

# Bridging the Governance Gap in a Changing Watershed



Henrys Fork Watershed Council  
Annual Meeting 2025  
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LEGACYWORKS  
GROUP



# BRIDGING THE GOVERNANCE GAP



## STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE WATER AND LAND USE PLANNING

Public Policy Research Institute  
The University of Montana  
2007



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## The governance gap:

A fundamental disconnect between water policies (state managed) and land use planning (locally controlled)

## Historical Disconnect:

Fragmented decision making and failure to communicate the impacts of land use and water decisions upon one another has economic, social, and environmental consequences, especially in rapidly growing rural communities



# Today's agenda illustrates governance gap solutions



## Water Considerations in a Developing Watershed

December 16, 2025

Hosted in-person at the Fremont County Annex Building  
in St. Anthony, ID and hybrid via Zoom

### Annual Conference Agenda

- 8:45–9:00** Registration
- 9:00–9:15** *Welcome, Introductions, and Community Building*
- 9:15–10:00** Keynote Address – Amy Verbeten (LegacyWorks Group)
- 10:00–10:30** Modeling Septic Tank Density in Idaho's Treasure Valley – Alexis Clark (Idaho Geologic Survey)
- 10:30–10:45** *Break*
- 10:45–11:15** Domestic Well Exemption – James Cefalo (Idaho Dept. Water Resources)
- 11:15–11:45** Irrigation Easements, Right-of-Way, and Real Estate Transactions – Paul Arrington (Idaho Water Users Association)
- 11:45–12:15** St. Anthony River Park Feasibility Study – Sam Swanson (Merrick Whitewater)
- 12:15–1:15** *Lunch provided by HFWC*
- 1:15–1:45** Island Park Fuels Reduction Project – Jon White (U.S. Forest Service)
- 1:45–2:15** Contribution of Second-Home Property Tax to Economic Value of Fishing – Rob Van Kirk (Henry's Fork Foundation)
- 2:15–3:15** *On-the-Ground Lessons and Perspectives in Planning, Zoning, and Development*
- Panel discussion moderated by Will Stubblefield (Friends of the Teton River) featuring:
- Shane Ruebush (Madison County Planning & Zoning Commission)
  - Jade Kreuger (City of Driggs Planning & Building Department)
  - Matt Hively (Henry's Fork Foundation)
  - Niki Richards (Valley Advocates for Responsible Development)
- 3:15–3:30** *Wrap Up and Adjourn*

Co-facilitators:

Henry's Fork Foundation, 208-652-3567

Fremont-Madison Irrigation District, 208-624-3990

Minutes and copies of presentations from recent Watershed Council meetings can be viewed on the [Henry's Fork Watershed Council webpage](#).





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# Invitation to the room: How do we continue to bridge the governance gap?

How does this topic connect land and water decisions?

Where are we already integrating water use decisions with land use decisions?

Where are the gaps still present—and who needs to be at the table to fill them?

What small or large step could you or your organization take to move us toward more integrated governance?

What conversations are still missing?

Who is not yet part of the solution?



# We've Made Real Progress in Closing the Governance Gap in the Henry's Fork Watershed

Strong cross-agency relationships

Data is available and increasingly integrated into land use and water supply decisions

More planners asking for and engaging with water data early in the decision-making process

Actively discussing interaction between population growth, water supply, and water quality

Watershed councils are bringing together diverse land and water users to explore multi-benefit solutions

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**We still  
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to do**

Strengthen collaborative  
processes

Refine management tools  
and practices

Institutional and policy  
reforms



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## **Strengthen collaborative processes**

Move beyond black and white  
thinking

Support local government with  
education and data

Engage the public

Use collaboration intentionally  
for priority setting and  
problem solving



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## **Refine management tools and practices**

Incentivize and require water efficiency

Expand land use planning tools that reduce water impacts

Commit to adaptive management

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## **Institutional and Policy Reforms**

Ensure development pays for the full cost of water

Update land use planning documents to integrate water

Evaluate localized impacts of water withdrawals, not just basin-wide impacts

Clarify and use local authority



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**Amy Verbeten**  
Director  
Teton Regional Initiative  
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Citation:

Bates Van de Wetering (2007).  
Bridging the  
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