



BRADLY J. BONER / NEWS&GUIDE FILE

Jackson Hole artist Jennifer L. Hoffman paints Flat Creek and the refuge last year from a piece of conservation property donated by Spring Creek Ranch.

Land trust fuses nature, art with picnic

Who: Jackson Hole Land Trust
What: Picnic
When: 4-7 p.m. Sunday
Where: 4 Lazy F Ranch
How much: \$50 for adults, free for children 12 and under
Web: JhLandAndTrust.org

By Frances Moody

The valley's scenery acts as muse for many artists.

Working to protect the place that inspires creative thinkers is the Jackson Hole Land Trust. Celebrating the accomplishment of phase one of a four-part preservation project, the trust is fusing art and nature for its annual picnic, open to the public.

Happening 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday at 4 Lazy F Ranch, just west of town, the event will feature the View 22 plein air painters and live music by Jessica Camilla O'Neal and the Neversweat Players.

In November the trust managed to preserve an area of East Gros Ventre Butte, the sage grouse habitat north of Jackson and above the National Museum of Wildlife Art.

"There are four different key parcels of land we want protected," said the trust's executive director, Laurie Andrews. "East Gros Ventre Butte is one of them."

By securing the landscape, the trust stopped the development of residential property.

Altering East Gros Ventre's land would compromise its wildlife benefits. It would also destroy a part of Jackson's majestic scenery. Keen about Jackson's wildlife beauty, several artists are in support of the trust's mission.

"Artists, be it a photographer or in this case the View 22 painters, help



DAVID STUBBS / COURTESY PHOTO

Jackson Hole Land Trust's mission is to protect the land that keeps people visiting Jackson. This year, the trust's picnic celebrates the protection of part of East Gros Ventre Butte and includes plein air artists and music.

us recognize the amazing scenery of Jackson," Andrews said. "When you stop to take a picture or paint one, you stop and look at that scenery in a different way. That outlook develops a deep connection with nature."

Some artists have volunteered to participate Sunday. Bill Sawczuk and four other artists will showcase their plein air skills at the picnic. Sawczuk and his fellow painters are from the group View 22, a posse of artists who paint "en plein air," French for "in open air."

This is the second year View 22 will be a part of the trust's picnic.

Sawczuk participated last year. He said the picnic is a way to use art to show land that is not accessible to most people.

Because the trust protects privately owned property, most people

don't get up-close looks at its preserved open spaces.

"Owners should be proud that they have these gorgeous pieces of land and are saving them and putting them in the land trust," Sawczuk said. "As an artist, you are always looking for places to paint and to go. This event is also great for the county. When we paint, we can share these private properties and share what these places look like."

Visual art is not the only creative genre affected by nature. O'Neal and her band the Neversweat Players write songs influenced by the Wyoming scenery. Although O'Neal, nee Garnick, grew up in Jackson, the band is now based in Dubois. It plays what O'Neal calls Rocky Mountain music, a sound with Western-influenced lyrics and acoustic funkiness.

O'Neal said her writing process doesn't flow when she is working in a big city.

"I worked in Nashville," she said. "I had a hard time being there, not being outside, and sitting in a fluorescent room."

Like Sawczuk, O'Neal commends the trust's progress.

"It's important to preserve these views and to make sure our wildlife has space to move freely," O'Neal said. "Being in nature itself is creation, and it is key for artists to create and enjoy."

"When you stop to take a picture or paint one, you stop and look at that scenery in a different way."

— Laurie Andrews

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JACKSON HOLE LAND TRUST

A private, nonprofit organization, the Jackson Hole Land Trust was founded in 1980 by a small group of Jackson residents. The trust works to preserve the open spaces of privately owned land. Working with the lands' owners, the organization has ensured the protection of more than 24,000 acres of open space land in and around Jackson Hole and Yellowstone. In addition to protecting the East Gros Ventre Butte, the trust's current projects include the preservation of Flat Creek Corridor, the Snake River riparian corridor and River Springs-Rendezvous Park.