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# SOURCES + DESIGN

PREMIER INDUSTRY PUBLICATION FOR DESIGNERS, ARCHITECTS, LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS AND BUILDERS IN THE WEST MARCH/APRIL 2007

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# 3 Creek Ranch, Jackson, Wyoming

Jim Verdone, ASLA, Verdone Landscape Architects, Jackson, Wyoming

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLEN KENNEDY AND AIDAN BRADLE







A covered bridge, aspen and a pond greet residents and visitors at the entrance to 3 Creek Ranch.



JACKSON'S WIDE-OPEN SPACES AND OLD RANCH LANDS ARE spectacular. Set against a backdrop of the Grand Tetons, the land is environmentally fragile and facing encroachment from the town's continuing growth. It's no wonder, then, that Teton County has some of the strictest zoning regula-

tions and overlays in the West, aimed at protecting the local environment and scenery.

The thought of plopping down a 710-acre golf-course development in the midst of all this pristine beauty might have raised more than a few eyebrows and hackles in these



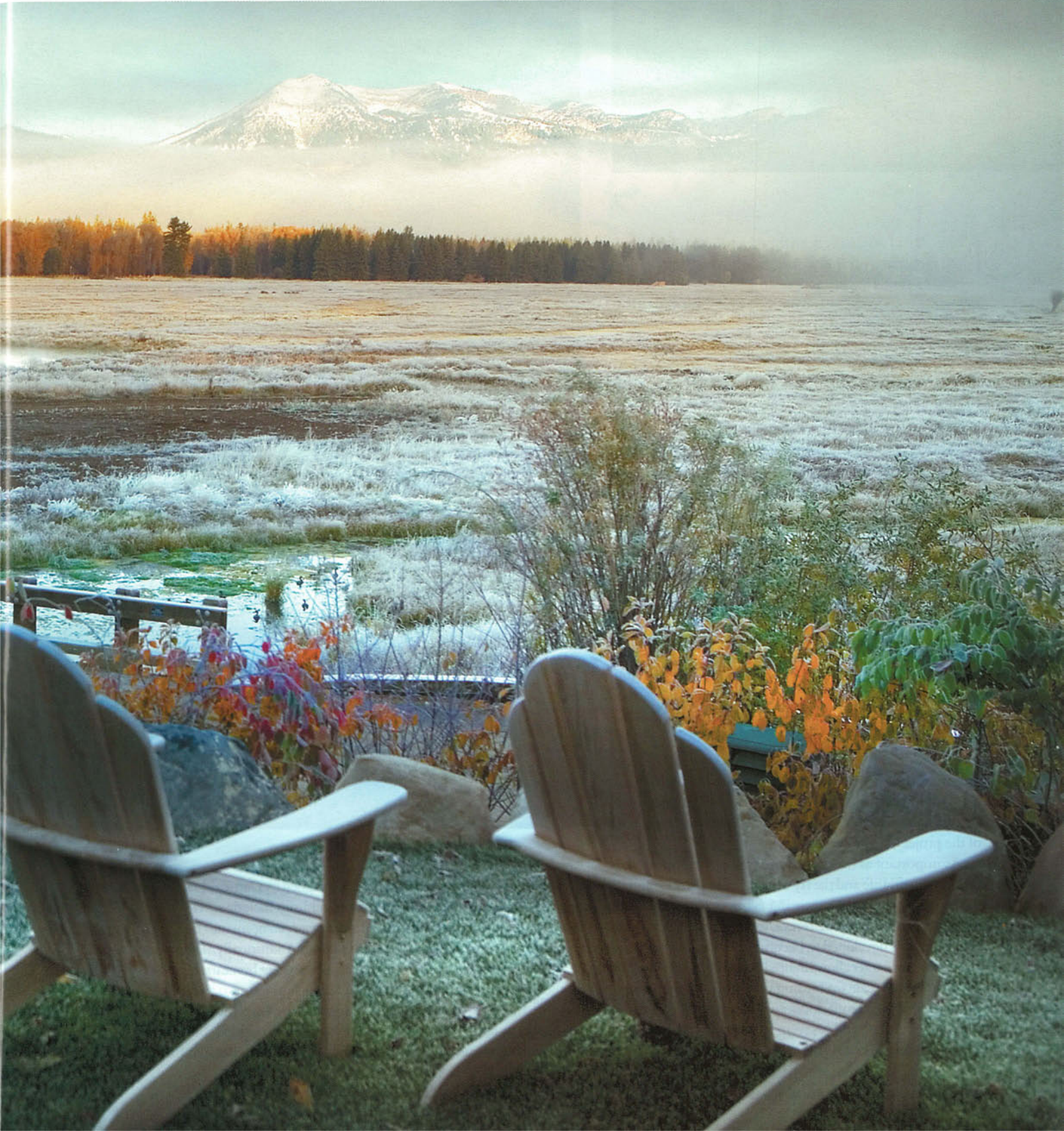
Adirondack chairs overlook the frost-covered wetlands near the nature center.



parts, but 3 Creek Ranch did it all right, even down to the Raptor Recovery Center on site and the fishing master employed there to monitor trout activity in the creeks. The planning and the landscape architecture, done by Jim Verdone and his team from Verdone Landscape Architects,

garnered a special 2006 Land Stewardship Award and Merit Award for design from the Colorado Chapter ASLA, which also encompasses Wyoming.

Verdone began work on the project not long after the client acquired the property, located just outside Jackson,







in 2000. It had originally been the 4 Lazy F Ranch, owned by the Frew family from Pittsburgh, who used it as a family guest ranch and fly-fishing retreat. They also raised cattle and grew hay there. The lower portion of the ranch is a series of wetlands and laced with the Spring, Cody and Blue Crane creeks—hence the development’s name.

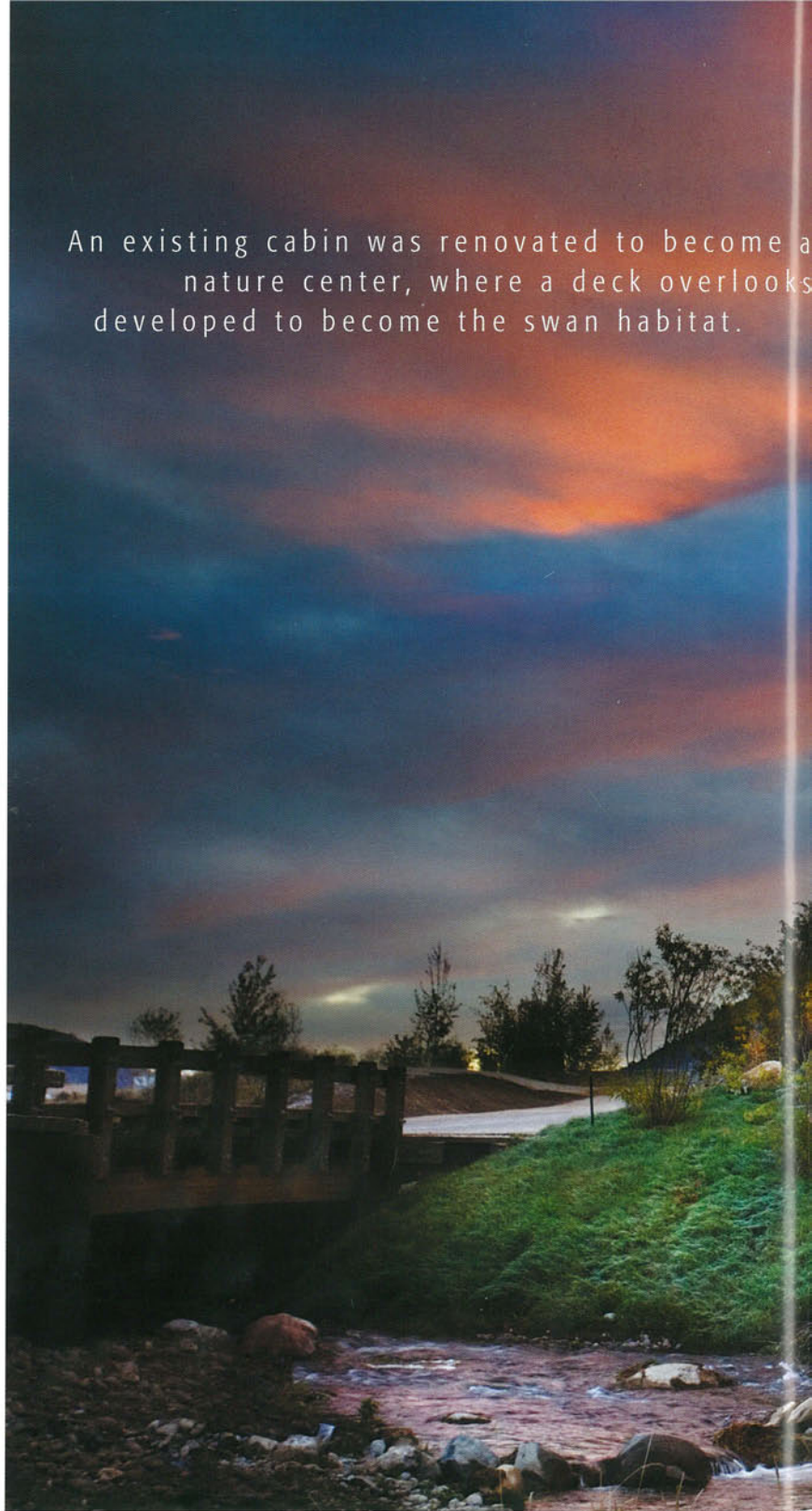
“There’s a natural resource overlay for the wildlife here,” explains Verdone, “which includes moose, elk, trumpeter swans and the Snake River cutthroat trout. There’s also a scenic overlay, because the ranch is part of a scenic corridor.” Undaunted by the restrictions, Verdone began planning out a community that includes an 18-hole Rees Jones–designed golf course and 136 residential units, ranging from half-acre cabin sites to 35-acre ranch settings. “The client appreciated the setting and wanted to do everything right,” says Verdone of the environmental regulations. “The project went through (the approval process) at an unheard-of speed.”

The key issue for the project was the impact the golf course and housing would have on the property, specifically the water quality of the creeks and wetlands. “We did an environmental inventory on the property and adjusted the golf element around it,” says the landscape architect. “We also coordinated a detailed golf management plan.” The plan involved working with a team of consultants, experts in wildlife, fisheries, wetlands and more. Soils and groundwater were tested, standards were set for grading and drainage, and certain fertilizers and chemicals were banned from use on the course. A system was set up to filter the runoff. “This was all also carried over to the residential component of the project,” says Verdone.

As important as the golf course was to the project, the creeks, the wildlife and the fly-fishing were also key points to the development. An existing cabin was renovated to become a creekside nature center, where a deck overlooks a series of ponds developed to become the swan habitat. The adjacent raptor center allows injured birds a chance to recover and provides a locale for birding programs. Homeowners can walk out their front doors and cast away for trout.

While Verdone and his team handled the planning for the ranch, they also did the landscape architecture for the

An existing cabin was renovated to become a nature center, where a deck overlooks developed to become the swan habitat.



project’s public buildings and the cabins, designed by Carney Architects, also of Jackson. The public buildings include a covered bridge that signals the entry to the development, and a clubhouse and a pool/fitness building. Additionally, Verdone is doing the landscapes for many of the other homes in the development.

“The theme for the landscape design was to keep the open, native look,” says Verdone. Revegetation included the use of sagebrush, sedges and native grasses, allowing

Above left: Fly fishing is a major element of 3 Creek Ranch.

Above: An old cabin now serves as the community’s nature center.



creekside  
a series of ponds



homeowners and visitors to enjoy long views of the creeks and the Tetons. Privacy for homes was achieved through siting, grading and the use of larger shrubs. “We kept the taller trees, such as the cottonwoods, willows, spruce and aspen, along the perimeter of the project,” he says. “We also used some taller trees around structures, such as the entrance and clubhouse, like they used to do at the old ranch houses here.”

The project has met not only with design success, but

market success as well. The golf course has been open for about two years, and all the lots have been sold. Many, apparently, have bought into 3 Creek Ranch’s careful stewardship of those wide open spaces.

**Planning and landscape architecture:** Verdone Landscape Architects, Jackson, WY; (307) 733-3062 or [www.verdonelandarch.com](http://www.verdonelandarch.com).

**Architecture:** Carney Architects, Jackson, WY; (307) 733-4000 or [www.carneyarchitects.com](http://www.carneyarchitects.com).