"All the months of planning and discussions are well worth the amazing outcome," said Laurie Andrews, executive director. "We really see this as an enduring legacy for our community."

Securing the property set off a chain reaction of possibilities for community-based projects, all anchored around the proposed park.

Several improvements to the site have been proposed, including enhanced public access to open space, reclamation of the on-site gravel operations into a community park, an overhaul of the boat launch, linkages to an adjoining BLM parcel to the south, public art, new pathways and trails, and a pathway bridge over the Snake River between River Springs and Emily’s Pond (also a Land Trust-protected property). Input and collaboration with community members and stakeholder groups such as the Snake River Fund and Friends of Pathways - two groups that were instrumental in keeping momentum for the project alive - will continue to be an integral part of the vision for River Springs.

To guide the transformation ahead, the RLC has enlisted the help of a locally-based, internationally acclaimed design team, led by Pierson Land Works LLC, and including Biota Research & Consulting Inc., Filtnser Strategies, Gilday Architects, Harmony Design & Engineering, and Hood Design Studio.

"Our first focus is to create a process by which we can solicit community input," said Hal Hutchinson, RLC board member and LOR’s executive director. "We want to get started as soon as we can on our goal of creating a natural park at River Springs. Since it’s a keystone for so many other projects, having an experienced and interdisciplinary design team on board that knows the project area is essential to getting to the finish line."

The Jackson Hole Land Trust, working with private landowners, knows the project area is essential to getting to the finish line. It seeks gifts in support of this project to help repay the bridge loan.

PHASE 3: CREATION OF A PARK – SUMMER/FALL 2013
Continuing in this phase will be the design and development of the new park, which will provide for passive recreational amenities such as trails, picnic areas, nature and wildlife viewing, gathering areas, a pathway bridge and pathways, and public art in a natural setting that complements the reclamation phase activities. In addition, once the design of the new park is approved and permitted, the Jackson Hole Land Trust will be able to finalize the terms of the new conservation easement on the property. The design team’s proposal projects a completion date of summer/fall 2013 for the new park and a seamless layering of the site’s natural beauty and ecological function with its social and recreational use.
Emily’s Pond

A Property Transforms into a Public Access Gem

Strolling in the sunshine along the Snake River levee at Emily’s Pond, soaking in Teton views, it’s hard to picture the place as it once was: littered with trash, with questionable public access and a dubious future. That was precisely the situation Emily Stevens encountered when in 1983 she bought the property next door. But she was able to see past the spent gun shells and piles of garbage to a future in which the property would become the cherished public space it is today.

Stevens, originally from Boston, fell in love with Wyoming as so many others have, while staying at a dude ranch, the T Cross and CM ranches in the Upper Wind River Valley. After buying and conserving the T Cross Ranch, she made her way to Jackson Hole and purchased the property that is now the site of the Iron Rock townhouses from a group of developers seeking to build a 350-unit subdivision. She had different plans for the property, conserving the majority of it and deeding much of that acreage to the neighboring Walton Ranch, which uses the land for hay and grazing to this day.

At the time she bought Iron Rock, the property now known as Emily’s Pond was a kind of no-man’s-land of contested federal ownership. In that vacuum the property had become an eyesore and a hazard. Trespassers dumped garbage with impunity, an abandoned rock quarry sat unreclaimed, and there was a plan being floated to build a hotmix asphalt plant on the property.

Stevens, who used the property to access the river with her two children, saw a brighter future for it. “Emily believed that the public should have access to the river – because there wasn’t any back then,” said Teton County Commissioner Hank Phibbs, who was an attorney for Stevens at the time.

Together Phibbs and Stevens fought—and eventually won—a four-year legal battle to secure ownership of the property.

The legal battle behind her, the property was still a mess. To clean up that mess, she worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to access funding for the reclamation of abandoned mine lands. They used that funding to rehabilitate the quarry, clean the water, and remove the garbage that had accumulated over the years.

Finally, in 1992 she gave the property to Teton County with a conservation easement held by the Jackson Hole Land Trust ensuring that the property will always be a place open to the public for quiet recreation and enjoyment.

In keeping with both Stevens’ wishes and the terms of the conservation easement, the Teton County Parks and Recreation department has added simple parking, bathroom, and picnic facilities and in the winter and spring groom the ski track on the levee. Now, almost twenty years later, dozens of people visit the property each day, every season of the year, to walk, run, ski, or just enjoy the river and the great views north to the Tetons.

When Stevens passed away in 2001, she left a legacy of conservation that ranged far and wide. In addition to her efforts along the Snake and in the Upper Wind River Valley, she conserved land she owned in Arizona and convinced relatives to protect land in New Hampshire. Anthony Stevens, Emily’s son, still lives in Jackson Hole and is reminded of his mom’s extraordinary gift every time he passes the park that bears her name.

“...the Snake River is one of the great treasures of this valley,” Emily Stevens wrote at the time. “I wanted to make certain others could always enjoy it, too.”

...a conservation easement held by the Jackson Hole Land Trust ensures that the property will always be a place open to the public for quiet recreation and enjoyment.

Antelope Butte

High School Butte Restoration

One of the Jackson Hole Land Trust’s most beloved protected properties is the popular Antelope Butte, known to many as “High School Butte.” This property has been protected by the Jackson Hole Land Trust since 1998 through a conservation easement that was donated by Emily Frew Oliver. Located at the north end of South Park Loop Road, the trail running to the top of the butte is a favorite after-work option for locals looking to stretch their legs, exercise the dog, or even take a paraglide flight on an afternoon thermal. Keeping these trails from being loved to death, however, requires an ongoing effort.

In 2009, with the permission of the landowner, the Land Trust organized volunteers to rehabilitate one of the most heavily affected sections of trail - where the trail had grown up to 25 feet wide with multiple paths and increased erosion of soils. With materials donated by the Teton Conservation District and Friends of Pathways, volunteers used hand tools to break up soil, laid native seed, and covered the area with erosion matting to encourage regrowth and help restore the butte.

Encouraged by the success of this restoration, this spring, the Land Trust restored a new section of trail with the help of community volunteers. If you are interested in future volunteer opportunities, sign up for our email list at jhlandtrust.org or contact us at 307.733.4707.

Photographs by Steffan Freeman
Grand Teton National Park
National Elk Refuge
JACKSON
ANTELOPE BUTTE
FLAT CREEK CORRIDOR
Flat Creek Corridor Antelope "High School" Butte
Karns Meadow
FLAT CREEK
Poison Creek
KARNS MEADOWS
POISON CREEK
Bryan Flats
EMILY'S POND
WILSON CENTENNIAL PONDS
WILSON SOCCER FIELDS
WILSON WETLAND TRAIL
JHLT Protected Properties
JHLT Public Access Lands
BLM and State Lands
Forest Service Lands
National Elk Refuge
Public Access Properties
Around Jackson Hole
Flat Creek Corridor
Seasonal Rhythm of Property

The Flat Creek corridor, like other places conserved by the Jackson Hole Land Trust, keeps a seasonal rhythm, a pattern involving plants, animals, and people that repeats itself, largely unchanged, year after year. These rhythms are at once unique and part of a broader set of patterns that encompasses our entire valley and beyond.

The current spring season brings with it the return of the migrants to this enclave of open space that runs through the heart of the Town of Jackson. Thousands of songbirds arrive, some from as far as Argentina. Osprey, too, arrive from Jamaica and harbor their calves for the first few weeks of their lives, replenishing depleted energy reserves on willows, aquatic plants, and new aspen leaves. Hikers and other trail users, after a muddy transition between winter and spring, emerge to hike up Josie’s Ridge or along the Sink or Swim trail amid the vivid green of young aspen leaves.

Summer sees the heaviest use of the corridor by the valley’s human inhabitants. Mountain bikers cruise through the property en route to Cache Creek or the top of Snow King Mountain, and anglers ply the creek’s riffles and pools, seeking to fool one of its native cutthroat with a well-drifted pale morning dun or caddis. With the arrival of fall, ripe berries on the chokecherry and serviceberry bushes attract foxes, robins, and even black bears. The bears feast on berries by night and, by day, bed down in the thick willows along the creek, staying cool and undetected. Trail users enjoy the year’s final hikes and the changing leaves of aspen and willows.

As winter sets in, the corridor is left largely to the animals, including moose and mule deer, which winter on the corridor’s slopes, beavers basking on the shelf-ice of the creek on bright winter days, and ermine hunting in the snow. Aly Courtemanch, Habitat Biologist for Wyoming Game & Fish Department, describes the area as, “crucial habitat for moose and mule deer during the winter. Both of these species migrate down to the willow communities along Flat Creek and the mountain shrub communities on the lower slopes of Snow King to spend the winter. Spring returns once again as the snow begins to melt and days grow longer, and – thanks to conservation efforts – the rhythm repeats. “The Jackson Hole Land Trust has been an important partner with the Town of Jackson’s efforts to acquire and preserve several significant parcels of riparian and hillside habitat that are strategic to the restoration of Flat Creek as it flows through the Town,” said Mark Barron, Mayor of Jackson, Wyoming. “The Land Trust’s vision and decisive actions provided foundation for the rehabilitation of water flows and natural habitat in Flat Creek that has markedly improved native trout population and spawning as well as waterfowl and songbird populations, while profoundly mitigating the causes of winter flooding. We owe a debt of gratitude to all the donors, staff and board of the Jackson Hole Land Trust for what they’ve provided us and future Jackson Hole residents.”

Protecting these areas helps ensure that moose and mule deer continue to have access to winter forage and can survive to produce young in the spring.

As you drive north out of Jackson along Highway 89, East Gros Ventre Butte rises sharply to your left. Adjacent to the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park, this block of private land has more significance for wildlife than might first meet the eye. Look up, particularly on a winter day, and you’re likely to see the shapes of dozens of mule deer, high up the slope. Look a little harder, and you might even see the small outlines of sage grouse–small, dark spots foraging hundreds of feet off the valley floor.

“East Gros Ventre Butte is almost hidden in plain sight in terms of wildlife habitat,” said JHLT Executive Director Laurie Andrews. “Many of us drive right by it every day without realizing what a significant spot it is for some pretty important species.”

The importance of these slopes for wildlife prompted the Land Trust to launch an effort to conserve this habitat last fall. The East Gros Ventre Butte Project is a collaborative undertaking spearheaded by the Land Trust with a goal of preserving more than 400 acres of land on the butte for mule deer, sage grouse, and other species.

“The conservation of sage-grouse habitat begins and ends with ensuring the sustainability of working ranches. Ultimately, Wyoming’s ranching community is the steward of this iconic species – what is good for our grazing lands is good for the sage-grouse,” said Paul Shelton, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wyoming.

The project is a tremendous opportunity for collaboration, drawing in numerous private landowners, government agencies, and non-profit groups as partners in this cause. Stay tuned this summer as the Land Trust hopes to announce further news on this developing project.
Welcome New Board Members

Jill Baldovin

Jill Baldovin, a 25-year veteran of the advertising industry. Her career has spanned both coasts with key positions at DDB, Grey, Ogilvy & Mather and Benton & Bowles. In 2003, she retired to form her own agency, Amperstand. Jill began coming to Jackson 20 years ago on her honeymoon and has visited every year since then with her husband, Steve Grauman, purchasing a home in Wilson in 2005. Together with their daughters, they have truly enjoyed becoming part of the valley community visiting as often as time permits from their full time home in Santa Monica, California. Jill is extremely active in the Los Angeles community currently serving on the boards of Chrysalis, The Broad Stage, Blue Ribbon and LA Opera. She is a fifth generation Californian originally from San Diego, and has her B.A. from UCLA and MBA from UCLA’s Anderson School.

Camille Thomas

Camille Thomas has spent her career in investment banking at Samuel A. Nusbaum & Co. and has held executive positions with the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School’s Investment Banking Center and The Coldwater Conservation Clothier. Camille is currently a Director of Manhattan Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital. Currently, she serves on the Board of The Coldwater Conservation Fund, a Trustee at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School’s Investment Banking Center and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Jackson Hole Land Trust.

Deborah Loeb

Deborah Loeb was a UN development official from 2003-2005, serving as the UN Special Coordinator for the Reconstruction of Iraq. Deborah has been a consultant to the UN, United States Agency for International Development, and the World Bank on issues of sustainable development and gender in the Middle East. Deborah lives in Jackson and is an active member of the community. Deborah is married with two children. She is extremely active in the community serving on the boards of Chrysalis, The Broad Stage, Blue Ribbon and LA Opera. She is a fifth generation Californian originally from San Diego, and has her B.A. from UCLA and MBA from UCLA’s Anderson School.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As springtime brings transformation to the valley once again, I find myself feeling extremely fortunate to live in a place that is often referred to as a paradise by folks who are visiting for just a week or two. The spring is a wonderful time of transition, a vibrant, dynamic time when we can truly appreciate the beauty of our surroundings, the wildlife that calls our valley home, and the endless opportunities for outdoor recreation. These are the things that keep our residents here year-round and motivate visitors to return season after season.

Thanks to the work of the Jackson Hole Land Trust, outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the valley have been protected in perpetuity for the benefit of the community. A morning walk along the dike at Emily’s Pond or a quick hike up High School Butte are reminders of the important work the Land Trust is doing to protect the treasures of this valley - and now, with the acquisition of the River Springs property, the Land Trust has secured a true community centerpiece that provides access to the Snake River at the Wilson Boat Launch and holds the promise of a linked pathway system, bridge and natural park designed for the use and enjoyment of the public. While the mission of the Jackson Hole Land Trust is not specifically to protect land for recreation use, the process of preserving over 20,000 acres of land to support wildlife, agriculture, and scenery in an area like Jackson Hole has inevitably included protection of properties that are used for public access and outdoor recreational activities.

I am grateful for this type of conservation and the outdoor access it allows, and encourage you to get out and take advantage of Jackson’s open lands throughout the year. Meanwhile, the Land Trust will continue our efforts to preserve as much open space in Jackson to ensure that the area remains “Forever Our Valley.” - Pete Lawton
Save the Date

32ND ANNUAL LAND TRUST PICNIC

Sun, Aug. 12th
4:00 PM

INDIAN SPRINGS

The annual picnic, held at the Parker Property in 2011, highlighted the stewardship efforts being made by the Land Trust. Guests enjoyed delicious barbecue, music from Anne & Pete Sibley, and a live demonstration by the Teton Raptor Center.

If you enjoy stories about open space conservation, please stay tuned for the launch of the TravelStorysGPS smartphone application this July. TravelStorysGPS is a smartphone application that connects travelers to the land through vivid and engaging stories told in real time. As a partner organization of the TravelStorysGPS pilot phase, the Jackson Hole Land Trust will be hosting a driving route and stories along Highway 22. Please visit our website at www.jhlandtrust.org this July for news about the TravelStorysGPS launch and instructions on how you can be among the first to test out the app and enjoy these compelling stories!