



Transmitted via email to <kmalone@tetoncountywy.gov>

September 10, 2020

Kristi Malone  
Town & County Planner  
County Planning Office  
200 S. Willow St.  
Jackson, WY 83001

Re: Comments on Proposed Updates to the 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Dear Ms. Malone:

These comments on submitted on behalf of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Protect Our Water Jackson Hole, and Wyoming Outdoor Council (the “NGOs”) in response to the Public Review Draft of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update released on July 29, 2020. Our comments focus on the demonstrated need to include enhanced water quality protections in the updated Comp Plan, and offer a number of suggestions for strengthening the level of protection for our critically important water resources. We appreciate the recognition by town and county staff of the need to better protect ground and surface waters, but as currently drafted the plan falls far short of achieving the stated goal of enhancing water quality. *See* Principle 1.2 and associated policy statements.

Our comments address and respond to the water quality “enhancements” offered by county staff, below. We begin with a brief overview of the context and setting, followed by specific recommendations to restore and protect the quality of Teton County’s ground and surface water resources.

### CONTEXT AND SETTING

#### **Snake River Sole Source Aquifer**

Our community relies entirely on the Snake River Aquifer for its drinking water. Due to its significance, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated the Snake River aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer. The Comp Plan should explicitly acknowledge this resource, and commit to developing an Aquifer Protection Plan to ensure its long-term protection.

#### **Congressionally Designated National Wild and Scenic Rivers**

The Snake, Buffalo Fork, Gros Ventre, Hoback and numerous other rivers in Teton County are congressionally-designated National Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Comp Plan

should identify designated river segments and establish preservation goals that are at least as protective as Federal policies to ensure that the “outstandingly remarkable values” that led to the designation are protected.

### **Class 1 Outstanding Natural Resource Waters (ONRW)**

Teton County boasts more miles of outstanding resource waters than any other county in Wyoming. Class 1 waters in Teton County include all of Fish Creek and its tributaries; the main stem of the Snake River through its entire length above U.S. Hwy 22 (Wilson Bridge); the main stem of Granite Creek (tributary of the Hoback River) through its entire length; and all surface waters within Grand Teton National Park and congressionally-designated wilderness areas.

According to Chapter 1, Section 4(a) of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) water quality rules and regulations, “Class 1 waters are those surface waters in which no further water quality degradation by point source discharges other than from dams will be allowed. Nonpoint sources of pollution shall be controlled through implementation of appropriate best management practices.”

Surface waters in Teton County that are not designated Class 1 are largely Class 2 streams, considered “high quality waters” managed for aquatic life including fish and all other uses identified in Chapter 1, Section 4. Water quality measures in the Comp Plan must be no less stringent than state and federal requirements, and may be more protective if necessary to achieve plan objectives.

### **Public Water Systems**

Teton County has 114 EPA-registered Public Water Systems (PWS), the largest number by far of any county in Wyoming. Although these systems rely exclusively on groundwater for drinking water supplies, very few have taken advantage of basic tools available under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to protect wellheads and source water areas. Indeed, only 44 of the 114 PWS have developed source water assessments (in 2004) and shockingly, only 3 have instituted source water protection plans. The absence of adequate regulatory oversight by local and state agencies has resulted in extensive groundwater contamination in Hoback Junction and exposes other PWS to unnecessary risk.

### **Hoback Junction – the Canary in the Coal Mine**

High concentrations of nitrates exceeding the EPA’s maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 mg/L have been detected in both public water systems and private wells in Hoback Junction. As a result, residents are now faced with a choice between drinking bottled water, installing expensive filtration equipment to reduce the nitrate levels, or drinking untreated water and risking the prospect of serious health consequences that can include blue baby syndrome and limb deformities in children. Local and state regulators have known of the problem for years and have accomplished little to address the underlying causes. However, recent efforts brought about by our advocacy — including an investigation by the Wyoming DEQ — will determine the causes of groundwater contamination (e.g., septic systems) and we hope ultimately, lead to a clean-up plan to remediate the groundwater contamination.

Unfortunately, there are indications that the debacle taking place at Hoback Junction may be the tip of the iceberg. Water quality data obtained from public water systems in other areas of Teton County reveal that several systems are experiencing nitrate hotspots. Naturally

occurring nitrate levels throughout Teton County are relatively low, typically well below 1 mg/L. According to the U.S. EPA, levels in excess of 3 mg/L indicate human influences. Although at least six Public Water Systems have concentrations exceeding 3 mg/L, no action is being taken by any regulatory agency to address this serious problem. The EPA is constrained by law from taking action until the 10 mg/L MCL is reached, but at that point the water is already unsafe to drink. And as shown by the Hoback Junction experience, suitable post-contamination remedies are cost prohibitive or simply unavailable. A far better solution is to identify and take action to address these nitrate hotspots before they exceed levels that trigger EPA jurisdiction, which often results in the immediate shutdown of the public water system and costly remedial action.

To address these concerns, the Wyoming Outdoor Council and Protect Our Waters Jackson Hole have proposed a new rule that would require intervention by the health department when nitrate levels reach or exceed 3 mg/L. A copy of the proposed rule is available upon request.

### **Major threats to water resources—wastewater discharges**

Nutrient pollution is one of the most significant threats to ground and surface waters in Teton County, along with stormwater, also known as “urban runoff.” The single largest source of water pollution in Teton County is the wastewater treatment plant operated by the Town of Jackson. In addition, major wastewater treatment facilities operating in Teton Village, Aspen-Pines, Jackson Lake Lodge/Colter Bay Village complex, Moose and others discharge millions of gallons of wastewater into groundwater (our sole source of drinking water) daily. The WDEQ has permitted 48 large capacity wastewater disposal systems in Teton County, with little oversight by county officials. In addition, approximately 3,600 “decentralized” small wastewater facilities (i.e., septic systems) have been permitted throughout Teton County, many in areas that are unsuitable—due to shallow water table and “poor soils”—for such systems. The lack of ongoing maintenance and inspection requirements in the county’s Small Wastewater Facility (SWF) regulations virtually guarantees that many septic systems are operating inefficiently and in some areas, have completely failed.

Excessive nutrients are responsible for nuisance algae in Fish Creek, and unsafe levels of nitrates in drinking water in Hoback Junction. Teton Conservation District has identified other PWS that provide drinking water from groundwater containing levels of nitrates that indicate human influence, and has dubbed these areas “nitrate hotspots.” The quality of drinking water provided by thousands of private wells is highly variable and mostly unknown to county officials, potentially putting the health and safety of private residents at risk.

### **Original Commitment to Clean Water Removed from Current Plan**

Water quality protections included in the Teton County’s first comprehensive land-use plan (1978) were removed in the 1994 rewrite, leaving groundwater quality vulnerable to pollution from septic systems and other sources. County officials owe the public an explanation as to why that happened.

Teton County’s first *Water Quality Management Program* was adopted over 40 years ago, in 1978, under the authority of Section 208 of the Clean Water Act. Developed by the long-defunct “Teton County 208 Planning Agency,” the water quality program recognized the

importance, sensitivity, and vulnerability of the valley's water resources and was therefore considered an "essential element" of the county's first comprehensive land-use plan.

To protect water resources, the county adopted what was then a new tool in local land use planning – the creation of Environmental Protection Districts, to guide land use in order to protect the most environmentally-sensitive areas of the county. These districts encompassed rivers, streams and wetlands, steep slopes, and groundwater, and were protected by enforceable performance standards such as buffer zones, setbacks, and building restrictions.

To address groundwater pollution problems caused by unregulated septic systems, Groundwater Protection Districts were established to delineate areas — based on soil type and depth to groundwater (i.e., environmental vulnerability), where septic systems would be restricted unless it could be demonstrated that groundwater pollution would not occur. Unfortunately, this performance standard was not enforced, leading to the present situation of hundreds of septic systems on the West Bank and other low-lying areas of our county discharging minimally treated human wastewater into our groundwater.

### **Lack of a Comprehensive County-wide Wastewater Management Plan**

The absence of a comprehensive wastewater management plan has led to haphazard, case-by-case decisions involving wastewater treatment and disposal. As a result, environmentally-sensitive areas of the county that should be connected to a centralized wastewater treatment facility are dependent on individual septic systems that are notoriously inefficient at removing pollutants from wastewater before it enters groundwater. The county's recent decision to move forward with wastewater planning is a significant step forward and will provide critical guidance regarding our community needs for the decades ahead.

### **Inadequate Regulation of Small Wastewater Facilities**

Teton County's SWF regulations were approved over ten years ago and do not comply with updated regulations promulgated by the WDEQ intended to protect drinking water supplies. The 2018 update promised by the county in Attachment D of the 2010 Delegation Agreement has not occurred, leaving the existing regulations woefully deficient, lacking many of the most basic requirements found in regulations in neighboring states.

The undersigned organizations submitted a detailed 34-page letter in response to an informal draft rule provided by the County Sanitarian that is available upon request.

### **Fish and Flat Creek *E. coli* Impairment**

The WDEQ has determined that both of these streams fail to meet water quality standards for primary contact recreation such as swimming and child's play. In-stream levels of *E. coli* in both streams exceed human health limits set by the EPA. To address the impairment, the WDEQ is required to develop total maximum daily loads, or TMDLs, a highly technical process that establishes the total maximum daily amount of *E. coli* that can be discharged into the stream without causing unsafe levels. The development of TMDLs for these two streams will take years; in the meantime, addressing this impairment in a timely fashion must be identified as a high-priority goal of the community. Inspections of septic systems and other sources of bacterial contamination in these drainages would be an obvious place to focus efforts.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope and severity of our water quality problems and challenges dictates more aggressive measures be included in the updated Comp Plan. The subsequent preparation of a “water quality enhancement plan” referenced in B.2., while welcome, is not a substitute for necessary changes needed now.

The Public Review Draft proposes the following “strategies to preserve and enhance surface water, groundwater, and air quality (Principle 1.2).” While helpful, these measures are not sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes.

First, concerning Principle 1.2, we recommend that it be revised to make clear we do not, in fact, have “high water . . . quality” throughout Teton County. As noted above, in certain areas of our county ground water quality has been degraded by nitrate concentrations indicating contamination; these areas have been dubbed “nitrate hot spots” by the Teton Conservation District. In the Hoback Junction area, groundwater degradation has been allowed to continue to the point where it is unsafe to drink, exceeding the EPA’s maximum contaminant level of 10 mg/L for nitrates and violating the WDEQ’s quality standards for groundwater. The phrase “[t]he high water and air quality of Jackson and Teton County are essential to the ecosystem. . .” clearly implies that that the county’s water quality is “high.” As much as we would like to believe otherwise, this is not universally true, and perpetuating the myth of a pristine environment is not constructive. While categorizing it as such may comport with the pristine image we have created of Teton County, this statement is not accurate and should be corrected to reflect reality.

Second, our two prized local streams, Fish Creek and Flat Creek are impaired with levels of *E. coli* that exceed numeric standards for “primary contact recreation waters” and as a result are unsafe to swim in or float on.

The Comp Plan strategies outlined below are all helpful, but are incomplete and will unfortunately not fully address the range of water quality problems facing our community.

1.2.S.1: Evaluate and update natural resource protection standards for waterbodies, wetlands and riparian areas.

1.2.S.2: Evaluate and update surface water filtration standards, focusing on developed areas near significant waterbodies.

1.2.S.3: Develop a water quality enhancement plan that includes consideration of additional County funding for water quality.

1.2.S.4: Update the Flat Creek Watershed Management Plan.

With regard to 1.2.S.1, above, the WDEQ has established in Chapter 1 water quality standards for Wyoming’s surface water. Given that, we recommend clarifying this item to identify the specific “natural resource protection standards” that would be evaluated and updated. We also recommend that the Comp Plan expressly require the highest level of protection for surface waters available under the Clean Water Act and the Wyoming Environmental Quality Act. For example, “all surface waters in Teton County will be managed for Primary Contact Recreation from May 1 to September 30<sup>th</sup>.”

Regarding protection of wetlands and riparian areas, we recommend that wetlands be defined to include all wetlands to ensure protection for non-jurisdictional wetlands that fall outside the scope of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) regulatory authority.

Turbidity and introduction of sediment (via discharge of dredge and fill material) into surface waters are regulated by the WDEQ and the ACE. We recommend clarifying 1.2.S.2 to explain the interaction of local and state regulation. If this section is contemplating the regulation of stormwater, perhaps that fact can be noted. We recommend that Best Management Practices for the control of stormwater be mandatory.

As noted above in our comments, we support both the development of a “water quality enhancement plan” and additional county funding dedicated to protecting water resources referenced in 1.2.S.3. We recommend that this language be modified to include a statement committing to involve the public in the development of such measures. For example, the phrase, “with public review and comment opportunities” could be inserted after “Develop.”

Lastly, in addition to updating the Flat Creek Watershed Management Plan noted in 1.2.S.4, we recommend including a measure to address *E. coli* impairment in Fish and Flat creeks. The development of TMDLs by WDEQ will take years; in the interim, the county can identify and implement actions designed to reduce levels of harmful pathogens.

In addition to the above suggestions, we recommend that the following strategies be included in the revised Comp Plan:

- Promulgate county regulations to protect Public Water Systems including a provision to require remedial action before nitrate levels exceed 3 mg/L. Prevent future Hobacks.
- Require all 114 Public Water Systems serving Teton County residents to develop (or update) Source Water Assessments and Source Water Protection Plans.
- Create a “placeholder” in the county plan to incorporate the comprehensive wastewater management plan upon its completion.
- Require, or create financial incentives to encourage, property owners to connect to existing sewer lines where available (e.g., Wilson).
- Reinstate Groundwater Protection Districts from the 1978 Comprehensive Plan and update groundwater protection zone maps based on best available science.
- Prohibit septic systems in Groundwater Protection Zones 1 and 2 unless a scientifically-valid analysis is provided by the applicant demonstrating that no groundwater pollution will occur from the operation of the system. This provision was contained in the original 1978 plan but unfortunately was not enforced.
- Update the county’s Small Wastewater Facility regulations with proven, state-of-the-art provisions recommended by the U.S. EPA for septic systems located in sensitive and vulnerable environments such as Class 1 surface waters and sole source aquifers.
- Recognize that crowding and overuse of rivers and lakes is harmful and commit to developing management plans to address this growing problem.
- Require inspections (by licensed professional engineers) of septic systems when ownership of property is transferred. (Such a requirement would have detected the numerous significant violations at Hoback RV Park much earlier).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/hoback-rv-park-leans-toward-overhauling-failed-septic-system/article\\_d925d6b7-50c3-5642-9773-2232dff55517.html](https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/hoback-rv-park-leans-toward-overhauling-failed-septic-system/article_d925d6b7-50c3-5642-9773-2232dff55517.html)

- To enhance community understanding of groundwater quality issues, establish a confidential registry of private wells and assemble a database of water quality information to better inform the public of water quality issues and trends.
- Evaluate, update and reinstate Environmental Protection Districts from the Teton County 208 Planning Agency’s 1978 Water Quality Management Program.

Additionally, we offer the following comments and suggestions regarding Principle 1.2 as well as the three related policy statements, 1.2a, 1.2b and 1.2.c. We suggest two new policy statements regarding the critical need to protect groundwater/ drinking water supplies, and the regulation of Public Water Systems.

Principle 1.2 (Preserve and enhance surface water, groundwater, and air quality) states that:

Clean water and air are the most basic requirements of a healthy ecosystem and community. The high water and air quality of Jackson and Teton County are essential to the ecosystem and scenic beauty that residents and visitors enjoy. Stewardship of water bodies, wetlands, riparian areas, groundwater, and the air is vital to sustaining healthy populations of native species and for the health and safety of the human community.

Given the critical importance to our community, we recommend highlighting the need to protect our groundwater – the Snake River Sole Source Aquifer – and the public water systems and private wells that depend on it. We suggest a new sentence at the end of the existing paragraph that specifically addresses the fact that ALL of our drinking water comes from groundwater and that the aquifer is irreplaceable.

Regarding the proposed policies, Policy 1.2.a (Buffer waterbodies, wetlands, and riparian areas from development) states, in part, that, “[t]he development will be designed to include buffers around water bodies, wetlands, and riparian areas that preserve their ecological function.” We recommend that this policy be clarified to explain how buffer distances will be determined to “preserve ecological function.” Will this be a case-by-case determination or will uniform buffer distances be established for each resource or value? Will the buffer distances currently established in the Small Wastewater Facility regulations be the same as in the LDRs?

We strongly support the adoption of Policy 1.2.b (Require filtration of runoff) and recommend that Best Management Practices be required. Please change “should” to “shall.”

Likewise, we support Policy 1.2.c (Coordinate water quality monitoring with Teton Conservation District and other partners) and urge its adoption.

### **Additional recommendations.**

#### Chapter 1. Stewardship of Wildlife, Natural Resources and Scenery.

Under the heading, “Why is this chapter addressed?” (CV-1-2) we suggest a change to this sentence: “Development can displace and fragment habitat, emissions drive climate changes to our natural environment, human movement through the ecosystem impacts wildlife movement, discharge and runoff can decrease water quality, and human introduction of invasive species can disrupt the ecosystem.”

Change “discharge” to “discharge of pollutants and wastewater from septic systems entering groundwater...”

### Chapter 3. Responsible Growth Management.

Under the heading, “Why is this chapter addressed?” (CV-2-2) we suggest adding the following language: “To achieve the goals and benefits of effective growth management, the plan must ensure that a comprehensive wastewater management plan is in place before authorizing new residential and commercial development in sensitive groundwater areas that lack sewer connections.”

Wastewater planning for new development should not be an afterthought or decided on a case-by-case basis. New development, particularly in areas with shallow groundwater and gravel soils, should not be permitted until a comprehensive strategy for wastewater treatment and disposal has been developed.

We recommend changes to the verbiage set forth in Principle 3.4, which currently provides that:

***Principle 3.4—Limit development in naturally hazardous areas.***

Development in hazardous areas threatens the health, safety and welfare of human inhabitants. Steep slopes, poor soils, avalanche chutes, floodplains, dense forests and areas along fault lines offer unique opportunities for interaction with the environment, but when natural events do occur in these areas the results can be disastrous.

The suggested change would delete the phrase, “poor soils” and replace it with more accurate and scientifically-acceptable terminology such as “unstable soils” where slides, slumps or settling are concerns, and use the word “alluvium” where groundwater contamination from septic systems is the concern, such as gravel-bed floodplains with a shallow water table and soils consisting of sands and gravels.

We recommend the same change to the language contained in “Policy 3.4.d: Limit development on poor soils” which reads:

Development on poor soils threatens the integrity of structures, encourages erosion and landslides and may cause groundwater contamination if septic systems are used in such areas. Development on poor soils will be avoided when possible and should employ best management practices if necessary.

As above, we suggest deleting the term “poor soils” and replacing it with an accurate, scientifically acceptable description of soil types that may limit activities.

We recommend a similar edit to a Policy 3.4.d - Limit development on poor soils. This policy provides that: “Development on poor soils threatens the integrity of structures, encourages erosion and landslides and may cause groundwater contamination if septic systems are used in such areas. Development on poor soils will be avoided when possible and should employ best management practices if necessary.”

We suggest deleting the term, “poor soils” and replacing with more accurate scientifically-acceptable terminology. With respect to septic systems, the policy should expressly prohibit the installation of septic systems (raised mound or otherwise) in areas where depth to groundwater is less than six feet unless the applicant has demonstrated through rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific investigation that no groundwater pollution will result – the standard first set in 1978. The application for such system shall include a sworn statement bearing the stamp of a licensed professional engineer or geologist that no nitrates or other pollutants will enter ground or surface waters. Groundwater quality monitoring shall be conducted at the proposed building site prior to the permitting of the system to establish baseline quality, and for 12 months following completion and occupancy of the dwelling. In order to meet the “no groundwater pollution” standard, no change in baseline groundwater quality shall be allowed as a result of the installation and operation of the system. These permit conditions should be added to the “*Strategies to limit development in naturally hazardous areas (Principle 3.4)*” on page CV-2-15.

Finally, we suggest adding a new policy under Principle 3.2, as follows: Where additional density is added, or where new growth areas are identified, a plan for infrastructure (transportation, water, and sewer) must be in place before any new density is granted. Planning must, at minimum, protect the general health and welfare. For example, permitting new development without appropriate wastewater or transportation infrastructure will only transfer the costs to taxpayers in the future, as we’ve seen with Hoback’s contaminated water.

#### Chapter 4. Town as the Heart of the Region – the Central Complete Neighborhood.

The Comp Plan states (at CV-2-16) that “[t]he Town of Jackson will continue to be the primary location for jobs, housing, shopping, educational and cultural activities.” To achieve this goal, it will be necessary to ensure that the town has sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to accommodate the desired/projected growth. We recommend specific recognition of this critical fact.

#### **Quality of Life: Common Value 3 of Community Character.**

This section (at CV-3-1) describes Quality of Life and then asks, “How are we going to achieve [it]”? It presents four chapters, Chapters 5–8, intended to assist the community in achieving Quality of Life. We would submit that access to clean and affordable drinking water and pristine surface waters are so fundamental to achieving the quality of life described in this section that a new chapter needs to be dedicated to restoring, protecting and enhancing water quality, which includes, first and foremost, protecting and securing our community’s drinking water supplies. It also includes ensuring that our streams, lakes and rivers are safe to swim in, and not contaminated by dangerous levels of *E. coli* or toxins from hazardous algal blooms. Key issues to address include protecting –and demanding accountability from– the 114 Public Water Systems currently operating in Teton County; moving forward with county-wide wastewater planning; adopting revised regulations for Small Wastewater Facilities which incorporate recommendations from the U.S. EPA for septic systems located in sensitive environments; establishing a new position in county government to oversee water quality protection efforts, and developing the necessary infrastructure to deliver essential community services such as water and sewer.

Chapter 6 of this section (CV-3-12) envisions a “Diverse and Balanced Economy.” Within this chapter, Policy 6.1.c calls for establishing an identity as a “green” community. For this goal to be realized, it is essential for our community to commit to providing clean and affordable drinking water to all community members and to properly address wastewater management, treatment and disposal, otherwise it will never legitimately achieve green community status.

Chapter 8. Quality Community Service Provision. Chapter 8 (CV-3-28) requires the county to “timely, efficiently and safely deliver quality services and facilities in a fiscally responsible and coordinated manner.” Within this chapter, Principle 8.1 requires the county to “[m]aintain current, coordinated service delivery” while Principle 8.2 requires the county to “[c]oordinate the provision of infrastructure and facilities needed for service delivery.” Given its importance, we would like to see Public Water Systems and wastewater treatment specifically identified under the heading “utilities and infrastructure.”

Chapter 9. Adaptive Management. We recommend the addition of the following “hard triggers” which will require a coordinated response by government agencies:

- Failure of surface water to meet WDEQ Chapter 1 water quality standards (e.g., Fish and Flat Creeks *E.coli* primary contact recreation standard).
- Failure of groundwater to meet WDEQ quality standards for domestic use (e.g., Hoback Junction).
- Failure of facilities authorized by the WDEQ to discharge pollutants into ground or surface waters of the state to comply with permit terms and conditions.
- Evidence of nitrate concentrations in groundwater utilized by public water systems or private wells indicating human influence or contamination; i.e., 3 mg/L.
- Failure of Public Water System to comply with Safe Drinking Water Act requirements.
- Failure to provide drinking water that meets EPA effluent limitation guidelines (ELGs).
- Violations of federal, state and/or county environmental law and regulations.

Lastly, we have a few suggestions regarding the section of the Comp Plan called “Illustration of Our Vision.” With respect to Districts that are not connected to town’s water and sewer lines, we recommend that a summary of the drinking water supplies and wastewater disposal systems utilized in the area (and subareas) be included in the narrative description of each district. The Policy Objectives for each district should specify that access to clean, affordable drinking water will be maintained, and that drinking water provided by public water systems will not contain levels of pollutants that suggest human-caused contamination.

With respect to Hoback Junction (subarea 8.4) the Character Defining Features should note that a centralized wastewater treatment facility and alternative drinking water supplies will likely be needed due to high levels of nitrates in the groundwater that exceed the EPA’s maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 mg/L. It should also be noted that nitrate levels exceeding 10 mg/L constitute a violation of WDEQ groundwater quality standards for domestic use, which may be a limiting factor regarding future development in the area that is dependent on septic systems for wastewater disposal.

Rising nitrate concentrations in other areas of the county (refer to TCD for list of such areas) may face similar challenges in the future if action is not taken to reduce nitrate levels. The descriptions of subareas should identify these nitrate “hotspots” and allow for the possibility that connections to centralized sewer systems, water filtration, and alternative water supply systems may be required if action is not taken to address the sources and causes of nitrate contamination.

Teton County’s water quality problems are the result of decades of neglect, inattention, complacency, and absence of adequate regulatory oversight at all levels of government. To remedy this, we must ensure that the job of restoring and protecting our precious water quality is viewed with the same sense of urgency as other community priorities such as affordable housing, wildlife crossings, easing traffic congestion, community policing and other pressing issues confronting Teton County. Preserving the status quo is no longer an option. We look forward to working with town and county planners and the community as a whole to ensure that our collective vision encompasses the fundamental right to clean water.

Sincerely,



Dan Heilig  
Senior Conservation Advocate  
Wyoming Outdoor Council



Brooke Sauser  
Community Planning Manager  
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance



Dan Leemon  
Executive Director  
Protect Our Water Jackson Hole

Cc: Jackson Town Council  
Teton County Board of County Commissioners