

THE RESULTS ARE IN: IT'S WORKING!

"What's working?" you may wonder. The answer is: "conservation". The reality is that conservation is not a fact. It is a task that is done over and over again with each human activity that may occur on a property.

So, how can we measure whether conservation is happening on the ground thanks to conservation landowners like you?

The stewardship staff at the Land Trust used a statistically valid method to measure changes on conservation properties over a 25 to 27 year period against changes on randomly selected, comparable lands unencumbered by a conservation easement. We picked the oldest conservation properties in the valley that have been under easement for at least 25 years. Using aerial photos, we then selected unprotected lands with similar characteristics and measured 4 types of features that are indicators of ecological function (physical habitat loss, road density, fence density & insularization). By measuring the condition of the land early in the lifetime of each easement (1977) and then again in 2005, we obtained data that captured the effect of easements over a 25 to 27 year period.

Our study objectively demonstrates that after the first 25 to 27 years, a conservation property will generally have 3.6 times less physical habitat loss than a comparable piece of land in Jackson Hole. In addition, a conservation property will tend to have 6.4 times less road density. These two factors are a measure of "conservation" occurring over time.

We also learned that fence densities were roughly the same on conservation properties as on the comparable lands. However,



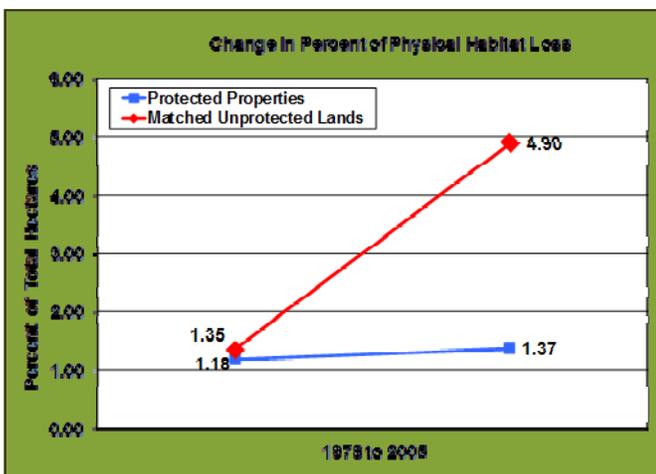
Photograph by Mack Mendenhall

the density of barbed wire fences on conservation properties actually declined slightly, while densities of wooden fences increased at about the same rate as to that on comparable unencumbered lands. The jury is still out on what to think about these results, because wooden fences can be as detrimental to wildlife passage as wire fencing, and sometimes more so. What is clear is that the conservation easements do not appear to be influencing the density of fencing.

The final parameter we assessed was if protected open space was attracting development around its periphery. For years, people have wondered if perhaps some of the ecological benefits of conserving open space are being counteracted as residential development is attracted to the boundaries of natural areas, thereby physically isolating the conservation areas from the rest of the natural environment. Our measurements indicated that the isolation of conservation properties in Jackson Hole occurs to the same degree as on unprotected lands. While it would be best to have less isolation, easements do not appear to be a contributing factor.

An important point to note is that these study results only apply to the first 25 years of the lifetime of a conservation easement. The differences that will be observed after 50 years may be more pronounced.

There you have it. As a group, conservation property owners like you are doing the task of conservation every day, throughout the years. And, it is measurable!



DEFENSIBLE SPACE IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

The Little Horsethief Fire of last summer was a close-to-home reminder that we live in a place shaped by a fire-dependent ecology, like most of the western United States. In Jackson Hole and throughout much of the West, there is no location, or property, that does not have the inherent potential to burn. Virtually all western lands burn from time to time, and a rejuvenated, healthy ecology is often the result. Commonly, what we enjoy most about our western landscapes is a direct reflection of past fire activity. Human activity and fire suppression have played a role in altering this natural regime, with unintended consequences such as fires that burn at higher intensities.

Defending your home from fire, on the other hand, can be quite simple. Landowners often seek out homesites that are nestled in, or near, stands of mature vegetation and adjacent to steep slopes for scenic value and privacy. The combination of an ever-increasing population in the western states, along with reoccurring drought has resulted in a renewed focus on protecting homes from wildfire, especially in wildland-urban interface areas. When it comes to conservation properties, the goal is the same: prevent your structures from burning. By

far, the most efficient and effective wildfire mediation work that you can undertake is to make certain that your structures, and the areas immediately surrounding them (i.e. 100 feet) are resistant to fire, and that the fire crews that are qualified to help you will be able to appropriately defend your structures. This is called creating “Defensible Space”.

Before spending time and money to drastically remove vegetation, or even dead wood, across your property in the name of fire prevention, consider that the manner in which you do so may be contrary to the purposes and terms of the conservation easement on your land. On the other hand, making your home, the space immediately surrounding it, and your access drive fire resistant and accessible by fire crews is absolutely acceptable and encouraged by the Land Trust.

Before you attempt to alter the entire ecology of your property, contact the Land Trust for help in developing appropriate “defensible space” surrounding your home. We are happy to provide you with information and then join you in meeting with your contractor. We will provide you with a letter detailing your plans and provide written approval relative to the conservation easement. Call us!

Forever Our Valley – LAND TRUST VIDEO NOW LIVE

This spring, the Land Trust released our new short film, *Forever Our Valley: The Jackson Hole Land Trust*. Filmed throughout the iconic protected properties of the valley, the 3 minute 40 second film introduces the efforts of the Jackson Hole Land Trust in protecting open space and the critical wildlife habitat, magnificent scenic vistas, and historic ranching heritage of Jackson Hole and the Greater Yellowstone Area. Sweeping cinematography by local filmmaker David Stubbs presents a picture of what is at stake in the last intact ecosystem in the lower 48 states.

See wildlife on the move, crystal clear trout streams, cottonwood groves, historic ranches, and the majestic Teton mountains, all from the perspective of the properties that the Land Trust has conserved throughout the valley. Hear from Brad Mead, fourth generation rancher and longtime Land Trust supporter, and Mike Wardell, Land Trust emeritus board member.



The video is available at:

www.vimeo.com/jhlandtrust/foreverourvalley

We would like to thank the landowners and ranch managers that gave us permission to access their beautiful properties for filming.

Starting from Scratch

My name is Sean O'Donnell. When I came to the Land Trust in January 2013, I knew I had a lot of catching up to do. I joined a team of very passionate and highly competent individuals who are all working with you to sustain the land and the Jackson Hole quality of life. That is the very reason why I'm here as well.



As the new Stewardship Manager, I am responsible for overseeing the Jackson Hole Land Trust's stewardship program. At the core of the program is the responsibility of monitoring over 200 conservation easements. While the stewardship team is pretty incredible, they can only be in one place at a time, and there are a lot of conservation landowners to visit over a relatively short time frame each summer. This is why we work so hard to foster good working relationships with you, the conservation property landowners, and your caretakers and managers. You are our eyes and ears; the task would be near impossible without your help.

Before joining the Jackson Hole Land Trust, I had spent over 10 years working in a very remote section of Denali National Park, Alaska. Technology was very unreliable out there, so most of our business was done face to face – and that is how I've always preferred it. Social media has come a long way, but it will never replace a cup of coffee and a handshake.

At the Land Trust, our relationships with landowners are the backbone of stewardship. While Jackson is fairly modern, there is a lot of history in the soil here, and there are still some of you that make your living off the land. When I took on the role of Stewardship Manager, I knew I had to get out there and meet as many of you as possible, in person. So, the first thing I set out to do was to send letters to each of you asking if you could take the time to meet with me. While addressing over 200 envelopes by hand was no fun, (at this point I would rather face an angry grizzly before licking another envelope), it was worth it.

So far, dozens of you have been able to make some time for me and I greatly appreciate it; sometimes we've just chatted over coffee, other times we've gotten out on the tractor to get some work done. Regardless of where each meeting took place, or what we discussed, I came away with a better understanding of why each of you live here. In many cases, the reasons were the same as why we are all here. What was clear is that you all love this incredible place.

I want to thank each of you who invited me out thus far and shared your knowledge. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the upcoming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean O'Donnell'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

NEW LAND TRUST WEBSITE FEATURES STEWARDSHIP PROFILES & UPDATED RESOURCES

This May, we will be launching our NEW Land Trust website, still available at www.jhlandtrust.org. We hope that you will enjoy the new features of the website, including: expanded Land Protection and Stewarding the Land sections, updated Landowner Resources pages, new photos and maps, and more. Our Stewardship Profiles slideshow features ranch managers and conservation landowners, and their thoughts on why being out on the land and open spaces are important to them. If you would like to submit your own quote and photo to us to be added to the Stewardship Profiles, we would greatly appreciate it! Please email Leslie Steen at leslie@jhlandtrust.org with any submissions.



Photograph by David Swift

Bar BC Ranch Host Site for Annual Picnic

Save the afternoon of **Sunday, August 11th**, for the Jackson Hole Land Trust Annual Picnic!

Each year, the Jackson Hole Land Trust annual picnic celebrates the wide open spaces in this valley that you work so hard to protect. This year, we will gather at the Bar BC Ranch up Spring Gulch for this family friendly event featuring classic barbeque fare, children's activities, and music by Anne & Pete Sibley. We hope you will be able to join us as JHLT marks the success of private land conservation in north-west Wyoming. Your personal invitation will arrive in late June.

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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

Stewardship Manager: Sean O'Donnell - sean@jhlandtrust.org
Staff Biologist & Land Steward: Tom Segerstrom - tom@jhlandtrust.org
Land Steward: Steffan Freeman - steffan@jhlandtrust.org
Wind River Program Director: Ellen Vanuga - ellen@jhlandtrust.org

2012 LANDOWNER APPRECIATION DINNER



One of the highlights of our 2012 stewardship program, besides being able to walk on so many fantastic properties, was a special dinner held on August 23rd at the Snake River Ranch. This evening brought together generations of conservation landowners, original easement donors, ranch managers, stewardship staff, and past and current board members to celebrate and thank all those that have worked on the ground to make land conservation happen in our valley, year after year. Bill Resor and Rob Cheek shared heartfelt and entertaining stories of Jackson Hole and their families' histories in the valley with over 80 guests gathered for the evening. Thanks to all of you who joined us on this wonderful late summer evening.

Consult with Your Consultants

As you know, a conservation easement is a legal agreement between you, as the landowner, and the Jackson Hole Land Trust. That makes our relationship with your property manager, the contractors who may be working on your property, your neighbors, or anyone else associated with your property, one party removed from our mutual legal agreement. When it comes to something as important as your land, we cannot interact with third parties with the same surety as when communicating with you directly. That is why we appreciate your participation on monitoring visits and having direct correspondence with you. Everyone else is considered "a third party" to our one-to-one conservation partnership.

We take great care to make sure that all communications to any third parties take place under your direction as the landowner. If someone contacts us about your property, we communicate with you to verify that you have directed them to do so. Our protocols ensure that you receive written correspondence of any dialogue we have with your managers or contractors. We hope that you will keep those letters for your records as we do.

Please be aware that your contractors and their employees may not understand that you view your land as committed to conservation purposes. Just as importantly, conservation approaches to land management are not always intuitive. Information that you may have relayed about your conservation commitment to your manager, or contractor may not "trickle down" to the person actually operating the backhoe, shovel, chainsaw, or vehicle. During construction projects, we often advise that landowners communicate clearly to their contractors and recommend measures like construction fencing so that everyone understands where construction activity and disturbance are to be confined.

As our partner in conservation, it is important that you review the plans of your consultants, contractors, and land managers to assure that they are in agreement with the terms and purpose of your conservation easement. If the Land Trust can help you in any way during that process, please let us know.

Noxious Weed Cost-Share Program Continues

The Teton Conservation District Weed Control Cost-Share program will still cover 25% of your weed control costs this year. If you are currently enrolled, you will not need to re-enroll this year. If you have questions about the program, or are interested in participating, call Mark Deluge at the Teton County Weed and Pest District 307-733-8419.