

Memorandum

February 24, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Commissioner Mike Whitfield
RE: Teton County Wildlife Advisory Committee

In keeping with the considerable interest in this County Advisory Committee, I would like to highlight the importance of this committee for Teton County, recognize the diligent work of the committee to date, and recommend an orderly process to make the committee composition responsive to the interests of Teton County residents.

Value and Benefits of Wildlife Advisory Committee

Fish and wildlife are vital to Teton County's heritage, local values, and tourism economy. Teton Valley is an integral part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the world's most highly valued natural areas. This ecosystem uniquely still retains the full complement of its native wildlife. Conservation of the Valley's important wildlife habitats and movement corridors is necessary to achieve Teton County's vision for the future as articulated in its Comprehensive Plan. To date the Wildlife Advisory Committee has worked diligently over 2.5 years to update Teton County's inventory of wildlife resources through consultation with Idaho Department of Fish and Game and other data sources to map potentially important areas of the County in its Natural Resource Overlay. This overlay is a screening tool to highlight areas of potential importance to wildlife. The Committee also developed a recommendation for processes and criteria for site specific assessment of wildlife habitats that was incorporated into Teton County's Wildlife Habitat Analysis Policy as adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Guiding Principles (from Goals and Policies within the Teton County Comprehensive Plan)

The *Teton County, Idaho Comprehensive Plan-A Vision and Framework 2012-2030*, established a goal to preserve natural resources and a healthy environment for community benefits, including conservation of native wildlife and fish habitats, wetlands, and migration corridors. The Teton County Wildlife Advisory Committee was formed to advise the County in how to meet Comprehensive Plan goals and policies related to wildlife as partially listed below:

- Regularly update all natural and scenic resource inventories,
- Create benchmarks for monitoring and conserving natural resources.
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity and native ecosystems.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas from resource degradation.
 - Conserve sensitive wildlife habitats (wildlife breeding, transitional and wintering habitats, and movement corridors; riparian areas, etc.)
 - Improve stream connectivity for native trout (e.g., spawning, rearing, and out-migration).
- Collaborate with landowners, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other natural resources professionals to inform land use and site planning decisions.

Expectations and Makeup of the Wildlife Advisory Committee

The Wildlife Advisory Committee will consist of invited wildlife experts from agencies, organizations, and the community at large. The focus is on expertise, not on advocacy. The

