

BATTLE OF THE TETONS

The start of Teton High's football season begins in Jackson

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IDAHO CENTURY FARM AWARD

Ernest George Bates recognized for 100 years of farming

PAGE B2

RACING THROUGH ALL WEATHER



Fred LaRiviere rides through the sun, finishing 10th in the Mountain States Cup at Grand Targhee this past weekend with a time of 3:28.314. See B1 for more.

GRAHAM GOTH

Idaho land trusts generate nearly \$190M a year, support 800+ jobs

Teton Regional Land Trust says saving the land saves the people

ALEX BRICHOWSKI
Contributor

In July, the Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts (ICOLT) released a report finding that land conservation and economic vitality go hand in hand. Titled “An Economic Assessment of the Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts” and calculated by Peterson and Associates, the analysis draws on survey data from Idaho land trusts, public economic data and an Idaho-specific economic model to trace how agriculture, forestry, grazing and land trust operations ripple



PHOTO COURTESY OF TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST

Teton Regional Land Trust worked with local farmer Boyd Bowles to protect his three properties at the mouth of Darby Canyon, pictured. “For the past few years, I have been working with the land trust to preserve the ground to keep it in agriculture,” Bowles said. “I think it’ll be continued farming for at least another 40 years, or better.”

through the state’s economy.

The numbers are striking: ICOLT’s member land trusts generate nearly \$190 million in

annual economic activity, support more than 800 jobs and contribute more than \$7 million in tax revenue each year.

Even in the lowest-case estimate, land trust-related activities support more than \$113 million in economic activity and 512 jobs.

Beyond the figures, the report hands land trusts a powerful tool to say, clearly and definitively, that saving the land saves the people.

“This report is a really helpful, additional tool to help us speak to folks. Conservation actually financially benefits our community, our county seats and our farmers,” said Lydia Hanson, staff attorney for Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT). “For some people, numbers are what speaks.”

“For some people, numbers are what speaks.” — Lydia Hanson

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As vaccination records lag, Teton Schools weigh enforcement options

Neighboring schools and districts take a range of approaches, from strict enrollment holds to informal reminder calls

KIRA CORASANTI
Editor

As Teton Valley’s schools head into a new year, Teton School District 401 board members are discussing what, if anything, happens to families who do not submit their child’s vaccination paperwork on time.

The district currently allows students to enroll and attend without a record on file if they have received at least one dose of each required vaccine and are actively catching up on the remaining schedule — known as conditional enrollment. Then the school relies on postcards and phone calls to follow up.

Board members raised the question at an Aug. 10 meeting, as the district works to address gaps in its documentation amid measles outbreaks in the region.

More VACCINE | A9

Six vie for vacant Victor council seat

ELLIS SMITH
Staff Reporter

Six Victor residents made their case for a seat on the City Council last week, sitting for interviews during a special meeting Wednesday, Aug. 12, as council members weighed who should fill the vacancy.

Erica Linnell, Cindy Riegel and Carol Nowakowski were interviewed in a session beginning at 10 a.m., and Charles Nussbaum, Bonnie Chambers and Bert Schnoebelen were interviewed at 5 p.m., before a regular meeting of the Council began at 6 p.m.

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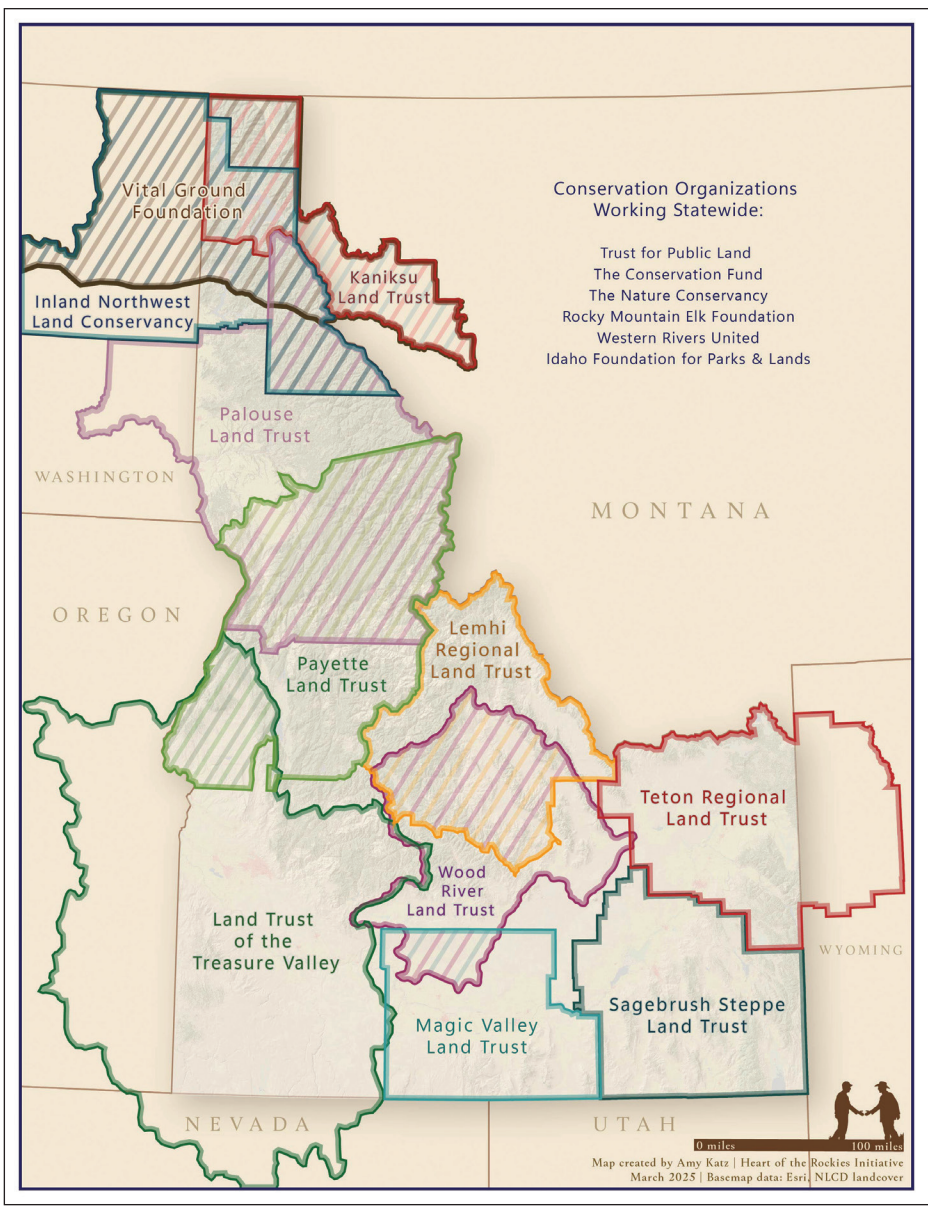
HEAVY HITTERS

The Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts is a nonprofit network of land trusts and conservation organizations dedicated to protecting private lands. Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that work with willing landowners to conserve land, often through voluntary agreements that let families retain ownership in exchange for benefits such as tax breaks, in return for a permanent agreement that the land will never be developed.

Conservation is often understood through what Hanson calls “amorphous benefits”: cleaner air, safer rivers, wilderness recreation, the passage of cranes on protected migratory routes, and the ranchers, hikers and businesses that depend on open space. Research has established a firm link between undeveloped space and human mental and physical health, but those benefits are difficult to quantify — which can hinder conservation’s legitimacy in fields such as policy and agriculture, where land trusts are working to play a stronger role. For Hanson, ICOLT’s report provides concrete evidence of that impact and shows land trusts are, in her words, “heavy hitters.”

“Stories, not so much as numbers, really hit the heart. But if you’re talking about governmental entities, I think a lot of times numbers are the right move,” Hanson said. “Especially if you’re looking at a state balancing budgets or a local county trying to figure out how to meet their needs.”

“Whether you’re a hunter, a birder, a boater or a rancher, you benefit from



The Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts is a nonprofit network of land trusts and conservation organizations dedicated to protecting private lands. Find out more at <https://www.idaholandtrusts.org>.

these protected landscapes,” said Heath Mann, executive director of Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust and vice president of the ICOLT board of directors. “There’s not a lot of things in this world that can benefit such a broad range of our population.” Conserved land isn’t just wilderness — it also sustains human livelihoods, often through agricultural land easements. “The environmentalist and the agriculture sectors,” Hanson said, “are not at odds.”

AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION ECONOMY

At the mouth of Darby Canyon, Boyd Bowles recently conserved his three properties — 511 acres in all — land he had worked for decades. With no children, Bowles entered the land into an easement with a succession plan, allowing his longtime neighbors to purchase it at a more affordable rate.

The deal follows what Hanson calls American Farmland Trust’s phrase, “keeping working lands in

working hands.” Thanks to Bowles’ efforts, Darby Canyon will be the only canyon in Teton Valley that will never be developed.

“He saved Darby Canyon for all of us,” Hanson said. “He’s just all around a shining example of conservation — an incredible example that folks in all areas, with all kinds of reasoning and purpose, can do things to save our valley.”

“For the past few years, I have been working with the land trust to preserve the ground to keep it in

agriculture,” Bowles said. “I think it’ll be continued farming for at least another 40 years, or better. ... I’m not afraid to tell somebody that I preserved it. You’ll be able to come back in 100 years, and it’ll still look basically the same.”

Idaho’s identity has long been tied to farming and ranching, dating back to the displacement of Native tribes such as the Shoshone and Bannock, when huge swaths of land were cleared to produce potatoes, soy and livestock. Idaho is “an agricultural state, culturally and economically,” Hanson said. “We have such open space because of our farmers and producers.”

Working farms and ranches make up more than 185,000 protected acres in the Idaho land trust network. According to the report, agriculture on that conserved land is the largest economic contributor, accounting for more than \$114 million in total economic activity. Sandpoint’s Kaniksu Land Trust, for example, protects a 643-acre property that supports a working ranch and local business, Western Pleasure Guest Ranch, which has been managed by one family for more than 80 years.

When agricultural land is placed under a conservation easement, blocking it from residential development, local economies see a series of benefits. The first comes on a macro scale.

Agricultural land is taxed at a much lower rate than residential land. Though residential development generates higher tax revenue, it also requires more services. When agricultural land converts to residential use, the county becomes responsible for the added infrastructure — roads, water, sewer and electricity

— as well as public services such as schools, police, fire, libraries, parks and waste management.

That financial burden is typically covered by increased property tax revenue or development impact fees. If those fees fall short, counties may need to raise general taxes on existing residents. Hanson said conserving agricultural land can help prevent counties from facing budget shortfalls or being forced to raise taxes.

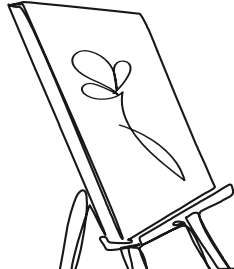
“There is a much higher cost to the community and county in particular for a property if it is developed at all versus the ag,” Hanson said. “So our ag lands are supplementing and subsidizing the rest of the county’s budget.”

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The second benefit is for the individual landowner. Once an easement is in place, rights that add significant property value — such as building or subdivision rights — are stripped, reducing the property’s overall cost. That helps farmers hold onto their land and makes it easier to transfer at a lower cost.

TRLT is also frequently able to provide grant funds to farmers to pay for the easement — “a wonderful financial contribution used to keep the land agricultural,” Hanson said. For any portion they aren’t compensated for financially, farmers can take a tax deduction over several years.

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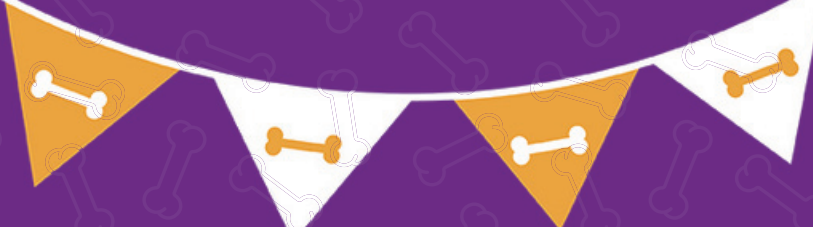
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CONNECTIVITY: JOBS, RECREATION AND NATURE

Jobs follow each easement. TRLT works with appraisers, surveyors, title companies, Biote, Inter-mountain Aquatics and a range of contractors. A number of federal jobs are tied directly to land trust and agriculture viability, particularly through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with jobs tied to farming and ranching communities.

Recreation on conserved land brings its own wind-fall. More than 204,000 people visit land trust properties each year, generating more than \$14 million in economic activity, according to the report.

In Teton Valley, several TRLT properties are open to the public. The Woods Creek Fen classroom, just before Bates Bridge, is an open space where visitors can park and walk. Signage explains the area’s native history, the wildlife found there and the biological processes at work in a fen.

TRLT hosts field trips there to support public education about “our wonderful

Idaho land trust economic contributions, by the numbers

- **\$189.7 million** in total sales impact
 - **818 jobs** supported
 - **\$50.9 million** in wages and compensation
 - **\$7.2 million** in local and state tax revenue
 - **204,000** annual visitors to land trust properties
 - **\$20.4 million** in annual-land trust operating expenditures
 - **243** staff, seasonal workers, contractors, and vendors supported directly by land trust organizations
- *These figures, calculated

by Peterson and Associates, are estimates according to survey information from Idaho land trusts, publicly available economic data, and an Idaho-specific economic model.

More about the study:

The study was commissioned by ICOLT and conducted by Peterson and Associates using survey information from Idaho land trusts, publicly available economic data, and an Idaho-specific economic model. Researchers evaluated economic activity associated with agriculture, forestry, grazing, tourism, and land trust operations.

Not all land trusts were able to provide complete data, and some sectors such as tourism and grazing are inherently difficult to measure precisely. For that reason, the figures in the report should be viewed as reasonable estimates rather than an exact accounting.

The report presents both a base-case estimate (represented in this press release) and a conservative lower-bound estimate. Even under the lower-bound scenario, land trust-related activities support more than \$113 million in economic activity and 512 jobs.

already protected properties. Sometimes those are other easement properties, but most of the time we bump them up next to the Forest Service or a BLM parcel,” Hanson said. “The thought behind that is the connectivity. We don’t want to end up with a little conserved postage stamp in the middle of a bunch of development. This really helps with the wildlife corridor, and it helps buffer and protect those public lands as well.”

None of this would be possible without local residents, Hanson said.

“We are doing great work, but it’s because we have such amazing landowners who want to see this done. We always want to be really mindful of that,” Hanson said. “It’s the landowners who have been conserving the land from day one. We are just going to help them going forward.”

THE BIGGER WHY

“We are a net positive,” Mann said of Idaho land trusts. “We provide a benefit to our local, state and national economies, not just in jobs and wages, but also in helping our ranches and farms be viable for the

future.”

Numbers aside, Hanson believes the work still comes down to caring.

“Sometimes having these numbers can really illuminate the benefit of things like land conservation,” Hanson said. “But I think we critically have to keep the stories, or we lose that bigger ‘why.’”

Between data and feeling, farmers and conservationists, there is a bridge: the land. One person might be balancing a county budget; another might just be hoping to create more paths through nature’s solitude. Those aims aren’t just aligned — they coexist. Conservation doesn’t just create space to birdwatch. It sustains livelihoods, and the future.

ICOLT’s report, ultimately, hands land trusts a far-reaching megaphone — one whose voice extends past recreationists to reach agriculturists and policymakers. What it’s saying is that everyone is on the same side.

Hanson put it best: “We all might have our different reasonings or different values that we associate with open space, but all of us value it.”

Vaccine/

from A9

NEIGHBORING SCHOOLS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

In Victor, Mountain Academy’s policy on enforcing immunization records takes a firmer stance. According to Head of School Leila Poutiatine, citing Mountain Academy’s Student and Family Handbook, a student cannot register for the year without submitting either a vaccination record or a signed exemption form.

In the 2025-26 school year, Mountain Academy had 61.5% of its kindergarten class vaccinated against MMR. Elsa Rall, marketing and communications manager for Teton Science Schools, told Teton Valley News that for the 2026-27 school year, the school currently has no immunization exemptions on file for kindergarten students at Mountain Academy.

The handbook requires parents and guardians to submit immunization records — written certification from a licensed physician, their representative or a public health authority — as part of enrollment, with documentation of the month, day and year of each required shot kept in the student’s cumulative record. Exemptions are available for medical or religious reasons, but

both Idaho and Wyoming require a doctor’s signature for a medical waiver, and Wyoming additionally requires sign-off from a county or state health officer.

The handbook also notes that in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, non-immunized students may be barred from attending school regardless of exemption status.

Poutiatine said the school put together a task force this summer to address vaccination issues in response to the summer outbreaks.

To the north — in Madison County — Sugar-Salem School District’s process sits somewhere in between. Jeanette Ekins, Central Elementary’s school secretary, enters immunization information into Iris, Idaho’s state immunization reporting system, around October each year. Families are asked for immunization records during screening in March, but Ekins said “we don’t always receive them right away.”

After the school year starts, the district sends reminders asking families to turn in whatever is missing, similar to TSD401’s approach. Some parents respond by filing for a philosophical or religious exemption, she said.

“Usually if we send out a couple reminders, then the parents are like, ‘Yeah, we don’t do that.’ And then they come in and sign the exemption.”

Asked what she does when a family does not respond to reminders at all, Ekins said staff can search the Iris system directly for that student, since the state may already have a record even if the family never submitted one to the school.

“I do a search to see if I can find them on the system and then I can print them out,” Ekins said. “I do search for every student that we don’t have one [for], just to verify that if they have anything done in the system.”

EXECUTIVE ORDER

The Trump administration’s Aug. 10 order cut the federally recommended childhood vaccine list from 18 to 11 diseases: measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib, pneumococcal disease, HPV and varicella.

Trump said the changes were prompted by rising autism rates, arguing that children who received fewer vaccines decades ago were healthier. Multiple large studies, including a 2019 Danish study of more than 650,000 children, have found no link between the MMR vaccine and autism.

In Idaho, school-entry

vaccine requirements remain a state matter, set by the Legislature, not the federal government. Eastern Idaho Public Health says its own recommendations have not changed since the order.

“The state has not adjusted the number and type of vaccines that are recommended to children,” McAdams said, “and there have not been changes to the exemption policy for school enrollment.”

Children entering

kindergarten at TSD401 are currently required to have doses of MMR, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, polio, hepatitis B and hepatitis A.

“We recommend everybody talk to their physician about it. I think everybody has a different recommendation. However, overall vaccination is the best way to protect somebody against disease or a virus.” McAdams said.

For families who want to catch up before school starts, Eastern Idaho Public

Health runs weekly immunization clinic hours in Driggs every Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and typically hosts a back-to-school immunization clinic at Driggs schools each October.

If a student is showing measles symptoms, McAdams said, the recommendation is to call a doctor’s office ahead of arrival rather than walking in, so clinics can isolate the patient and mask staff to prevent spread.

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