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Promote Stewardship of Wildlife Habitat and other Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Resources (Theme 1)

Statement of Ideal

Maintain viable populations of native species ("species of concern"), and preserve scenic vistas and use resources in the most efficient way possible.

The statement needs to be clarified – “Native species” and “species of concern” are very different. Also, these statements need to be consistent throughout the document. (For example, on p. 15, “native species” is used, and on p. 28 “all native species” is used.) The statement of ideal specific to this theme should include language such as the following: “Human activities will allow for viable populations of all native species.”

Theme One should refer to “wildlife” in addition to “wildlife habitat.”

What does the theme address?

Teton County’s abundant wildlife and natural and scenic resources are a local and national treasure, and the community recognizes a stewardship responsibility to protect them. The community has been working to conserve lands through a variety of techniques; however, it is difficult for conservation to keep pace with development. Future development in Jackson and Teton County will take place in the context of stewardship. The wildlife, forested lands, waterways, and meadows throughout the county are a resource with intrinsic value that residents and visitors agree the community must work to preserve and maintain. Compact development patterns can preserve land for open space, as well as lead us towards a more sustainable and energy-efficient development pattern.

Central to this theme, but more importantly, to the foundation of the Plan, is a consistent understanding of “stewardship”. “Stewardship” should be defined more clearly, particularly in terms of how land use planning is approached given the community’s top priority. In addition, the context of Jackson Hole as a gateway community within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem should be clearly described in the introduction to this theme. A map or visual depiction of this role would be beneficial, and would include adjacent federal lands such as Grand Teton National Park, the National Elk Refuge, and the Bridger-Teton National Forest. (Specifically, “Grand Teton National Park” should be mentioned in this document prior to page 22, and the “Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem” should be mentioned prior to page 16. This context should be described on page one of the Plan.) Jackson is the largest community within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and closest to designated wilderness areas.

“Compact development patterns” are a positive and critical piece of a strong planning approach. But, “development pattern” is just one piece of the puzzle because it relates primarily to direct effects. A strategic conservation planning approach would not only consider development patterns, but would also consider the total amount or intensity of development, as well as the rate at which it occurs. These other “pieces” would better address indirect and cumulative effects. In a nutshell, a focus on “development pattern” alone (and given the patterns proposed) would fall short in fulfilling stewardship goals.

Summary of this Theme’s Topics

This theme addresses the following topics:

Wildlife habitat (*WILDLIFE*), natural systems *clarify ?*, and ecologically sensitive resources;

It's important to specifically mention invasive species, vegetation and climate change,

Wetlands, streams, rivers, watersheds, floodplains and riparian areas;

Water quality;

Scenic resources and dark night skies;

Hillsides and forested areas;

Air quality;

Natural hazards;

Agriculture and ranching;

Public access for public lands (*and stewardship of public lands*); and

Sustainable resource use.

Where is this theme a priority?

The Future Land Use Plan shows the Natural Resource priority areas (i.e., the Natural Resources Overlay (NRO)). Where the Natural Resource priority areas are shown on the map, **this theme aims for no net loss of land to development.**

Explain "net loss". How does mitigation (and its performance as a natural resource protection policy) factor into this goal? It is also important to clarify the difference between "structural" protection of land or habitat versus "functional" protection of land or habitat. If the goal, as it should be, is to aim for no loss of habitat function, then strategies will require a landscape (rather than site-specific) perspective.

(Note: The planning team is obtaining new wildlife data from the Conservation Alliance and Teton Science School, and will review the old NROs map for appropriate revisions. Discussions will continue about species and habitat priorities and migration corridors that may need to be added to the maps.)

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How does the theme relate to core values?

Environment: **"Species of concern"** OR *"all native species?"* and habitat protection, open space, clean air and water, sustainable resource use, conservation.

Community: Economic viability of the region, community health and livability, educational and scientific value. *Unique obligation as stewards – unique mountain community*

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles support these objectives:

Principle 1.1—Protect wildlife habitat, natural systems, and ecologically sensitive resources of the region

Why is this Important?

Abundant wildlife has always been a draw for the area and distinguishes the region from others. Teton County lies within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem—the largest generally intact ecosystem in

the lower 48 states. **Yet, biologists believe the region’s overall environmental health is in decline, concurrent with increase in human population.** *(This is one of the few sentences in the entire text that links increases in human population density with a decline in environmental health. While science cannot necessarily provide, or predict, exact thresholds at which irreparable changes in wildlife populations occur, there is considerable research that demonstrates the direct and indirect effects of human activities on wildlife, such as habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, outdoor recreation impacts, transportation-related barriers and collision-based mortalities, etc... In general, given our community’s priority to protect wildlife, our development decisions should be precautionary in cases where we lack substantive data.)* One of the big challenges for the next decades is

finding a balance between human activities and growth and natural systems. Other reasons this principle is important are:

Wildlife and natural systems, do not conform to jurisdictional or ownership boundaries. Private lands, as well as protected public lands, contain crucial habitat for species and are an integral part of a healthy, biologically diverse ecosystem.

Development has occurred on the winter ranges of many of the species valued by the community, restricting the land area needed by wildlife during the most trying part of the year for them. The winter is the most difficult time in the survival of elk, moose, deer, and other big game and non-game species.

The pressure to develop these areas creates **the need to manage growth** - *clarify* - to preserve winter habitats and migration corridors that exist on private land.

Wetlands, winter ranges, and migration routes are all independent of ownership and jurisdiction boundaries **and cannot be moved as development occurs.** *It is important to consistently spell out the consequences of land-use decisions (as they are “spelled out” in other themes of the Plan). In this case, individual species will be displaced and the viability of wildlife populations will be threatened.*

Wildlife adds to quality of life and enhances the community’s economy. *This language understates the role of wildlife in this area, and in the ecosystem. It doesn’t just “add” or “enhance.” The landscape, and the wildlife to which it is home, define Jackson Hole for both residents and visitors from all over the world. Our community has a unique responsibility to the entire Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem – not just our local “quality of life and economy.”*

Managing wildlife

habitats, migration routes, spawning habitats, and nesting areas is critical to the wildlife and also the community.

Natural and scenic resource issues have a direct effect on the social and economic well-being of the community. Land use policies that consider ecological and natural systems will protect the area’s visual beauty, abundant wildlife and air and water quality, which are draws for the part of Teton County’s economy that is tourism-based and for the quality of life for local residents. **These resources and natural systems will maintain the area’s critical role.** *? Clarify*

This Plan recommends protecting wildlife habitat and intact natural systems through a variety of tools

and strategies, including standards, acquisition, voluntary dedications, and partnerships. In

addition,

the plan recommends identifying measures for how much wildlife habitat has been impacted by development and what is essential to maintain for the viability and health of different species and critical thresholds for particular species.

The intent to identify these measures is a positive step, but it should be understood that the best available science cannot always provide exact “thresholds”, particularly at the finer scale at which local land-use decisions are made. The complexity of the ecosystem, and the scales at which variables affect the wildlife populations we have in Teton County, will always provide challenges to identify “essential” conservation measures at a local planning level. We should be precautionary – particularly in geographic areas where we lack data, have outdated data, or for species that we generally lack data. In a nutshell, we should be precautionary, and not wait for “exact thresholds”. If we “wait” for “proof of impacts”, and particularly given the current rate of growth and land-use change, the chances that we will cross these thresholds before they are understood are high.

Policies that protect the ability for wildlife to move through the landscape are critical. Habitat must be contiguous, accessible and intact.

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Policy 1.1a: Minimize development of wildlife habitat (identified in the Natural Resources Priority area) to maintain biodiversity of native species

What is the difference between a natural resources priority area and the Natural Resource Overlay?

New development and human activities will not fragment (or unnecessarily degrade habitat function) wildlife habitat of species (“of concern”?) identified in the NRO mapping and will mitigate detrimental effects of development on habitat.

Development standards within the NRO must be significantly strengthened. In general, we should not only have policies to “minimize development of wildlife habitat”, but also to “minimize the effects of development on wildlife.” (Note:

We are seeking further direction about how to interpret the new NRO mapping and species data, and will tighten up this policy when that information is available.)

Human activities in Teton County will minimize conflicts ? clarify - (The direct and indirect degradation of wildlife values will be avoided. Wildlife access and movement across preserve abundant and diverse

wildlife that distinguishes Teton County. To do this, the county will continue a program of comprehensive wildlife protection standards for areas defined as Natural Resource priorities (on the Future Land Use Plan or a separate map). In addition, the county and town will guard against incremental environmental degradation to nest sites, crucial winter ranges, and migration corridors. *Great goal ☺, but how will site-specific analyses that assess only direct effects “guard against incremental degradation?” Without clear direction to measure indirect and cumulative impacts, (and baseline data to make this analysis possible), the potential for incremental change will still be high.* New development should:

Be sited outside of Natural Resource priority areas (identified in the NRO mapping);

If siting outside a Natural Resource priority area is not possible, limit the size of development and disturbance in the NRO to a certain size, as determined by regulations; *Critical piece – Any other specifics on allowable densities?*

Minimize impacts on wildlife migration corridors by siting buildings out of the corridors (in the least sensitive areas), minimizing fencing and roads that conflict with wildlife movement; “Minimizing” is not strong enough. In terms of policy, what does “minimizing

roads” mean?

Not plant invasive vegetation or allow noxious weeds and minimize disturbance that leads to increased exotic weed infestations; and

Plan and phase construction activities to avoid impacting crucial lifecycles of species (e.g. breeding) –*reproductive/nesting seasons, etc* .

This Plan will set up systems to monitor cumulative impacts of change in the region and curb development growth when **monitored key species appear to be affected**. *Define “key species.” It’s great to see a discussion on monitoring cumulative impacts. Additional detail in this section will be very important, including criteria for assessing impacts. It will be critical to outline why such an approach is necessary, and secondly, how we can make such an approach “funded” and feasible.*

Policy 1.1b: Require use of non-invasive plant species

Require use of a variety of native or compatible non-native, non-invasive plant species indigenous to the site as part of project landscaping to improve wildlife habitat values.

Policy 1.1c: Conserve connected and strategically located open space

The county and partners will identify potential connected open spaces and **(areas of natural and scenic resources)** *why are these in parentheses?, as defined primarily by the Natural Resources Priority area.* *Define this area,* To achieve this aim, pursue multiple techniques and partnerships for open space preservation to permanently conserve large, intact properties.

Include language about the importance of unbroken, contiguous open space for habitat function. In general, it should be clear that not only is corridor protection important (specific to each species), but that the overall landscape needs to be as “permeable” as possible for wildlife use. There are a number of factors that influence permeability, including overall development densities. Particularly in terms of long-term strategic planning and “sustainability”, it is critical to understand that the natural environment is dynamic and not static. A landscape level perspective that considers and addresses cumulative impacts is essential.

In a nutshell, we should not confine protection to narrowly defined areas based on current use; we should also plan ahead for changes, including those triggered by climate change. And, large, intact properties (as stated) should be a top priority, in order to provide as much flexibility as possible to ensure wildlife can adapt to changing conditions.

Policy 1.1d: Minimize disturbance to vegetated and forested areas

Protect large **significant** trees and healthy forested areas. *Or “protect large existing forest communities.” These woodland communities should be perpetuated.* Identify forested areas and establish

standards to protect **healthy significant trees of a certain size**. *Will need further clarification – Is the goal to maintain a particular function? How does this goal link to fire ecology and policy?*

Policy 1.1e: Encourage restoration of environmentally degraded areas

Recognizing that not all strategically-located open space and natural resources are in pristine condition, the county and town will **promote restoration of degraded areas** to their natural condition, enhancing degraded habitats through incentives, programs, and regulations. *It’s great to see discussion on the need for restoration, but to have “teeth” the policy’s objectives need to be clearer. For example, who decides whether “degraded areas” should be determined as “unworthy of NRO designation” versus “worthy of restoration”?*

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Principle 1.2—Protect the integrity of watersheds, streams and rivers, wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas

Why is This Important?

Waterways, rivers and streams, and wetlands are the lifeblood of the region—for the natural environment and local economy. They provide both natural functions (wildlife, safe discharge of snow melt) and recreational and economic purposes, yet pressures of development continue to stress these areas.

Wildlife, fish, and birds depend on healthy rivers and streams.

A significant economic sector has evolved around guiding, rafting and fishing trips, world class fishing opportunities and world-renowned competitions.

Wetlands are essential to life, as wildlife habitat and for upland and aquatic species that feed, drink, breed, reproduce, or hunt near them. Some wetlands serve as nurseries for commercial or recreationally valuable fish and wildlife. In Teton County they provide (a) water storage and gradual release of runoff, (b) sediment stabilization and phosphorous retention, (c) nitrogen removal, (d) Snake River cutthroat trout habitat, (e) amphibian habitat, (f) breeding and migratory water bird habitat, (g) wintering bird habitat, (h) songbird habitat, (i) beaver habitat, (j) moose habitat, and (k) plant community integrity.

Current land use regulations stress setbacks from water bodies and wetlands and prohibit development in the ten year floodplain. **Maintaining effective setbacks** and other regulations are essential to sustain the waterways and natural aspects of Jackson Hole. *Good language.*

Policy 1.2a: Provide development setbacks from rivers and streams *(all natural waterways?) (ditches?) Ditches may provide different ecological functions. Perhaps different criteria could be established to evaluate them.*

Protect the rivers, streams, high quality wetlands, and other water bodies from the potential impacts of development by requiring setbacks.

Policy 1.2b: Minimize development in floodplains and riparian areas

To reduce hazards and protect water quality and riparian areas, continue prohibition of development in the 10-year floodplain and **minimize** further development from occurring in 100-year floodplains when an alternative location exists. – *“Minimize” could mean a lot of different things. “Restrict”? How many properties fall within this floodplain?*

Policy 1.2c: Provide setbacks to maintain functioning healthy wetlands

Protect high value wetlands that contribute to wildlife and fish biodiversity, flood control, and clean water by requiring setbacks and establishing “best management practices”. *Why not use the phrase “require setbacks”? “Provide” is unclear.*

Principle 1.3—Maintain clean water in the region

Why is this Important?

Urban runoff can negatively impact to the water quality in the Valley if not managed. Forward-thinking efforts, as occurring in the town’s Karn’s Meadow project and filtration efforts should be continued—with particular emphasis on filtering increased urban runoff that reaches the pristine valley water system.

At a countywide level, watersheds are the systems that carry water, sediments, and nutrients from ridge tops to rivers and perform vital water quality and storage functions. Avoiding human alterations that can diminish natural functions of watersheds and streams and rivers is critical. *Any thoughts on how anticipated climate change will affect water availability and quality?*

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Policy 1.3a: Require development to follow Flat Creek Watershed Master Plan

New development will adhere to the Flat Creek Watershed Master Plan, a collaborative effort

of several local, state and federal agencies, which contains many recommended strategies to address urban runoff.

Policy 1.3b: Manage urban development to filter all runoff

Continue town efforts to improve urban water filtration for Flat Creek and identify and strengthen countywide standards to *reduce and* treat urban runoff from mixed-use centers. *Is overall development intensity an issue, given impervious surface limitations, etc.?*

Policy 1.3c: Map Teton County watersheds

Identify the watersheds that relate to the rivers and streams in the region and identify best management practices to maintain clean water. Protect the rivers, streams, high quality wetlands, and other water bodies from the potential impacts of development by establishing “best management practices”. *Good recommendation, although it seems more like a specific action than a “policy”. If this is listed as a “policy”, then “Map Teton County Vegetation and Habitat” should be part of principle 1.1*

Policy 1.3d: Protect integrity of groundwater and aquifer recharge areas

Protect ground water from the potential impacts of development by steering development to areas served by wastewater systems. *What about considerations of overall development intensity?*

Principle 1.4—Preserve the region’s scenic resources and dark night skies

Why is This Important?

The community regards scenic quality as a very important component of the region and community

character. Preserving the scenic resources and skies are important because:

Various types of landscapes determine the scenic quality of Teton County, where scenic vistas are broad and deep. Meadows in the foreground contribute to the open feeling and **rural character of the county**, framing the stunning visual backdrop of buttes, ridgelines, and majestic mountains in the background.

Land use regulations and open space initiatives (land trusts) have generally been effective in limiting visual clutter in the foreground and structures on ridgelines. Landowners have put many scenic properties under easement for permanent protection.

Dark night skies are another component of scenic quality, which local groups are currently assessing and working to maintain low lighting and minimize further light pollution.

Scenic resources, and how they play into the perception of the surrounding environment, have tremendous impacts on both quality of life and visitor experience. Scenery is a defining asset of Jackson/Teton County, and is largely linked to land use proportions between the built environment and the natural environment. The extent to which the landscape becomes increasingly human dominated will have profound impacts on the experience and place of Jackson Hole. The 94 Plan’s chapter on community character included some very specific recommendations and guidelines for protecting the rural character of Jackson. While the concept can certainly be subjective, from a planning approach, the Plan included some very objective and targeted guidelines. Unfortunately, too much of that discussion appears to have been dropped from this draft plan.

There are a certainly a number of factors that affect overall “scenery,” such as our transportation infrastructure. The number of stoplights, number of lanes, volume, etc., will affect the “scenery” of Jackson Hole. This is just one example of many that point to why “numbers matter”, and why a more realistic description of consequences of chosen policies, and linkages between them, are so critical.

Policy 1.4a: Maintain scenic meadow and mountain views

Use a combination of measures to protect scenic quality in the county including continuing effective land use regulations and voluntary protection programs. Site structures and lots

where they will preserve the long views across meadows toward the mountains and buttes, as seen from major roads and highways. (Note: may need to reevaluate and redefine the SRO – evaluate its strength and deficiency.) *Again, scenic resources were a major component of the 94 Plan, and should not be dropped as a priority.*

Policy 1.4b: Keep structures off skylines

Set new development back from ridgelines and skylines to protect scenic quality. Identify key skylines or ridgeline views. Maintain standards to address siting and appearance of structures near skylines or ridgelines as seen from major roads. *In terms of scenic preservation, how does this policy relate to the proposed intensification of hillside development (according to future land use plan maps?)*

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Policy 1.4c: Control lighting to maintain dark night skies

Minimize the amount of artificial light and light spill-over and glare in developments to provide safe conditions and protect the aesthetics of dark night skies. Evaluate and revise lighting standards if necessary. *Any discussion on overall development intensities? Who decides this balance between safety and scenic resource protection? In a recent article, police staff said that crime is expected to increase in response to increased densities in the valley. Would lights be increasingly required throughout neighborhoods if crime did increase? Which value has priority?*

Policy 1.4d: Protect characteristic and unique landforms

Protect appearance of mountains, buttes, glacial valley, historic river benches, glacial moraines in Teton County. *Clarify?*

Principle 1.5—Protect hillsides

Why is This Important?

Many communities limit development on steep slopes to prevent resource degradation and hazards such as landslides, avalanche, and erosion.

Development and grading affects the structural integrity of the hillside, increasing potential for slides.

Moreover, massive grading and cut and fill on hillsides to provide roads, driveways, and structures affects the scenic quality of the town and county. *Given some of the inconsistencies (the future land use plan maps propose intensification of hillside development), this principle needs to be clearly defined. Even if current technology can make hillside development safer or more feasible, what is the overriding principle – aesthetics and preservation of scenic character, feasible technologies and safety, or protection of wildlife habitat?*

Policy 1.5a: Minimize disturbance and grading on hillsides

Maintain the visual quality and ecological integrity of forested hillsides by minimizing the footprint of disturbance and adapting development to fit the topography, rather than adapting the topography to accommodate development. Minimize the appearance of road cuts and grading on hillsides. *Define “ecological integrity” and clarify why “forested” hillsides were specifically identified. Also, the “future land use plan maps” propose a south-facing hillside (which is important winter range) as an area for development intensification. Why? In general, given our main goal to protect wildlife, we should be particularly hesitant about “writing off” south-facing slopes given their potential role as important seasonal ranges. In addition, the land uses proposed for hillsides (on the maps) appear to be in direct conflict with other policies to preserve scenery and mountain vistas. If the principle is to “protect hillsides”, then “minimize disturbance” is a very weak policy to address the principle.*

Policy 1.5c: Steer development away from steep slopes

Steer development away from slopes that are steeper than 25% grade to protect visual quality of hillsides and promote safe development. *What does “steer development away” mean? This*

language does not provide increased predictability or clear direction. What are distinctions between “avoid” or “restrict” or “steer development away”? In general, the policy directions for land-use decisions on steep slopes need to be significantly clearer. What about allowable densities of development?

Principle 1.6—Improve air quality

Why is This Important?

Jackson Valley generally has clear air—quality that is well within the limits of Environmental Protection Agency standards, and recent trends do not indicate the need for corrective action.

However, the high-altitude valley surrounded by mountains is susceptible to temporary air quality problems associated with winter temperature inversions. Carbon monoxide mostly from automobile emissions, dust particles, and woodsmoke are pollutants that become trapped.

Dust (as measured by PM 10 particles) has significantly worsened in Jackson Hole.

Attention is needed on **continued monitoring and future mitigating measures** to avoid deteriorating conditions over time. *What about “prevention” measures? In general, given the unique context of Jackson Hole as a high-altitude valley, “numbers” or overall development intensity will matter. Making a conscious choice to limit overall development potential is a viable prevention measure. While the effects of individuals can be mitigated somewhat through technology shifts and behavior modifications, the overall buildout (residential and commercial) will largely influence overall air quality. The higher the number, the greater the emission potential. The more commercial development, the more reasons for commuting from neighboring communities, and therefore a greater potential for automobile-related emissions.*

Policy 1.6a: Maintain and improve air quality through a mix of programs

Air quality programs can include, but are not limited to reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), the growth rate of total vehicle miles of travel, reducing wood burning emissions, reducing airborne particulates from unpaved roads, requiring increased dust control at large construction sites, and embracing new technologies, such as cleaner burning engines. The

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county has maintained for several years a successful wood stove rebate program—to replace them with cleaner burning modern devices. In addition, the community will aim to minimize emissions of heat trapping gasses, such as through incentives for fuel-efficient cars/hybrids.

Policy 1.6b: Reduce vehicle miles traveled (*per capita?*)

Implement land use policies and transportation strategies to reduce the number vehicle miles traveled, such as home mail delivery, building pathways and improving transit. New subdivisions should contain a mix of uses and should generally be focused in and around the Town of Jackson and county communities, as identified on the Future Land Use Plan.

Great goals. However, it is critical that we recognize traffic problems cannot be wished away, particularly given some of the current realities of lifestyles in Jackson Hole. Certain trips will be minimized through these strategies, but other factors will be significantly more challenging. It is critical to recognize the degree to which our community has historically underestimated traffic demands. Also, total numbers matter. If the policy to “reduce vehicle miles traveled” aims to reduce congestion and improve air quality, the outcome is equally dependent on the sources for potential vehicle travelers.

Principle 1.7—Restrict development in natural hazard areas

Why is This Important?

Natural hazards in the environment can threaten the natural systems, our built environment, and

human life. Teton County could face several types of hazards.

Teton County is a seismically active area, so earthquakes are a potential hazard.

Other potential hazards include flooding, landslides, avalanche chutes, areas of unstable soil, and wildfires.

The policies below aim to minimize the impact of hazards related to natural phenomena.

Policy 1.7a: Restrict development in floodways

Manage development in areas prone to flooding by prohibiting development in floodways and the ten year floodplain. Limit development in the 100-year floodplain when alternative locations exist.

Policy 1.7b: Restrict development in avalanche chutes and fault zones

Map all areas identified as hazardous Avalanche Chutes and Fault Zones and steer development away from them.

Policy 1.7c: Restrict development in unstable slopes and soils

Coordinate with local geologists to map areas of unstable slopes and steer development away from them.

Policy 1.7d: New buildings will meet codes to address seismic activity

New developments will follow building codes to protect life and safety of occupants during seismic events.

Clarify “restrict”, “limit”, and “steer development away.”

Principle 1.8—Conserve Remaining Agricultural Resources

Why is this Important?

Alta, Buffalo Valley, and Kelly are locations in the county with few remaining active agricultural operations and intact lands. Particularly in Alta and Buffalo Valley have potential for continued viable

farming and ranching operations, and it will be important to broaden conservation efforts.

What about South Park?

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Policy 1.8a: Continue conserving Jackson Hole’s agricultural lands

Continue to support efforts of landowners and land trusts to conserve large intact parcels of land and farming and ranching in the valley.

Policy 1.8b: Conserve farming and ranching in Alta through voluntary measures

The Future Land Use Plan designates Alta as a Conservation Focus Area where the county, private landowners, and other partners will seek voluntary ways to conserve large intact blocks of land and operational farms and ranches. – *We can see the value of focus areas, but why have certain areas been specifically designated and not others? What will these Focus Areas signify in terms of land development regulations? The areas listed in 1.8b and 1.8c do not represent all of Jackson Hole’s agricultural lands.*

Policy 1.8c: Conserve farming and ranching in Buffalo Valley and Kelly through voluntary measures

The Future Land Use Plan designates Buffalo Valley and Kelly as Conservation Focus Areas, as described for Alta in Policy 1.8b, above. *In general, the Plan needs to specify and differentiate between “natural resource priority areas” and “conservation areas”. This policy clearly points to “farming and ranching” as practices to “conserve”. Specific goals should be clear as they relate to “Future Land Use Plan Maps, ” as to not confuse different conservation “targets” (such as “conserve ranching” or “conserve rural character and scenic views”, or all of the above).*

Principle 1.9—Maintain public access to public lands for recreation -

Along with access, there needs to be a principle to promote responsible stewardship of public lands (as related to recreation) (i.e. minimize impacts associated with recreation)

In general, the Plan must incorporate strong language that Teton County and the Town of Jackson recognize their role in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and will do everything possible to promote the integrity of the GYE.

Why is This Important?

Teton County has vast outdoor recreation opportunity in the millions of acres of public lands lying in

the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and other federal lands.

However,

public access to federal lands for outdoor recreation are often through private land, and points of access are minimal. Access for recreation needs to be balanced with other multiple purpose objectives of federal lands, such as habitat protection or grazing.

These goals are being refined in the Snake River Resources Management Plan.

Policy 1.9a: Provide recreational opportunities in new developments

To avoid excessive pressure on nearby public lands, new developments should provide recreational opportunities, such as dog parks, trails, parks, and pathways. **Consider incentives for landowners to provide additional access points to public lands.** *Clarify how this sentence relates to the policy above. The policy listed above has more to do with the recommended principle above – to minimize impacts on public lands.*

Policy 1.9b: Provide continued access to federal lands

The county will coordinate with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Park Service regarding new public access points and to maintain access to federal lands and to the rivers and natural resource areas (National forest, Snake River, and Flat Creek). Recreational access and human activities should be planned and provided in a manner consistent with resource protection goals to allow for continued populations of native species and protection of scenic quality. New developments should not obstruct existing access points.

Policy 1.9c: Provide improved access to the Snake River on public lands

Promote strategies to accomplish the goals and objectives of the BLM Snake River Resource Management Plan for several parcels along the river, which provide potential for public access to the river, recreation, wildlife and open space. The Plan involves Teton County, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Snake River Fund, the Bridger - Teton National Forest, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and the Jackson Hole Land Trust and lists goals and objectives for several BLM parcels along the Snake River. The plan provides for the disposal of

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parcels from BLM, while ensuring that the lands remain in public ownership and available for recreation, public access, open space, and wildlife habitat.

Principle 1.10—Promote sustainable use of resources and minimize waste

Why is This Important?

Consumption of non-renewable energy sources can contribute to air pollution, rapid depletion of resources, and climate change.

Part of achieving a balanced, sustainable community and providing good stewardship of resources is focusing on how the community uses and conserves its resources, such as energy and water. Increased investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy conservation can lower energy bills, reduce demand for fossil fuels, help stabilize energy prices and energy system reliability, and help reduce air pollutants and heat trapping gas emissions.

Meaningful investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy conservation in Jackson Hole will happen through ongoing efforts by the Town and County to advance land use planning, improve multi-modal transportation systems, expand recycling and reuse of consumables, and updating (*update*) building standards. *As each new development is proposed*

sustainable guidelines must be met. It is not enough for the developer to say it is a sustainable development. Will the infrastructure required to serve the development drain or enhance energy?

Policy 1.10a: Use resources efficiently and promote renewable energy

Use our region’s natural resources, including energy, in a manner that meets our present needs without endangering the welfare of future generations. The county and town will promote private and public conservation of energy resources and promote use of renewable sources of energy, such as solar, geothermal, and wind.

Policy 1.10b: Promote Green Building and site design

Require energy conservation and Green Building. New development will comply with standards to conserve energy and also use renewable resources. Develop a prescriptive energy code and green building standards. Codes should address energy impacts related to **size of structures** and construction (recycling and reuse). *“Require” and “promote” are very different. There are likely to be very different opinions about what constitutes a “green” structure size. Use mitigation program for residential structures over 2500 feet, and all new or remodeled town or county buildings must be built at the equivalent level of LEED Silver.*

Policy 1.10c: Encourage water conservation

Encourage water conservation to protect the region’s prized water resources for current and future consumption as well as for recreation purposes, and for use by wildlife and fish. *Clarify “encourage” – versus, for example, “promote”.*

Policy 1.10d: Increase recycling and composting

Increase opportunities for recycling, reuse, and composting to minimize solid waste that must be hauled long-distance to a landfill.

Principle 1.11—Increase per capita energy efficiency and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions

Why is This Important?

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The community has the opportunity and obligation to address the challenge of global climate change. The issue of managing and reducing carbon emissions that contribute to greenhouse gas runs through all the chapters of the plan, as it addresses transportation planning, siting of development, building housing, or monitoring and protection of resources. Some of the largest contributors to energy use are heating and cooling of buildings and transportation-related energy use (for commuting and vehicle-related use); therefore, how we continue to build structures and communities in the future will affect energy consumption.

Policy 1.11a: Make new development energy efficient

Locate and build future growth and redevelopment patterns with energy efficiency and resource protection in mind. **Manage** building and construction through the planning process to reduce lifecycle energy costs and improve energy efficiency and resource protection. *In general, there are many degrees of “energy efficiency”. Clarify “manage building and construction.” Will the County promote any particular standards or certification frameworks to implement this policy?*

Policy 1.11b: Encourage energy efficiency for existing development

Encourage existing development to increase energy efficiency.

Policy 1.11c: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with

development and transportation

Development patterns with higher density mixed-use centers near transit and focused in Town and county communities will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation. A comprehensive transportation network, with transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks (as proposed in Theme 3) will also reduce greenhouse gas emission. Develop and promote the means to reach a 50% reduction in building-related carbon emissions by 2010 and carbon neutral buildings by 2030. *In general, compact design (not necessarily “patterns with higher density”) helps reduce emissions. While the two concepts are linked, there are important distinctions, particularly in the context of other community priorities.*

Policy 1.11d: Locate commercial and workforce housing in mixed-use community centers and the Town of Jackson

Development patterns should mix land uses so jobs, services, schools, shopping, and other destinations are in close proximity to homes and neighborhoods and restrict locating in Natural Resource priority areas. *This is a good concept, but details for how this plays out on the ground will be critical. Mixed use, as a concept, can be misapplied. For example, expansion of commercial into residential areas to justify development intensification (via mixed-use developments) is inappropriate. There must be a strategic balance between residential and commercial development; to date, recognition of this balance has not occurred. If commercial is expanded into areas where it is inappropriate, it will actually worsen traffic congestion in areas where problems currently do not exist. In a nutshell, the future land use plan maps (for the Town) appear to suggest a geographic expansion of commercial development, which goes against smart planning.*

Suggested Strategies (Theme 1—Stewardship)

(Note: The planning team will work with the community to complete the strategies sections during the next phase of work as they relate to policies. Strategies are included in this draft for discussion purposes.)

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The strategies suggested on pages 25 and 26 are a really good start. As part of this comprehensive plan, a principle should be included that stresses the importance of monitoring and data collection on wildlife resources. This would reinforce the definition of sustainability offered on page 9. A clear strategy, including a funding mechanism and timeline requirements, is essential. The Conservation Alliance will submit specific recommendations for strategies in this “theme” in a separate document.

Theme 1 Suggested Strategies

Assess Wildlife Habitat NRO Mapping and Standards –
Reevaluate NRO mapping and associated LDRs to ensure that all LDR-protected habitats for “species of concern” are included in the NRO and consider including additional habitats and species for protection.

35-Acre Development Standards - Develop standards for 35-acre exemption to create unmanaged impacts to wildlife in NRO areas.

Floodplain Standards – Minimize development in the

100-year floodplain when alternative location exists.

River and Stream Setback Standards – Maintain river setbacks of 150 feet and increase the minimum stream setback to 100 feet (*for new developments?*); work with landowners to create a natural vegetation buffer along rivers and creeks.

Stormwater Regulations – Maintain the stormwater management regulations; strengthen required Best Management Practices for redevelopment; implement Flat Creek Watershed Master Plan.

Wetlands Protection – Develop wetlands protection standards to provide protection of wetlands that are part of wildlife habitat areas (Prepare inventory, key elements would include buffer zone and base the buffer distance for wetlands on the function and importance of the wetland).

Wetland Banking Program – Explore the feasibility of a wetland bank that can enhance existing valuable wetlands.

Wetland Reclamation – Establish a reclamation program to restore critical wetland areas.

Refine PRD Site Design Criteria - Provide better criteria for clustering of lots and structures out of wildlife habitat and migration corridors, to conserve agricultural lands, and to ensure overall density is compatible with rural character in the county. *“Compatibility” as a concept lends to diverse interpretations. At this time, more information is necessary to understand the consequences of criteria modification and zoning changes. Through time, overall density should perpetuate the County’s rural character. How does this PRD criteria relate to removal of density options in remote areas of the County?*

Non-Contiguous PRD – Modify current option for landowners to conserve land.

Water Quality Standards - Refine setback requirements and “best management practices” for point and non-point water pollution.

Species Data and Trends – Coordinate and improve information about Teton County’s ecology and natural systems currently available from multiple sources or not at all.

Scenic Protection Standards – Assess how effectively

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viewsheds have been preserved. Refine Scenic Resource Overlay (SRO) regulations to continue to

preserve key-image setting scenic vistas and skylines.

A closer re-evaluation and focus on scenic resources is warranted. In general, this draft appears to have greatly reduced attention on scenic values and how they relate to the community character of Jackson Hole.

Lighting Standards - Evaluate standards for lighting, especially in new commercial areas to determine if they achieve intent for dark night skies.

Slope Standards – Evaluate whether slope standards, limitations for essential access, and grading standards are effective.

Air Quality Programs – implement land use policies and transportation strategies to reduce VMT

Hazard Mitigation Mapping and Standards – prepare maps locating critical hazardous areas and develop standards to address development siting and mitigation.

Funding Sources for Open Space and Agricultural Purchase of Development Rights – Identify critical lands for purchase. Establish new funding sources (dedicated tax) to acquire open space or development rights for protecting wildlife habitat, for maintaining clean water, for maintaining scenic quality, and for providing public access to recreation areas.

Tree Protection and Forestry – Develop/refine tree protection standards. Develop an urban forestry program to manage urban trees.

Public Lands Access – Develop standards and incentives to address. Coordinate with agencies.

Sustainable Resource Use/Green Building – Develop prescriptive energy code and green building codes to address passive solar design, green roofs, active solar, and other renewable energy sources. Revise zoning codes that act as a barrier to the use of renewable energy systems.

Continue **monitoring** environmental quality (air, water); Continue to promote voluntary protection of important natural, scenic, and agricultural areas through conservation easements; Encourage alternative modes of transportation.

In order to “guard against incremental degradation”, monitoring strategies should be expanded to include a periodic “cumulative effects analysis”. In addition, there is no nexus between monitoring and altering development practices as a result of monitoring results. Monitoring

alone documents existing conditions and nothing more.

In general, the Plan needs to better articulate guidelines for monitoring and subsequent modification of regulations.

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Possible Indicators (Theme 1—Stewardship)

Possible indicators to monitor how well the community is achieving the goals of this theme include:

1. Threatened and Endangered sites (Federal and State agencies?)
2. Wildlife-vehicle collision rates (Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation data on number of animals, WYDOT data and Grand Teton National Park)
3. Wildlife populations, habitat quality and quantity
4. Exotic weeds (acres treated each year for noxious weeds, Weed and Pest)
5. Natural Resources Overlay (NRO) preservation (acres permanently preserved in NRO, acres developed in NRO, acres restored, as measured through County building permits) – *This type of analysis would have to assess variables such as habitat connectivity and function versus simply “number of acres protected.” First, conservation easements can have very different terms, and therefore have different values in terms of natural resource protection. Second, connectivity among preserved acres is critical. If these areas are isolated or fragmented, the overall function of the NRO is undermined, which would greatly threaten our priority to protect wildlife. More research needs to be conducted on wildlife movements throughout the valley and how varying development densities impede or facilitate movements.*
6. Water quality (condition of drinking water and as healthy habitat for fish and wildlife, Federal agencies)
7. Air quality (compliance with EPA Air Quality standards, days of good quality air per year, Teton County Public Health and Environmental Health Department)
8. Night sky (measured by Teton Valley Dark Skies organization)
9. Percentage of urban runoff system treated with filtering system
10. Open space (annual mapping and preservation of scenic areas, NRO acres, acres in easement and protected, land trust activity)
11. Recycled materials as percentage of total solid waste (responsibility to be determined)
12. Building-related carbon emissions (responsibility to be determined)
13. Per capital use of water (responsibility to be determined)
14. Vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) per capita