



**Munger Mountain State Lands Proposal
Teton County Board of County Commissioners**

March 19, 2024



SUMMARY

Teton County, Wyoming and the Board of Teton County Commissioners are proposing a 35-year recreational lease on the 640 acres comprising the Wyoming State Lands parcel in Teton County, Wyoming, Parcel ID No. 22-40-17-36-1-00-01. This parcel is commonly known as the Munger Mountain Parcel. Teton County proposes a 35-year recreation lease at \$75,000 per year, totaling \$2.625 million.

Proposing this long-term recreational lease is a community-driven effort that began as a grassroots group and has evolved into a multi-organizational, government and citizen-driven plan to fund public education throughout Wyoming and preserve recreational uses. This approach is modeled on Albany County's Pilot Hill Project lease.

Under Teton County's proposal, a long-term lease will be secured through an agreed-upon process where Teton County staff and elected officials will work with the Office of State Lands and Investments leadership to

bring this proposal to the State Lands and Investment Board for consideration.

This plan includes a trail design concept to enhance recreational opportunities, support wildlife habitat, mitigate noxious weeds, improve habitat and continue agricultural leasing. Maintaining and revitalizing the diversity of plants on Munger Mountain supports wildlife habitat, protects our watershed and livestock grazing, and controls noxious weed infestations. These property improvements are proposed to increase the underlying value of the property for Wyoming and the trust beneficiaries.

Most significantly, this 35-year long-term recreational lease will provide critical funding for K-12 public education while protecting highly-valued wildlife habitats, year-round recreational opportunities, and historical agricultural uses.

The Munger Mountain Parcel provides incredible value for wildlife, residents, visitors and the State.



Adjacent to US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land, these 640 acres neighbor multiple Jackson Hole Land Trust and Wyoming Game and Fish Department-conserved properties (see map). The highly diverse structure of open meadows, mesic habitats along the Snake River, mixed aspen-conifer stands, sagebrush, and mountain shrub communities support an abundance of native Wyoming species.

This State parcel also holds significant potential for community benefits such as enhanced recreational trails and connection to over 20 miles of adjacent multi-use trails on the Bridger-Teton National Forest, abundant hunting opportunities, and important

agricultural uses. The ample recreation and hunting prospects have immense value for Wyoming, its people and its tourism industry.

This agreement will greatly benefit our K-12 public schools, community, state, and visitors while limiting surface development on the parcel outside the agricultural and non-motorized recreational uses. This proposed lease will be compatible with the existing agricultural lease and will enhance conservation and recreational values on the property for all Wyomingites and visitors to our State to enjoy.

THE RECREATIONAL LEASE WILL PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE FOLLOWING:

HUNTING AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND CONNECTIVITY:

- Improve hunting access
- Limit surface development to protect significant big game habitat
- Provide habitat enhancements through weed control and selective plantings

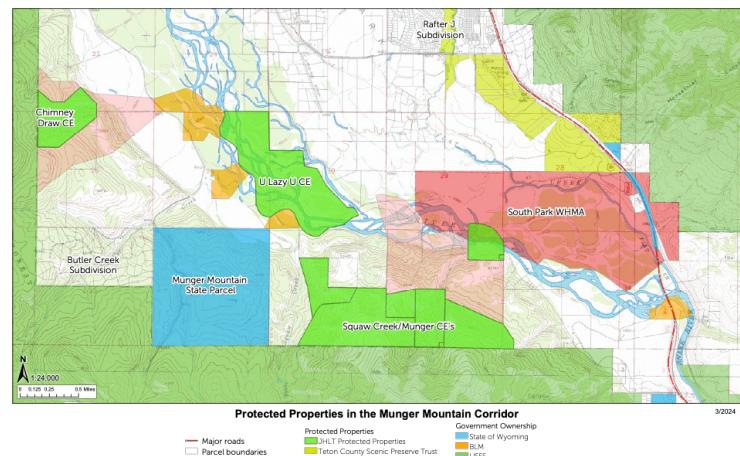
The Munger Mountain parcel provides significant big game hunting opportunities. It is a critical part of the overall mosaic of lands that the Snake River Range elk herd utilizes throughout the year. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Strategic Habitat Plan designates most of this parcel as a Crucial Winter Yearlong Habitat for moose and elk. This designation signifies that conserving and managing the land values is critical to maintaining big game populations for the present and future. Maintaining permeability and connectivity across this parcel to neighboring open lands is vital for big game movements; the property is an important migration area for elk that utilize the nearby South Park Wildlife Habitat Management Area and travel between the Snake River corridor and the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The property provides unique fall hunting opportunities and has long been utilized by regional hunters.

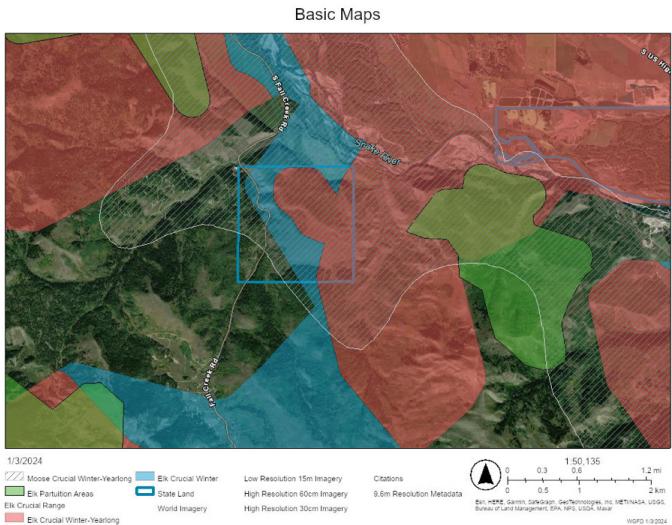
This lease will limit surface disturbances outside of agricultural and recreational uses in order to ensure that the next generation of Wyomingites has the opportunity to hunt the Snake River Range herds that utilize this parcel.

Teton County also proposes to work with nonprofit and agency partners to enhance the existing habitats. This will be undertaken through invasive weed controls and habitat enhancements (with permission from the agricultural lessee). Proposed enhancements will support elk and other wildlife that actively utilize the parcel.

The existing mosaic of habitats on the property supports a number of non-game species, including high-quality spring nesting sites for many native birds, such as the Bald Eagle and Great Grey Owl. Species such as bears, mountain lions, coyotes, foxes, badgers, mink, and a variety of other mammals, reptiles, and amphibians utilize the parcel's diverse habitats.

The Jackson Hole Land Trust has offered to provide stewardship of the surface disturbance restrictions in this lease.





ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL VALUES

- Provides an opportunity to expand and improve the existing trail network to create better recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Provides an opportunity to improve trailhead parking and visitor education by expanding parking area capacity and installing trail and interpretative signage.
- Improves connectivity to the adjacent Munger Mountain trail system on the Bridger-Teton National Forest, which see a range of 150-400 people a day in the summer and fall.

The illustrations below highlight the existing conditions on Munger Mountain and the proposed trail plan. The proposed trail plan would integrate with the U.S. Forest Service trail system, improve, rehabilitate or construct 10 miles of trails, construct 5 trail bridges and provide expanded parking areas for recreationists, including hikers, bikers, hunters and equestrians.

Local organizations such as Friends of Pathways (FOP) and government entities like Teton County Parks & Recreation (TCP) will collaborate on enhancing and managing the trails, parking, and any other recreational amenities on the Munger Mountain Parcel.

Friends of Pathways will work with TCP and the Bridger Teton National Forest (BTNF) to revitalize existing trails on the State parcel as well as construct additional connector trails to the State parcel from adjacent BTNF lands. In addition, FOP and TCP will work to expand the capacity of three nearby parking areas so people have better vehicle access to the State property as well as design and install trail and educational signage. The attached trail and trailhead maps are in draft form. Final trail layout and trailhead expansion will be subject to the creation of a work and management plan approved and adopted by Teton County at some point in the future.

Trail work will not commence until weed infestations are controlled on the entire State parcel and portions of adjacent BTNF lands. This will ensure that weeds are not unintentionally spread by biker, hikers, hunters and equestrians utilizing the new trail systems. Weed mitigation efforts will be overseen by Teton County Weed & Pest with assistance from Friends of Pathways. Total estimate value of improvements to the Munger Mountain trail system is estimated at \$100,000 for initial enhancements with approximately \$7,000/

year for maintenance, totaling approximately \$343,000 in recreational improvements to the Munger area over the span of the lease.

The siting of all recreational enhancements have been planned to minimize impacts on the significant wildlife resources that are present on the parcel and have been discussed with WGFD. While winter access would not be prohibited, access points would not be maintained in the winter so as to not encourage disturbance of wildlife. This proposal recognizes that all recreational expansions have the potential to disturb wildlife uses, but we strongly believe that this approach strikes a strong balance between recreational enhancements and habitat protections.

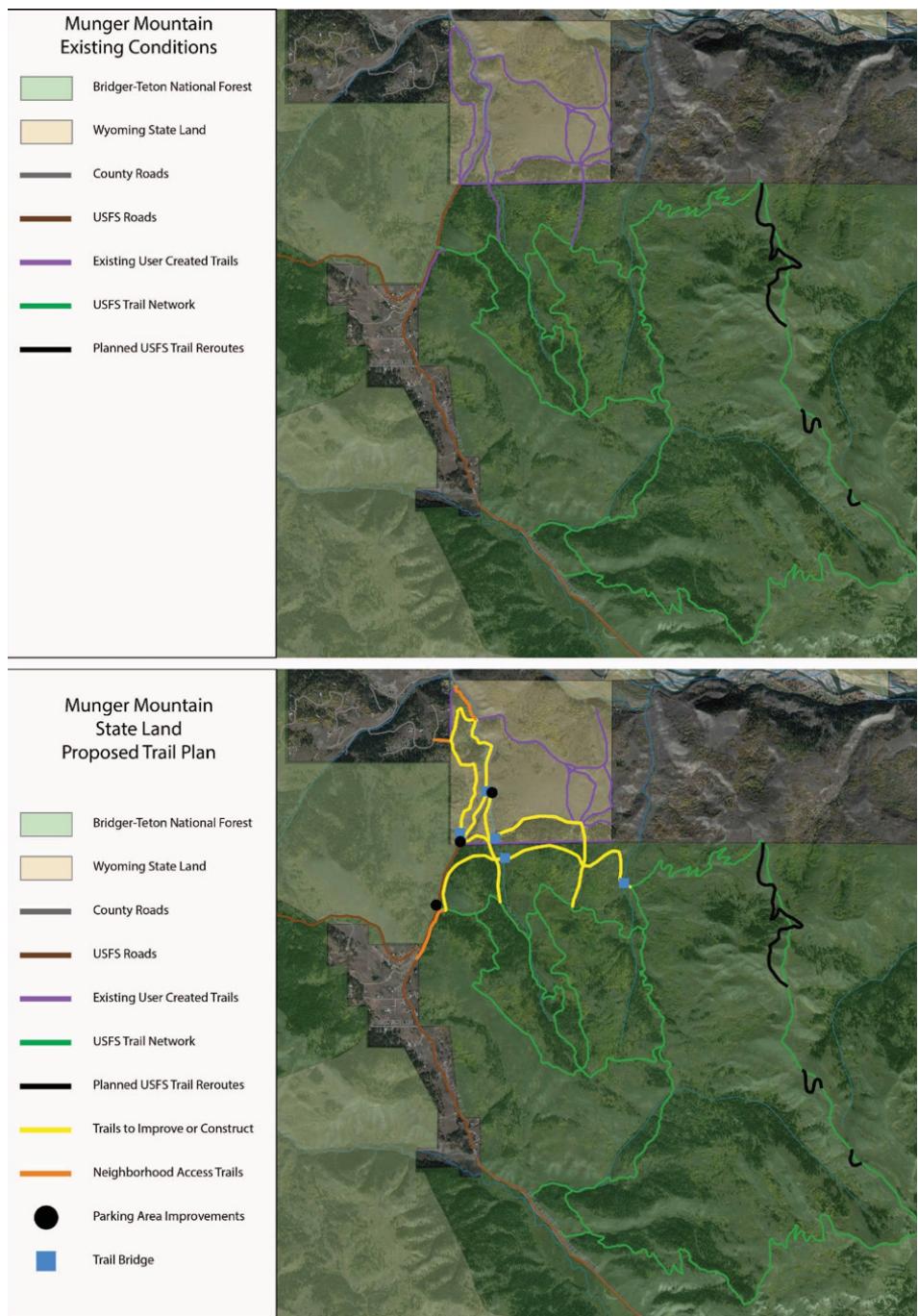
WATERSHED FUNCTION:

The property contains numerous seeps, springs, and small streams that support riparian and mesic vegetation. The northeastern boundary of the property is located in the Snake River corridor. The Snake River supports drinking water for much of Teton County and is crucial to supporting the biodiversity throughout the valley. Protecting this sole-source aquifer is vital to the health and safety of the residents and visitors of Teton County.

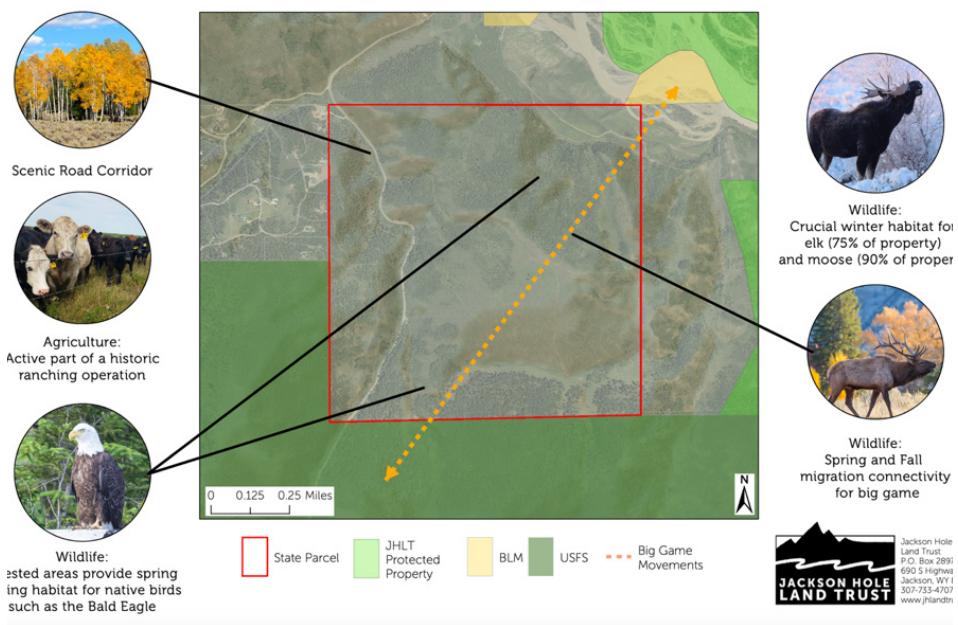
AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY AND CONNECTIVITY:

The parcel is currently subject to an agricultural lease. In particular, the parcel plays an essential role in the connectivity of that operation. We recognize the significance of maintaining a viable agricultural economy throughout Wyoming, and this proposed lease is compatible with the existing agricultural lease.

Wyoming is distinguished in our Country for its abundant wildlife, breathtaking landscapes, vast recreation opportunities, hunting,



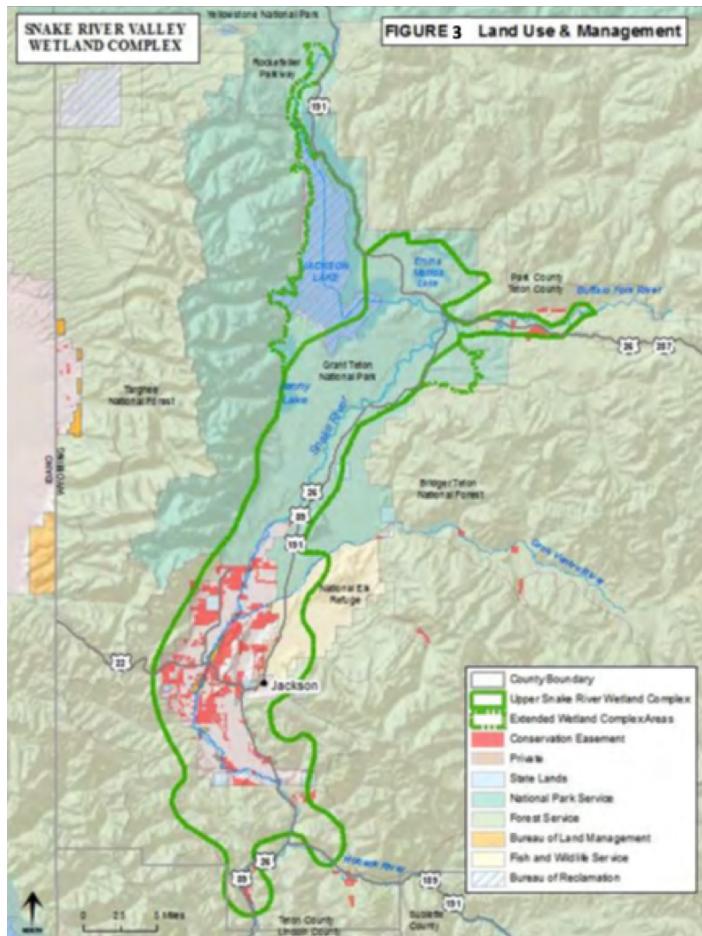
Teton County State Lands - Munger Mountain



and many agricultural uses. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has a long-standing vision dedicated to conserving, enhancing and protecting Wyoming's wildlife resources and the habitats that support them.

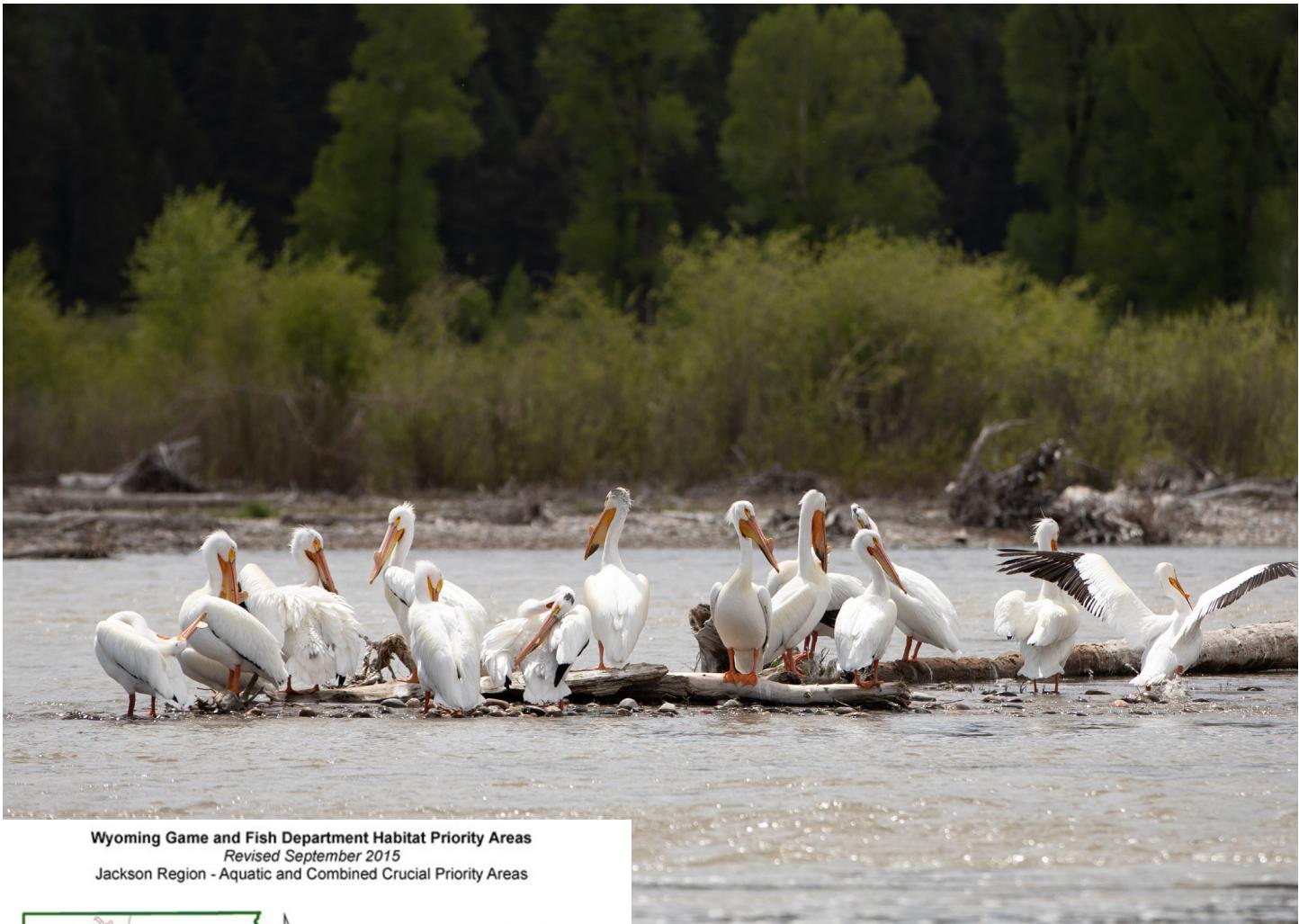
Wyoming Game & Fish and other statewide organizations have studied the Snake River Corridor and Munger Mountain and recognized their outstanding natural attributes, including:

- WGFD Snake River Valley Priority Wetland Complex
- Elk Crucial Winter Yearlong Habitat
- Moose Crucial Winter Yearlong Habitat
- WGFD suspected elk migration corridor
- Seasonal spring, summer, and fall habitat for mule deer, elk
- Snake River Corridor and Spring Creeks Corridors Aquatic Crucial Habitat Priority Areas under the Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP)
- Big Game Crucial Range Terrestrial Crucial Habitat Priority Area under the SHP
- Provides suitable habitat for various Wyoming's Species of Greatest Conservation needs including: Moose, Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Great Grey Owl, Northern River Otter, and Western Toad

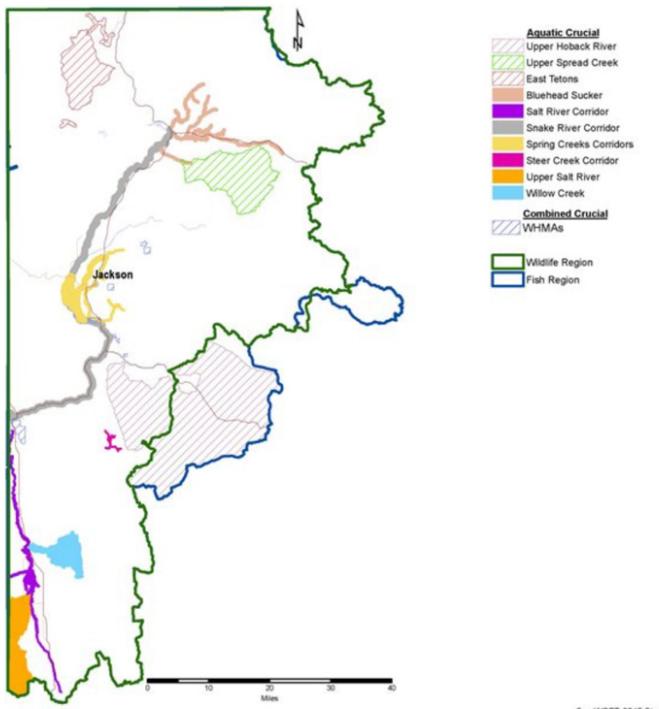


Excerpt from the Wyoming Game & Fish letter dated October 23, 2020:

T40N R117W Section 36 Butler Creek
"This parcel is surrounded on two sides by USFS lands and provides an important access point for hunters both on the property and to the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Sportsmen heavily use it for elk, deer, moose, and mountain grouse during the hunting season. This parcel provides crucial winter habitat for elk and moose and is adjacent to an elk calving area. Commercial development incompatible with existing uses may negatively impact wildlife and wildlife-oriented recreation within this parcel. Therefore, the Department supports



Wyoming Game and Fish Department Habitat Priority Areas
 Revised September 2015
 Jackson Region - Aquatic and Combined Crucial Priority Areas



<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Habitat/Habitat-Plans/Strategic-Habitat-Plan>

conservation-oriented proposal options that would maintain existing public access and uses.”

FUNDING

Teton County, Wyoming, is proposing a 35-year recreation lease at \$75,000 per year, totaling \$2.625 million. To ensure that the State of Wyoming has the greatest opportunity for investment purposes and returns over the course of the proposed 35-year lease, Teton County will remit the total lease amount of \$2.625 million in full at the start of the lease.

Existing and future grazing leases on the Munger Mountain parcel will remain.

Figured conservatively at 5.2%, the total investment return on this 35-year recreational lease for Munger Mountain could yield a total of 15,476,765 million dollars for Wyoming’s public schools.

See WGFD 2015 Strategic
 Habitat Plan for information
 on priority areas.



GIS Section
 9/9/2015



CLOSING

The Munger Mountain parcel holds countless opportunities for collaborative solutions that increase State revenue, protect essential recreational values and provide significant community and State benefits.

We hope this proposal and its work can be replicated in other communities and counties. Much as the Pilot Hill project galvanized Albany County, we know a similar scenario on Munger Mountain will receive robust support in Teton County and throughout the State.

Wyoming's landscape, wildlife, agriculture, hunting and recreation opportunities make our State rich and exceptional. Through this proposal, we hope to continue that legacy for future generations while funding our top-notch public schools and educational system.

We sincerely thank the Office of State Lands and Investments for its time and consideration of this proposal.



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