Teton County Wildlife Advisory Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Start Time: 3:00pm

Location: **Zoom and In-person**
Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81854768477
Location: Commissioners' Room

Meeting note: The purpose of this meeting is to "cure" actions taken by the Wildlife Advisory Committee during improperly noticed meetings.

Committee Voting Members: Jeff Klausmann, Kathleen O'Neil, Linda Unland, Renee Seidler, Mike Lien, Tamara Sperber, Allison Michalski, Wray Landon

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CALL TO ORDER.

Motion: It is now 3:05 pm MST; I call this Regular Meeting of the Wildlife Advisory Committee to Order

Motioner: Kathy O'Neil
Seconder: Wray Landon
Vote: Unanimous

Roll Call: Jeff Klausmann, Kathy O'Neil, Tamara Sperber, Renee Seidler, Mike Lien, Allison Michalski, Wray Landon, Linda Unland
County Staff/Officials Present: Commissioner Whitfield, GIS Manager Rob Marin, County Manager Dan Reyes
Absent members: None

1) **ACTION ITEM: APPROVE MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETINGS FEBRUARY 20, 2024, and OCTOBER 14, 2022**

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Motion: I move to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2024, Special Meeting of the Wildlife Advisory Committee.

Motioner: Kathy O'Neil
Seconder: Renee Seidler
Discussion: No changes to minutes
Vote: Unanimous

OCTOBER 14, 2022

No motion or vote taken regarding the 10/14/22 minutes. This will occur at a future meeting.

2) DISCUSSION ITEM: NATURAL RESOURCE OVERLAY REVISION

Agenda: SUMMARY: Discuss and Determine updates to NRO map based on available reports and data.

- *2022 IDFG Summary of Fish and Wildlife Resources in Teton County, ID - compare coverage on current NRO with coverage based on 2022 Summary report, with special attention to indicator species. Use IDFG digital data as available.*
- *Teton Regional Land Trust data on Sandhill Cranes.*
- *Teton Regional Land Trust waterbird breeding information.*
- *Other credible data.*
- *Bear Conflict Zone and Habitat Overlay discussion.*
- *Conceptualize written narrative to support recommended NRO updates.*
- *Determine To-Do Items to be completed for the next committee meeting.*

Minutes:

The committee reviewed with Rob Marin, the County GIS Manager, the original Natural Resources Overlay (NRO) Map that has been used since 2006, noting that it does include Public Lands (National Forest, BLM and State).

Rob shared the draft of an NRO map proposal with updated overlays, based on data sourced from the Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG) report: A Summary of Fish and Wildlife Resources in Teton County, April 2022. Summary data that informs the draft map proposal includes updated information on Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse, Elk and Mule Deer migration and seasonal/winter use. Additionally, it includes Grizzly Bear conflicts and Black Bear movement (only from the last two years, which was all the data that was available on Black Bears). It was noted that Grizzly Bears are designated as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and are an Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). In addition to IDFG Summary data, the revised NRO is informed by Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT) Sandhill Crane fall staging data, which included actual numbers observed. Other waterbird data collected by TRLT since the 2006 NRO would not change the waterbird layers and was not presented. No other data sources were used. It was noted that other sources of credible data, including citizen science, should be utilized as available for overlay revisions. Annual revised data from IDFG and TRLT would be optimal.

It was noted that we do not have an overlay for non-bear Large Carnivore species, specifically Wolverines, an Idaho SGCN.

The approximate increase in overlay coverage of private lands, between the 2006 NRO and draft revised NRO, is 50%.

Updated NRO layers were reviewed overlay by overlay to illustrate changes. The new and the old layers were shown.

Changes by specific overlay:

Big Game Migration and Seasonal Range: This overlay underwent a significant increase based on past and ongoing data collection from collared animals, aerial surveys and staff observations by IDFG for decades in Teton County and adjacent areas.

Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse (CSTG): Nothing was removed from the original NRO overlay, but additional presently known leks (communal breeding grounds) with 2 km

buffer zone were added. The buffer is to reflect the highest probability of nesting and brood-rearing. Less than 5% of historic CSTG range remains, and 60-65% of CSTG-populated habitat is in Idaho. CSTG are also a SGCN.

Waterbird Breeding, Migration, Foraging and Wintering: This overlay was expanded based on Sandhill Crane fall staging data. The new updated layer also corrects a 2006 mapping error which resulted in a portion of this layer inadvertently not being shown in the 2006 NRO. Most of this correction overlaps other 2006 NRO layers.

Four NRO layers – NWI, South Leigh Forested and Woods Creek Fen Wetlands and Songbird, Raptor and Winter Breeding Habitat have no recommended change.

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (not an NRO layer) are also a critical Teton County natural resource. Mike Lien was asked to give a little background on Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT), as YCT is a species of great concern in Teton County, and considerable data has been collected on YCT by Friends of the Teton River(FTR). FTR has extensive data to monitor this species and the efficacy of the work being done to protect them, and have asked that these be included in the habitat analysis.

After the revised draft NRO was shown with all overlays, Commissioner Whitfield suggested that, as an advisory committee, we gain consensus regarding recommending these described changes into an updated NRO.

The committee determined that we would ask Rob Marin to create this draft of a revised NRO as a formal draft. The committee will work on an accompanying narrative supporting our recommendations to the Commissioners.

The committee had a brief discussion about the Bear Conflict Map and potential update with recent data and scientific modeling resources. Questions yet to address include: determination of buffer zones and corridors, bear habitat, and other data sources such as the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee.

3) DISCUSSION ITEM: POLICY FOR NATURAL RESOURCE TECHNICAL REVIEWS

Agenda: SUMMARY: Discuss initial points from BoCC regarding technical reviews triggered by NRO. Committee to begin determining the concepts and steps of the process. ● Pre-qualified consultants

- *Consultant qualifications and vetting*
- *Concept of what will be triggered for technical review under NRO*
- *How do other places have these technical reviews done?*
- *What does it mean to do a Natural Resource technical review?*
- *Standardize the technical reviews (for streamlining, consistency, and reducing the burden on IDFG and County staff).*
- *Seek IDFG input on recommended components of technical review.*

Minutes:

County planning staff has indicated that consultant research is highly varied when performing technical reviews regarding natural resources in Teton County. The question becomes how do we standardize this process, while requiring appropriate experience and qualifications for those providing the consulting. In the timeline of the application process, it was agreed that the analysis should precede the concept. It is

believed that this process will provide a more standardized way for staff to review these reports, particularly with no biologist on staff.

In these efforts, the goal will be to keep our relationships with IDFG ongoing by trying to create a process that keeps them engaged, but not in a way that they are interacting directly with applicants. It was noted that this technical review process does not change underlying zoning (i.e.density).

Public Comment. Began at 4:20

● Lynn Bagley – Has relocating bears been considered. What is considered prime bear habitat. Are we over-reaching? Bear conflict is not limited to bears.
● Curt Behle – Wants committee to understand the frustrations from the public: the new overlays have been imposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the BoCC on previous applicants. Costly impact for taxpayers. Concerned with the percentage of data increase in overlay. Believes the October 14 meeting not properly noticed. The public was never part of discussion with no opportunity to be part of these conversations.
● Anthony Wilcox - Concerned with perceived conflicts of interest on board.
● Penny Vasquez - Displeased with Commissioner Whitfield's interaction with the public.
● Anthony Reynolds – Suggests that the WAC is trying to pass a year and a half of discussions without any public input. It is difficult for the public to understand our decisions. He believes that multiple overlays require multiple wildlife studies. Buffer is huge beyond the overlay. Doesn't know what citizen science is. Migration corridors are outside the IDFG Summary. Felt that before the committee was a formal group, discussions were also not with the public. We're supposed to be ok with these decisions?
● Kathy O'Neil - Stated the IDFG Summary is posted on the county website and available to the public.
● Commissioner Whitfield – Only two sources are being used in the NRO: IDFG and TRLT. ● Rob Marin – If all layers are combined, including big game winter habitat, what the committee came back to is very much consistent with the IDFG Summary.
● Dan Reyes - Nothing is being approved by this group. The public will have the opportunity to talk at Planning and Zoning Commission hearings and BoCC meetings.
● Renee Seidler – Suggested that the public review committee minutes.
● Ida Hanson - Questioned that we know where wildlife is? Wonders why we would burden landowners with additional studies. Suggests that we just ask people to move their building site without all these overlays and studies required. Why can't builders come in, look at a map, see where wildlife is and move the building. Bear conflict. Who's going to police it? Trash cans and bird feeders. Good idea for your own protection. It's not good to put rules on people that can't be enforced. Impossible for farmers and ranchers to build for their children to run the farm because of overlays. We're making it impossible for people to be able to stay in the Valley. Doesn't think we should give these burdens to the residents.
● Jeff Klausmann – Explained the quality of the data used in NRO. There has been significant study and research done in all of these areas, as evidenced in the IDFG Summary and from data obtained from TRLT, which has provided our data points for the NRO.

ADJOURN

Motion: I motion to adjourn this meeting

Motioner: Kathy O'Neil

Seconder: Wray Landon

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm