

LETTERS

Continued from 5A

The road is a terrible danger to vehicles and anyone who travels this section of road. Someone may well be killed on this road if nothing is done, and the Forest Service has said they have no plans whatsoever to repair the road in the foreseeable future. It is not as if the Forest Service has not had years to plan or budget for these repairs; they merely choose to spend their resources on prescribed burns and other of their priorities.

It should also be noted that the residents are absolutely the lightest users of this road. Forest Service vehicles, county vehicles, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service vehicles, hay trucks, seasonal concessionaires, sightseers, snowmobilers, fishermen, hunters and campers use the road far, far more than those of us who live up there.

Public safety should be issue No. 1. It is a sad day when the public must spend their after-tax dollars and valuable summer days to hopefully avoid accidents that the Forest Service should be more concerned with.

Rob Cheek
Gros Ventre Valley Resident

Critical junction

The following letter was sent to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell — Ed.

On behalf of the more than 2,000 members of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, I respectfully request that you prioritize the National Park Service's acquisition of two Wyoming-owned inholdings in Grand Teton National Park.

If the Interior Department fails to act by the Jan. 5, 2014, deadline, the alliance is concerned that state officials will sell these lands on the open market. The resulting development would mar an otherwise pristine landscape that brings millions of tourist dollars to the local economy.

In 2010, the Interior Department struck a deal with Wyoming officials that allowed the department to purchase four state-owned inholdings in the park for more than \$100 million. The deal was the result of more than a decade of work on behalf of the state of Wyoming and the Interior Department. While the acquisition of the first two parcels is now complete, work on the remaining two parcels — arguably the most difficult — remains unfinished.

At risk is 1,280 acres of spectacular habitat in Grand Teton National Park. Together these parcels serve numerous species including elk, bison, wolves, pronghorn and grizzly bears. The land is also important to numerous bird species, including sage grouse, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deemed warranted for but precluded from Endangered Species Act protection.

Both of these parcels lie in one of the last remaining places where Americans can witness firsthand wild animals living the way they did before the arrival of European settlers. One parcel serves as the gateway to the spectacular Gros Ventre River Valley and is immediately adjacent to the Path of the Pronghorn, the longest terrestrial migration in the lower 48 states.

In short, these parcels are integral to the park and its wildlife. They sit at the junctions of numerous migration corridors, including migration paths for elk and bison moving to the National Elk Refuge. These migration linkages will become even more important as global warming changes habitats and park animals must move to seek out refugia.

Wyoming residents and Wyoming elected officials see the value in protecting these lands. These officials do, however, have a legal obligation

to use these school sections to benefit Wyoming schools. If the Interior Department doesn't purchase the next parcel by Jan. 5, 2014, the fate of some of Grand Teton National Park's most important real estate will rest with the five-member Wyoming Board of Land Commissioners.

We're at a critical junction, and I strongly urge you to engage with Congress to enact any of several solutions proposed for this land acquisition.

Trevor Stevenson, Cory Hatch,
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance

On your shoulders

The following was addressed to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department commissioners and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team — Ed.

How many of you have actually spent considerable amounts of time observing grizzly bears in the wild — untrapped, uncollared, untagged and undrugged? Certainly some of you have. How many of you have watched bears interact: grizzly bears mating or mothers with cubs playing, nursing, chasing elk calves in spring and eating berries in the fall? Have you observed grizzlies walking through deep snow to their dens in winter and emerging in early spring? I believe anyone who has witnessed these remarkable animals doing these and other behaviors would not, for a second, be so anxious to have the grizzly bear delisted and face the same fate as cougars have from sport hunting or be slaughtered like the wolves after they were delisted.

These actions tragically leave behind orphaned, starving kittens, wolf pups and bear cubs, all in the name of fun or what some would call "sport." For those who kill these great beasts, it may seem like fun, but for those killed and those left behind it's pure horror. These animals are sentient beings with emotions no different than one's pets.

During the past year, I've attended a number of agency meetings on wolves, bears and cougars, and in recent months I've listened to the increasing drum roll to delist the grizzly. The language from the agencies and researchers is that the delisting of grizzly bears is imminent and a foregone conclusion, even though some of the research has yet to be published or peer-reviewed.

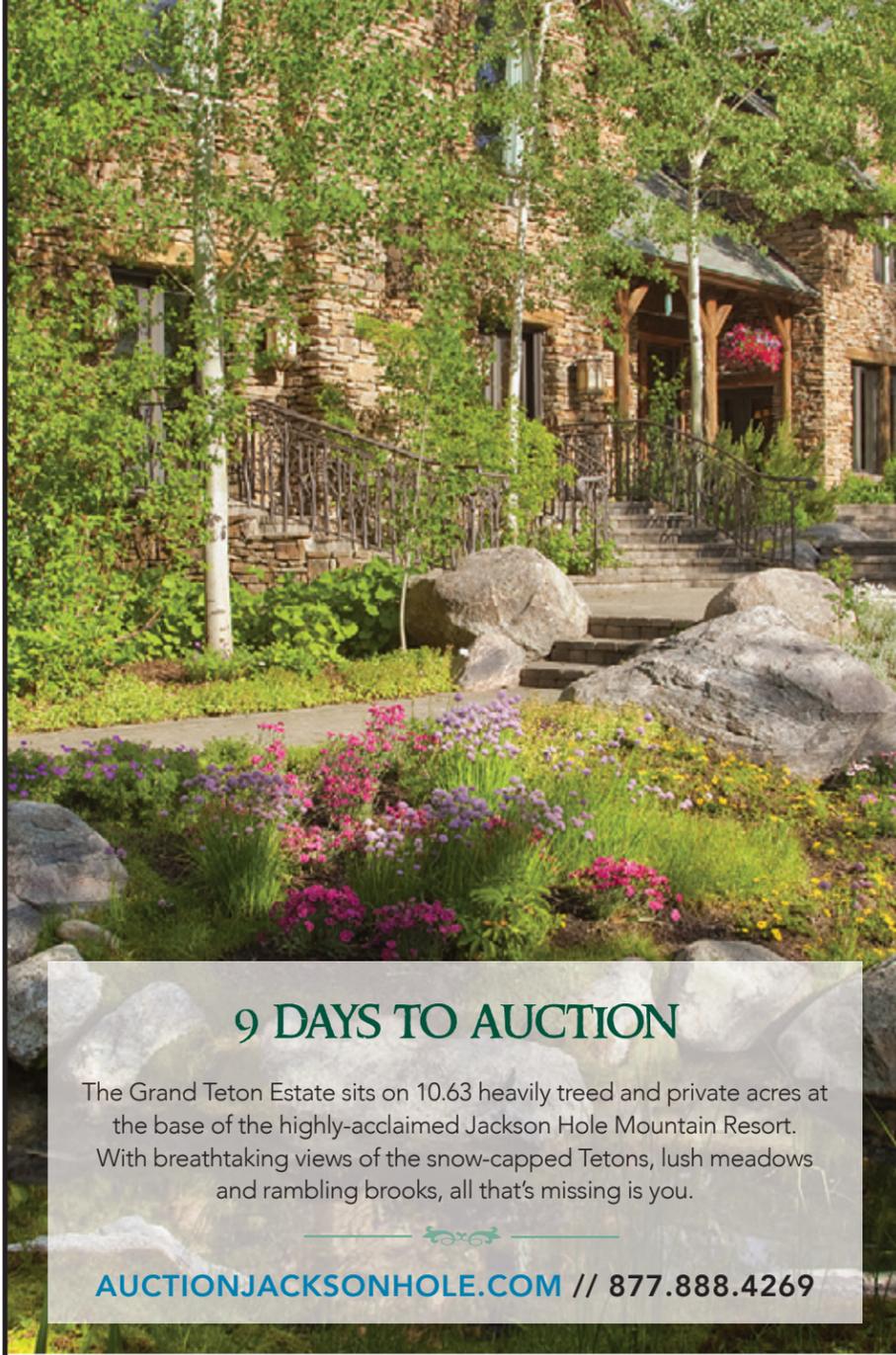
In your rush to delist, it is short-sighted and irresponsible to ignore much of the data and minimize the importance and loss of whitebark pine nuts, cutthroat trout and the unknown effects of future climate change on the bear's food sources. Also called into question and challenged even by members of your own Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team's biologists are the new methods of counting and estimating numbers of grizzlies in an attempt to artificially boost their numbers. In the Jackson Hole Daily, June 25, "Another U.S. Geological Survey bear researcher, David Mattson, said Doak's findings were in line with his own conclusions that current estimation methods are 'essentially worthless.'"

I know many have worked hard and staked their reputations, retirement and legacy on delisting the grizzly. In my opinion, like the delisting of wolves, there will be no celebrating, no real recovery— only a false sense of self and a false accomplishment — followed by a legacy of being part of not saving a species but instead destroying one. Every individual within a species is important and valuable — far beyond your legacy, that of WGFD and your constituents. Every grizzly bear death by a bullet due to your decision to delist the grizzly and turn their fate over to the WGFD to "manage" in the name of "sport" hunting will forever be on your shoulders and in your hearts.

Thomas D. Mangelsen
Moose

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