

September 1, 2020

Jackson Mayor and Town Council
Teton County Board of County Commissioners

Memo: Best first use of public funding for ecosystem conservation

Dear Mayor, Madam Chair, Councilors, and Commissioners:

Thank you for your ongoing work on the very challenging public health crisis that our community faces. We are grateful that you have put our community's safety and health first. We also appreciate the difficult decisions you had to make through the budget process, and we understand that this year's budget may be amended given how quickly our economic situation is changing.

We appreciate the feedback we received from councilors and commissioners in response to our letters regarding ecosystem stewardship funding earlier this year. One common question was: **what would be the best first steps for conservation funding?** Understanding that town and county revenues are uncertain, we propose allocating funds to two purposes once funding is available, whether in this year's budget or in a future year.

1. Ecosystem & Climate Action Plans & Goals

Our community has invested significant time and resources into creating the [Housing Action Plan](#) and the [Integrated Transportation Plan](#) to implement the broader vision of our Comprehensive Plan. Both of these focused plans set out clear, measurable goals – 65% workforce housing and 11% smaller growth in vehicle miles traveled. But though ecosystem stewardship is one of the three common values, and it is at the core of our vision, *we have no ecosystem / conservation plan or goals*. So how can we know if we're making progress or losing ground? We need a Conservation / Ecosystem Action Plan that outlines clear goals, metrics, and a prioritized path forward. We estimate this would be a \$150K one-time expense, mostly in consultant time, and believe this would most logically live at the County.

In parallel, and for the same reasons, we support the recent discussions about the need for a Climate / Sustainability Action Plan. We believe the climate plan would have a similar cost and would logically live at the Town. Both plans should be jointly developed if possible. These plans could further develop the priorities for, and be implemented by, related staff positions:

2. Ecosystem / Sustainability Coordinators in local government

We support creating a Town position focused on sustainability and climate goals and a County planning position focused on ecosystem / land stewardship / water quality. This is the staffing that [many members of Systems of Conservation joined forces to ask for](#) this spring, at about \$100-150K per staff position. While the above goal setting and plan development would chart a proactive path toward preserving our ecosystem, a staff member prepared to comment on the many projects coming at us now (the Bridger-Teton National Forest Plan, transfer of the Bureau of Land Management Parcels along the Snake River, implementation of the Wildlife Crossings Master Plan) and participate in the many coalitions (Clean Water Coalition, Systems of Conservation, etc.) would be of immediate value and impact. And the plans are much more likely to be implemented with professional staff in place.

We hope this information is helpful, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas with you in a workshop or at any time.

Sincerely,

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Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance

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Wyoming Wildlife Advocates

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National Parks Conservation Association

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