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.
  - o 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 outmigration).
- 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

Wildlife Advisory Committee may make recommendations to Teton County decision makers that provide for conservation and restoration actions. These recommendations should be informed by the best available scientific data. The Committee is not empowered to make decisions on Teton County policies or regulations.

## Process for Filling Positions on the Wildlife Advisory Committee

The Teton County Wildlife Advisory Committee Resolution (May 2022) stated that the Wildlife Advisory Committee "shall consist of between seven (7) and eleven (11) members who shall be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners." All members of the Advisory Committee shall have a demonstrated interest, competence, and knowledge of wildlife and of Teton County wildlife habitats. After the initial appointments to the Committee, appointments shall be made for three- year terms. Committee members may be reappointed to serve additional terms. Vacancies shall be filled through review of applications to the Committee from prospective members with the requisite expertise. The Advisory Committee shall elect officers from among the Advisory Committee members.

The Committee currently has three vacancies to meet its full membership. Current member terms are also staggered as shown below in Table 1. I recommend that we add to this committee from qualified applicants to fill vacant positions and consider further appointments as the terms of its current members expire.

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Table 1. Current Composition of the Teton County Wildlife Advisory Committee

			INTITIAL	IEKIVI	IEKIVI			
NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	APPOINTMENT	START	ENDS	TERM	QUALIFICATIONS	OFFICE
Jeff Klausmann	jeff@intermountainaquatics.com	<u>(208)313-</u> <u>6929</u>	10/1/2022		9/30/2025		Angers & Hunters; Restoration Ecology	Chair
Kathleen O'Neil	kathyo.252@gmail.com	(801)703- 6624	10/1/2022	9/22/2023	9/30/2026		Chair Master Naturalists	Vice
Linda Unland	lindaunland@mac.com		10/1/2022	9/20/2024	9/30/2027		Environmental Educator	Secretary
Renee Seidler	renee@jhwildlife.org	(208)760- 7267	10/1/2022		9/30/2025		Wildlife/Road Ecology Expert; JHWF	Member
Mike Lien	mike@tetonwater.org	_	10/1/2022	9/22/2023	9/30/2026		Fisheries and Waterways, FTR	Member
Mathew Ward	mward@tnc.org	<u>208-821-</u> <u>8388</u>	9/20/2024	9/20/2024	9/30/2027		Ecologist; Nature conservancy	Member
Wray Landon	wray030@gmail.com	(208)521- 2783	10/1/2022	9/22/2023	9/30/2026		Mitigation of Recreation impacts	Member
Barbara Stone	ston0242@gmail.com	<u>(801)455-</u> <u>2681</u>	9/20/2024	9/20/2024	9/30/2027		Expert Wildlife Biologist	Member
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