



Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
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Environment Commission a critical step

At their next monthly joint meeting this coming Monday, March 1, town and county elected officials are scheduled, for the seventh month in a row, to continue discussing a proposed Environment Commission. After reviewing both the original proposal from planning staff and an alternative proposed at the last meeting by County Board Chairman Hank Phibbs, the Conservation Alliance encourages the elected officials to create an Environment Commission that is more closely aligned with the original intent.

An Environment Commission, as thoroughly outlined by staff, and as proposed in a Nov. 2008 memo from the Sustaining Jackson Hole Environment Group and in the draft Comprehensive Plan, is an important step for our community. It would be charged with gaining an ecosystem-wide, comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the land-use decisions that we are making today, and would help inform public policy.

One of the most important features of the original proposed Environment Commission was that the responsibility to set the research priorities was given to the commission itself, with the understanding that as experts in their fields, they were the best equipped for this job.

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 cannot afford to make irreparable mistakes with our wildlife and natural resources. While it has some good aspects, County Board Chair Phibbs' proposal, which is less comprehensive and more project-specific, is simply not an acceptable substitute for the original proposal.

We encourage you to ask our elected officials to create an Environment Commission that more clearly meets the originally intended objectives.

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