. Yopp!!!!’ Jo-Jo cries.

And that yopp... That one small extra yopp put it over! Finally, at last! From that speck on that clover their voices were heard, ringing clear through the air. The people had spoken, no matter how small. And their whole world was saved by the smallest of all.”

As an early childhood educator for more than thirty years, I spent my career teaching similar life lessons to young children. I would often take my class to the woods to observe, play, be silent, and just be in nature. Sometimes, we would visit a creek. The abundance of flowing water was always a

treat to explore, appreciate, and take in completely. In contrast, during our outside play at school, the children used a faucet with a water-saving mechanism that would let out only a trickle when it was pushed. This taught the importance of water conservation at the earliest stage. From the smallest of the small, my students learned to appreciate and care for their surroundings.

What if we carried what we learn in our childhood more fully into adulthood? Would we take better care of each other and our surroundings? In my mayoral role at the City of Driggs, I see these basic questions as central to the challenges we are facing in a growing community with limited water supply and resources. Simply stated, people and the environment need our care. The reality is much more complicated. The extended drought, aging and inadequate infrastructure, rapid growth, and changing climatic conditions have and will continue to make water availability more challenging.

To meet the water needs of our community, everyone will need to pitch in—perhaps this means watering less, taking turns, choosing drought-tolerant landscapes, running efficient appliances, or by making more water-conscious choices. While not easy, finding collective solutions will take the ability to listen, a willingness to play well with others, and responsibility for doing our part—from the tall to the small.

*August Christensen*  
City of Driggs Mayor

## New Staff



**Brian Van Winkle** joined FTR this summer as our Fisheries Program Manager. After spending his youth exploring and fishing his way through the Sierras and surrounding areas, he attended Oregon State University. Fortunately, he limited out on King Salmon the day of his last exam and made it to campus in time to finish his test and earn a bachelor of science in fisheries biology. Brian has worked extensively throughout the West and Alaska on projects benefitting species such as Lahontan Cutthroat Trout to the docile Sleeper Shark in Alaska. Brian first moved to Driggs in 2005 constructing stream and wetland restoration projects throughout the region, while also making trips to do fisheries research in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. Brian spends his free time outside and with his girls: wife, Jenny, his daughters Brook and Maggie, and their black lab, Maple.

# Gently Down the Stream



*Throughout the past twenty-two years, we have come to understand that the strongest and most lasting positive impacts on our watershed are realized when we commit to being flexible and fluid and work in collaboration, rather than confrontation, with our community.*

*Amy Verbeten*

Executive Director

This summer, we saw many of you floating gently down the Teton River and enjoying the warm, sunny days that lasted well into the fall. This was reflected in the river use data that was gathered by Teton County, Idaho, and analyzed by the Henry's Fork Foundation. Recreational use of the Teton River in 2022 was identical to numbers collected in 2021 and was approximately 26 percent higher than in 2018. The major change we saw between 2021 and 2022 is a clear trend toward decreased use from residents with out-of-region license plates and increased usage from those with Teton County, Wyoming and Idaho, as well as Utah, license plates. While we cannot know from license plate data alone the reason for these changes, we can speculate that a contributing factor may be the significant population growth within the region. As the population of our towns, our county, and our region continue to grow, it becomes more important than ever that we continue to work together to understand and reduce our impacts on the Teton Watershed and its precious natural resources. At Friends of the Teton River, we envision a future in which all members of the Teton Valley community understand the importance of clean water and a healthy watershed, and voluntarily work together to take actions that protect and conserve the water resources we all share and rely upon.

In this issue of *Water Lines*, we highlight work that is being done within this community, through partnerships and long-term relationships, to protect and improve the Teton River, its resources, and the lives and livelihoods it supports. And yet, there is much more to be done. As our valley continues to see increasing use, demands, and development, we will continue to face challenges to clean water and healthy streams. It will be critical that we continue to develop community-driven solutions that ensure our river and our watershed are not "loved to death."

Throughout the past twenty-two years, we have come to understand that the strongest and most lasting positive impacts on our watershed are realized when we commit to being flexible and fluid and work in collaboration, rather than confrontation, with our community. It will take a diverse group of river stewards working together to actively educate the current and next generation of river users about responsible use. It will take a committed group of community leaders to guide development patterns and standards that protect water quality and ensure that residential and commercial development occurs in a water-conscious manner. And it will take a highly innovative and creative group of land and water stewards, who are willing to reach across fences and transcend boundaries, to determine how to ensure that well-managed family farms and ranches, which protect and steward water quality and quantity, can persist into the future despite the pressures of development.

Thank *YOU* for your willingness to float gently down this stream together for the past two decades. We are committed to working with you, long into the future, to ensure that Teton Valley is a model community for watershed stewardship.

# Field Tours & Field Days



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Through field tours, community events, and school programming, FTR's Community Education Program is built on the premise that spending time together and sharing knowledge about the watershed builds connection and stewardship for our river and streams. It also creates a deeper understanding of the lives and livelihoods supported by our water resources, and how our partners are choosing to support conservation in a variety of ways.

**1 Our events and tours** kicked off with a group of producers, water managers, agency representatives, and nonprofit partners traveling to see the Aquifer Recharge program in action. We visited a canal in Victor, Idaho, that was flowing with water dedicated to incidental recharge in the spring.

**2 The Canyon Creek Tour** highlighted FTR's partnership with irrigators to improve water delivery infrastructure for agriculture and habitat for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT).

**3 Teton Valley Farm Tour** Producer Harley Hill gave insight to challenges and opportunities as an organic producer during this summer's Farm Tour with the Teton Soil Conservation District.

**4 The Fisheries Field Tour** offered a unique opportunity to see YCT spawning redds up close, while learning about FTR's population monitoring across the Teton River Watershed.

**5 The Hog Canal Fish Screen** was in operation this June when a group came out to see the automated screen keeping YCT in South Leigh Creek.

**6 This summer, FTR partnered with local commercial rental** operations for river clean-ups with the greater goal of continuing the dialogue on the growing recreational use on the Teton River and potential next steps for stakeholders.

**7** Residents take note each spring when the **Teton Creek Corridor** outside of Driggs fills with the spring runoff. FTR hosted a tour to showcase the river restoration work that has shaped the river channel as we see it today.

## Stream Study Highlights

For twenty years, fifth grade students have participated in a Stream Study Program with FTR in the fall.

**8 The 2022 Stream Study Program** began with a session at the Driggs City Park where students were introduced to water quality tests, macroinvertebrates, and expectations for working in teams to conduct field research and gather water quality data.



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9 Students used various tests to quantify water quality in Trail Creek. Students learned that dissolved oxygen is critical for fish, macroinvertebrates, and aquatic vegetation.

10 Beautiful fall weather greeted Rendezvous Upper Elementary School students at Trail Creek, where they used their field science skills to examine the impacts that people have on water quality in our watershed.

11 Students use a kick net to collect macroinvertebrates to learn about the connection between water quality and the diversity and abundance of aquatic life.

12 Warm weather in the afternoon brought a mayfly hatch and the opportunity to witness an aquatic insect lifecycle.

13 Nothing says Stream Study like rubber boots, fall colors, and water temperature monitoring!



## Thank You to our Seasonal Intern, McKenzie Heras!

We are sending our thanks and well wishes to McKenzie Heras after her summer-long internship with FTR. McKenzie joined the team in July supporting our mission with work in fisheries research, community outreach, and recreation education. She proved to be a vital part of our field data collection efforts from electrofishing to water quality monitoring. She delivered high-quality watershed education to Teton Valley students and supported day-to-day communications and behind-the-scenes tasks at the office. FTR is grateful for McKenzie's good nature and ability to jump into any project or task.

# Farms & Fish Projects and

## Flow Restoration

FTR has been making plans to begin a multi-year project thanks to \$2 million in funding awarded through the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of the Interior's Environmental Water Resource Program to reconnect the Canyon Creek tributary. FTR will be working with irrigators to update pumping infrastructure, increase water delivery efficiency, and restore flows to this important Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) spawning tributary. We are currently finalizing budgets, plans, and contracts with the intent to move forward with infrastructure construction next summer.



## Climate-Smart Agriculture

There is a growing community of producers and agencies involved in work to increase regenerative agriculture practices, enable climate-smart farming, and improve soil health for drought resiliency. During the 2022 crop year, we worked with farmers and ranchers to plant cover crops, use conservation tillage methods, test innovative grazing, and monitor the effects on soil and water health on 867 total acres.



## Fish Passage

This fall, we began work on the Desert Canal fish screen, a project that will improve fish passage on the only remaining significant unscreened irrigation diversion on South Leigh Creek, a vital spawning tributary for YCT. As flows drop in the natural creek, the Desert Canal creates an entrapment and mortality hazard for YCT. This project will support the successful life cycle of this native trout, while improving irrigators' ability to access their water rights.



## Aquifer Recharge

In 2022, there were five participants in the Teton Water Users Association incidental recharge program, including three of Teton Valley's largest canal companies: Trail Creek Sprinkler Irrigation Company, Garden Water Company, and Cherry Grove Canal Company. The quantity of water recharged to the Teton Valley aquifer is still being analyzed, but despite challenging weather conditions, including a wet, cool spring followed by a quick transition to a dry, warm summer, participants noted a difference even during an atypical year.



# Campaign Updates



## Almost There!

Through support from individuals and private foundations, Friends of the Teton River has raised more than \$400,000 toward our \$500,000 campaign goal.

This campaign will provide private matching funds needed to support the over \$5 million Farms & Fish Initiative and leverage \$4.5 million in federal, state, foundation, and in-kind gifts.

Reach out to our Philanthropy Director at [hannah@tetonwater.org](mailto:hannah@tetonwater.org) or scan the QR code below to donate.



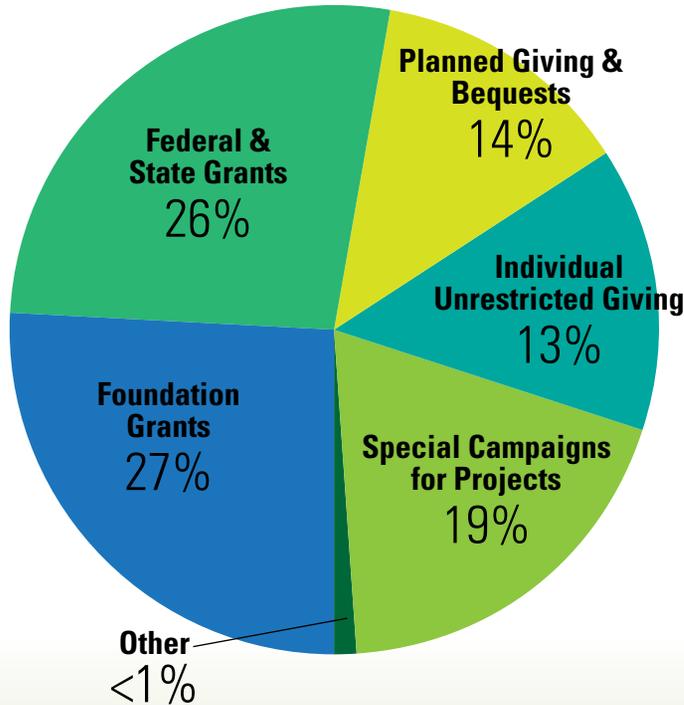
**DONATE  
TO THE  
CAMPAIGN**

You can give online at [tetonwater.org](http://tetonwater.org), scan the code with your phone or tablet, or mail a check to the address on the back page. For more information, please reach out to our Philanthropy Director [hannah@tetonwater.org](mailto:hannah@tetonwater.org).

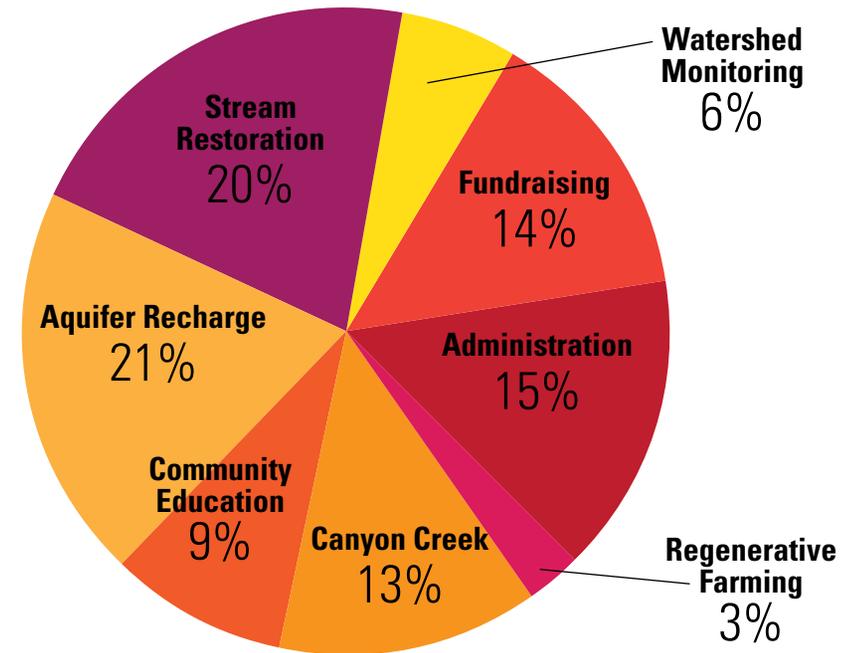


# JULY 2021-JUNE 2022 FINANCIALS

## 2022 INCOME \$1,442,330



## 2022 EXPENSES \$896,839



### REVENUE AND SUPPORT:

Federal, State, & Local Grants	\$371,814
Foundation Grants	\$386,167
Individual Unrestricted Giving	\$193,682
Planned Giving & Bequests	\$200,000
Special Campaigns for Projects	\$282,103
Other (Bank interest, merchandise sales)	\$8,563
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$1,442,330</b>

Friends of the Teton River raised \$1,442,330 in total revenue and support in FY 2022, to fund on-the-ground projects and programs, including stream restoration and habitat improvement projects, aquifer recharge and stream flow augmentation, regenerative farming, watershed monitoring and research, as well as community education and outreach efforts, and FTR operations.

### EXPENSES:

Regenerative Farming	\$25,677
Watershed Monitoring	\$50,340
Community Education	\$76,562
Aquifer Recharge	\$191,956
Canyon Creek Flow Restoration	\$112,492
Stream Restoration	\$176,174
Administration	\$137,620
Fundraising	\$126,018
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$896,839*</b>

\*FTR has \$352,917 in restricted net assets held at the end of FY 2022, which will be spent on programs and projects in FY 2023 for which they have been designated by the grantor.

This report illustrates FTR's financial position as of June 30, 2022. A copy of our most recent 990 tax form is available on our website [tetonwater.org](http://tetonwater.org).

# FY 2022 BY THE NUMBERS

Find full donor lists on our website: [tetonwater.org/give](https://tetonwater.org/give)

# 466

Donors

# 319

Tin Cup Donors

# 34%

FTR donors in  
the Leadership  
Circle\*

# \$350

Average  
Donation

\*The Leadership Circle recognizes donors who have supported FTR for five consecutive years of more. Like water drops, each gift has an impact. We are grateful for these dedicated supporters and their unwavering commitment to the Teton River Watershed.



The Teton Watershed encompasses 1,133 square miles across two states. It is our job at Friends of the Teton River to protect, restore, and steward this land and the water that flows through it. To break down the enormous size of our watershed, for our staff of eight people, each person at FTR would be responsible for 141.63 square miles—over ten times the size of Central Park and nearly a third the size of Grand Teton National Park. Per employee. In my time at the organization, I have been astounded by the amount of work this group can accomplish. And our funding partners and supporters are recognizing this, as well. So much so, we have had our most successful fundraising year to date in Fiscal Year 2022.

Our work is far from done. The challenges facing our beloved watershed—from development and recreation pressure to drought and climate change—are many. The importance of working together to protect water resources continues to grow for people, fish, and wildlife.

At one-and-a-half years old, my daughter is already learning how important this watershed is to our valley. She has discovered joy splashing in tributaries, amazement in floating the river while pointing at the

ducks and fish, and the relief a dip in our favorite swimming spot brings on hot days. Thank you for your commitment to FTR as we work to ensure her generation can enjoy all this watershed has to offer for years to come. Consider a donation to FTR at year end or reach out to discuss how you can invest in the future of our watershed with a planned gift.

With Gratitude,

Hannah Orcutt Mook

## MAKE A GIFT TODAY!

You can give online at [tetonwater.org](https://tetonwater.org), scan the code with your phone or tablet, or mail a check to the address on the back page. We accept gifts of appreciated securities, bequests, and qualified retirement plan distributions. Reach out to our Director of Philanthropy at [hannah@tetonwater.org](mailto:hannah@tetonwater.org) if you have any questions or want to discuss your donation to FTR.



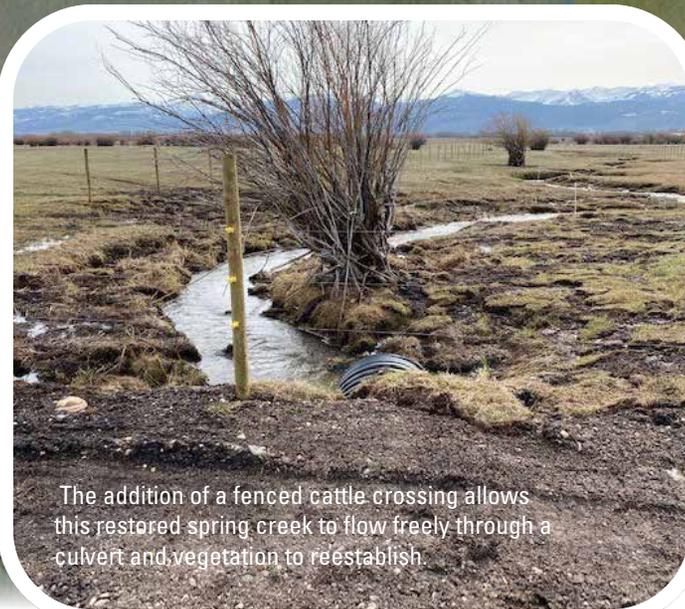
# Landowners Lead Restoration

During a time of marked growth and development pressure, FTR and a group of willing landowners are leading the way to restore properties that will improve important land and water resources adjacent to the upper Teton River. As a result of prior grazing, development, or other alterations, many riparian areas along the river have been destabilized, significantly contributing to sedimentation, habitat loss, and water quality impairments.

FTR has completed thirty-five stream restoration projects to-date, totaling more than seven linear miles of stream and fifteen riparian acres restored (and counting)! With most of this work focused on tributary streams, FTR has turned its attention to opportunities for improvement on the mainstem Teton River. Funding through the Idaho Department of Lands has supported the development of a Teton River Riparian Forest Management Plan to guide this upcoming work. This plan identifies a 4,200-acre corridor along the upper Teton River—from approximately Cedron Road to Packsaddle Bridge—where restoration will be focused to improve stream channel stability, instream and riparian forest habitat, and floodplain function to the most critically degraded sections of stream. *Some of this work will be featured on new interpretive signage along the walking trail at the Buxton River Park, installed next spring.*



Eroding streambanks downstream of the Bates Bridge caused excess sediment in this reach.



The addition of a fenced cattle crossing allows this restored spring creek to flow freely through a culvert and vegetation to reestablish.

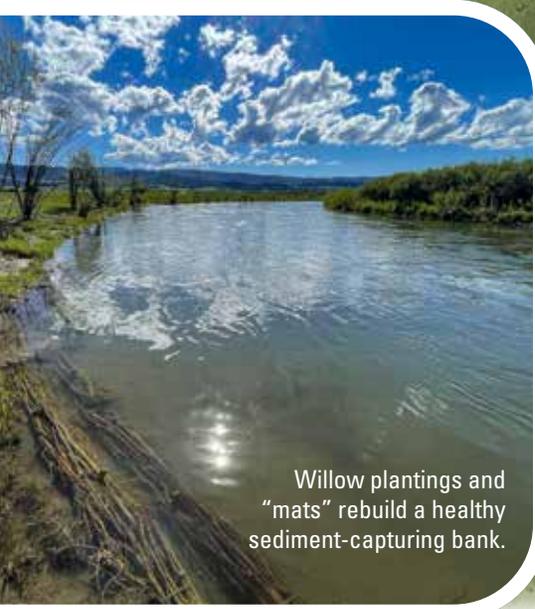
## What's the Main(stem) Problem?

Healthy, stable riverbanks can resist the power of flowing water, but when the forces exerted by the river overpower the bank, it can start to collapse. When a stream functions properly this is a natural process, but without stabilizing streamside vegetation the streambanks and channel become susceptible to significant erosion. Once a devegetated bank starts to erode, there is nothing to stop the domino effect of sediment from entering the river channel and failing banks to cause more erosion downstream. Excessive sediment in the river also smothers aquatic vegetation, degrades fish habitat, and increases water temperatures.

## Changing Land Use

Changing land uses over time have significantly impacted the Teton River ecosystem. The development of homes, public infrastructure, and agricultural practices have altered stream banks, channels, and floodplains for many uses. Some of these uses have constrained the floodplain, removed stream-stabilizing vegetation, or widened the stream channel. The landowner-partners that FTR works with recognize that restoring intact, fully functioning riparian areas and healthy streambanks along Teton River provide a myriad of services that sustain the surrounding community, landowners, and livelihoods. Through cooperative partnerships, landowners are changing their land and water resource management with long-term conservation at the forefront.





Willow plantings and “mats” rebuild a healthy sediment-capturing bank.

### Climate-Smart Solutions

As a result of climate change, our watershed is experiencing warmer winters with a reduced snowpack and hotter/drier summers, exacerbated by extended drought. FTR and our partners implement climate-smart projects that address interrelated issues, that taken together, improve the resilience of our natural systems for the long-term. For example, installing riparian buffers along working lands not only restores streambank stability—streamside vegetation also filters out fine sediments, provides shade, reduces water temperatures, and provides refuge for critical fish and wildlife species, like Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, moose, migratory birds, and other critters.



Stream Restoration Director Mike Lien and ranching partner Robert Piquet lead a project tour of his restoration work on the Teton River.

### Restoring Rivers Benefits Us All!

FTR approaches stream restoration collaboratively by working closely with landowners, farmers, ranchers, scientists, engineers, and local business, as well as with county, state, and federal agency partners who hold a common interest in restoring healthy functioning watersheds to support a variety of needs. From making the river an enjoyable place for people to recreate and a healthy home for native fish, to helping sustain agriculture in the face of a changing climate, we are finding common ground that allows us to float more gently down the stream.

## WELCOME BOARD MEMBERS



Chris Littauer has been actively involved in the Teton Valley fly fishing community both professionally and personally for more than twelve years. Following an internship with WorldCast Anglers and after graduating from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, Chris moved West in 2012 and took up a post at WCA, working his way from shop staff to Vice President and overseeing their Destination Travel and Guide School programs. When not on the river or in the fly shop, Chris can be found enjoying time with his girlfriend Beth, snuggling with their Chihuahua Pug (Chug) Blue, and planning his next international fishing adventure.

**Why do you want to serve?** “I am excited for the opportunity to listen, learn, and to give back to this community, the Teton River, and native fish.”



Rick Fogg moved to Teton Valley from North Carolina part time in 2020 after falling in love with the area on fishing trips over the past twenty years. Now retired from a career in finance, he’s dedicated to bringing his professional expertise and passion for conservation to serve on the FTR Board of Directors. Rick jumped in with both feet to learn more about FTR’s programs and projects through our community education events and webinars. Rick and his wife reside in Teton Springs through most of the summer. Rick and Grace enjoy traveling, playing golf, and fishing float trips on the Teton and South Fork rivers.

**Why do you want to serve?** “I am eager to roll up my sleeves to make a difference and be an ambassador for watershed health.”

## CONTACT US:

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## REMEMBERING SANDY MASON

On the evening of September 21, friends and family of Sandy Mason gathered in Driggs to celebrate Sandy's lasting impact on conservation in Teton Valley, and on the Teton Creek Corridor project in particular.

Numerous past and present staff and board members of the Teton Creek Corridor Collaborative, as well as community leaders representing Teton County, Idaho, the City of Driggs, and numerous other organizations, spoke about Sandy's dedication to Teton Valley's people, wildlife, and way of life.

In the words of Carl Palmer, executive director of the LegacyWorks Group: "Sandy's vision for the potential to do something special on Teton Creek and his belief in the power of collaboration were the seeds of the Teton Creek Corridor Collaborative that is now entering its tenth year. For years Sandy had laid the groundwork to bring Friends of Teton River, VARD, TVTAP, and Teton Regional Land Trust around the project. Conversations he instigated with the LOR Foundation set the stage for their critical funding and partnership. He was the guiding light that brought us all together to make this project happen. Sandy set the tone and tenor of the collaborative—the joy and laughter, the openness and honesty, the mutual respect and trust... all laced with [frequent colorful language]. Thanks to Sandy, the collaborative has protected, restored, and made that magical creekside available to the whole community. It has been a remarkable success story, and its success has rippled out into many other collaborative projects in the valley and beyond."

Before Sandy died, the Teton Creek Corridor partners were able to let Sandy and his wife Mary know that the protected land owned by the Teton Regional Land Trust along Teton Creek would be named "Sandy Bottom" in his honor. The announcement made him laugh one of those big Sandy laughs that those who knew and love him will never forget. Sandy's colleagues, friends, and family had a chance to share that laugh during the memorial celebration with the formal announcement of the name, and dedication of the property, a memorial bench, and a marmot statue overlooking Sandy Bottom.

For more information on the Teton Creek Corridor project, please visit [tetoncreekcorridor.com](http://tetoncreekcorridor.com).



Photos: (top left) The Geo Center was packed with friends to celebrate Sandy Mason; (bottom left): Sandy's beloved Chicago Cubs hat adorns the Geo Center grizzly and his marmot statue; Sandy entertains the live auction crowd at an FTR picnic circa 2006.