

Six Flags over the Snake

A waterpark on the Snake? The Snake is designated a "Wild & Scenic" river. News flash: Waterparks are neither wild nor scenic.

But a local group is busy arguing just that, claiming their waterpark is a proper use. Wisely, county commissioners voted down their proposed waterpark in a 3-2 vote. Unfortunately, it's far from dead.

A group of kayakers wants to reshape river bedrock to create an artificial protuberance so boaters can catch waves and surf man-made hydraulics. Never mind the barrier it will create to fish like the blue nose sucker, as long as a few elite paddlers have a place to play.

Jackson Hole's appetite for construction appears insatiable. While most in our community are conservationists in love with natural beauty, a few want to harness this mighty waterway once called the Mad River. They want to subdue, conquer, and Disney-fy the Snake in the name of—don't laugh—conservation.

Some members of this private group of river runners are transparent enough. An owner of a kayak shop wants to make sure he has steady customers for decades to come. Others are mysterious, including an anonymous financial backer ready to donate \$500,000. All to make a play-land out of the South Park stretch of the mighty Snake. People rarely drop a half-million without an expected return on investment.

This community has worked hard to protect 400 miles of the Snake and its tributaries, to keep them Wild & Scenic.

Now, just a few years after the county has taken decision making authority from the BLM, some county leaders are ready to fire up the bulldozers in the name of making our riverbanks better.

"It's shovel-ready," say the waterpark advocates. But nature doesn't need a shovel. It needs more Muirs and Muries.

The Snake needs a waterpark like the Grand needs a Ferris wheel.

Kathryn Wood-Meyer said it well in this paper on August 14. "Anyone who says the community needs a 'park' in the Snake River for its citizens to have fun is only looking at the money that can be made. The Jackson Hole area is one of the few places on earth that has unbounded natural recreation right out its back door."

She goes on to say: "If the river needs cleaning of bridge construction debris then clean it. Don't pee on our legs and tell us it's raining."

The Snake River doesn't need a waterpark any more than the Grand Teton needs a Ferris wheel.

If local politicians don't have the will to say no, put it on the ballot and let the voters weigh in. Let's leave this Wild & Scenic waterway alone, free of man's fingerprints.

Appeal for funds: News in this column can't be found elsewhere. It's expensive to publish.

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