

September 16, 2011

Re: Natural Resources Technical Advisory Board Operations

Dear Natural Resources Technical Advisory Board members,

On behalf of the Conservation Alliance, thank you for your attention to this letter and for your dedicated service on the Natural Resources Technical Advisory Board (NRTAB). We are very pleased that the NRTAB is made up of such capable and qualified individuals, and that it has begun its work. The work that you are doing is vital to the achievement of our community goals of natural resource protection, and we look forward to providing ongoing support for the NRTAB's work. The Alliance has historically been very supportive of the creation of the NRTAB.

Our understanding of the NRTAB's role in the community, guided by the resolution that enabled your creation (Resolution 10-12) and related discussions, was that you were charged with bringing science into public policy and land use decisions. It is clear that the intent was not to add a layer to the existing development application process, but rather to assess cumulative impacts of our growth and development decisions. The NRTAB has recently invested significant time on how to perform the needed operations within its mandate.

#### Current Challenges

Resolution 10-12 outlines that activities of the NRTAB should be in response to directives from the elected officials. It also states that "directives to the Natural Resource Technical Advisory Board will be formulated by elected town and/or county officials in consultation with the chair of the Natural Resource Advisory Board." This statement grants the chair, on behalf of the NRTAB, the ability to recommend timeframes, projects, and areas of focus to the elected bodies for them to then consider referring back to the NRTAB.

To alleviate any confusion or disagreement, a discussion to clarify the role of the Board in developing research objectives is important. The NRTAB, as a group and as individuals, are aware of some of the chronic needs for data and information in the county, and we'd like to see them given clear authority to play a much stronger role in advancing recommendations into action.

We recognize that the timeframes that many elected officials operate within is very different than those that members of the NRTAB operate within. This disconnect is one example of the challenges inherent in the creation of a board such as this one and could be helped by greatly increased direct communication between the elected officials and NRTAB, or the NRTAB chair.

We appreciate the planning staffs' requests for support in the Comprehensive Plan Character District mapping exercise. The NRTAB is a very appropriate board to play this role, but as planning staff themselves have pointed out it is also important for the board to maintain a focus on creating a new or updated long-range system of resource protection, even if it is not ready for the Character District maps. **The NRTAB needs to have the responsibility of exploring new approaches and recommending policy changes to better achieve our community's goals.**

Longer Term Solutions

Looking a little further into the future, it might be appropriate for the board to revisit the resolution at some point to address lessons learned as this board nears its 18-month anniversary in December of 2011, and address the concerns listed above.

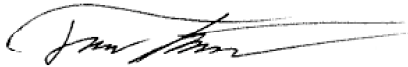
Overall, the NRTAB has the potential to be an excellent resource for decision makers in the creation of policies that reflect both the unique values of our community and our ecosystem. However, some minor changes need to be made to enable the NRTAB to function better.

Proposal for Immediate Action: Updating the NRO

In the short term, however, we would like to make a specific offer for a concrete action that the NRTAB and elected officials can take with regard to an update of the Natural Resources Overlay (NRO); the initiation of a focal species mapping project. There has already been significant discussion around this subject, including a meeting at the Alliance with Brent Brock of the Craighead Institute. The NRTAB should take the lead in directing exactly how they want to update our current system of resource protection, as this Board has discussed over the past year. At your request, the Alliance and the Craighead Institute could fund and execute an update of the NRO to a cutting edge focal species approach. The Alliance would like a few minutes to discuss this opportunity with the NRTAB at your next meeting.

We are pleased that there is agreement that the best available science should drive public policy, particularly in Jackson and Teton County, where our wildlife, open spaces and natural resources are our most prized community assets. We are excited to continue to work with the NRTAB and the elected officials to ensure that we achieve the community's wildlife, natural and scenic resource protection goals.

Sincerely,



Trevor Stevenson  
Executive Director

Louise Lasley  
Program Director

cc: Teton Board of County Commissioners  
Mayor Barron and Jackson Town Council  
Jeff Daugherty  
Tyler Sinclair  
Randy Williams