

July 20, 2011

Jacque Buchanan
Forest Supervisor
Bridger-Teton National Forest
P.O. Box 1888
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

RE: Lee Administrative Site

Dear Supervisor Buchanan;

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance has been very involved in helping to find solutions to the facilities and housing issues on the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF). Fundamentally, we believe that federal agencies should not sell assets – public lands – to produce revenue for operational needs, so we have provided multiple opportunities for community input to the BTNF. We are concerned about increasing pressure to sell lands to fund not only the local forest needs, but to generate funds for the regional offices. On behalf of our members, we submit these concerns regarding the sale of the Lee Administrative Site.

The Lee Administrative Site has significant value beyond the need to retain the land under federal ownership. A recent visit to the site by the Conservation Alliance, BTNF staff and interested public enabled everyone to discuss these values. Even before detailed studies have begun, significant concerns have been identified. They include:

- Wildlife – Unfortunately, Wyoming Game and Fish officials were unable to attend the field trip. However, in prior discussions they have been concerned with the impact that building a home or homes will have on resident and migrating wildlife in this area. In addition, observations by the public indicate that this is a very productive area for wildlife. Moose, elk, deer, bears, mountain lions, and a variety of small mammals and birds are seen here. This would be a top concern for any environmental study done for the sale of this property.
- Palisades Wilderness Study Area – A large portion of the 200-acre site is within the Palisades WSA and is not eligible for sale. Selling any portion must not negatively impact the WSA. An environmental study would not be able to adequately determine what kind of future impacts might occur and should acknowledge that fact for public comment.
- Recreation – Mountain bikers, skiers, hikers and horseback riders utilize this very popular and busy trail system. The Jackson Hole Ski Club has been a permittee for many years. Several summer recreation homes exist on this site. The heavy use of this area is testament to the multiuse tenet of the Forest Service. How a private landowner might impact these existing uses is of concern. Lack of access, and disruption of biking, hiking

and ski trails, are only two potential outcomes of private ownership on such a large amount of land within this recreation area.

- Wildfire – A project initiated by the BTNF last summer addresses the need for fuels management from Teton Village south to the Snake River. The Lee site sits within this project area, and allowing homes to be built here appears to be antithetic to this project. This is a densely vegetated area that has received mechanical treatment in the recent past, but it should be looked at closely to determine if homes here would increase the potential for wildfire to reach private lands.
- Infrastructure and other impacts – The existing roads within this site are dirt two-tracks. How would this have to change to accommodate the type of home(s) anticipated to be built here? Water rights, visual impacts, noise and light pollution are all factors that will need to be studied comprehensively.
- Agency resources – The BTNF should consider the impact on their financial and staff resources required to perform NEPA on a proposal that has such obvious drawbacks.

The Conservation Alliance strongly believes that the BTNF employees in Jackson are a valuable component of our community. The location of the Supervisor's office in Jackson provides a centralized, accessible presence to residents, visitors, partners and permittees. We do not think that moving the office outside of Jackson is in the best interests of employees or the community, but selling lands in the Lee Administrative Site is not a solution to keeping the office here. Another method of acquiring the funds needed to build facilities and housing for the BTNF should be found. The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance will continue to hold public meetings to facilitate this effort and will help with other opportunities that might arise. We would appreciate a map of existing administrative sites on the BTNF to facilitate any further community conversations.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns. The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance looks forward to continued work with Bridger-Teton National Forest to find a better solution to this problem.

Sincerely,

Louise Lasley
Public Lands Director

cc: Harv Forsgren
Michael Schrotz
Keith Simila