

FREE

Jackson Hole Daily



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Five panda cubs eat special milk porridge served in separate bowls Wednesday during feeding time at the Chengdu Panda Breeding Research Center in southwestern China's Sichuan province.

■ **Regional**

Mont. to invest in team for grouse

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Montana plans to hire five full-time employees to protect sage grouse as a number of Western states try to keep the bird off the federal endangered species list.

State officials fear that increased federal protections for the bird could inhibit agriculture and energy development on its habitat.

Montana is set to spend about \$500,000 annually on the new positions, including a program director to oversee the management of sage grouse.

The team, which will be hired after July 1, will distribute \$10 million primarily in grants over the next two years to conserve the habitat and population of the bird. It will also count and map the birds and attempt to control ravens and magpies that have wreaked havoc on the sage grouse.

"As long as state management is possible, we'll be advocating this program as a method of managing sage grouse," said John Tubbs, director of the state department of natural resources and conservation.

A court-ordered deadline requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to decide by Sept. 30 whether the animal will be added to a list of threatened or endangered species.

Montana's sage grouse population is second only to Wyoming, which has dedicated two full-time state employees to tracking and protecting the bird.

Tom Christiansen, Wyoming's sage grouse program coordinator, said at least 115 other biologists, wardens, policy makers and communications staff in Wyoming work with sage grouse in some capacity.

Ranch land protected

STAFF REPORT
 JACKSON HOLE DAILY

Three hundred and eighty acres of one of Jackson Hole's first ranches are now protected by an easement arranged by the Jackson Hole Land Trust.

The land in Spring Gulch is part of the 1,500-acre Mead Ranch, north of Highway 22, one of the few large undeveloped areas left in private hands in Teton County.

The Mead family includes Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead and his brother, Jackson Hole resident Brad Mead, a rancher, attorney and whiskey maker. Other members of the family

are Muffy Mead-Ferro and Pete Hansen.

Longtime family patriarch Cliff Hansen, a former Wyoming governor and U.S. senator, was raised there. He died in 2009 at age 97.

Brad Mead said the family is "pleased to think that future residents and visitors can look across the meadows in Spring Gulch and see essentially the same views Peter Christoffer-Hansen did when he settled there almost a century ago" in 1918.

The land being preserved has been ranched by Hansen's descendants for four generations. It's now the home ranch of Mead Ranch Natural Beef.

The deal maintains open land and the area's ranching heritage, and also preserves a clear view of the Grand Teton for people looking north from Highway 22. Besides the scenic value, the land is home to elk, mule deer and moose, and also provides migration routes for the animals.

Preservation of the land has been a goal of the Land Trust for years, said Laurie Andrews, executive director of the group.

"It's been a dream of ours to protect more land in Spring Gulch, together with the ranching families that own the remaining large, open spaces that are otherwise vulnerable

to development," Andrews said. "We are grateful to the Mead family for working with us to make this conservation priority a reality."

Land Trust board president Fred Staehr said he will "be thankful to the Mead family and the generous donors that have made this conservation project possible ... every time I drive along Highway 22 and look up that valley."

The Mead Ranch encompasses most of the southern half of Spring Gulch, the open ranch land to the north of where Spring Gulch Road turns off from Highway 22.

Easements completed in See **RANCH** on page 2

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■ Local

Town hopes to finish roadwork by holiday

By BEN GRAHAM
JACKSON HOLE DAILY

Roadwork season is in full swing around the valley but fear not wary motorists — some of the most inconvenient projects are on track to be finished by Memorial Day.

East Broadway should be completely reopened by the weekend after next, Town Associate Engineer Jeremy Parker said Wednesday.

Crews have been tearing up the road around Town Square all the way to Willow Street and replacing a 60-year-old water pipe. There still will be some smaller roadwork along that stretch of road, but nothing that requires full lane closures, Parker said.

“We’re approaching the goal line on this one,” he said.

A forecast for wet weather over the weekend could lead to delays, he said, but at this point everything is on schedule.

Work also is taking place a few blocks in the other direction from Town Square, at the corner of Millward Street and West Broadway. Crews must pour concrete by Friday in order for it to dry

in time for a Memorial Day opening, Parker said. That was still the plan on Wednesday.

The contract for the entire project, which is being undertaken by Westwood Curtis Construction, is about \$493,000.

Significant portions of pathways construction around the “Y” intersection also should wrap up by the holiday weekend, Jackson Hole Community Pathways Coordinator Brian Schilling said.

Work will continue throughout the summer along the south side of West Broadway and along Highway 22 to Spring Gulch Road, but lane closures aren’t planned, Schilling said. There will be work that involves closures to access roads and some intersections.

The plan at this point is to complete the pathway connection from Jackson to Wilson by the fall. That also means construction on the pathway from the Snake River Bridge eastward, which won’t lead to lane closures but could result in traffic control at times to slow vehicles down in the construction zone.

“We’re approaching the goal line on this one.”

— Town Associate Engineer JEREMY PARKER

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RANCH

Continued from cover

2001 and 2006 protected 211 acres at the southern tip of the ranch. The land being added is to the north.

Jackson Hole hotelier Clarene Law, a former state representative from Teton County, worked on the earlier easements. She said the latest additions were “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect ranch lands in Spring Gulch that are a part of the history and identity of Jackson Hole.”

The Land Trust has also protected

other parcels in the gulch. They include 247 acres at Jackson Land and Cattle Equestrian Center, between the previous Mead easements and those now being added; the 507-acre Bar BC Meadow easement farther north in Spring Gulch; and 447 acres of easements around Spring Creek Ranch and Aman-gani resorts.

Money for the Mead easements came from donors to the Land Trust’s Forever Our Valley campaign and a loan from the Bank of Jackson Hole. Forever Our Valley is a \$35 million campaign begun in 2016 that has already protected more than 600 acres in the valley.

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