

Origins of the Overlay

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Teton County is proposing to utilize a Natural Resource Overlay (NRO), developed by the Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT), as one component of the latest draft PUD ordinance prompting some questions from the public. What is the NRO and where did it come from? The NRO is the result of collaborative conservation planning efforts by TRLT, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other regional natural resource experts. TRLT has worked for years to identify the most important lands for conservation in the Upper Snake River Watershed. Since TRLT, like any organization, has limited capacity it is vital that we invest in the most strategically important lands for sustaining our region's natural resources. TRLT has assembled planning information for several conservation focal areas within our region including Henry's Lake, Shotgun Valley, the Sand Creek Area, the South Fork Snake River, the lower Henry's Fork River, the Willow Creek watershed, and Teton Basin.

In early 2006, Teton County Commissioners requested natural resource information from TRLT that might be used as a planning tool to help guide development in Teton Basin. Responding to the Commissioner's request, TRLT and agency partners assembled geographic information on key natural resource areas in Teton County and created the NRO. TRLT presented the information to the Commissioners and developed a data-share agreement that allows Teton County to utilize the NRO as a planning tool if they so choose. The NRO is periodically updated to ensure we have the most current and accurate resource information available.

The Teton County NRO incorporates habitat for most *Species of Greatest Conservation Need* as identified by IDFG's Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy; habitat for culturally and economically important species as identified by IDFG and economic analyses; and habitats that are significant for maintaining regional connectivity and biodiversity as identified by multiple sources such as the Idaho Conservation Data Center (ICDC), the National Wetlands Inventory and the Idaho Wetlands Conservation Prioritization Plan. The NRO has five layers: wetlands, big game, trout, waterbirds and landbirds. The layers do not map all known or potential habitat for each group, but focus on the most important areas for sustaining functional systems and preventing local/regional extinctions. The map is designed for use at the 1:100,000 scale and is not scaled for use at the parcel layer. To confirm priority natural resources that may exist on a given parcel, a supplemental resource inventory is recommended.

The Land Trust NRO was recently vetted in a regional conservation planning meeting hosted by IDFG at their regional office in Idaho Falls. The geographic information behind the NRO is currently under review by the IDFG and the ICDC and will likely be incorporated into a statewide database that identifies focal area boundaries that are important to the conservation of Idaho's *Species of Greatest Conservation Need*. If you are interested in learning more about the science behind the NRO please come to a public presentation on Wednesday, June 4, 7:00-8:30 PM at the Driggs City Hall.