

March 19, 2026

Summary Letter

Bart Monsoon

On March 10, 2026, a group of concerned East Jackson neighbors met at the Elks Lodge in Jackson to discuss issues related to the proposed 2025 development plan for the Nelson Residential Site on Nelson Drive.

The discussion focused on how significantly the 2025 proposal diverges from the Final Decision issued in 2012 by Bridger–Teton National Forest (BTNF) Superintendent Jacqueline Buchanan. Many attendees believe the 2025 proposal represents an entirely new development plan that legally requires a new approval process under NEPA.

The 2025 development proposal prepared by the BTNF and the Jackson Community Housing Trust differs from Buchanan’s plan in several significant ways. Most notably, the proposal increases the number of additional units to 36, nearly three times the number contemplated in 2012. In addition, the proposal does not appear to follow the development boundary shown in Buchanan’s sketch plan, which clearly identified a defined area for construction.

The 2025 proposal also introduces the possibility that individuals who are not employees of the Bridger–Teton National Forest could be housed on public land. This concept was not considered during the 2012 NEPA process and would represent a significant policy precedent that has never been analyzed.

In her 2012 decision, Superintendent Buchanan approved a maximum of 13 additional residential units at Nelson Drive and committed to staying within the existing development boundary to the greatest extent possible. She also outlined the specific development area in a sketch map included with the decision. By contrast, the 2025 development plan proposes 36 additional units—nearly triple the number approved in 2012—and does not appear to adhere to the development boundaries outlined in Buchanan’s decision.

Shortly after issuing the 2012 Decision Notice, Buchanan further clarified her intent for the site in a letter sent to East Jackson resident Charlie Payne. That letter, along with the referenced sketch plan, is attached here. A copy of the letter was also sent to then–Jackson Mayor Mark Barron, and the Town of Jackson has confirmed that it remains in their records. The BTNF has likewise confirmed that both the letter and the sketch plan are included in their files related to the Nelson Drive project.

As documented in these materials, Buchanan approved a modest increase in housing units while committing to remain within the existing development footprint to the greatest extent possible. At the time, participants in the Environmental Assessment (EA) scoping process had the opportunity to appeal the decision or pursue legal action. No appeals were filed and no lawsuit was brought because the general consensus among East Jackson neighbors was that Buchanan’s decision was responsive, fair, and well-reasoned.

Another unresolved issue concerns the fate of the existing housing units at Nelson Drive. One of the primary motivations for the 2012 redevelopment effort was that the existing units were aging, inefficient, and unpleasant to live in. The 2025 development plan does not clearly address whether these structures will be replaced or removed. Without such clarification, residents are concerned that a future phase of development could later be proposed to redevelop those units, potentially resulting in additional density beyond what is currently proposed.

For these reasons, members of the group are concerned that the NEPA process is not being properly followed. Substantially altering the scope of the project without a new review means that key impacts may not have been fully analyzed.

Equally concerning is the issue of precedent. As part of the 2012 Environmental Assessment, BTNF evaluated whether the decision would set a precedent for future actions either locally or nationally. Buchanan concluded that it would not, largely because the approved plan remained modest in scale and adhered to the existing development footprint.

The 2025 proposal, however, would establish several significant precedents. It would potentially allow National Forest Service supervisors to substantially alter prior decisions made through the NEPA process, and it would introduce the precedent of housing non-BTNF employees on National Forest Service land—a policy shift with implications not only for Nelson Drive but for other communities located near National Forest lands.

For these reasons, and others, the group opposes the proposed project and intends to pursue all available avenues to ensure that the 2012 Decision Notice issued by Superintendent Buchanan remains the governing framework for development at Nelson Drive.

If the BTNF wishes to pursue a development plan similar to the 2025 proposal, it is free to begin a new NEPA process, seek full public comment from all stakeholders, and analyze the potential impacts on property values, traffic, safety, environmental quality, and community character. Such a process should also fully examine the broader precedential implications of the proposal for both this site and other National Forest Service lands.

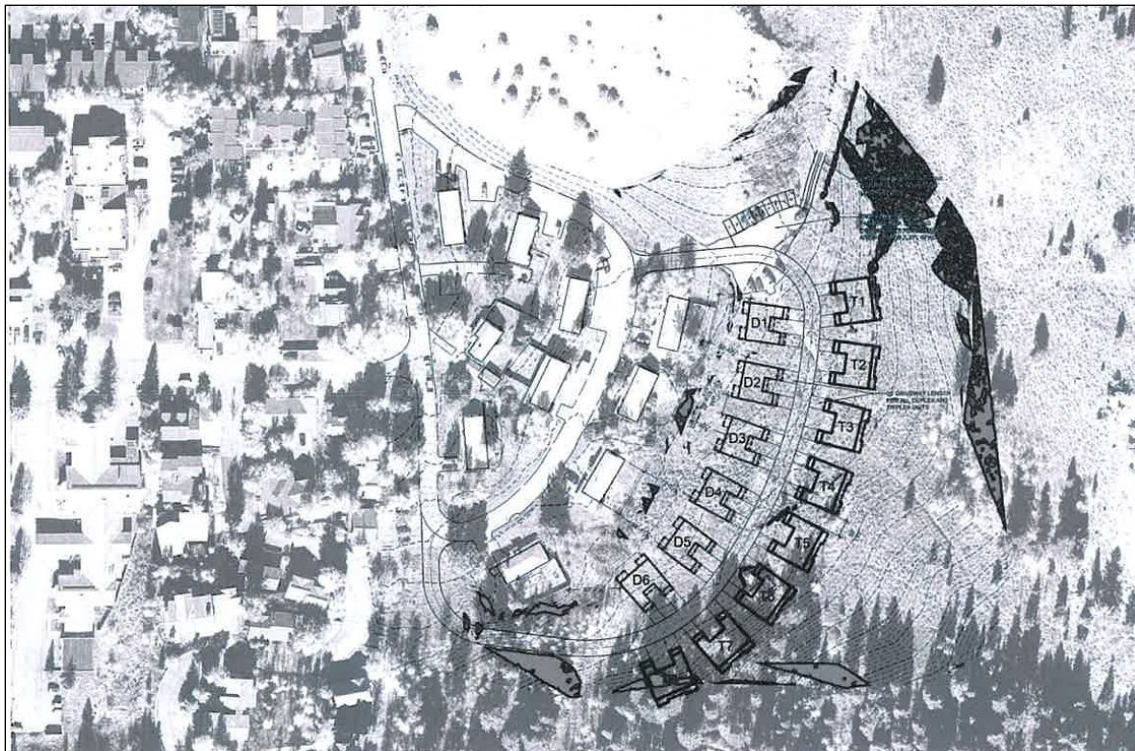
To visually illustrate the boundary issue, this is an image of East Jackson and the massive 80-acre BTNF Nelson Residential Parcel. We intend to protect this land as it is vulnerable to development now and in the future.



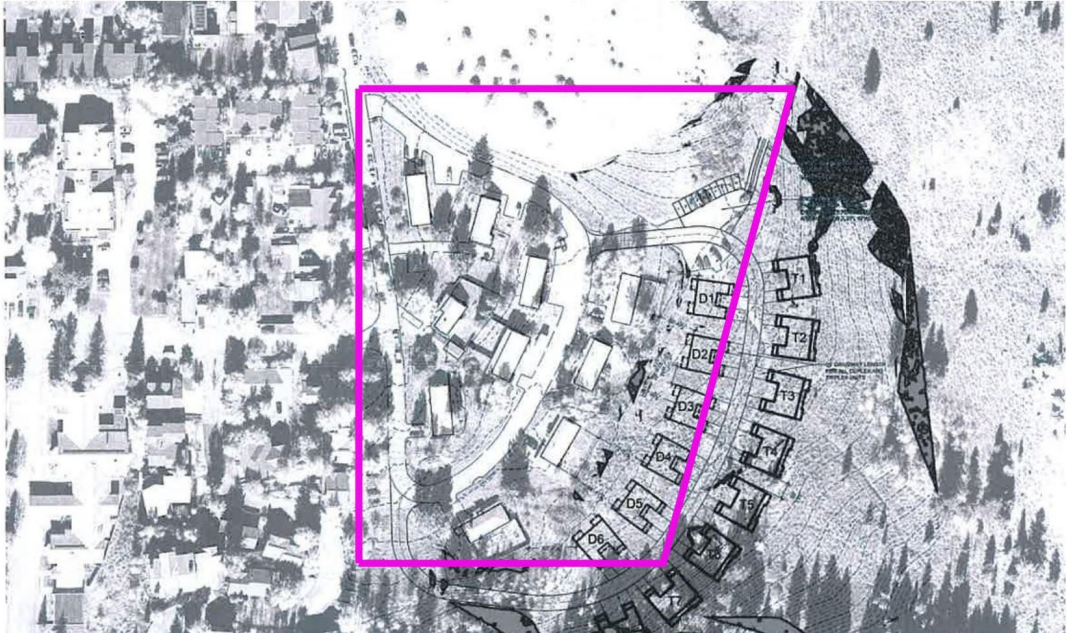
This is a hand-drawn sketch that BTNF Supervisor Buchanan sent to East Jackson neighbor Charlie Payne in 2012 clarifying her Decision Notice and noting the approved boundaries of the project.



This is the 2025 development plan as shown in the Special Use Permit issued by BTNF Supervisor Chad Hudson to the Housing Trust:



Overlaying an outline of Buchanan's sketch plan with the plans included in the Special Use Permit issued by Hudson, we see that many units in the 2025 development plan are outside the boundary approved by Buchanan in 2012.



The full Clarification Letter from Supervisor Buchanan wherein she commits to building no more than 13 additional units at Nelson Drive and staying within the existing building envelope to the greatest extent possible is attached here. Also attached is a summary of issues with the 2025 development plan compiled by Michael Clement.

In closing, get ready, because we are now committed to fighting this as a group.

Sincerely,

Bart Monson on behalf of Nelson Neighborhood Conservation Coalition