

## Teton County WPLI Advisory Committee

### Meeting Summary

January 8 , 2018

USFS Building, Jackson, WY

Draft for Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved
<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b></p> <p>Gregory Buchko  Amanda Carey  John Heberger Jr.  Lisa McGee  Don Saner  Rob Shaul  Siva Sundaresan  Dan Smitherman  Tom Turiano  Bruce Hayse  Lloyd Dorsey  Steve Kilpatrick  Harry Statter  Jim Woodmencey  Abby Moore  David Sollitt  Wade Kaufmann, <i>standing in for Mike Mielke</i></p>	<p><b>Others Present:</b></p> <p>Tom Segerstrom, <i>Teton Conservation District</i>  Mark Newcomb, <i>Teton County Commissioner</i>  Paul Vogelheim, <i>Teton County Commissioner</i>  Alison Michalski, <i>GYC Association</i>  Linda Merigliano, <i>USFS</i>  Kathleen May, <i>Great Old Broads for Wilderness</i>  Ben Read, <i>public</i>  Meg Jenkins, <i>Jackson Hole Airport</i>  Benj Sinclair, <i>WY Wilderness Association</i>  Shad Free, <i>public</i>  Brian DiLenge, <i>Idaho Dept. of Parks and Rec</i>  Kevin Meagher, <i>Multi-Use</i>  Brett Swift, <i>Pew Charitable Trust</i>  Deb Kleinman, <i>UW Ruckelshaus Institute</i>  Steve Smutko, <i>UW Ruckelshaus Institute</i>  Nicole Gautier, <i>UW Ruckelshaus Institute</i></p>
<p><b>Members Absent:</b>, Mike Mielke, Mike Brennan</p>	
<p><b>Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business / Administrative Matters</li> <li>• Update / Discussion: Cheney WSA Bill</li> <li>• Options &amp; Straw People</li> <li>• Working Group Report Back &amp; Discussion</li> <li>• Public Comment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Handouts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Cheney legislation</li> <li>• Proposals (McGee, Shaul, Statter)</li> <li>• Palisades map</li> </ul>
<p><b>Actions Taken</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lisa McGee will draft a letter to the WCCA.</li> <li>2. Lincoln County subcommittee/Palisades Working Group: Siva Sundaresan, John Heberger Jr., Greg Buchko. Don Saner initially offered to part of this working group, but subsequently, via email, withdrew his participation.</li> <li>3. The Teton Conservation District will integrate proposals into a digitized map to be shared at the February meeting</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Meeting Summary</b></p> <p>Teton County Commissioners Mark Newcomb and Paul Vogelheim addressed concerns over legislation introduced by Rep. Liz Cheney. The Teton committee agreed to draft a letter to the WCCA. Lisa McGee, Rob</p>	

Shaul, and Harry Statter shared “strawman” proposals and potential options. The committee broke into small groups to work on map based options tied to designations. A working group was designated for outreach to Lincoln County.

### **Cheney Legislation: Mark Newcomb**

Teton County commissioner Mark Newcomb shared information and answered questions about Rep. Liz Cheney’s proposed wilderness bills. The first piece of legislation addresses the number of helicopter skiing days in the Palisades WSA. The second piece of legislation has yet to be formally submitted to a Congressional Committee, but has the potential to supersede the WPLI process. Mark Newcomb spoke to members of Cheney’s legislative office staff, and asked outright if they would support what WPLI produces. They responded that they will make that decision when they see the recommendations. Mark Newcomb said he would keep lines of communication open with Cheney’s staff.

In regard to the first piece of legislation, Jim Woodmencey commented to clarify that High Mountain Heli-Skiing’s current permit with the USFS allows for a total of 1200 skier days, throughout the entire permit area. Currently, only around 60 of those skier days are allowed to occur in a season within the Palisades WSA. There was a misconception that without the WSA designation the skier days would increase from 60 to 1200, within the current boundaries of the Palisades WSA. Woodmencey said it would certainly be more than 60, but nowhere near 1200.

Abby Moore pointed out that this legislation has been floating around in different formats since 2001. Dan Smitherman clarified that this is the first such bill in the last five years that would impact Wyoming. He said the biggest threat is that the 1991 inventory would be used as release conditions. Without a reevaluation, 350,000 acres of WSA would be released, erasing opportunity for Wilderness designation. Cheney’s wilderness bill has a short trigger (90 days).

Mark Newcomb continued that the county commissioners are completely supportive of the WPLI process, have committed funds for facilitation, and have no explicit timeline. Cheney was aware of this process, and decided to pursue her own avenues. Paul Vogelheim, another Teton County commissioner, shared that the commission is unanimously in support of process, and thanked the committee members for their time. Paul said the takeaway from the situation is that there should be a sense of urgency for the WPLI committee to complete a recommendation package and get it to the County Commission ASAP by this spring latest. Dan Smitherman asked about writing a letter to Rep. Cheney.

Paul Vogelheim responded that he was not in support of a letter from Teton County, and had voted within the County Commission against sending a letter to Representative Cheney. He said that he and the other Teton County commissioners already have to fight hard to be seen as a part of rest of state. Alienating Teton County could be seen in other parts of the state as a feather in Cheney’s cap. He would prefer putting energy behind the WCCA as a whole writing a letter to Cheney. Steve Kilpatrick asked if other counties could apply heat, and wondered if other counties are thinking this has disrupted the process. Paul Vogelheim said Pete Obermueller, the Executive Director of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, is passionate about this, and that all the commissioners are meeting in February. Paul’s suggestion was to plug along with a sense of urgency. Mark said he did not see a problem if the committee wants to craft a letter to the WCCA.

Siva Sundaresan asked if the commissioners could respond to a quote from Pete Obermueller about the process being in hands of conservation groups. (Quote: *“Whether or not it ends your WPLI efforts is largely in the hands of the conservation/environmental groups. How they react to the bill will likely dictate the ability to proceed.”* JH News and Guide, Jan. 10, 2018) He was concerned that conservation groups are being blamed for Cheney’s bill. Paul Vogelheim responded that Obermueller was feeling the threat of lawsuits from the conservation side.

The committee discussed the potential pros and cons of writing a letter to the WCCA, to Pete Obermueller. Deb Kleinman asked for a thumbs vote. There seemed to be committee support, no one spoke against the proposal or clearly indicated disapproval. Lisa McGee offered to draft the letter. Subsequently, there were comments via email in response to a draft of the letter indicating non-approval. It was only via these subsequent emails that any lack of approval became evident.

### **Lincoln County**

Mark Newcomb has been in touch with Lincoln County commissioners. He said they have made a policy commitment to no additional Wilderness, but would review a recommendation that included designations other than Wilderness.

John Heberger Jr. discussed the reasons why a formal approach to Lincoln County might be essential to the success of any eventual Teton County WPLI Committee consensus and proposal. He asked the committee to formally agree to approach Lincoln County, recommended formation of a subcommittee to do this.

Wade Kaufmann had met with Lincoln County commissioners after the December Teton meeting, and alerted them that Teton WPLI might make a secondary outreach effort to them. Deb Kleinman asked to revisit this later in the meeting.

### **Options and Proposals Presentations: Lisa McGee**

Lisa shared ideas generated by the conservation community (Lisa, Siva, Dan, Lloyd) that might have broad support. She said the conservation groups cannot reach consensus amongst themselves around Palisades at this time. This proposal looks at public lands in Teton County as a whole.

See Teton WPLI (web link) for full proposal: <https://tetonwpli.org/information/draft-proposals-for-wsa-designation-and-management/>

Lisa highlighted the committee's shared interest in protecting wildlife, and pointed out room for agreement in regard to seasonal closures and no net gain of roads.

Jim Woodmencey expressed concern with the option, "Ideas for wilderness designations outside of WSAs: All lands inside GTNP in the Teton Range (no real change from current management)", which he found redundant. Lisa explained that they were approached by the National Park with this idea, and it was not a top priority.

Deb asked for responses, and ways in which this proposal might or might not satisfy interests.

Steve Kilpatrick said from wildlife perspective, he appreciated a carrying capacity for roads, and not just the amount of roads, but distance bands along roads. Distance bands are buffers (1000 m on each side) on roads and trails. Linda Merigliano, USFS, explained that instead of looking at "road spaghetti", buffering routes makes a contiguous secure habitat between buffers. There can still be miles of road, but it depends on how they are configured on the landscape.

Rob Shaul asked why there would a stipulation for no net gain of trails in addition to roads. Lisa McGee responded that trails still add a level of disturbance.

Wade Kaufmann was interested in the proposed seasonal closures and the overlap with winter range areas. He would like to know which drainages and entry points might be affected. Steve Kilpatrick mentioned the '88-'91 winter travel plan for snowmobiles as a good compromise for designated routes through winter ranges. Steve Kilpatrick doesn't see an issue with certain routes going through sensitive areas because wildlife become acclimated.

Greg Buchko said he was having difficulty considering proposals for other areas in Teton County when the environmental group left out recommendations for anything in Palisades and Shoal Creek. Lisa repeated that they simply could not reach consensus on those areas.

Bruce Hayse brought up the high wilderness value in Spread Creek (also termed the Mount Leidy Highlands area), which he thought was just as valuable as Palisades and Shoal Creek. It was not included in the '84 inventory due to timber and mineral potential that did not play out.

Rob Shaul expressed his disappointment that the environmentalist groups did not have specific proposals for Palisades and Shoal Creek.

#### **Report back on Sublette Shoal Creek Negotiations: Siva Sundaresan and Dan Smitherman**

Dan S. and Siva summarized and shared the status of the Sublette WPLI committee's Shoal Creek negotiations. Members of the Sublette committee worked on a map, drawing lines which are still tentative. Sublette would like to work with Teton so as to arrive at a single, joint recommendation.

Dan explained that the committee worked from the southern boundary of Shoal Creek WSA northwards, looking for areas of agreement. Sublette came to some agreement on a list of management prescriptions.

Dan said salient points were that a substantial piece of Shoal would be Wilderness, with protections for existing recreational uses. The entire WSA would be protected from oil and gas. Siva explained that the actual line on the map will depend more on topography, wildlife, motorized recreation, and bighorn sheep habitat. Siva asked the committee to provide feedback to take back to Sublette before they meet again. Tom Turiano asked a question about why the Wilderness boundary stopped where it did. He thought it should move down to Pass Peak ridge, to the south of Jack Creek. He said that area was dense forest, and he imagined, good elk habitat, up to the head of Pass Creek. Tom thought the whole north facing flank of that canyon should be Wilderness. Dan shared the Sublette committee's concern with keeping pack trails out of Wilderness in order to maintain them by chainsaw.

Rob asked about getting more specifics around winter outfitter use in the WSA. Don Saner asked how much recreational snowmobile use was happening north of Craig Cabin. There was a discussion over winter outfitter days permitted in the WSA.

#### **Options and Proposals Presentations: Harry Statter**

Harry Statters' biggest takeaway for the committee was that wildfire should be a concern when drafting proposals in any and all Teton County public lands. Wildfire suppression has impacted the appearance of these lands, and should be considered as it relates to buffers and perimeters of these lands. He pointed out that many fires have been suppressed over the years in Palisades.

See Teton WPLI (web link) for information: <https://tetonwpli.org/information/palisades-wilderness-study-area/>

#### **Options and Proposals Presentations: Rob Shaul**

Rob Shaul's proposal looked outside of the existing WSAs, included creation of a National Recreation Area from the Palisades WSA. He clarified that his thoughts are still fluid around this proposal. Rob said he saw the main conflict as between conservation and motorized recreation, so he tried to put something in his proposal for both groups to take back to their constituents. He recommended Wilderness for the entirety of Shoal Creek, and potential Wilderness in the Grayback Ridge area, extending from Teton County south into Lincoln County. He mentioned a desire to manage wildlife for the people of Wyoming.

Link: <https://tetonwpli.org/information/draft-proposals-for-wsa-designation-and-management/>

#### **Map Work**

The committee broke into suggested groups to work on map based proposals. These groups were quite fluid, and some of the committee members did "bounce around" quite a bit between groups. Ultimately, there were two primary groups, only two that put lines and comments down on paper, on the maps.

## **Report Back**

Jim Woodmencey shared out his group's work. They concentrated on the Palisades.

There was discussion over an unwritten rule about no snowmachining off the south side of Teton pass.

Wade Kaufmann said people do snowmobile in that area. Access to the Mail Cabin was mentioned.

Only one heli-skiing company currently operates in the area.

Tom Turiano shared areas where skiers would like to have quiet recreation: Mt. Glory, Oliver to Black Canyon, the mouth of Mosquito Creek, Pritchard Pass, and the high peaks which form the southern tier of the Palisades WSA (Wolf Mountain to Red Peak to Dead Horse Peak to Ferry Peak). His group also worked on highlighting designated motorized access routes in the WSA. Amanda Carey highlighted existing mountain bike routes, the highest concentrations of which are in the northern perimeter, immediately south of Teton Pass. She pointed out that the terrain in the Palisades is limiting, and there is only a select, currently small, user group, but they are using that area more as use rises elsewhere. Amanda also mentioned the rise of bike packing, and people using internal routes more. She said it was a little frustrating not to be able to discuss & include the Idaho side of the National Forest lands, as that is where much of the access is coming from (or exiting).

There was a discussion of map layers, and how to show as much as possible (for example, wildlife habitat and motorized recreational use) without things getting too muddy. Lloyd Dorsey pointed out the difficulty of portraying wilderness character with lines on a map. He sees it as a contiguous landscape.

Tom Turiano mentioned the option of additions to the Jedediah Smith Wilderness.

Steve Smutko clarified that there was some openness to looking outside the WSAs in order to have more options to satisfy interests.

Wade Kaufmann brought up the likely negative feedback he would receive from his constituents over these proposals. He said he represents the largest user group that is losing the largest areas with the present proposals, so something has to be given to his constituents. He would like to see an adjustment in the Fox Creek Quarry area. Steve Smutko suggested that Wade and Mike propose that in map or written form.

Lisa McGee brought up Wilderness not necessarily being "the bone" for conservation. She mentioned conservation options that might take precedence, such as phasing out sheep grazing. There would be a conservation gain if some ranchers were agreeable to selling or retiring their leases.

Amanda Carey summarized a conversation between herself and Rob Shaul, explaining that acreage and certainty were important points for mountain bikers. Lisa said the certainty piece was important for conservationists as well.

Deb Kleinman asked the committee to provide a clear response to John Heberger Jr.'s proposal to form a sub-committee to attempt outreach to and discussion with Lincoln County. The entire committee formally DID approve creation of such a sub-group, and did empower it to reach out to Lincoln County. In response to Deb's question about next steps for the just approved Lincoln County working group John Heberger Jr. responded that the initial focus would be simply to attempt to meet with Lincoln County commissioners and/or their designees. Siva, Greg, Don Saner, and Wade Kaufmann offered to be part of this "Lincoln County Working Group" (though Don Saner subsequently withdrew his offer). Wade Kaufmann also offered to reach out to individuals on the Idaho side of the Palisades WSA.

## **Public Comment**

Brian DiLenge introduced himself as a representative for the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. He is the Eastern Region Trails Specialist. He expressed interest on behalf of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation in connecting existing Idaho trails with those in Teton County, Wyoming.

Len Carlman mentioned an Advocates for Multiuse of Public Lands event on Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> as an opportunity to converse in a less formal setting.

603PM Meeting adjourned

**Next Meeting**

February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 2-6 pm

USFS Building,

Jackson, WY