



# water lines

SUMMER 2023



## Passion Projects

## Dear Friends,

I don't ever remember choosing to become a rancher. I knew from a very early age that this is what I was going to spend my life doing. "Passion project" is a perfect description of my work. My goal isn't to become wealthy as a rancher, but to work toward the greater goal of sustaining a generational ranch. Along with my wife and our two children, we manage many acres of ranch land in Teton Valley, where we raise cattle and poultry. It is our passion to be good stewards of the land and livestock under our management.

The choices for us aren't about what we do, but how we do it. Time tested methods of ranching may be fine, but we are always ourselves: Are there more innovative ways to go about things? Experimentation has led us down exciting paths that bring life and productivity to land that I previously thought were elusive.

If you pass by the land we operate on the west side of the Teton River, you might notice that our methods are not the same as you see on other ranches. We use livestock as a tool to regenerate land. Simply put, we replace purchased fertility (fertilizers and soil amendments) with animals. By controlling the time, acreage, and number of animals on a section of ground, we are able to restore fertility and productivity to the land. We love our cows, but what good are cows if they bankrupt us and the soil? As managers with the goal of generational ranching, it is imperative that we continue to innovate to create a sustainable business and environment.

Over time, we have developed partnerships to achieve our goals. We have worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop grazing systems and the Teton Soil Conservation District to gain access to producer education. More recently, we have developed a partnership with Friends of the Teton River to do stream restoration along the Teton River that includes enhanced watering facilities for livestock and planting riparian buffer, as well as monitoring soil health to give us measurable ways to see if our work is achieving our goals. I'm grateful that the people at these organizations are willing to work with us and I'm proud to call them my friends.

I hope that we can continue to work together on shared goals and further the ability of families like mine to pursue their passion projects (and way of life) in Teton Valley.

*Robert Piquet*



## Welcome Back, McKenzie!

We are excited that McKenzie Heras, our 2022 summer intern extraordinaire, is returning to FTR this summer as the development & program associate while philanthropy director, Hannah Mook, is away on maternity leave. McKenzie will be responsible for communicating with supporters, coordinating the Tin Cup Challenge, and working closely with program directors to implement projects in the office and the field. We are thrilled to have McKenzie back on the team! When she's not working, McKenzie will be floating the Teton, hiking, or spending time with her grandmother. [mckenzie@tetonwater.org](mailto:mckenzie@tetonwater.org)

### STAFF

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Anna Lindstedt, Grants Director  
Hannah Orcutt Mook, Philanthropy Director  
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Sarah Lien, Water Resources & Policy Director  
Will Stubblefield, Community Education Director  
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# A Heart Day's Work



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*At FTR, we bring pride, enthusiasm, dedication, and joy to our work. We not only work hard to protect and conserve the Teton River Watershed; we also make time to enjoy and celebrate it.*

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**\*FTR's Core Values:** Science-Based, Collaborative, Action-Oriented, Adaptive, Innovative, Integrity, Excellence and Passion for Our Work.

In my household, it has become a family joke that I regularly come home and say, "I feel like I'm doing the best work of my career!" My husband responds by reminding me that I said the same thing just last week, and I reply, "Yes, but this week it's even BETTER!" These statements are almost always made after a project tour, brainstorming session, or peer-to-peer educational workshop that brings together FTR staff and some of our key collaborators. I am so fortunate to work with staff and partners who are truly passionate and committed to what they do.

Passion is literally written into FTR's Core Values.\* At FTR, we bring pride, enthusiasm, dedication, and joy to our work. We not only work hard to protect and conserve the Teton River Watershed, we also make time to enjoy and celebrate it.

This comes through so clearly in the words of guest columnist Robert Piquet, (opposite page) and it's evident when you float down the river and see the way the Piquet family is managing the cattle, poultry, land, and streambanks under their stewardship. It's apparent in the revolutionary work the Teton Basin Water Users Association is doing to bring together agricultural water users, municipal and residential water managers, and conservation groups to proactively address statewide changes in water management. Passion for protecting the Teton Watershed, and the people who live here, is clear in the work being done by the City of Driggs to assist with securing grant funds for floodplain restoration work on Teton Creek, and in the leadership from Teton County to manage recreation on the Teton River.

This newsletter has been a true joy for me to read and contribute to, as it highlights the "heart day's work" that our staff and partners engage in day-in and day-out to bring projects and collaborations to fruition. I'm convinced that we truly are doing our best—and most—work ever to protect and conserve the Teton River Watershed for the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife. Thank YOU for bringing your own passion to conservation as you support our efforts and celebrate the fruits of this labor of love. I hope to see you this summer on a project tour, on a float, or just out enjoying the river!

*Amy Verbeten*  
Executive Director

# Canyon Creek – Blood, Sweat, and Success



BY SARAH LIEN, FTR Water Resources & Policy Director

As you read this, I want you to cue up the theme music to the movie *Rocky* and envision Rocky Balboa confiding in Adrian (Rocky's love interest) that, while he's done everything he possibly can, he just isn't sure that he can beat heavyweight boxing world champion Apollo Creed. For me, the parallels between that movie and the Canyon Creek flow restoration project are very real. There have been emotional ups and downs, long hours of hard work bookended by the presence of uncertainty and doubt, persevering and overcoming, the forging of new friendships, the building of trust, support from a myriad of places, and finally, the achievement of something noteworthy and special.

In the fall of 2023, Friends of the Teton River and the Canyon Creek Canal Company will break ground on a project

Irrigators have piloted flow restoration, which has connected Canyon Creek with the Teton River.



that has been twelve years in the making. Through the investment of \$4 million, improvements will be made to three irrigation diversion structures located on the Teton River. These im-

provements will allow ten of the eleven Canyon Creek Canal Company shareholders to divert water from the Teton River (which is not flow limited), rather than from Canyon Creek (which is flow limited). The project will seasonally restore up to 70 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water to Canyon Creek, a critically important tributary for the future of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) in the Teton River watershed, improve water supply and reliability for the Canyon Creek Canal Company shareholders, and address fish entrainment issues on both Canyon Creek and the Teton River.

FTR would like to thank the many individuals and entities that have made this project possible, including: the Canyon Creek Canal Company shareholders, regional partners from Idaho Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, Water District 01, Fremont Madison Irrigation District, and U. S. Geological Survey (USGS), as well as project funders including the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program, Idaho Water Resource Board, Bureau of Reclamation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Bonneville Environmental Foundation, and the many individual donors that have contributed to FTR's Farms and Fish Campaign. This community of partners gave their expertise, guidance, energy, and financial resources to this project, thereby transforming it from an idea to a reality.

This project gives me all the feelings: pride that FTR's flow restoration work has grown to include a project such as this; excitement for the conservation benefits being captured; fulfillment found in the opportunity to work so closely with some of our region's most long-standing farming families; gratitude for the many partners that made this project possible; and excitement for the opportunities this project may catalyze in the

future. So this fall, when you see heavy equipment working in the area east of Newdale, slow down, crank up the theme song to *Rocky*, and take a moment to appreciate this amazing, hard-fought, success.



Irrigators and FTR staff inspect pumps and fish screens similar to those that will be installed as a part of this project.



Sections of pipe are already staged for the project to begin.



# Regenerating Love for the Land

If you are farming and ranching in Teton Valley, your passion is born out of a love for the land and a deep connection to the region's natural resources and beauty. Many farming families in the area have been working on the same land for generations, and they take great pride in carrying on the traditions and practices that have been passed down to them. These multi-generational farms face obstacles every year with rising land prices, extreme weather, and market fluctuations.

Regenerative farming and soil improvement practices are gaining ground amongst farmers and ranchers because they prioritize the health of the land and animals, as well as the long-term profitability of the operation. Implementing regenerative practices can be challenging, but, many farmers and ranchers see it as an essential part of their work. They experiment with new techniques and strategies to improve the health of their land and reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, hoping to increase yields while maintaining sustainability. They understand that caring for the land is a long-term investment and that the benefits of best management practices will pay off over time.

Friends of the Teton River agrees that well-managed family farms and conservation can and should go hand-in-hand. Together with our agricultural partners, we recognize that soil health is closely linked to the health of the Teton River and its tributaries. Healthy soil can absorb and retain water more effectively, reducing runoff and erosion, improving water quality, and supporting biodiversity. FTR is passionate about sup-

porting the adoption of best management practices and has grown interest and adoption of regenerative practices by supporting farmers and ranchers who want to try these methods.

FTR's Soil Health Initiative began in 2017, with the co-purchase of a no-till seed drill with the Teton Soil Conservation District. Since then, FTR has worked in conjunction with twenty agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to plan, implement, and monitor regenerative agriculture practices. Our agricultural partners receive small incentives (like the cost of seed or incentive to off-set their established crop) which reduces their financial risk associated with trying a new farming or ranching practice. They also have access to additional support like data sharing, workshops, and peer-to-peer learning. So far, participants have enrolled 3,500 acres of Teton Valley farmland in no-till or reduced tillage, cover crops, intercropping, perennial pasture/hay plantings, managed intensive grazing, soil testing, and irrigation water management. They are a dedicated group driven by a deep passion for their way of life and a desire to create a more sustainable and resilient food system supporting the lives and livelihoods in our community.

If you would like to find out more about regenerative agriculture incentives and technical assistance, contact the Farms & Fish Program Manager Daniel Wilcox: [daniel@henrysfork.org](mailto:daniel@henrysfork.org)

# Farms & Fish Initiative

The Farms & Fish Campaign will support new and ongoing work like the projects listed below, now and into the future.

## FISH SCREEN UPGRADES

This winter and spring, our fisheries team has been upgrading several existing structures to improve the movement and barriers for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. FTR upgraded the fish screen on the Splitter Canal off Badger Creek, installed in 2007, with solar panels and a system to raise and lower the mechanized fish screen. New batteries were installed this spring to ensure full operation this spring and summer. The fisheries team is also adding solar panels and new batteries to the fish screen on the Hog Canal off South Leigh Creek to cycle the screen at a faster interval for better efficiency and debris removal. Finally, the new fish screen on the Desert Canal off South Leigh Creek is almost complete! Contractors installed the corrugated metal screens and will finish the final grading and revegetation this year.



## ONE MILE OF STREAMBANKS RESTORED

It was a big winter for FTR's restoration team, restoring 3,700 feet of streambank on the Teton River and 2,800 feet on Fox Creek—adding up to over one mile of restored streambank! In addition, FTR rebuilt 5 acres of floodplain with riparian vegetation planting in these two areas. This work included bioengineering with native plants to improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat.



## THE CANYON CREEK PROJECT BEGINS IN 2023!

FTR is pleased to announce that the nonprofit has been awarded \$815,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge grant and has been selected as a recipient of a \$2 million award through the Bureau of Reclamation's Environmental Water Resources Program. This funding, along with more than \$1 million in non-federal and in-kind matching contributions will complete irrigation infrastructure improvements that will reconnect aquatic habitat in Canyon Creek to benefit native trout, while improving irrigation efficiency and reliability for farmers. The project team expects to start work this fall.



## Farms & Fish Goals Reached

- Hosted a Farms & Fish Open House with 70+ attendees.
- Mailed an informational brochure to 600+ community members.
- We have now raised more than \$425,000 toward our \$500,000 campaign goal!
- This campaign will provide private matching funds needed to support the more than \$5 million Farms & Fish Initiative and leverage \$4.5 million in federal, state, foundation, and in-kind gifts.

# ve Updates

## BUILDING A NETWORK FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

A growing community of agricultural producers is working to increase regenerative agriculture practices. FTR is supporting expanding knowledge and buy-in for natural climate solutions through workshops and field tours. In January, FTR co-hosted a workshop with the Teton Soil Conservation District (TSCD) to share agricultural best practices and network with local and regional producers. Presenters shared the impacts these practices have had on soil health and further on the nutritional value of the food they produce, a reminder that the food we eat directly connects to the quality of the ground where it is grown. This summer, FTR will partner with TSCD to put on the annual event.



Visit [tetonwater.org/give](https://tetonwater.org/give) to donate or please reach out to our Philanthropy Director at [hannah@tetonwater.org](mailto:hannah@tetonwater.org).

## Help us Close the Farms & Fish Initiative Fundraising Campaign!



### You may be thinking, "Wow, if FTR has already raised all that money, why do they need more?"

Friends of the Teton River is grateful to be the recipient of large federal and state grants for our Farms & Fish Initiative. So far, we've raised \$4.5 million out of our \$5 million goal from government, foundation, and in-kind sources.

Government grants require recipients to chip in some of their own money to match the federal funding. That means we still need to raise \$500,000 in private funds to access the government grants.

The funding numbers are large because they reflect the remarkable scale of this work. We only have \$75,000 left to raise to hit our private fundraising goal, and we're grateful for this generous community that's helped us come this far. Thank you for your support!

# Doing Our Best Work

## Teton Creek: *Bestoration* At Work



**BY MIKE LIEN**  
**Stream**  
**Restoration Director**

### RESTORATION OR BESTORATION?

“Bestoration” (coined by FTR’s Executive Director Amy Verbeten) is a term that captures nearly twenty-years of FTR’s stream restoration design evolution. The term “restoration” never seemed to sit well with us and here is why: To say that we are “restoring” a stream implies that we are designing a project to a past condition or a pre-settlement condition, but the problem with this approach is that everything has changed dramatically in watershed in past 130 years, such as land development and diverting water for farming. People are now a part of the landscape. Anthropogenic changes and a changing climate also need to be accounted for in project design to ensure that we come up with the best solutions possible for fish, wildlife, and people!

### FTR’S APPROACH TO WATERSHED BESTORATION:

- **Identify issues** through scientific research and analysis (such as habitat conditions, water quality issues, and stream bank erosion).
- **Meet with the landowner**, and in some cases larger portions of the community, to figure out how to design a project that works for the property owner, stakeholders involved, and state and federal management agencies, while accounting for existing and changing environmental conditions. It’s through our stakeholder-driven process that bestoration was born!
- **Bestoration asks the questions:** How do we design a restoration project that maximizes benefits for the environment and people? What design will be the most practical and will address the current problem along with potential future conditions?

### BESTORATION AT ITS BEST

FTR has completed hundreds of projects—from planting willows to building floodplains—all aimed at improving the overall function and health of the Teton Watershed under current conditions. At its best, improvement of a streambank, irrigation structure, or agricultural practice provides a conservation solution focused on long-term success—for the landowner and the watershed.

#### Conditions Before



Homes built near Teton Creek along a side-channel filled in with cobble and sediment from upstream stream instability were at risk of flooding every year.

#### During Construction



It was determined that restoring the side channel within a constructed floodplain to accommodate high water events would significantly reduce risk to the existing homes.

#### After Bestoration



A stable, well-functioning side channel flows past residences in the spring.



### FUNDING UPDATE

The City of Driggs, in partnership with FTR, has been selected to receive \$2.5 million in FEMA grant funding to continue Teton Creek stream channel stabilization through the City of Driggs to the Hwy 33 Bridge.

# Around the Watershed

NEWS IN BRIEF

## TROUT FRIENDLY LAWN

Teton Valley has Trout Friendly Lawns! You can participate by visiting [jhcleanwater.org](http://jhcleanwater.org) and committing to trout friendly practices like limiting fertilization, being water wise, planting native plants and streamside buffers, and using herbicides and pesticides appropriately. Help us conserve water and protect our surface and ground water quality by going trout friendly!



## TETON RIVER RECREATION

Teton County, Idaho, has hired a full-time river ambassador for the summer season. Their goal this summer will be to educate the public on responsible recreation and the Teton County Waterways Recreation Ordinance, as well as supporting efficient traffic flow at river access points. FTR is excited to continue supporting Teton County with a recreation education campaign and fundraising through the Teton River Fund. Look for FTR staff at the river this summer don't be a stranger! Say hello, ask us questions, and buy a sticker to support responsible recreation on the Teton River.



Scan the code to get the latest info, maps, and purchase a 2023 River Recreation Fund sticker.

## WATER OUTLOOK 2023

Above average snowpack over the winter of 2023 means that the Teton River will experience healthy stream flows over the summer season!

Visit [waterdata.usgs.gov](http://waterdata.usgs.gov) or search "Teton River AB South Leigh Creek NR Driggs ID" to get daily updates on stream flows.

## WHAT ABOUT THE DROUGHT?

While this year's water supply is above-average, we are still experiencing an extended drought. You can track current drought conditions at [droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu).

## EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Trout in the Classroom Program served eight classrooms across the Teton Watershed this season, including one tank at the Teton Geo Center that was open to the public! The TIC program continues to be a hit with young watershed citizens as a way to connect with the fish of the Teton River and gain a deeper understanding of water quality, habitat, and the lifecycle of trout.



## WELL WATER TESTING

This summer, FTR is hosting a group order of test kits to simplify logistics of Well Water Testing in Teton Valley. By participating in this program, you can test your well water without driving to Pocatello or arranging the expedited shipping required for analyzing samples.

All Teton County residents living outside city limits and using water from a private well are responsible for the testing, operation, and maintenance of their well to ensure that the water is safe to drink. Teton Valley residents are lucky to enjoy high-quality drinking water due to our low density, rural population and location high in the headwaters of the Teton River Watershed. However, it is important to note that some areas can have elevated nitrate levels caused by

improperly maintained septic systems, personal or commercial fertilizer use, animal waste, or a combination of those factors. Look for the announcement to sign-up for Well Water Test kit orders later in August. Test Kits will be available for pick up in Driggs and samples will be collected in Driggs and Victor to be shipped to the lab for analysis.

## FISHING REGULATIONS

Idaho 2022-2024 fishing rules and regulations can be found on the Idaho Fish and Game website [idfg.idaho.gov](http://idfg.idaho.gov). Always check the regulations and Know Before You Go!

Some highlights for the Teton River:

- No limit on Rainbow Trout or hybrids
- No Harvest of Cutthroat Trout
- Teton River Tributaries closed to Fishing June 1 – June 30



## 2023 FISHERIES SAMPLING

This summer FTR will be looking for volunteers to help with the IDF&G Teton River boat-based electro-fishing survey that happens every other year. FTR will assist IDF&G with netting, measuring, gathering genetic samples, and PIT tagging trout throughout the main stem of the Teton River. FTR is also looking for volunteers to help backpack electro-fishing on some of the major tributaries to the Teton River that will add to data collected using eDNA in the 2022 field season. All dates are TBD, but please reach out if interested in volunteering or have any questions to our Fisheries Program Manager: [brian@tetonwater.org](mailto:brian@tetonwater.org).

# Giving from the Heart

*Living in Teton Valley can be challenging. The winters are long, shoulder seasons seem to stretch forever, and many make sacrifices to call this valley home. We live here out of love—for the valley, the mountains, the animals, the way of life, the rivers, and the streams. As we gear up for another glorious summer, we are reminded of the Teton River's hold on our hearts. It is a source of beauty, a place for recreation, and a crucial habitat for countless species of plants and animals.*

*As a passionate advocate for this valley, we know you share the vision of healthy streams, clean water, and a thriving wild fishery. By making a donation this summer, either through the Tin Cup Challenge or directly to Friends of the Teton River, you'll be playing a crucial role in ensuring that the watershed remains healthy and vibrant. See the back page for details on how to make a gift to Friends of the Teton River.*

*We know that you have many options when it comes to charitable giving, and we are grateful for your support.*

*Thank you, and see you on the River!*



Hannah Orcutt Mook  
Philanthropy Director

## BABY ANNOUNCEMENT

*Hannah and her husband Will happily welcomed their baby boy, William Herbert Mook VI at the end of May. Fittingly, Hannah went into labor while on a family float on the Teton River! Hannah, Will, and big sister Abby are settling into this new phase of life and hope to spend more time on the river this summer, now as a family of four.*



# Show The Teton Some Love

Write a love letter to the Teton River for a chance to win new FTR merch! Select love letters will be highlighted in FTR's e-newsletter and on our social media pages.



**Scan the code to enter for a chance to win these!**

Love letters will be accepted through July, raffle drawing will take place on August 1.



# 2023 Summer Calendar

We invite you to share our passion for the Teton River! Check event listings and details on our website, [tetonwater.org](http://tetonwater.org), under 'Get Involved.' Often, space is limited. Don't forget to sign up! Email [will@tetonwater.org](mailto:will@tetonwater.org) for more information.

## June 14

### Fish Passage Field Tour

There is a complex system of canals and irrigation infrastructure in Teton Valley that is critical to agriculture. Explore fish screens on South Leigh Creek that improve water delivery for irrigators and protect Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout.



## 29

### Fisheries Program Field Tour

Get a closer look at YCT spawning redds, monitoring infrastructure, and stream restoration work on Six Springs creek just outside of Driggs.



## July 1

### Teton River Tributaries open to fishing



### Tin Cup Event Day

Come on out and run, walk, and celebrate our valley's hardworking nonprofit community. There will be fun activities for all ages and opportunities to connect with nonprofits making a difference in Teton Valley.



## 15

## 19

### Float the Teton River

Learn about FTR's responsible recreation campaign and collaboration with Teton County to conserve our local river resource.



## August 10 23

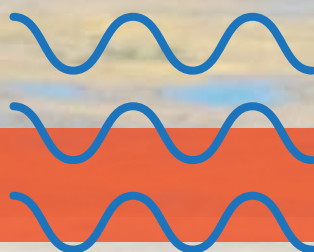
### Teton Valley Farm Tour with Teton Soil Conservation District

Get on the bus with our partners at the Teton Soil Conservation District to visit local agriculture operations and see how we are working together for a healthy Teton River Watershed.



### Float the Teton River

If you missed the float in July, come out to float the river in August!



### Restoration Tour

Check out stream banks that were recently restored using bioengineering and native plants to improve water quality in the Teton River.



## 31

### \*For More Info:

Visit the FTR website, [tetonwater.org](http://tetonwater.org), for more information, including specific times and locations for tours and events. Note that some events require sign-up and participation is limited. Email our community education director, Will Stubblefield, at [will@tetonwater.org](mailto:will@tetonwater.org) to connect about upcoming education opportunities.

## CONTACT US:

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[www.tetonwater.org](http://www.tetonwater.org)

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"Rivers flow not past,  
but through us; tingling,  
vibrating, exciting every  
cell and fiber in our  
bodies, making them  
sing and glide."

- John Muir

Teton Creek glistens in  
the morning light.

## GIVE BACK



### ONLINE

Make your one-time or recurring donation to any ongoing campaign online at [tetonwater.org](http://tetonwater.org) using the 'GIVE' link.



### BY MAIL

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



**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.



**LEGACY PLANNING** Designate FTR as a recipient of a planned gift to ensure a bright future for the Teton River. Contact our philanthropy director at [hannah@tetonwater.org](mailto:hannah@tetonwater.org) and your financial advisor or tax professional to begin the process.

### TIN CUP CHALLENGE

Donate to FTR through the Community Foundation of Teton Valley's Tin Cup Challenge at [cftetonvalley.org](http://cftetonvalley.org) from June 15 to July 21 to have your gift matched by community donors.

