

Land Steward

Newsletter for the Jackson Hole Land Trust's Conservation Easement Donors
and Owners & Managers of Protected Properties



FRPP a viable protection incentive for landowners

Many people are unaware that the federal government has several programs to fund the purchase of conservation easements. One of the largest of these at work in Wyoming is the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), a Farm Bill program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. FRPP provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural use. Working through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement



FRPP is a big program nationally, but it has been especially important to Wyoming conservation efforts in recent years. In the 2010 federal Fiscal Year, Wyoming NRCS received and obligated \$20.6 Million dollars in FRPP financial assistance, facilitating the permanent conservation of over 41,000 acres of land in the Cowboy State. In the 2011 federal Fiscal Year, Wyoming NRCS anticipates receiving approximately \$30 Million in FRPP financial assistance. This is a total of \$50 million in federal funding made available to Wyoming.

In 2010, Wyoming trailed 6 other states in the number of projects that received obligated funding. While, the dollar amount received by Wyoming projects amounted to roughly 14% of national FRPP funds, the land conserved accounts for almost 40% of the total acreage nationwide. So, when considering the NRCS' "bang for its buck", FRPP projects throughout the state were far and away the most productive with an average of \$497 obligated per acre conserved. Of the 6 states with more

FRPP projects, acreage in Wyoming was protected at 1/10 of the cost of projects in Massachusetts, 1/4 of the cost of Pennsylvania's projects, at 1/3 the cost of those in West Virginia, and about 1/2 of the cost of projects in Ohio and Michigan.

The Jackson Hole Land Trust has a solid track record of working with FRPP. We've secured several large grants of FRPP funds in recent years that we've used to acquire conservation easements.

Land trusts are extremely selective in the projects they nominate for purchased conservation easements, and the JHLT is no exception. The amount of time and resources involved, the requirement to raise matching funds, and the selectivity of the funding programs themselves all make purchasing conservation easements a serious undertaking. But we're always looking for new projects that might be suitable for FRPP.

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Teton Conservation District Weed Cost-Share to Decline

For years, many of you have been participants in the weed cost-share program offered by the Teton Conservation District (TCD). 384 of your neighbors also treated the weeds on their land last year, utilizing the incentives offered through the popular program. This amounts to nearly 1/3 of the private land in the valley.

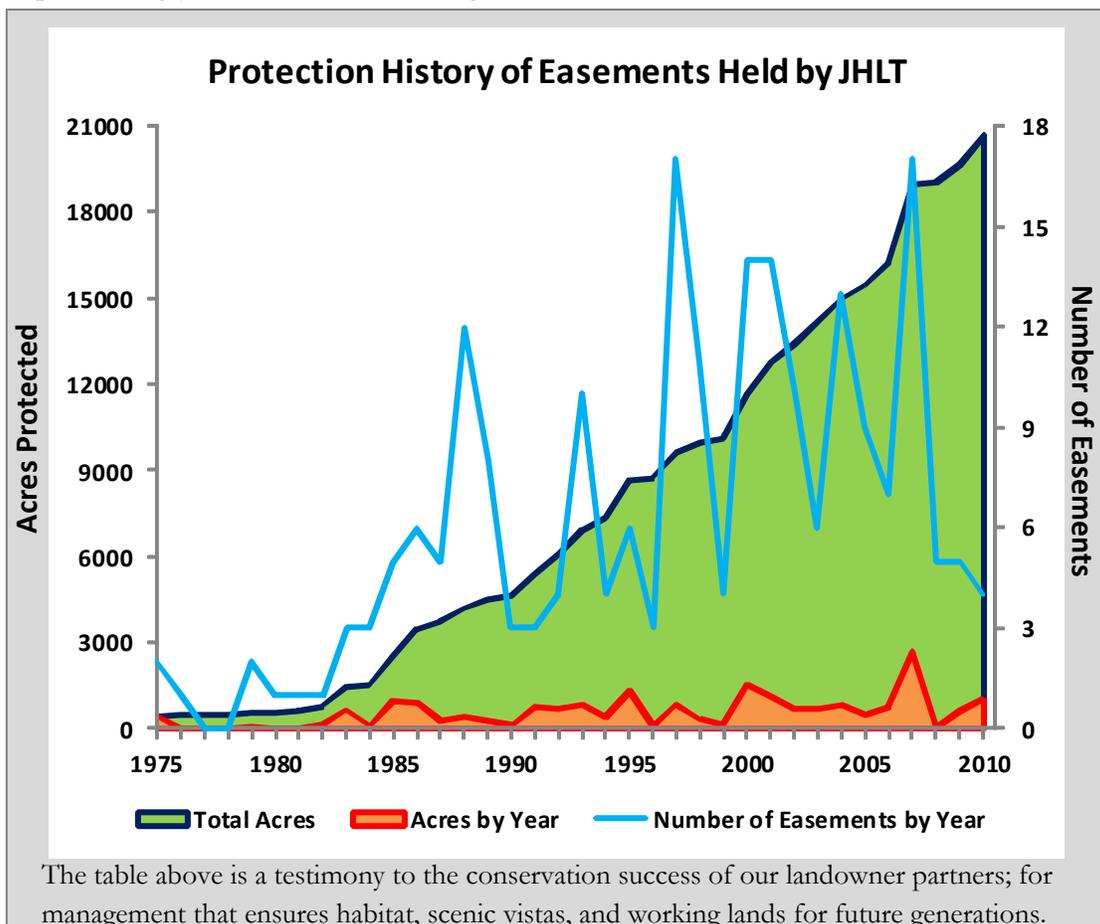
In visiting the conservation properties throughout the valley, our Land Stewards have seen the strides that have been made under the program that has provided:

- Free weed mapping for every participating property
- Free site evaluations and post-treatment follow-ups
- Free advice to guide your actions as a private land owner
- And, 40-50% cost-share of all your expenses

In spite of the great success and participation, the TCD program has come under budgetary constraints. As a result, 2011 will bring a decrease in the percentage of your weed control costs that will be offset by the program. The new cost-share rate for 2011 will be 25%. The Land Trust encourages every conservation landowner not to “back-slide” on the progress that you have made in keeping your property values from becoming pirated by noxious weeds. After 5 years of participation and strategic weed control, your treatment expenses should be a predictable and effective part of your management budget. TCD’s incentive is still a significant benefit, and continues to provide motivation to stay the course on implementing weed treatments that have been assisted by TCD’s expertise and mapping in the past.

If you travel outside of Jackson Hole you might notice the stark contrast in relation to noxious weeds. Much of Montana, Idaho, Utah and other places in Wyoming have lost significant productivity and habitat to weedy species. Time has shown that this community has joined together to keep the special character of northwest Wyoming, and the case is no different for attention to weeds. And it is always wonderful to see that conservation property owners continue to lead the way.

If you believe that you have not made progress in your weed control, please ask your Land Steward for advice and input during your annual monitoring visit.



The table above is a testimony to the conservation success of our landowner partners; for management that ensures habitat, scenic vistas, and working lands for future generations.

FRPP from Front Cover

For landowners who wish to see their land and its unique qualities conserved in perpetuity, there are modest financial incentives available, like FRPP that may prove to tip the balance, increasing the viability of further conservation. If you're interested in learning more about FRPP, or any of the other funding programs at work in Wyoming today, call or stop by the office. John Shepard is the director of conservation for the Jackson Hole Land Trust, is responsible for identifying, developing, and carrying out both donated and purchased conservation easement projects, and would be happy assist you. John can be reached at (307) 733-4707.

Mark your calendar: Picnic Aug. 14th

The annual Jackson Hole Land Trust picnic will take place on the second Sunday of August on the Parker property. We look forward to celebrating private land conservation with music, food, and conversation. Come and enjoy the fabulous views to the Snake River Range and Glory Bowl, perched high above Spring Creek. JHLT's Staff and Board look forward to seeing you for this wonderful community event.

Land Trust preview at Diehl Gallery

Join us on the evening of July 20th at the Diehl Gallery for a private preview for JHLT exhibiting the works Hung Liu. This event precedes the exhibit that will run from July 21 – August 9.



Refreshments will be provided. Liu, a Mills College professor, has twice been recognized with Painting Fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts. Using historical photographs of human subjects, her work explores their "mythic poses", incorporating the documentary authority of the photographs with the more reflective painting process.

Collectors are invited to write 10% of the acquisition cost of paintings in this show directly to Jackson Hole Land Trust.

Cheatgrass becoming the bane of the West

WHAT IS CHEATGRASS? Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is an exotic, annual grass originating from southwest Asia. Well established and extremely problematic in much of the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada, it is becoming common on dryer hillsides and disturbed areas of Jackson Hole. During the last 20 years of drought and warmer temperatures, cheatgrass has been able to gain superiority over native plants by the prolific production of seeds in both spring and fall. Cheatgrass, an early season grass, "greens-up" early on south facing slopes and/or dry disturbed areas before native bunchgrasses have a chance to begin their growing season. Cheatgrass literally "cheats" native plants out of early spring moisture and space, and completes its life cycle by going to seed before our native grasses have a chance to compete with it. The plant produces little useful forage that is of poor nutritional value for livestock and wildlife, it is prone to catching fire, and has a very limited root system to help hold soils on a slope. The bottom line is that in recent years this species is expanding in Jackson Hole, to the detriment of our native plant communities and the animals that depend on the forage they provide. How extensive is

Cheatgrass at various life stages:



Fine, silky appearance is typical during spring and early summer



Just before the seeds are mature the plant takes on a purple hue



The seed heads begin to droop early in the season



When the plant cures (by mid-July), cheatgrass is golden colored when native bunchgrasses are green.



Cheatgrass is an annual with weak roots give it a tug and the plants come out of the soil easily.

the infestation? There is no inventory at this time, but that is changing as various local, state, and federal entities are beginning to turn their attention to this invader.

HAVE I GOT CHEATGRASS?
During the summer monitoring visit ask your Land Steward to identify cheatgrass for you.

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Our Mission

The Jackson Hole Land Trust is a private nonprofit that was established in 1980. We work to preserve open space and the scenic, ranching and wildlife values of Jackson Hole by assisting landowners who wish to protect their land in perpetuity.

Stewardship Staff

Director of Conservation: John Shepard - john@jhlandtrust.org
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Grouching about the property

Lots of folks see grouse around their homes each year and many wonder whether they are the increasingly rare “sage grouse”. Perhaps the Land Trust can help you sort out just what kind of chicken-like, grey birds are on your property.

First of all, we do have sage grouse in Jackson Hole but they all live between the Town of Jackson (on east Gros Ventre Butte) and the Spread Creek in Grand Teton National Park. Sage grouse are quite large (slightly bigger than a chicken) and walk around on the ground in the sagebrush. They sometimes bring their broods into lush green areas where the chicks can catch bugs, but they are never associated with forests or perch in trees.

The most common grouse people see in Jackson Hole are ruffed grouse. These birds like forested patches such as aspen stands with an understory of tall shrubs like chokecherry, serviceberry or water birch. This bird is slightly smaller than a chicken and will often times bring their broods in from the forest to your porch or garden. This grouse is famous for drumming on logs in the spring generating sounds similar to a small motor starting up. At times the crest on the top of the ruffed grouse’s head is visible, or the black ruffed collar that the bird is named for can be seen.

Blue grouse are associated with pine forests and have a dark tail with a light colored band across the base. In spring, these birds strut and make a “booming” noise in the form of a single, base note. Hikers often see booming males along trails in the valley, with the birds tenaciously holding their ground in spite of threatening human presence. This bird is less likely to be the one near your home.

Finally there are sharp-tailed grouse that can be spotted from time to time in the valley. Although very limited in number and distribution, you may be able to catch a glimpse on the National Elk Refuge or in the Antelope Flats/Kelly area. Of course they have a pointed tail, and they are most often spotted when they roost in aspens or cottonwood trees during winter.

If in doubt, send us your grouse photos for a positive ID:
Tom@jhlandtrust.org

Consider trout friendly management

We are fortunate that flowing water in Jackson Hole is prevalent. Not only is water a top ranked amenity for the Jackson Hole lifestyle, but our live water system of streams and ditches that lace through private land support some of the best trout fishing and best trout populations in the world. In particular and especially on private land, we control the fate of a species of cutthroat trout that cannot be found anywhere else in the world . . . the Snake River Cutthroat. With trout spawning season upon us, there are some things to consider when carrying out property management that can have far reaching significance on our local and regional fishery.

Whether your property is two miles from or sits adjacent to a pond, stream or ditch, the combination of permeable soil and a high groundwater table in Jackson Hole dictate that your land affects the valley’s trout. For example, near Wilson, where groundwater levels are often just 2 feet below the surface of the land, there are approximately 1,500 private septic systems and at least that many lawns that interface with both ground and surface waters. Teton County has gone to great lengths to ensure that our local golf courses use chemicals wisely, but as individual landowners we “go for the green look” at all costs when it comes to lawns.

Items to consider include limiting your use of lawn chemicals and providing a buffer strip of native vegetation along any shorelines or stream banks on your property. Simple steps can lessen the effect of lawn care treatments on our aquatic communities to the benefit of the trout that we place such value on.

If you would like to see how your property interacts with water on our near your property, visit the Teton County Geographical Information site for an aerial perspective. Navigate to <http://www2.tetonwyo.org/mapserver/map.html> and check the 2009 aerial photo box on the right hand sidebar; then pan the valley floor to find your property.

Several aerial photos that depict the close proximity of our water resources and fishery habitats ↓

