



Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
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U.S. Forest Service sale inappropriate

In this time of economic stress, we all struggle with how to make ends meet; how to provide the essential and basic needs to not only prosper, but in some cases, survive. We are experiencing this struggle as individuals, as businesses, and as public agencies and governments. The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance has worked successfully with many of these groups in the valley over the years and we are aware of their needs, their resources and their value to the community. Some of our most diligent work and partnerships have been with the Bridger-Teton National Forest. We recognize that the 3.4 million acres surrounding our home are both an economic draw and a source of recreation, respite and a sense of place for Jackson Hole. We would be the last to argue against fulfilling the needs of the Bridger-Teton and its employees. However, the sale of the administrative lands on north Cache in Jackson and the resulting impacts on outlying lands, community, wildlife, and employees and the associated inefficiencies inherent in this conveyance are unacceptable. Selling public lands in order to cover agency operations is not good business and is just wrong. The United States has the responsibility to adequately fund the Forest Service and its operations to manage the public lands under its care. Past generations in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem have not sold assets to cover operational costs – neither should we.

While we recognize the current problems the Bridger-Teton has with inadequate and inefficient buildings, lack of employee housing, and improving fire fighting operations, we also believe that using the Forest Service Facility Realignment and Enhancement Act to achieve a solution to these is an inappropriate and unprecedented use of this act. It is our understanding that this act was designed to eliminate hard-to-administer lands in the forest units in order to improve the management of the lands under their jurisdiction. To make the leap of releasing lands from public ownership in order to pay for infrastructure and operational needs undermines the responsibility of our government to designate and appropriate the necessary funds for departments under its oversight. For the United States government to deny money to the Department of Agriculture, the National Forest System and, specifically to the Bridger-Teton National Forest to operate efficiently and manage our public lands at the level we all expect is a dismal failure of our congress.

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance agrees with Supervisor Hamilton on the need for improving the offices, operations and housing needs on the Bridger-Teton, but we do not agree that selling assets is the way to solve this problem. As the rest of us struggle to provide for our families, employees and community, we do not try to sell our homes in a market that has seen home values drop precipitously in recent years. It is not good business to sell assets in a time of economic downturn, and we would argue, not at all a

good move to sell public lands for usual and customary operational and infrastructure needs. We have expressed our concerns to Senators Enzi and Barrasso and Representative Lummis and have not received support from them to find other mechanisms to pay for these needs.

Our organization would like to see a concerted effort within the community, the region, and the federal government to identify other sources of funding that would not deplete and negatively impact our public lands. Michael Schrotz of the Bridger-Teton stated once that all they needed was someone to sell 30 million cupcakes for a dollar each. While we are not advocating selling cupcakes, we do see an opportunity to gather the community together to discuss how we can help the Bridger-Teton meet their needs without divesting the public of valuable assets.

Jackson Hole continues to see our neighbors faced with hard decisions and difficult situations. This is a chance for us to help some of these neighbors and avoid an action detrimental to our community, our abundant and diverse wildlife, and our responsibility as citizens to support our obligation to maintain and protect our public lands.

Louise Lasley, Public Lands Director
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance