

Commonsense Guidelines *for Living in Teton County, Idaho*



produced in cooperation by the Board of Teton County Commissioners
and Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

Welcome to Teton Valley!

Whether you are a lifetime resident or a newcomer; whether you are here to live, raise and provide for your family; or whether you are here just to recreate or meditate, the Teton County Board of County Commissioners extends a hearty welcome. This guide to living in our Teton Valley rural area is provided for your convenience.

Teton County, Idaho, is a place of unique natural beauty. In this peaceful green valley, there are limitless opportunities to pause and appreciate the grandeur of the beautiful Teton mountain range to the east, the quiet serenity of the Big Hole Mountains to the west, the Snake River Range to the south and the rolling hills to the north that lead they eye toward Yellowstone and beyond. There are trails to be hiked, mountains to be skied, and streams to be fished. The solitude of the public land that surrounds Teton Valley provides both a reflective and energizing environment. To appreciate and protect both our private and public land requires us all to find a balance in our lifestyle choices. It is our responsibility to share the land and be good stewards of our natural resources environmentally, agriculturally and recreationally.

Our wide-open spaces provide more “elbow room” than you may be accustomed to, but with that freedom to move comes responsibilities. To enjoy your stay, please understand that many of the curbside services and conveniences found in large cities are not available in Teton Valley’s rural setting. While you enjoy the wide-open spaces, the property rights of others must be respected. Life at 6,000 feet of elevation in the rugged Rocky Mountains often presents natural challenges for which we need to anticipate, prepare and be patient.

The people of Teton Valley are friendly, hearty and hard working. They have chosen to live here for many of the same reasons that brought you. They will welcome you in the same manner they were welcomed when they arrived. We hope this guide will benefit and assist you during of your stay.

Welcome!

Teton County, Idaho, Board of County Commissioners

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Teton County, Idaho is a high mountain valley in the rugged Rocky Mountains in the arid western United States. The average elevation is above 6,000 feet. Teton Valley is bounded on the east by the majestic Teton Mountain range and on the west by the Big Hole Mountains. As you consider purchasing land in rural Teton County, Idaho, it is important to realize that life in the country differs from city life in many fundamental ways. The following information points out some of these differences, of which many new residents are not immediately aware.

ACCESS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

The wide-open space and relative isolation we enjoy often causes you and those who wish to visit you or access your property, to drive some distance. Law enforcement in Teton County is provided by the Teton County Sheriff and the deputies assigned to the department, all of whom are full-time employees. Teton County also has a Fire Protection District, an Ambulance District, and a County Hospital. The Fire District and the Ambulance District employ full-time workers and volunteers. Teton County Hospital is a first-response facility, providing excellent primary care. Additional medical services are available through patient transportation via ambulance or life-flight to extended-care facilities in Idaho Falls, Idaho, or Salt Lake City, Utah. Notwithstanding the excellent service provided by these agencies, Teton Valley's relative isolation will cause additional response time. This response time may occasionally be increased by adverse weather conditions such as deep snow or blizzard situations.

ROAD MAINTENANCE— Subdivision roads are generally not maintained by the county; maintenance is arranged by the property owners in the subdivision. The county maintains public roads: everything from paved routes to roads that are nothing more than two tracks. But just because a road is designated a county road does not mean it will be improved or upgraded in the future. All roads receive different levels of maintenance and upkeep. Not all roads receive snow removal in the winter or regular grading and upkeep in the summer. In some situations the property that you own may be some distance from a county road and require some type of private easement or right-of-way to travel from the county road to your property. To avoid any unreasonable expectations, make sure you have legal access from your property to the county roads; know what type of road maintenance is provided by your subdivision and what the cost will be to you.

One aspect of living in this wild place is vulnerability to natural events which may include but are not be limited to: earthquakes, flash floods, mud slides, high winds, deep snow, and the blowing and drifting of snow. Some of these events such as earthquakes, occur very infrequently, while others, such as blowing and drifting snow, occur rather frequently. Occasionally these events may cause road or highway closures and/or interruption of other services.

HOME PLACEMENT— Trees are a wonderful environmental amenity, but also serve as source of fuel for uncontrolled forest fires which can destroy your home and property. Building at the top of a forested draw should be considered as dangerous as building in a flash-flood area. Defensible perimeters are very helpful in protecting buildings from forest fire and inversely can protect the forest from igniting if your house catches fire. For further information, you can contact the Teton County Fire Marshal, 354-2760 or the Forest Service Office, 354-2312.

If you are considering purchasing land adjacent to the National Forest, review a copy of the Forest Service's Forest Plan to be fully informed of the kinds of activities that are allowed in the National Forest, such as grazing and recreational vehicle use.

PUBLIC SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION— Teton County School District maintains a fleet of school buses to provide transportation for grades K-12. However, not all houses in the county receive school-bus service. Furthermore, where school transportation is provided, that service like all others may be interrupted by the mitigating factors previously outlined. If you have school-aged children, check with the Teton County School District to determine if school bus service is available to your property. Only the school district can give you that information.

MAIL DELIVERY & NEWS— The United States Postal Service maintains a post office in each of the cities of Driggs, Teton and Victor. Mail delivery is not available to all areas of the county. Ask the postmaster to describe the system for your area. If mail delivery is available, you are responsible for the installation of your mailbox. If the county plows your road, the snowplow will get as close as possible to your mailbox, but you are responsible for ensuring that the mail-delivery person can reach it. The county is also served by FedEx, DHL and UPS. The relative isolation of Teton Valley from large metropolitan areas, coupled with the distance of your property from your neighbors places special demands on services of this nature. Check before assuming how long delivery will take.

Teton Valley's local newspaper is the *Teton Valley News*, which is published weekly. It is available by subscription, for sale in local stores, and on the internet at www.tetonvalleynews.net. The *Idaho Falls Post Register* is the nearest daily paper which can be purchased at local outlets and has limited mailbox delivery.

UTILITY SERVICES

Water, sewer, electric, telephone and trash pickup services are all available in Teton County. However, because of the relative isolation of Teton County and the possibility of your property being separated from central systems, the type of service may differ considerably from that provided in large cities. The companies and agencies which provide these services are similar to companies and agencies in other rural areas in the Intermountain West.

WATER— Each of Teton County's cities — Driggs, Teton and Victor — provide culinary water service to its residents. If you live outside of town, you will most likely need to drill a domestic well. Few subdivisions and developments have community water systems.

The waters of the state of Idaho are regulated by the Idaho Department of Water Resources. You must obtain a permit from this agency before drilling a well on your property.

The Idaho Department of Water Resources considers culinary water and irrigation water to be different uses and regulates each differently. The fact that a stream of water flows across your property does not necessarily mean you have a right to use that water. The rights to that stream of water may, in their entirety, belong to someone else. In order to understand your water rights, consult with the Department of Water Resources at its office in Idaho Falls.

SEWER— Driggs, Teton and Victor each provide sewer service to their city residents. If you live out of the city, you will most likely need to install a septic system to treat your waste water. All septic systems are maintained by and at the expense of the property owner.

A municipal sewer line runs between Victor and Driggs. If your property lies in close proximity to this sewer line you may be able to, or may even be required to, hook up to this line. Consult with the cities of Driggs and Victor to see if such a hook up is possible, then check with the County Building Department to see if hook up is required.

All septic systems must be permitted by the District 7 Health Department before they are installed. The type of system required will vary depending on the nature of your soil and/or the level of the water table beneath your property, so consult with the District 7 Health Department before you purchase.

ELECTRIC— Electric power is, for the most part, provided by Fall River Rural Electric Co-operative. Their main office is in Ashton, Idaho, but a branch office and equipment station is maintained in Driggs. A small area of the county generally known as the West Bench Area is served by Utah Power.

Delivery of electric service to your property may involve the installation of new power lines. Consult with the appropriate power provider to determine the programs available to you and the costs involved.

Many areas of Teton County provide good sites for the use of alternative energy sources such as solar and wind energy. Some people live completely off the electric power company grid. There are several alternative energy firms in Teton Valley that can help property owners pursue this option.

TELEPHONE— Telephone service is provided locally by Silverstar Communications which maintains an office in Driggs. Silverstar Communications also provides cellular telephone service. Several other cellular companies provide service to Teton County. Before purchasing cellular phone service, check that you have reception from your property.

TRASH— Teton County maintains a sanitary landfill east of Driggs. The landfill is open to the public three days of the week. WHICH DAYS?

Voorhees Sanitation, a private company, provides trash pick up for a fee. As this service may not be available to all areas in the county, contact Voorhees Sanitation for information about service and cost. If this service is not provided to your particular lot, you may be required to transport your trash to the landfill at your own expense.

Recycling in Teton Valley is currently going through a transition to a new program. At the time of publication there are still yellow recycling bins on Depot Street in Driggs and at the Grand Teton Brewery in Victor. However, by September 2006 the plan is to have recycling centralized at the Teton County Landfill. Check the Teton Valley Community Recycling website www.tetonrecycling.org for up to date information on recyclables and recycling locations. This is also a good source of information for making sure that you know what of your garbage is considered hazardous waste and how to dispose of it safely.

PROPERTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Teton County deserves respect: few locations are so free of crowding and pollution, with so much open space. The cumulative effect of the actions of individual property owners will determine whether or not Teton Valley remains this way. Correspondingly, property ownership has responsibilities. Some of these are laid out in local law; other measures are voluntary. We hope this document serves to direct you toward resources that will enable you to be part of the effort to preserve a legacy of natural resources and beauty for future generations.

Your legal property rights in Teton County, Idaho, are similar to those of any other county in any state. Your property rights are defined by the Constitution of the United States, the constitution and statutes of the state of Idaho, and the local ordinances enacted by Teton County and the cities located in the county.

ZONING— Teton County is a zoned county. Zoning is mandated by state statute for the purpose of establishing ordered growth and protecting property rights and values. The particular location of your property will determine how you may utilize it. Information concerning your property's zone and the opportunities available in that zone can be obtained from the Teton County Planning and Zoning Office.

The properties surrounding you may not remain as they are indefinitely. Check with Teton County Planning and Zoning to determine how neighboring properties are zoned and what developments may be in the planning stages. Your property's views and other aspects may change dramatically over time.

SERVICE EASEMENTS— Teton County, like other rural counties, depends not only on roads but also upon systems of easements, rights-of-way, and other licenses or real-property tenements. These easements or right-of-ways allow access for roads, power lines, telephone lines, sewer lines, culinary or irrigation water, forest accesses, sportsman accesses, etc. Your property may be subservient so services can be provided to another's property. Vice versa, another property may be subservient so these services can be provided to your property. In some situations these burdens to property may not be a matter of public record, but may have been obtained by adverse possession. Take care to research that your property can receive the services you desire and that you understand the burdens on your property so that services can be provided to others.

MINERAL RIGHTS— Prior to 1923, when the state of Idaho sold land to the public sector, the state transferred both surface rights and mineral rights. In 1923 the state of Idaho began transferring surface rights only, retaining the mineral rights in the state. Thus, whether or not you own the mineral rights to the property you purchased or intend to purchase depends on (1) whether or not it was first transferred from the state prior to 1923, and (2) whether or not your predecessors in interest retained the

mineral rights when he sold the property. Your title insurance policy will contain this information. If minerals are never found beneath your property, your ownership of the mineral rights will not be too much of a benefit, nor will the fact that you do not own the mineral rights be too much of a detriment. However, if you do not own the mineral rights to minerals that are found beneath your property, not only will you not have an interest in that asset, but the process of mining those minerals may place a demand on your surface rights that you never expected and do not appreciate.

FENCING— Some of the property in Teton County is fenced. A fence may appear to be the boundary line between two separate parcels of property. However, it may not correspond with the surveyed property line and it may be necessary to relocate the fence to have it correspond with the surveyed or "real" property line. On the other hand, your predecessors in interest may have made certain agreements or acted toward their property in such a way that the fence line becomes the "real" property line, notwithstanding the fact that the fence line and the surveyed line are not the same. Before you purchase property, these issues should be looked into carefully. It may be prudent to obtain assistance and advice from a local real estate attorney to ensure that you understand exactly what you are purchasing.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE— Teton County's abundant wildlife is a big part of the valley's attraction. Wildlife corridors are areas of wildlife habitat or areas where animals migrate or feed, often near streams of water, riparian areas, groves of trees or canyons. Although there are no state laws protecting these wildlife corridors, there is a great deal of public sentiment in the county to do so. Rural development encroaches on the traditional habitat of coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, squirrels, bears, mosquitoes and other animals that you need to know how to live with.

Pet control is important as pets, especially dogs, can harass and even kill wildlife, or be injured or killed themselves. You should also be aware that Idaho law allows for anyone to kill a dog caught in the act of harassing livestock.

Other things you can do to avoid injuring or endangering wildlife are to provide proper garbage storage and wildlife-friendly fencing. Some of the northeastern parts of the county have been designated Grizzly Bear Management Units with special regulations. The Idaho Fish and Game Department is a good source of information on how to live with wildlife, as well as information on the location of Grizzly Bear Management Units and any special regulations that apply to them: 208-334-3700.

LIGHT POLLUTION— Our stars are beautiful and one of the assets of being in the rural part of the county is the dark night sky. You can help preserve our starry skies by being mindful about outdoor lighting. Use downward directed lighting rather than outward or upward-directed lighting.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

As in many parts of the state of Idaho, agriculture is an integral part of the economy of Teton County. The lush green hay fields, golden waves of grain, and green potato fields in blossom all contribute to the sense of rural beauty.

Some of the factors that make Teton County a desirable place to live, such as high altitude, distinct seasons, and cool crisp nights, also make it a difficult place to farm. Farmers are required to work hard, sometimes with unusually long hours. As they till the land, harvest their crops, and manage their livestock, undesirable odors, intrusive noise, and drifting dust and chaff may result. As the land upon which you live or contemplate living is transitioned from agricultural use to residential or commercial use, these sometimes objectionable elements will not disappear.

PEST CONTROL— The state of Idaho has enacted Right-To-Farm legislation designed to protect farmers and ranchers from nuisance and liability lawsuits. The Idaho Department of Agriculture has identified Teton County as a Seed Potato Management District. The Seed Potato Management District protects the county's seed potatoes from disease and certain insect pests. Among other things, all potatoes planted in the county—even those planted in vegetable gardens—must be certified. The planting of certain fruit-bearing and ornamental trees known to carry certain aphids is prohibited.

OPEN RANGE— Teton County, Idaho has an open-range law. If you do not want cattle, sheep or other livestock on your property, it is your responsibility to fence them out. It is not the responsibility of the rancher to keep his/her livestock off your property.

However, there are some designated Herd Districts in the county. These are areas where a majority of landowners have petitioned the county to create an area where livestock cannot run at large. The landowners must pay for a portion of the cost of fence construction. Thereafter, landowners are responsible to maintain fences on their land. Check with the Teton County Clerk for the location of the existing Herd Districts.

WEED CONTROL— Before buying land you should know if it has noxious weeds that may be expensive to control. It is the landowner's responsibility to keep their land free of noxious weeds and they may be fined if they fail to do so. Some plants are poisonous to horses and other livestock.

Consider using native plants in your landscaping. These are drought and pest resistant and well adapted to our local growing conditions. Unlike other species, they will not require extensive watering once established. In addition, they provide cover and food to native wildlife. Introducing exotic species of plants can choke out local species and reduce the diversity of species we enjoy.

CONCLUSION

Teton County is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. It has been endowed with some of nature's most spectacular beauty. There is a real sense of community here and plenty of opportunities to get involved in community organizations. The young people, their schools, and their school activities are an integral part of the culture. Our proximity to the mountains and forest offers many recreational opportunities. However, to survive and thrive in this relatively remote and rural area, some of the "curb-side conveniences" which make city life so appealing and so convenient will be sacrificed. To maintain the desirability of our rural quality of life, growth must be controlled and regulated in such a way as to preserve rather than desiccate the natural beauty and lifestyle that initially brought you and others like you to Teton County, Idaho.

CITIES

City of Driggs.....	208-354-2362
City of Victor.....	208-787-2940
City of Tetonla.....	208-456-2249

COUNTY

Teton County Assessor.....	208-354-3507
Teton County Clerk and Recorder.....	208-354-2905
Teton County Dept of Motor Vehicles.....	208-354-2938
Teton County District 7 Health Department.....	208-354-2220.
Teton County Fire Protection District.....	208-354-2760 / 2761
Tetonia.....	208-456-2012
Victor.....	208-787-2003
Teton County Landfill.....	208-354-3442
Teton County Law Library.....	208-354-8496
Teton County Magistrate Court.....	208-354-2239
Teton County Planning and Zoning.....	208-354-2593
Teton County Prosecuting Attorney.....	208-354-2990
Teton County Road and Bridge.....	208-354-2932
Teton County Road Report.....	208-354-2325
Teton County Sheriff.....	208-354-2323
Teton County Treasurer.....	208-354-2254

MEDIA

Teton Valley News.....	208-354-8101
Post Register.....	208-522-1800
Q102.....	208-354-4102

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Office.....	208-354-2207
Driggs Elementary School.....	208-354-2335
Tetonia Elementary School.....	208-456-2288
Victor Elementary School.....	208-787-2245
Teton Middle School.....	208-354-2971 / 2556
Teton High School.....	208-354-2952

TRANSPORTATION

Driggs Airport.....	208-354-3100
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UTILITY COMPANIES

Fall River Rural Electric Coop.....	208-354-2377
Silverstar Communications.....	208-354-3300
Voorhees Sanitation.....	208-354-2249

OTHER RESOURCES

Forest Service, Teton Basin Ranger District.....	208-354-2312
Fremont-Madison Irrigation District.....	
Idaho Division of Environmental Quality.....	208-528-2650
Idaho Department of Lands.....	208-334-0200
Idaho Falls office.....	208-525-7167
Idaho Dept of Water Resources.....	208-287-4800
Idaho Falls office.....	208-525-7161
Idaho Dept of Fish and Game.....	208-334-3700
Idaho Falls office.....	208-525-7290
Teton Valley Hospital and Surgicenter.....	208-354-2383
University of Idaho Teton County Extension Service.....	208-354-2961

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

4-H.....	208-354-2961
American Cancer Society of Teton Valley.....	208-354-2220
Boy Scouts of America, Idaho Falls Office.....	208-522-5155
Cattleman's Association.....	208-354-2961
Family Safety Network.....	208-354-8838
Friends of the Library.....	208-787-2201
Friends of Teton River.....	208-354-3871
Teton Arts Council.....	208-354-4278
Teton County Farm Bureau.....	208-354-2775
Teton High School Rodeo Club.....	208-354-2924 / 354-8339
Teton Regional Land Trust.....	208-354-8939
Teton Valley Alliance.....	
Teton Valley Chamber of Commerce.....	208-354-2500
Teton Valley Community Recycling.....	208-354-2800
Teton Valley Education Foundation.....	
Teton Valley Foundation.....	
Teton Valley Historical Museum.....	208-354-6000
Teton Valley Home Health & Hospice Volunteers.....	208-354-6317 x299
Teton Valley Humane Society.....	208-354-8636
Teton Valley Recreation Association.....	208-354-4444
Teton Valley Trails and Pathways.....	208-201-1622
Teton Valley Seed Marketing Association.....	208-456-0904
Valley Advocates for Responsible Development.....	208-354-1707

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Falls Post Register
Teton County School District
Teton County Planning & Zoning
Teton County Road and Bridge
Teton Valley News
Teton Valley Community Recycling
USDA, Forest Service, Teton Basin Ranger District
Voorhees Sanitation



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