

# Protecting Water Protects Life

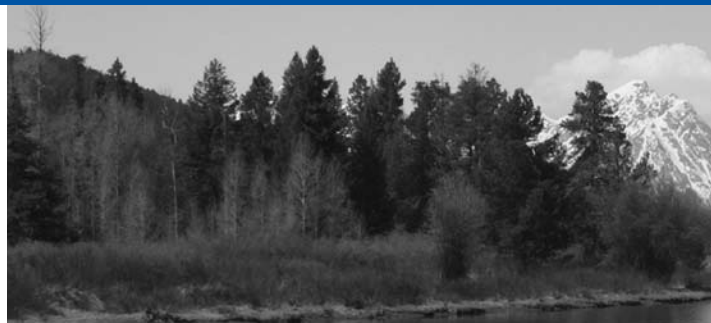
By Tim Palmer

“When I came here, the mountains were the first attraction,” the renowned Jackson Hole wildlife biologist, Frank Craighead, once told me. “But the river is what grew in my interest.” ♦ Frank was not alone. ♦ With visions of the iconic peaks embedded in my young brain, I hitchhiked to Jackson in 1969. Carrying a pack on my back, I couldn’t wait to set out for the high country on a path of adventure. But when I got there, and looked down on all the world below, and saw the veinwork of valleys and canyons with rivers winding through them, I could tell at a glance that those were the true pathways of life – green-edged, sinuous, glistening in the heat. When I came down, I sat by the bubbling water, and I felt refreshed and nourished by the flow. ♦ The river grew in my mind. Twenty years later, I returned to write a book about the Snake and its landscape. To me, this seemed not only fascinating, but also important. ♦ Everything that lives needs water, and rivers are the water supply of the world. Riverfront habitat is the most critical to wildlife, and what would Jackson Hole be without fishing? ♦ Now, when I return to this great place, I still go to the river. I still sit, and I still feel nourished. And I am not alone. If you raft, canoe, fish, sit quietly by the stream, or simply drink – drink anything – the connection we have with flowing water is really no mystery: our bodies are 70 percent water, every drop coming from a river, or from groundwater intimately tied to the surface flow. ♦ Frank Craighead would agree: to know a place, know its rivers. To steward all life and to care for our communities, take good care of the water. To defend the places we love against powerful forces of unconscionable greed or simply the heartless momentum of growth, protect these stunningly beautiful lifelines, which become more important to us and to our children with every precious day. ♦ The next generation will judge us by whether or not we saved our rivers. ♦

*Tim Palmer is the author and photographer of seventeen books, including The Snake River: Window to the West, which is available for sale at the Alliance office, and Rivers of America, an art book of color photos published in 2006 by Harry N. Abrams.*



Tim Palmer



*The largest river in Wyoming, the Snake spans just over 1,000 miles from Yellowstone to the Columbia River. It receives 30 percent of the runoff from the eight mountain*

## Snake River’s

Your input could help pass a bill to protect 397 miles of local creeks and rivers.

By Beverly Lane, Outreach Associate

On May 3, U.S. Sen. Craig Thomas introduced the Snake Headwaters Legacy Act, a visionary bill that would include 397 miles of 13 rivers and streams in northwest Wyoming in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Local involvement was key in getting the bill introduced and will be critical to get it passed.

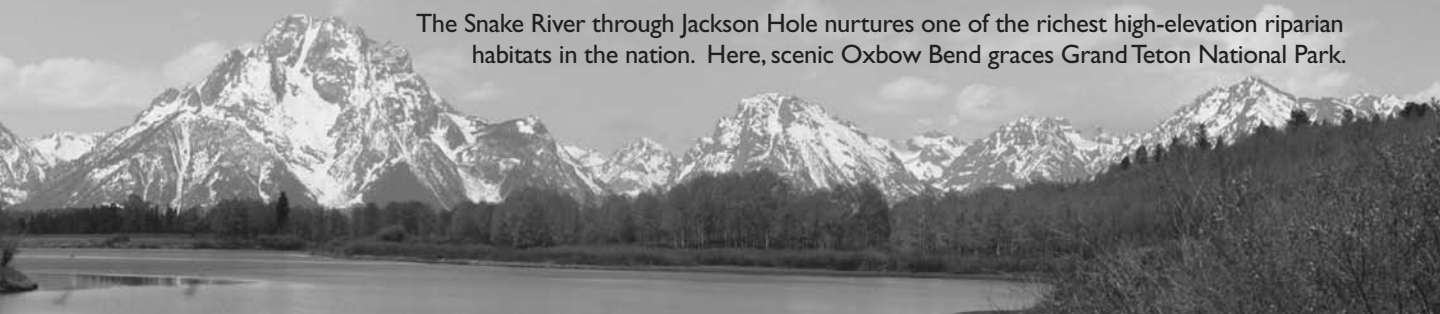
The Campaign for the Snake Headwaters, a coalition of anglers, outfitters, guides, landowners, business owners and conservation groups including the Alliance, has worked for the past three years to gain wild and scenic designation for these waterways in the Snake River watershed. Such designation would preserve their outstanding water quality and prohibit dam building and major water diversion projects, while not affecting water rights, private property rights or multiple uses on public lands.

The National Parks Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the bill on May 15. Jackson Hole fly-fishing legend Jack Dennis testified in support, saying that it is “good for rivers, good for small businesses and good for Wyoming.” The National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service also testified that they support the bill.

On June 4, the State of Wyoming lost a champion when Sen. Craig Thomas passed away from leukemia. Without his leadership, the Snake Headwaters Legacy Act remains a viable bill in the Senate but its fate is uncertain. The Campaign for the Snake Headwaters is working to ensure that it becomes law, but the task of moving the bill now falls to Sen. Mike Enzi and newly-appointed Sen. John Barrasso. It will be up to them to uphold Sen. Thomas’ legacy, and up to us to let them know we want the Snake headwaters protected. (Please see the box on Page 5 for their contact information.)

For more information, please visit [www.snakeheadwaters.org](http://www.snakeheadwaters.org). For the bill’s status and full text, visit [www.govtrack.us/congress/billsearch.xpd](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billsearch.xpd) and under “Search for” just type in S. 1281. ♦

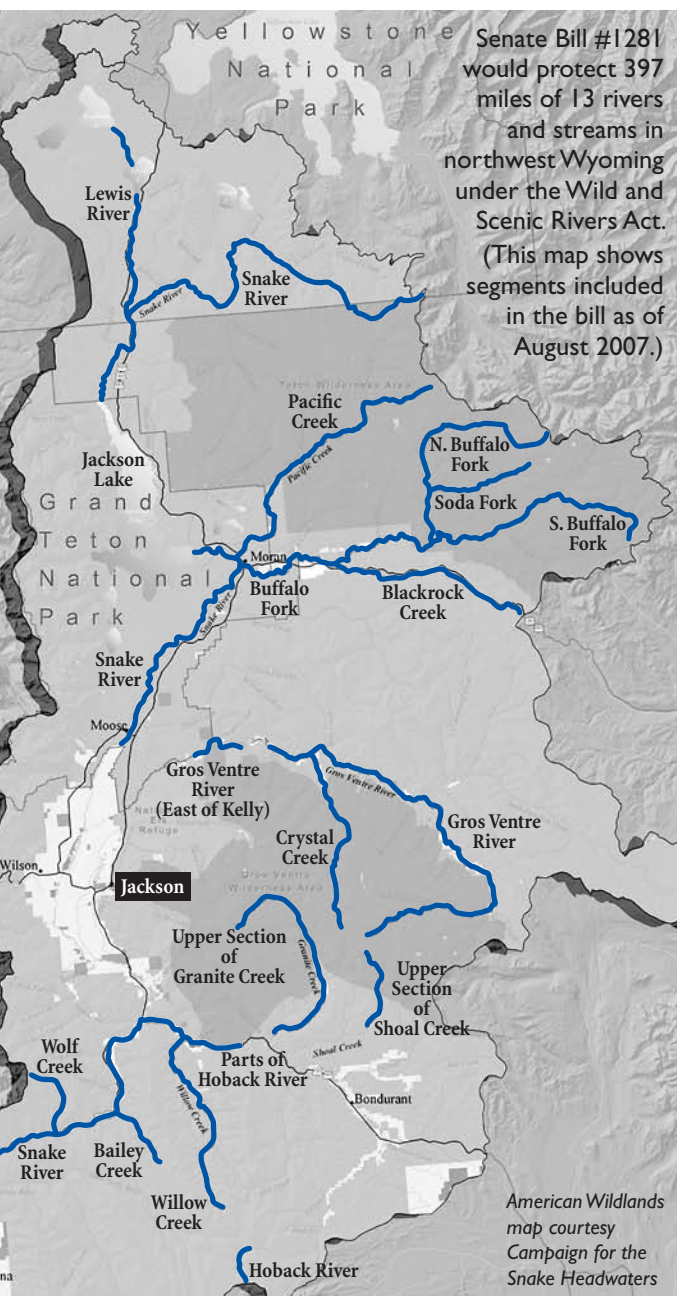
The Snake River through Jackson Hole nurtures one of the richest high-elevation riparian habitats in the nation. Here, scenic Oxbow Bend graces Grand Teton National Park.



states and drains much of the northwestern Rockies – a 109,000-square-mile area larger than Colorado. Carrying 37 million acre-feet a year (1 acre-foot covers an acre

with 1 foot of water), the Snake exceeds the volume of the Colorado River by two and a half times. (Source: The Snake River: Window to the West by Tim Palmer)

## Headwaters Need Your Aid



### How You Can Help

Please contact Wyoming's Congressional delegation to voice your support for passage of the late U.S. Sen. Craig Thomas' Snake Headwaters Legacy Act, Senate Bill #1281:

#### U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi

379 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-3424

Email via: <http://enzi.senate.gov/email.htm>

#### U.S. Sen. John Barrasso

307 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-6441

senator\_jbarrasso@barrasso.senate.gov

#### U.S. Rep. Barbara Cubin

1114 Longworth, HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-2311

Email via: [http://www.house.gov/cubin/zip\\_auth.html](http://www.house.gov/cubin/zip_auth.html)

## The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act

First proposed by Jackson Hole biologists John and Frank Craighead, the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1968.

Since then, it has been used to protect 160 rivers totaling 11,292 stream miles throughout the United States, but only a 20-mile section of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River northwest of Cody has been designated in Wyoming so far.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

- Bans all new dams and other potentially harmful water development projects,
- Restricts activities that would impair a designated river's "outstandingly remarkable values,"
- Ensures that water quality at the time of designation is maintained and enhanced,
- Creates a federal reserved water right for the amount of unappropriated water that is necessary to protect a designated river's special values, and
- Requires the development of a cooperative river management plan to govern future management of designated rivers. 💧