Can you name a JHLT protected property?

By 2016, the awareness of different JHLT-protected properties had noticeably increased, with responses identifying a wide variety of protected properties by name, suggesting that the Forever Our Valley campaign played a role in spreading awareness of properties.

Figure 2.2: “If you answered yes, please provide an example of a JHLT protected property.” By 2010, the awareness of different JHLT-protected properties had noticeably increased, with responses identifying a wide variety of protected properties by name, suggesting that the Forever Our Valley campaign played a role in spreading awareness of properties.

In the summer of 2016, five years after the original community survey, the Land Trust commissioned Flitner Strategies once again to conduct an assessment of the community’s effectiveness and to take a temperature check of the community to see where conservation and open space stood on the priority list of community members in this changing and growing town. Through numerous diverse group discussions with stakeholders and an online survey open to the public, the Land Trust wanted to know how it was perceived, where the community priorities currently stand, and how the community thinks the Land Trust should focus efforts among those priorities. The “Community Assessment” yielded excellent data, allowed the Land Trust to track its efforts since the initial 2010 study, and provided valuable insight into internal stewardship procedures, protection practices, and overall perceptions about the Jackson Hole Land Trust.

FINDINGS

In the past five years, partnerships have begun to extend relationships through art, health, recreation, and education. The success of exciting unconventional projects, like View22 and Foundspace illustrated that the community wants to be more involved on a hands-on, tangible level. The green JHLT flag temporarily placed on conserve and protect signs throughout the valley generated a groundswell of interest in and recognition of the Land Trust’s properties. Young professionals’ events brought fresh perspectives to the Land Trust and attracted a previously untapped and diverse constituent base. The JHLT has learned that community education is not only important to continuing our mission, but also valued, and people want to learn more about the Land Trust and understand how the work fits into the bigger picture.

Although these new and exciting programs absorb a lot of focus, stewardship of existing easements is a top priority of the Land Trust. It is central to the organization’s success and the vitality of protected open space. However, these practices are complex, and can be somewhat controversial if not fully understood. To the Land Trust, stewardship is incredibly important, because it serves as the connection between the conservation values that the community holds so dear and the bulk of the organization’s daily work. When the Land Trust knows that the community supports the values on stewarded easements, the day-to-day work of protecting the land becomes effortless. The strength of an easement is only as strong as the community connection to the land.

Upon reflection, the elements of nature that we love are interconnected. Each depends on the continued preservation of open spaces and natural areas. In turn, these are dependent upon the success of the Land Trust’s work in relevant and supported land protection initiatives. The success of exciting unconventional projects like View22 and Foundspace demonstrates that art, health, recreation, and education can bring forward completed and potential projects that will add quality to the lives of the residents of Jackson. The Land Trust will engage more with the community to bring forward projects that inspire and excite the community. To do this adequately, they need to think about the bigger picture.

The Community Assessment illuminated that the Land Trust is still seen as positive and important in Jackson Hole; however, it also revealed that the Land Trust needs to actively strive to maintain its connection to the community as issues like housing, education, and health come to the forefront of concerns. What can the Land Trust do to stay relevant? To bring forward projects that inspire and excite the community. To think about the bigger picture.
Follow a mule deer in autumn south out of Jackson, as the herd heads to its wintering ranges. You travel along the crystal clear, wild and scenic M Gus River, watching the Gros Ventres rise and then fall in the north. After about 50 miles, a vast, high and dry sagebrush steppe presents itself, bisected with a few small streams, and the herd splits out across the open landscape. As the mule deer seek nourishment in cool, refreshing rills of a major waterway of the Rocky Mountain West, you step onto ground steeped in human history, revered by international anglers, and cultivated by local agriculturists for over one hundred years. You’ve journeyed to the Green River Valley.

Throughout the Green River Valley, you will find a colorful and lively scene in summer, with ideal vegetation for birds, such as Sandhill cranes, sage grouse, osprey and eagles. You’ll encounter moose browsing in the willows and shrubbery, coyotes singing from the plains, and trout rising silently for bugs from the depths of world-class waters. After such a journey, it’s easy to notice that the plants and animals within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem depend on the accessible connectivity of this terrain to its neighbors in the north, and vice versa.

As of October 1, 2016, this vital land in Sublette County plays host to the Green River Valley Program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust. In contrast to Teton County, about 20% of Sublette’s 3.2 million acres consists of private land and is vulnerable to residential and commercial development. While geographical isolation helps to preserve the frontier culture and to keep the population sparse, with roughly 2 people per square mile, Sublette’s economy relies largely on the oil and natural gas industry, as the Green River Valley rests atop two of the nation’s prolific natural gas fields. Agriculture and ranching are crucially large part of many daily lives of the population and play an important role in maintaining the cultural heritage of the area. With ample natural resources and a rich history, Sublette County is truly a gem and undeniably valuable to the wider region and Wyoming. The Green River Valley Land Trust (GRVLT) is a new conservation program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust (JHLT), formed in 2016, that arose for this precise reason. Since 2006, the GRVLT has acquired conservation easements which have protected open spaces, watersheds, wildlife habitats and ranchlands, which benefit current inhabitants, protect historic and critical wildlife migration routes, and act as a legacy for future generations. In 2013, after 13 years of operating as the primary land conservation organization in Sublette County, the Green River Valley Land Trust announced that they were seeking out other conservation organizations in Wyoming that would be willing to adopt their 18 existing conservation easements on 32,000 acres of protected land in Sublette County. Knowing the value that these easements brought to the Green River Valley basin and the importance of maintaining consistent stewarding of their important conservation values, the Jackson Hole Land Trust (JHLT), along with the Wyoming chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the Land Trust Alliance, began working together with GRVLT to determine the most efficient and effective way to safeguard these easements. Through careful consideration and many strategic discussions over several years, the Board of Directors of the JHLT and GRVLT agreed that the solution for ensuring sustainable stewardship of existing Sublette County conservation easements and for gaining the necessary resources to move forward on additional land conservation opportunities in the region was to have the JHLT take ownership of all GRVLT easements and manage conservation in the area under a Sublette County based program with a local office and staff.

"After working with the landowners, board members, and the community in Sublette County, we are more excited than ever to launch the Green River Valley Program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust. We have worked carefully to create a stewardship and conservation plan that is specific to the unique and valuable lands of Sublette County. The historically strong leadership and financial security of the Jackson Hole Land Trust will bring stability to an incredibly important conservation area in western Wyoming," said John Lowton, Chair of the JHLT Board of Directors.

As of October 1, 2016, the GRVLT concluded its separate operations and the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT opened in Pinedale. Moving forward, the staff will work to ensure partner landowners and new potential conservation landowners have a quality experience as they work to protect a critical portion of the Wyoming landscape. Sublette County representatives will hold two spots on the JHLT Board of Directors, and the JHLT has begun working to establish an Advisory Committee comprised of former GRVLT board members, conservation supporters, and community members from the Sublette County area.

"I am grateful to have a trusted partner in Sublette County to help me and my fellow landowners here achieve our conservation goals," said JJ Healy, a conservation property landowner in Sublette County and new GRVP representative on the JHLT Board of Directors. "With the presence of the Jackson Hole Land Trust, we can regain momentum towards our collective vision to establish a high quality, permanent land protection strategy for our community."

The collaboration and community support of conservationists in both Teton County and Sublette County has been extraordinary and without them, this effort would not have been successful. There are so many ecological connections between Jackson Hole and the Green River Valley Basin that run across man-made boundaries and lines on a map. Protecting land in each place has an equal benefit to the quality of life in both counties, especially when taking into consideration what large-scale conservation looks like regarding where our wildlife travels, the impacts on recreation opportunities, ranching and agricultural heritage, and the less tangible, though no less important, connections made through our water, air, and soil.

"This is a proactive approach by two conservation organizations to become more sustainable and to safeguard the future of Sublette County’s ranch lands, open space and wildlife habitat," said Bob Budd, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Executive Director. "Proper stewardship of conservation properties in this region is critical to maintaining important, large scale wildlife migration corridors that run across two major mountain ranges, along three primary river systems, in all directions, and to preserving important ranchlands that contribute to the agricultural resources and heritage of Sublette County."

The unification of the JHLT and GRVLT through the launch of the GRVP means that a robust and cohesive conservation strategy will be implemented and maintained to protect the legacy of landowners in Sublette County forever. Local staff and board will continue to assist with conservation plans and will evaluate new easements, and annual monitoring of existing easements will carry on as usual. The Land Trust is proud and excited for the opportunities that will arise alongside the new Green River Valley Program, and looks forward to safeguarding the valuable land protected by the generous landowners and hardworking staff and board in Sublette County.

"It is clear that the Jackson Hole Land Trust understands the big picture of conservation in Wyoming and has dedicated an immense amount of time to understanding the history and dynamics of our land protection efforts and goals here in the Green River Valley," said Brian Gray, former JHLT Board President. "We are grateful to all those that have worked so hard to get us to this point so that we can continue our local presence, strengthen our relationships with landowners, and look forward to doing even further important protection work in Sublette County."
ROCK SPRINGS
211 acres, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, protected since September 1997
"A mountain you should see, a mountain to admire..."

OPEN LANDS
211 acres, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, protected since September 1997
"A mountain you should see, a mountain to admire..."

SPRING CREEK
338 acres, Fee Owning - Wild canyons and dramatic waterfalls, protected since 1984
"The water here is..."

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK
338 acres, Fee Owning - Wild canyons and dramatic waterfalls, protected since 1984
"The water here is..."

FEATHER FALLS
100 acres, Town of Jackson, protected since 1997
"The water here is..."

KARN'S MEADOW
4 acres, Town of Jackson, protected since 2015
"The water here is..."

FLAT CREEK CORRIDOR
38 acres, Town of Jackson, protected since 2015
"The water here is..."

RENNZO'S R PARK
15 acres, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, protected since 2015
"The water here is..."

INDIAN SPRINGS
26 acres, Teton County School District, protected since 1992
"The water here is..."

INDIAN SPRINGS SWAN PONDS
624 Acres, Teton Science Schools, protected since 1992
"The water here is..."

BUFFALO VALLEY
TO MORAN & JACKSON
WILSON WETLANDS TRAIL
2 acres, Teton County School District, protected since 1995
"The water here is..."

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REMEMBERING HOWARD STERN

It only took five days for Howard Stern to fall in love with the valley. After encouragement from his wife Cara, who had visited Bear Paw Ranch and Teton County in the ‘90s, the couple decided to travel together to Jackson to pick up their eldest daughter from Teton Valley Ranch Camp in 1986. Howard and Cara couldn’t resist visiting each summer thereafter, staying at the original R Lazy S Ranch, then owned and operated by Bob and Claire McConaughy, located in Grand Teton National Park. In 1972, with the ranch’s lease in the park ending and substantial flooding threatening the livelihood of the business, the Stirm’s looked for a solution.

Unbeknownst to the couple, when Alvin Smith, had purchased property not too far south of the original R Lazy S Ranch. “In the 1960s, this property was going to be potentially developed into 60 home sites,” Kelly Stern, Howard and Cara’s son, explains. “He felt horrible about that, as he’d ridden in the area on the trails around Granite Canyon. So he purchased it as a way to preserve this part of the valley.”

After approaching Cara’s father and learning about his property, Howard and Cara bought the land from Kelvin, where the current R Lazy S now stands. “We wanted to maintain the whole area as a wilderness, and that was the first reason we ever bought the property in the first place,” Cara explained to the Land Trust in 1996. In the years following 1972, the couple helped the McConaughys move the ranch and many of its buildings from its original location, quietly purchased the dude ranching operation, and continued to run the business with great success. R Lazy S’s links the past and the future, and grounds itself in generations of familial ties. Visitors and employees alike happily return year after year. Nowadays, R Lazy S’s gives out bronze and sterling silver belt buckles to guests that return for over ten and twenty years. Nancy Stirn, Kelly’s wife, can easily rattle off a dozen people that have multi-generational ties to the ranch. The land is rich in history, especially having had multiple owners prior to the Stirn Family, including the Mosley’s, the Hassens and the Lins. The Stirm’s proudly keep it that way. “We had Daisy Linn out here when she was in her 90’s,” Nancy tells us. “She told us that what was once the chicken coop is now my storage shed, the kid’s dining room was the bar or the parlor.” Kelly points out where Daisy carved her and her boyfriend’s initials into the wall in her old bedroom, now converted into a guest office space. The property is magical in that sense. Its timelessless is preserved in the cobs built in the 1830s, with sounds and smells that may as well be decades old, and hints to the current year only through the buzzing of a cell phone, or the dust collected in the rafters. Perhaps its magic derives from the care and passion that were rooted in its creation. Shortly after acquiring the land, Howard and Cara boldly decided to donate the first ever conservation easement to the newly created Jackson Hole Land Trust in 1981. “Howard played an instrumental role for conservation in Jackson and we are so grateful to have worked with him on preserving R Lazy S,” reflected Laurie Andrews, President of the Land Trust. Howard was a critical component of the founding of the Jackson Hole Land Trust, and earned a lending hand to the development of the organization.

They were pretty proud of the fact that they were one of the first, Kelly says. Nancy agrees, “He was such a big proponent of saving the land.”

“I think (donating the easement) struck my dad as a perfect device to be able to protect the land to keep it the way it is. He specifically designated certain home sites on the property, just enough for all his children to have, and that was it. And so it was almost following in my grandfather’s footsteps in preserving the property and the fact they felt they needed to continue that,” added Kelly. In a reflective piece he wrote that he wrote for a Jackson Hole Land Trust newsletter over 15 years ago, Howard called R Lazy S their “Bit of Heaven.” Howard explained that he and Cara enjoyed “introducing people to the area in a home-like atmosphere, providing our guests with a wonderful western experience, and maintaining the natural qualities that are disappearing in the valley.” Howard and Cara would graciously host guests every summer for decades, and in their downtime, discovered the valley on horseback. Today, visitors to Grand Teton National Park can explore trails named after the couple. Howard was “very much a naturalist,” Kelly says. “He just didn’t want to see a lot of development.”

It’s abundantly clear that the R Lazy S Property is special. The now 324 acres of protected land lies just one mile north of Teton Village, and borders the Snake River on the east and Grand Teton National Park in the north. Rendezvous Mountain towers above the ranch, and the Tetons rise above to the west. The vegetation provides habitat for a significant number of birds on the Audubon’s Blue List. The land’s mixed meadow, willow and aspen communities offer shelter for moose, while elk and deer use the land as a corridor for traveling to and from their winter ranges. The relatively unaltered natural setting of the Grand Teton National Park adjacent to the property helps to protect the natural wealth of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and serves as a critical connection for countless animal and plant species.

“Dad loved this valley and it was always on his mind to help protect it,” Kelly explains. “He was so happy that the Land Trust existed and did wonderful work towards this endeavor. We, too, believe that the Land Trust will continue its great work in the future of protecting our valley.” Howard and Cara retired from the business 20 years ago, leaving the family business to Kelly and Nancy, who continue to uphold the dude ranch traditions today. Kelly and Nancy understand how fortunate they are to live and work on the property, and enjoy watching their own children grow up as the fourth generation on the land, especially having picked up a conscientious attitude about land protection. “All the cards lined up,” Kelly says. “We feel so lucky to be here.” Anyone who spends time at R Lazy S can consider themselves lucky. Quintessential and picturesque, R Lazy S will remain protected and perpetuated under a HLST conservation easement because of Howard’s dedication, determination, and passion for protecting his “Bit of Heaven.” Howard’s contributions will help preserve the character defining open space of Jackson Hole. His legacy lives on forever in Jackson.

NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JOE ALBRACHT

Joe is the co-founder and former Chief Operating Officer of Mobius Management Systems Inc., a leading provider of enterprise software products designed to optimize the storage, retrieval and presentation of large volumes of transactional information. In 2006, he and Patricia Stancarone purchased a home in Teton Village and became full time residents. He enjoys the great outdoors with activities such as hiking, biking, and simply observing the landscapes and wildlife. He is also an instrument rated private pilot.

KELLY DAVIS

Kelly is an avid equestrian and owner of Old Oak Farm, LLC, an international show jumping stable. She and husband George Davis have two children, Lucy and Clay. Kelly has served on the Board of the Sullivan Canyon Reservation Association and as Chair of the Stanford Parents Advisory Board. Currently, she serves on the California Committee South for Human Rights Watch and The Director’s Circle at the Los Angeles County Act Museum. Kelly enjoys skiing, mountain biking, fly fishing and running, and is learning golf.

BRAD NIELSON

Brad was born and raised in the Rocky Mountain region and earned his juris doctor degree from the University of Utah College of Law. During his 34 year legal career he served in various legal roles with several major energy companies, living abroad for 19 years and managing legal teams and projects all over the world. In 2015, Brad retired from Royal Dutch Shell as General Counsel and is currently a board member of several non-profit organizations involved in conserving some of Wyoming’s extraordinary natural resources.

ROB WALLACE

Rob is Chief Regulatory Officer of I2 Capital and Co-Founder and President of the Upper Green River Conservancy. He ardently advocates for landscape scale conservation banking as a solution to the co-existence of energy development and conservation. From Evanston, Wyoming, Rob served as Director, U.S. Govt. Relations for GE Energy, Staff Director for the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Chief of Staff to Senator Waxman, Chief of Staff to Wyoming Governor Gerren and Assistant Director of the National Park Service.

HOWARD STERN on Horseback

R Lazy S Ranch in Winter
PLACE-BASED ARTMAKING

Place-based artmaking at the Jackson Hole Land Trust aims to cultivate a deeper sense of place by connecting people and artists with the land. “The Land Trust and many other Land Trusts across the country realize that while many projects focus on wildlife habitat or scenic vistas, they also have projects that the whole community can touch, feel, and be part of,” President, Laurie Andrews explains. “For a Land Trust to be relevant in a community, people really feel like they need to touch the properties, be part of the properties and art has activated that.” Two annual place-based artmaking projects, FoundSpace and View22, raise awareness of the importance of open space protection for the valley’s wildlife, community, and artists.

VIEW22: OPEN STUDIO

View22 unites art and conservation. With each work, the project brings to light the role that land conservation has played in shaping our valley’s private lands. In 2016, the fourth iteration of View22 included 19 local artists exploring “Open Studio” locations throughout the valley, on 13 different easement protected properties which were either open or easily accessible to the public. The artists were able to visit these properties whenever they wanted throughout the summer and then shared their experiences through blog posts, artist interview demonstrations, and finally fundraising art show at the Annual Picnic in August. The resulting works illuminated the great extent of talent evident in the participating local artists, and will forever embody the breathtaking beauty and the imperative to protect the valley.

FOUNDSPACE

FoundSpace explores the crossroads of art and land. This project asks the community to participate in the artmaking process and recover found objects on protected properties and work together to create temporary large-scale interactive installations in a public, conserved, open space. In the summer of 2016, FoundSpace revolved around the Summer Solstice Celebration at R Park, and featured four returning local artists and one new local artist. The project drew community youth and adult groups together and resulted in a collaborative project which transformed R Park for the duration of the summer.

CONSERVATION ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Two artists, Ben Roth and Bronwyn Minton, offered their creative talents to both View22 and FoundSpace this summer. Ben Roth’s FoundSpace creation, the “Ring of Fire,” asks visitors to leave the property and to create work for a public place and to create work that is interactive and about the place I thoroughly enjoyed fitting my sensitivity into these new ways of interacting with place.” Positioned on the edge of a walking bridge above the water, Ben Roth’s FoundSpace creation, the “Ring of Fire,” begs visitors to leap through the blazing circle into the cool depths of the park’s pond. The inspiration for the work derived from the bridge’s playful construction. “Instead of putting up handrails on the bridge to say ‘do not jump,’ [the builders] just dug out the pond enough that you could jump!” Ben says. “It was very interesting to try to create work for a public place and to create work that is interactive and about the place. I thoroughly enjoyed fitting my sensitivity into these new ways of interacting with place.”

Inspired by botanical garden signage, Bronwyn Minton’s FoundSpace creation asked people to interact with Rendezvous RT Park using different senses. The public was asked to pause and wonder about the plants and animals that live and grow in the park. “The whole project was very much designed for the viewer who might happen upon the signs and enjoy them without much explanation or direction,” she explains. Using momentum from her FoundSpace project, Bronwyn’s View22 artwork featured a triptych of plants drawn on metal plates, which were then positioned next to the same live plant in the park. Bronwyn reflects, “It is very interesting to try to create work for a public place and to create work that is interactive and about the place I thoroughly enjoyed fitting my sensitivity into these new ways of interacting with place.”

I am honored to call Jackson home. I especially love how exchange in season seems to make our community more connected and connected, even after an action-packed summer. As the leaves begin to turn, and we’ve gathered hold of these last chances to float, the Snake, to bike the pass, to lie in the grass and count the stars with our kids, we expect to be worn out and beat down when the first few flakes of snow fall. But miraculously, even after all the projects and all the parties, we rally. We’re propelled forward into the next season with the energy from our inspiring local community, our minds and hearts open to the possibilities of what yet another winter may bring. We owe a lot to this community, and I am so grateful for the caring individuals, groups, and businesses throughout the valley that carry on tirelessly to make the region the best it can be.

This newsletter celebrates the connections between those hardworking individuals and the Jackson Hole Land Trust. The Community Assessment gives us a framework to inspect and adjust how we work and how we engage with our local community, our partners, landowners, and the region’s visitors. The exciting new Green River Valley Program results from years of dedicated partnerships and incredible collaboration between countless involved parties, and I look forward to seeing all the accomplishments that this merger will inevitably bring. It is also wonderful to see the impact of View 22 and FoundSpace and the creativity and inspiration that we can draw from the land with enough patience and attention. While the Jackson Hole Land Trust is an exemplary land conservation organization, its partnerships outside the box of land protection ultimately make it relevant to everyone in the wider community. This year we’ve engaged with all generations and all facets of the Jackson community, and I believe this will propel us forward into many seasons to come.

I am grateful for Jackson Hole Land Trust’s commitment to maintaining the quality of life in the valley, and encourage you to get involved in the community, whether through art, outdoor recreation, or conservation. In the meantime, the Land Trust will continue our efforts to engage with residents and visitors to provide the epic sights, sounds, and experiences that Jackson Hole’s open spaces yield year-round.

Warmly,
Pat Lawton

BUTCH PARKS, WIND RIVER PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Butch joined the Land Trust in 2016. Originally from the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, he graduated from Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1982. In 2015, Butch obtained a Masters in Archaeology from Durham University in Durham, England. Butch brings a non-profit and land conservation experience from her passions of Mission, Partnerships, Volunteers, and Special Events at Western Reserve Land Conservancy in Cleveland. Elizabeth has recently relocated from Ohio to Jackson and enjoys fishing, skiing, yoga, hiking and reading.

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

JACKSON HOLE LAND TRUST  jhlandtrust.org     11

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OPEN LANDS  Fall/Winter 2016

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The Jackson Hole Land Trust is a private, non-profit organization that was established in 1980 to preserve open space and the critical wildlife habitat, magnificent scenic vistas, and historic ranching heritage of Western Wyoming. By working cooperatively with the owners of the area’s privately owned open lands, the Jackson Hole Land Trust has ensured the permanent protection of over 55,000 acres in and around Jackson Hole and the Greater Yellowstone Area including Fremont and Sublette counties.

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**SAVE THE DATE**

for our next Annual Picnic Sunday, August 13, 2017

Keep up with our work and sign up for our email list at jhlandtrust.org

Cover photograph by Timothy C. Mayo