

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



Regenerative Agriculture
and Resilient Waters

Teton Creek Land & Water Project

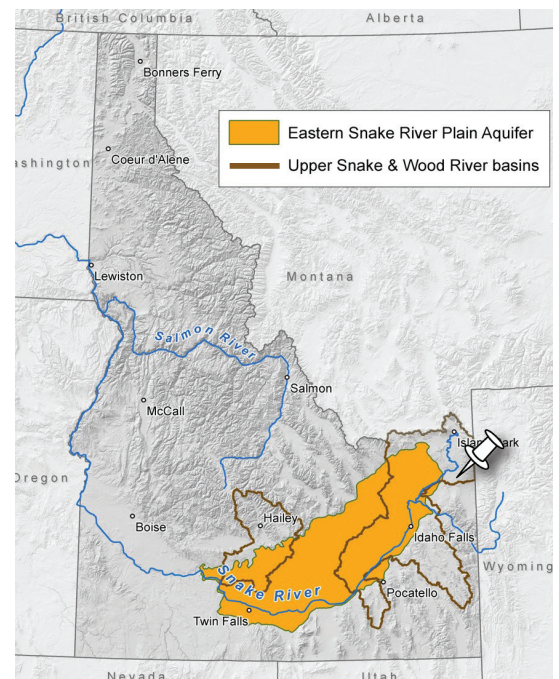
In the heart of the Teton Valley, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has an opportunity to protect the 1,000-acre Huntsman farm. The property consists of a portfolio of water rights, canal share and land ownership that could ensure a conservation success unlike any other parcel in Eastern Idaho. Through the Teton Creek Land & Water Project, TNC seeks to forge a unique, replicable model for how to engage with a canal company and catalyze lasting changes to historic water use in an evolving Western landscape.

Why This, Why Now

Fed by snowmelt from the vast, interconnected mountain ranges of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Upper Snake River basin includes some of the most iconic and ecologically-significant freshwater systems in the American West. The basin holds renowned fisheries, provides some of the “last best” strongholds for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout anywhere, and it carries critical water resources for farmers.

The pressures facing the region’s freshwater systems are daunting. Water demand continues to heighten as drought conditions become more prominent due to rising temperatures and climate variability. This reality has entities around the State, including cities, irrigators, the Idaho Water Resource Board, and others, looking for water.

Now, after years of laying the groundwork, a convergence of positive negotiations with the Huntsman family and growing support among regional conservation partners and community members, is creating a window of opportunity for this historic transaction.



The Teton River watershed is hydrologically connected to the ever important Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

Restoring Flows to Protect Spawning Habitat

Native to this region, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) have experienced dramatic declines in both persistence and abundance. During summer months when temperatures and agricultural demands for water increase, flow in Teton Creek nearly runs dry, failing to provide either sufficient water quantity or water quality to support fish. This project seeks to restore mid and late season flow in Teton Creek to facilitate the migration and movement of the most significant population of YCT in the Upper Teton River Watershed.



Innovative Water Transactions

Through this purchase, TNC will acquire about 1,000 shares in the Grand Teton Canal Company, 23% of any water diverted by the canal company, equating to about 5,000 acre-feet of water annually. These water assets, which have historically been diverted on Teton Creek just outside of Driggs, will be sold or leased by TNC to a farm located farther downstream. Through alternative water marketing strategies, involving aquifer recharge and downstream leases or sales, TNC will link land and water conservation goals with State of Idaho water supply goals. If successful, the project will increase the quantity of water that stays in the Teton River system while meeting the ever-growing needs for freshwater to grow food.

The Upper Snake River demand reduction goal, as defined by a collaborative group of non-profit partners in the area, is 60,000 acre-feet. The Teton Creek Land & Water Project will contribute ~8% towards this goal, a truly phenomenal volume of water conserved through a single project.

TNC will also place conservation easements on portions of the property, permanently protecting some of the Teton Valley's last over-wintering habitat and a critical migration corridor for elk. Additionally, TNC will use this property to test high-elevation regenerative agricultural practices and explore the integration of carbon sequestration marketing opportunities.

Key Project Benefits

- Improve mid- and late-season flows in Teton Creek, the most significant spawning tributary for Yellowstone cutthroat trout, while still meeting agricultural irrigation needs.
- Address water supply shortages playing out in the eastern region of the state.
- Pilot innovative in-stream flow transactional marketing strategies that could influence conservation in the region for decades.
- Protect wildlife migration and promote use of regenerative agriculture practices.

Opportunity

The Teton Creek Land & Water Project is unlike any that TNC or its partners have endeavored to undertake in the past. Building on years of land transaction experience, TNC is uniquely positioned to bring the science, innovation and relationships to this one of a kind project to benefit nature and people. The future of this property will either directly benefit or dramatically degrade the Teton River ecosystem and will lay the groundwork for improved water management in the Upper Snake and beyond. Please join us in being part of a vision for the future of conservation.

For more information

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