

Water Resources Candidate Forum

I regret not being with you today to participate in this important campaign forum, however I am in Holland working through final planning for the installation of High Country Linen Service's new energy efficient laundry equipment, automation and material handling systems. This state of-the-art laundry system will reduce our electricity and natural gas consumption and water per pound of soiled laundry quite dramatically resulting in a significant reduction in our carbon footprint. The plant installation begins next week.

I will share with you today that my efforts to reduce energy and water consumption are decades old, the direct result of the industry I chose and my desire to produce more while consuming less.

Upon my election as mayor and taking office in January 2003, I realized that the municipality was an energy consuming organization that had a direct opportunity to improve the water quality and consumption in the Town while also reducing energy consumption. In 2003, we started a partnership with Teton Conservation District and with financial support from Trout Unlimited embarked on an effort to reduce winter frazil & anchor ice flooding in Flat Creek that could result in a significant reduction in the millions of gallons of water annually that Town pumped down Flat Creek in an effort to reduce creek flooding. The project, with new pour overs and bank deflectors at strategic places in Flat Creek, resulted in improved cutthroat trout habitat and a decrease in thaw well water being pumped down the creek.

I led the effort to work with the Karns family to purchase Karns Meadow and partner with the Jackson Hole Land Trust to place into conservation the central part of Karns Meadow where Flat Creek flowed. This land purchase, negotiated and entered into in late 2003, enabled the Town to preserve valuable in-town riparian habitat while giving the town direct access and control over our efforts to improve the water quality, fish and waterfowl habitat on a large, public stretch of Flat Creek.

As that Flat Creek Frazil Ice Reduction project was underway, I worked with the town council and our engineering and public works departments, to commence a multi-year strategic effort to improve the water quality in Flat Creek, polluted by town street grime runoff. We installed storm water runoff systems with collection points to eliminate or drastically reduce street pollutants from Nelson Drive, and Redmond Streets, down E Broadway and Pine Drive and Wister down Flat Creek Drive. These collection points were able to capture 60 tons of road waste, much of which had been finding its way into Flat Creek.

The last major storm water runoff project was to collect the runoff that ran across the town along East Kelly to West Kelly in the Kelly St. by planning and building a series of settling ponds in east Karns Meadow where the storm water pipe had drained. This storm water collection point was designed in natural scape, with landscaping that would attract birds and other wildlife and it would eliminate between 100 and 130 tons of street pollutants annually from polluting Flat Creek, compromising water quality and fish habitat. Thank you.

Teton County and Town of Jackson Water Resources Candidate Forum

1. I have not read the ROD regarding the BLM's disposing 16 parcels of public land to Teton County, nor have I read the Snake River Management Ownership/Transfer Plan. I'm therefore limited in presenting a responsible vision for the future uses of the 1.5 miles of river frontage north of Emily's Pond. That said, the public uses of fishing and hiking, riding and dog walking along the dike road has given the public great recreational enjoyment of this land. I would be cautious of any development plans along this stretch of the Snake River on the east bank or the west bank as the hydrology impacts seem very uncertain with the fast pace of flow and every changing river flow pattern.
2. The legal authority of the Teton County BCC along the Snake River is not known to me at this time. However, given that the annual levies maintenance seems to fall within the legal jurisdiction of the BCC, that body may have the authority to play a government role in supporting the intent, process and standards of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. As county commissioner, I would request the commission to take that authority to support the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with regards to the Snake River.
3. It would remain important to me that generations of Jackson youth and visiting fishermen and women find the Cut Throat Trout fishing plentiful and challenging, as the fishing is today.
4. I would have to read and understand the goals and strategies of the Teton County Wildlife Crossing Master Plan to properly answer this and I have not.
5. It would be important for the county commission to liaison with Grand Teton National Park and the Wyoming Game and Fish to find strategies and remedies that would serve to support the healthy populations of Cut Throat Trout to thrive into the future.
6. This is a good question when it comes to balancing the desire to incorporate "integrated water-conscious land use planning and community-conscious water planning" with the rights of private property owners. It is my belief that education can go a long way in helping people understand the benefits to them, and their property, by integrating land use and water-conscious planning. I hesitate to promote policies that, whether intended or unintended, compromise the private property owner's rights to full access and use of one's property. I would want to understand more perspectives on this issue and not rely solely on this study.
7. Having served 6 terms as mayor of the Town of Jackson, I supported the expansion of the sewer trunk line that now serves much of Wilson and properties along the Village Rd. I supported the extension of the sewer system to Three Creeks Golf & Tennis Resort also the extension of the sewer line up Spring Gulch and to the Jackson Hole Airport. I also supported extending the sewer line down Hwy 89, which has now gone down to Munger Mountain School.

These extensions gather sewer that had previously been going into septic systems, many of which may not have worked properly. These older systems were beginning to fail and, in all probability, polluting our aquifers, creeks and seeping into the Snake River, clearly not what any community desires and particularly not here at the headwaters of the Teton Mountains.

During much of this time, from 2007 to current, the Town of Jackson, under my leadership, invested in energy efficiency, renewable energy sources in solar power and certified low-impact hydro electricity from Strawberry Creek. Today, Jackson's Wastewater Treatment Facility was operating 70% more efficient treating a gallon of water in 2016 and that 70% efficiency carried through 2017, from 2006 Baseline.

Given these excellent water treatment results and the Town of Jackson's history of cooperation with Teton County to extend sewer system trunk lines out of the Town and throughout the County, I see no upside to a formal partnership between Town and County. In fact, a partnership may negatively impact the results the Town is achieving in expanding sewer lines to reduce aquifer and stream pollution and may also divert from the strategies that have resulted in a 70% efficiency gain at the waste water treatment facility that the Town operates. Lastly, the Water and Sewer funds are an Enterprise Fund by state statute, owned and operated by the Town. It's not broken, so why fix it?

8. The white paper indicated a "likely" indication of pollution by these fertilizers and septic systems. I would continue to educate land and homeowners and promote the Trout Friendly Lawn Program towards that education. If septic systems of given neighborhoods on the westbank are failing and polluting the Snake River, then I would strongly urge those Home Owner Associations to begin the process of requesting an extension of the Sewer trunk line to their neighborhoods. Today's enforcement measures, if they exist, can and should be exercised prior to exploring the adoption of new regulations.
9. In my years as Mayor, working with the Town Council to create policies that would eliminate or minimize Flat Creek winter flooding due to frazil and anchor ice conditions in the creek, I do not recall any indications that the winter flooding resulted in part or wholly by narrow channels in the creek. In fact, where narrow channels existed, the creek flowed more rapidly and the frazil and anchor ice did not seem to result in winter flooding. I would have to be convinced that these conditions are exacerbated due to minimal development setbacks.
The only setback exemption that I am aware of resulted from a variance request by the director of the Conservation Alliance to build his deck in the setback.
10. As mayor, I worked to lead the efforts that would result in improved water water quality in Flat Creek through many strategic actions and to minimize the phenomenon of winter flooding of Flat Creek and we achieved measurable success. Water quality went up,

frazil Ice flooding went down, and trout population and waterfowl have flourished. I also lead the effort to purchase Karns Meadow from the Karns family with the goal of preserving open space, increasing water quality and trout habitat and creating a year-round passive park experience with pathways around the Meadow to be enjoyed by Jackson Hole youngsters, families and adults.

I have not seen the Water Resources White Paper or the science within it that indicates that a walking path in Karns Meadow will inhibit the quality of riparian habitat. My vision for Karns Meadow mirrors that of Pete Karns and is reflected in the adopted plan for Karns Meadow with the passive recreation amenities described within.

11. I do not know when Flat Creek was listed as the only stream in Teton County that is “impaired” by the State and Federal Management Agencies. The results of many years of a multi-pronged strategies (already specified and described) that included millions of dollars invested in storm water runoff capture containers and the Karns Meadow capture ponds, capturing between 100 and 160 tons annually; and the years of efforts in Flat Creek to reduce winter flooding while increasing the quality of trout habitat and riparian habitat through plantings along the creek. The pollution of Flat Creek with the Town was measured and a clear reduction in pollutants was achieved. The creek work in Karns Meadow measurably increased trout habitat and increased trout populations and waterfowl populations. After this work was completed trout spawning went from a handful to well over 120 spawnings.