

*The other side of the story...*

## When Will Wildlife Win?

Wildlife is losing. Little or nothing has been done for wildlife since 2012 when electeds declared it priority #1 in the Comp Plan — eight years ago.

In those eight years our electeds produced two massive new plans, a housing plan and a transportation plan, both big-growth enablers. Ecosystem Stewardship, our #1 Comp Plan Common Value, has been ignored.

Based on actions taken and \$\$ spent, big-growth is our #1 objective, not ecosystem or wildlife.

It's not that housing and transportation are unimportant. It's that the focus is always on commercial growth. Wildlife and open space get ignored.

Town loves density; they found an un-budgeted \$4M for a Housing Trust project. They approved a big new subdivision, another giant hotel, a huge new brew pub and a condo project. Faced with re-zoning, they up-sized the downtown commercial core first. Then they did an expensive parking study paving the way for paid parking in town.

They've approved wildlife unfriendly projects. Hidden Hollow wedges 168 new homes onto prime wetlands bordering the National Elk Refuge. The new 90-unit Sagebrush Apartments on Broadway blocks mule deer access to Flat Creek. And Karns Meadow construction will remove vital habitat.

It's not much different in the county. Commissioners are busy approving rock concerts wherever rural and peaceful areas exist — driving out wildlife and neighbors. On Hwy 390 they tried to shoehorn 69 housing units onto property zoned for only 7.

Meanwhile, the Natural Resource Overlay LDRs that protect wildlife habitat haven't been updated since 1994.

Here's what has been done for wildlife. County spent \$100,000 to learn moose are getting slaughtered on Highway 390, mule deer are being run down on Broadway, and elk are getting bashed on S. Hwy 89. Public Works could have told them that for a cup of coffee. Go figure.

What does all this mean? When our electeds put the Comp Plan's #1 priority on the back burner, it's government favoring special interests, not the voters. When you say one thing and do another, that's bad leadership ... and we're being kind.

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on commercial growth*

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Look at Vail. It's a failed mountain community, an example of how NOT to do things. Yet we are following in their footsteps.

A recent news story in the *Vail Daily* stated Eagle County has seen a 50% reduction in elk numbers. Half the herd was eradicated in a decade. Why? A wildlife manager said it's a result of more people, more houses, and more recreationalists. Another wildlife manager said, "It is becoming increasingly difficult for animals to find respite from humans."

It's already happening here. We need to wake up and make a true effort to protect what's essential to Jackson Hole. Let's keep our world-class Western brand boasting unspoiled outdoor recreation, unmatched wildlife and open space.

Tim O'Donoghue, former Chamber of Commerce director now heading Riverwind Foundation, a sustainable destination organization, told electeds about conservation just this week, "We need to get our act together ... not just create a strategy plan that gathers dust on a shelf."

There's an election this November. We need to wake up and vote for our #1 priority. Let's stop soiling our rivers and creeks, running over our wildlife, and paving over prime habitat.