



Winter 2019-2020

Migrating from the Red Desert to the Tetons



Anna sits with a doe after drawing blood. The orange mask covering the doe's eyes helps her remain calm. Photo by Zach Andres.

Why do some mule deer migrate more than 150 miles annually, while others migrate less than 30? Anna Ortega, a University of Wyoming PhD student, is studying how maintaining a variety of migratory behaviors may increase the resiliency of the herd overall. The portion of the Sublette Mule Deer Herd that Anna is studying share a winter range in the Red Desert of southern Wyoming and exhibits three migratory strategies: long-distance (~150 miles), medium-distance (~70 miles), and short-distance (<30 miles). In order to compare the costs and benefits of these migratory strategies, Anna and her team recapture the collared mule deer does twice a year. The research team collects blood and fecal samples, measures body weight, collects morphometric measurements (i.e., body length, body girth, metatarsus length), and determines a body condition score. This information, along with GPS collar data, tells the story of each individual doe's migration. Did she find enough forage on her journey? Did she have a fawn and did it survive?

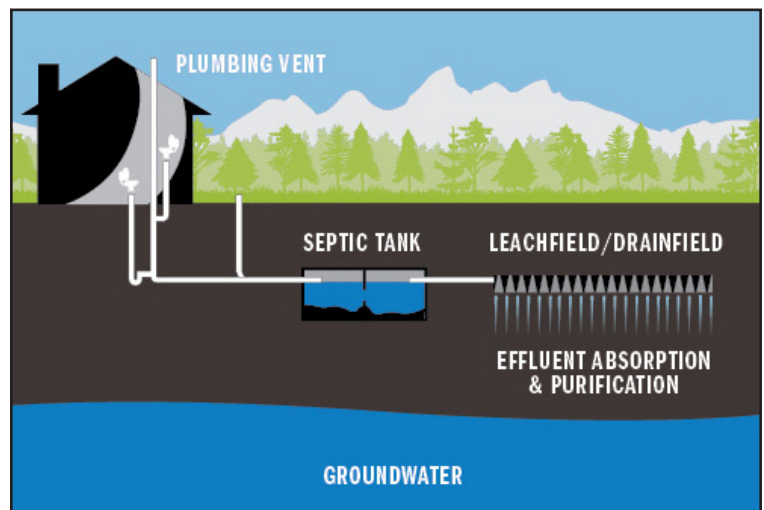
Anna suspects that depending on weather and ecological factors, the costs and benefits of migration strategies may shift among long-, medium-, and short-distance migrants from year to year. In some years, long-distance migrants might have higher survival or reproductive success, but in other years they might have higher mortality. Long-distance migration is key to the productivity of ungulate herds, but many such movements are declining globally due to disturbances such as fencing, roads, and development that fragment habitat, sever migration corridors, and cause shifts in climatic conditions and forage

availability. Not only is Anna's study deepening our understanding of migration, but it will have applied benefits for conserving migratory herds of mule deer across western Wyoming.

Teton Conservation District awarded this research project a grant to capture the 12 deer that migrate through Teton County.

Do you have a septic system?

Do you want to play a key role in water quality research in Jackson Hole? Given growing concerns regarding the effects of wastewater on ground and surface water in our community, Teton Conservation District is embarking on a study to measure the wastewater treatment efficiency of residential septic system leach fields. We are seeking volunteers who own either a traditional leach field or a raised leach field. Learn about the study site criteria at www.tetonconservation.org/septic-monitoring-study. If you believe your property could be appropriate and are interested in being involved in this community project, contact Suzanne Lagerman at Nelson Engineering: (307) 733-2087 ext. 143, slagerman@nelsonengineering.net.



Celebrating youth farmers

Although the darkest and coldest days of the year are upon us, we're celebrating two gardening projects to remind that spring will come again. First, Teton Conservation District provided a grant for the construction of the new Children's Learning Center's (CLC) green house, which replaced their hoop house after it collapsed under snow in the winter of 2016. CLC's Executive Director Patti Boyd said, "We believe that early learning about plants, water and food is essential to ensure that our children are more invested in their need to take care of our environment and our natural resources as they get older." The second youth gardening project we recently supported was the Slow Food in the Tetons Youth Farming and Cooking Camp, a summer program that teaches 3rd through 8th graders how to grow their own gardens and cook for themselves and their families using their harvest.



CLC students water their vegetables.

Meet our newest board member

Roby Hurley replaced Bailey Schreiber on the Teton Conservation District Board. After more than 30 years in land use planning, Roby retired from his position as Principal Planner with Teton County in 2019. Though he may drop a fish on occasion, Roby won't drop the ball at the district. We're lucky to have a board member with such dedication to our community (and a good sense of humor). Bailey moved to Lander to own and manage Second Street Farm.



She will continue to serve as the Natural Resource Counsel to the Wyoming County Commissioners Association.

Annual Report Award

Teton Conservation District won the 2018-2019 Outstanding Annual Report award presented by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture at the Wyoming Association of Conservation District's annual convention. You can see the annual report on our website.

Partners in Conservation Grants

If you have a conservation project relating to water, wildlife, agriculture, restoration, sustainability, mapping and GIS, or planning and development, consider applying for a Partners in Conservation (PIC) grant from Teton Conservation District. The PIC grant program replaces the former Technical Assistance Cost Share grant program. Applications are due by 5:00pm on January 31, 2020. Information and application instructions can be found at www.tetonconservation.org.



Hoback Drinking Water Stakeholder Group

In an effort to propose actions to improve the availability of safe drinking water in the Hoback area, Teton Conservation District, the Teton County Health Department, and the Teton County Engineering Division formed a working group called the 'Hoback Drinking Water Steering Committee.' Earlier this fall, the committee surveyed the Hoback community to better understand self-reported water issues, hosted a free nitrate screening event, and offered discounted well test kits. Nine people representing different areas of Hoback were selected to form the 'Hoback Drinking Water Stakeholder Group.' In early December, the first Stakeholder Group meeting was attended by representatives from the EPA, the WY Department of Environmental Quality, the WY Water Development Commission, Teton Conservation District, Teton County, and Teton County Health Department. Facilitated by LegacyWorks Group, the Stakeholder Group will meet at least four times and host at least one public meeting throughout the winter. At the conclusion, the Stakeholder Group will recommend options to provide safe drinking water to the Hoback area to the Teton County Board of County Commissioners and the Teton Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

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