

Oldest Bald Eagle in the World Lands at the Teton Raptor Center

A bald eagle, now known as BAEA 3.12.16, was found a few weeks ago covered in blood near the homes along the base of the East Gros Ventre Butte across from the National Elk Refuge. The eagle was assumed to have been struck by a vehicle on Hwy 89. After being transported to the Teton Raptor Center, x-rays revealed that while the bird had no broken bones, she had road rash, bruising and swelling throughout her body.

During her treatment, staff at the Teton Raptor Center noted that this bird had a unique metal band on her left leg. These bands are often used by researchers to identify many different species of birds with unique codes that will give them date on migration, nesting habits and age. After some investigation, it was determined that this bald eagle was 34 years old, making her the second oldest wild bald eagle on record in North America.

Director of the Teton Raptor Center Amy McCarthy noted that the center's ecologist Bryan Bedrosian was in disbelief when he discovered the bird's age. "He kept coming back to us

and saying, "That can't be right, that can't be right," McCarthy said. "He was putting it into the system, and it wasn't giving any feedback." This group of wildlife experts discovered that BAEA 3.12.16 was banded as part of a Wyoming study as a fledgling in 1982. This makes her older than the Teton Raptor Center itself, which wouldn't be established for another 15 years.



The typical age of a bald eagle living in the wild is about 20 years old. According to a local newspaper near Henrietta, New York, the oldest known wild bald eagle lived until the age of 38. At the Teton Raptor Center, staff is optimistic about BAEA 3.12.16's health. She is hand fed each day and is receiving laser therapy to improve blood flow to her injured areas. Rehabilitation Coordinator Meghan Warren is amazed at her patient's progress. "This one is kind of special because she's still alive," Warren said. "Not kind of special, very special."

Wyoming US House Candidate Proposes Federal Land be Ceded to State

In the race to become Wyoming's next representative in the United States House of Representatives, Rex Rammell has made the growing movement to pressure the federal government into ceding land to western states into one of his core campaign issues. The Gillette veterinarian believes the state would benefit from having control over federally controlled land such as Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. "I guarantee you if I was in charge of Yellowstone, it would be making money," Rammell said.



The idea of taking control of federal lands hasn't become as popular in Wyoming as it is in Utah, where some lawmakers have proposed suing the federal government to

gain control of this land. A recent bill proposed in Wyoming which would give the federal government three years to transfer land to the state failed to be introduced into the state legislature recently. This hasn't stopped Rammell from bringing up the issue during his campaign. He's said nearly everyone he speaks to in Wyoming supports the idea.

Many are drawn to the economic appeal of this proposal due to the fact that federal land accounts for almost half of Wyoming's total area. "There is so much money in natural resources that if the state had control of the land, I don't see any revenue problems ever again. I honestly don't," Rammell said. "And that includes management of the land — however the state wants to appropriate the use." Other Republicans running for this open spot in U.S. House include former Fox News commentator Liz Cheney, state senator Leland Christensen, state representative Tim Stubson and Northwest College professor Mike Konsmo.

Escalating costs slow resort worker housing

For the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, the rising cost to build 24 employee housing units which will house 93 employees has slowed their progress on the proposed Powderhorn development in Jackson. While the number of workers in Jackson Hole who need a place to live continues to rise, the cost of these projects for resort companies have ballooned since they were started. “The biggest reason we haven’t moved ahead is building costs,” resort Chief Administrative Officer Scott Horn said. “Since we started Phase 1 it’s probably gone up 30 or 40 percent — it’s through the roof.”



However, the need for employee housing is only expected to rise as the economy rebounds from an economic slump. For many construction projects in Jackson Hole area which began before the economic turnaround, rising construction costs have slowed progress on new developments. Recently, the Teton County Housing Authority’s Grove project on Scott Lane faced a ballooning price tag on their building project which was plagued by a rising price tag. In only one year, construction costs rose 20 percent, making the overall price of the project rise

from \$12 million to almost \$19 million.

Escalating costs have also plagued the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, who began construction on its employee housing on Powderhorn Lane in 2014. Pricing for building projects was more competitive during the Great Recession of 2008 when the few remaining contractors were eager to compete for work. “When we started Phase 1, at the tail end of the recession, things hadn’t really recovered yet,” Horn said. “Now that everyone is back on their feet, prices are back up.”

Progress on this resort worker housing is currently slow. While the resort company currently sublets some of the completed Powderhorn units to staff from the Four Seasons and Teton Mountain Lodge, there is enough demand from their own workers to fill all the units with their own staff. After the complex’s completion, it is expected that the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort will eventually take back these units. This will leave even more demand for employee housing from the other resorts in the area.

Tax Hikes Coming for Commercial Property Owners

In Teton County, county assessor Andy Cavallaro recently unveiled state-mandated changes to the ways commercial properties are assessed. This new system of appraising properties will bring the county’s properties into state compliance. The arrangement was recently approved by the State Board of Equalization, who had been pressuring the county to change its practices for the last nine months.

Cavallaro has been negotiating with the state board for many months about what these proposed changes would look like for the county. A recent letter from the State Board of Equalization pushed the assessor to “remedy areas of appraisal deficiency” to rectify a “concern that Teton County’s commercial improved property was undervalued.” They believed the county needed to address “historic valuation issues” with the its commercial

properties. The biggest problem with current practices comes from the inconsistent appraisal of properties by the county. While some commercial properties are valued by their chronological age (or the number of years it has been since the structure was built), others are assessed using their effective age, a system which also accounts for remodeling and the condition of the building.

Teton county estimates this transition to a system which will comply with the State Board of Equalization’s demands will amount to an average tax increase of between 20 and 40 percent for commercial property owners over the next four years. Obviously, these changes have been met with concern by the community. “You think I want to do this?” asked Cavallaro. “I totally get it. This is not an easy situation to walk into but I’m trying to talk though it as open and straightforward as I can.”

The first year of Cavallaro's plan will adjust the value of properties listed in the county's systems as almost entirely depreciated. These initial changes are not expected to significantly impact many commercial properties. However, it is anticipated that some owners will feel these changes more than others, depending on the number



of properties they own and the condition of these buildings.

Next, the assessor's office will work to re-assess all commercial

properties in the county. Over the course of this process (which is expected to take at least two years), property values could jump as much as 60 percent. While some properties inside the town have already been re-

evaluated, Cavallaro didn't want to initiate tax increases for some while others had a few more years of relief. "I don't want to just tax the town," he said. "I want to have the entire county complete and we need to physically inspect the entire county." The county plans to work with a commercial consultant to complete this work to make sure it completed objectively. Finally, the assessor's office will apply market data to valuations and will finalize each property's assessed value to bring it into compliance with current state regulations.

Cavallaro, who only took office last April, had to walk a fine line while meeting with the State Board of Equalization while also protecting the county's interests. If Teton County does not comply with these demands, the state board can take over the process. A major concern for these changes voiced by the community is the impact they will have on renters. Ray Elser, a local commercial real estate broker, noted, "It will have impacts on rents. There's going to be a lot of change."

Yellowstone National Park on List of Top Places to Visit in 2016

Yellowstone remains one of top places to visit in the United States a century after its establishment as a national park. Lonely Planet, a tourism company well known for their travel guides, announced recently that Yellowstone National Park has been named the third best place to visit in the country this year. In their guide to touring the park, Lonely Planet notes, "it's not all about boiling steam vents, bubbling mud pots and psychedelic hot springs. Go wolf-spotting in the Lamar Valley, take a Wild West tour by horseback or stagecoach, zoom through some the country's best snowmobile territory in the cold months, and explore the gateway towns like Gardiner, Montana, and Cody, Wyoming."

For many generations, Yellowstone has served as a sort of living museum for travelers from across the



world. Each year, more than 4 million visitors come to Wyoming to visit the national park's unspoiled wilderness. Yellowstone gives these these travelers to the park's 2,219,789 acres of land an up-close and personal glimpse of what North America was like before recorded history. The park, which is open year-round, is known for iconic spots such as a geyser called Old Faithful, Lower Falls and Yellowstone Lake which are popular spots for families to visit when touring the many natural wonders contained in the park's boundaries.

Yellowstone National Park is one of 407 national parks in the United States being celebrated during this 100th year of the National Park Service. During its Centennial, the National Park Service is encouraging people to explore their favorite parks and to learn how the conversation and preservation of parks such as Yellowstone has impacted their communities and the nation as a whole. As America's first national park, it is only fitting that Yellowstone serve as a reminded of what the nation looked like before modernization. For this reason, Yellowstone National Park remains a must-see attraction for people across the world.

Vertical Harvest Opens New Greenhouse in Jackson Hole



A new three story greenhouse which has been built on Milward Street in Jackson Hole is set to open right before Memorial Day weekend. Run by a company called Vertical Harvest, the new retail operation, called Market, will offer fresh, local produce and a variety of handmade products made in the community.

The greenhouse, which is owned by the town of Jackson, was built at a cost of \$3.67 million dollars (including a 1.5 million grant received from the Wyoming Business Council). Vertical Harvest has been charged with the building's operation. This organization is a low-profit socially minded business which combines the legal and tax flexibilities found in a traditional LLC with the social benefits that accompany a nonprofit organization.

Vertical Harvest anticipates it will be able to grow up to 100,000 pounds of fresh produce each year using hydroponic farming. This environmentally friendly method of farming is expected to save land, save water, eliminate agricultural runoff and chemical pesticides, and offer the benefits of efficient, high-yield, local, year-round food production. Co-founder Nona Yehia has urged customers to start looking for the fruits of these labors soon. "This spring customers can anticipate the inclusion of freshly picked produce harvested directly

from the greenhouse," she said in a release. "Market will sell Vertical Harvest's line of freshly picked lettuces, microgreens, herbs and tomatoes."

The organization anticipates this new retail store will be able to deliver fresh produce year-round to the Jackson Hole community within a week off its harvest. In addition to being a resource for locally grown foods, Vertical Harvest is socially minded as well. They have developed an employment model that will give much needed jobs to individuals with intellectual disabilities.



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