

# Health board likely to OK smoking ban

3 of 37 comments made so far oppose regulation.

By Traci Angel

Sparkling emerald St. Patrick's Day decorations dangled from the Virginian Saloon's ceiling Tuesday morning. But the party would have to wait until after a talk decrying smoking restrictions.

A binder titled "The Lies Behind the Smoking Bans" was on top of the bar. Its pages dismissed government-enforced regulations, saying the media often distort scientific data to propagate anti-smoking advocates' causes.

The Virginian is perhaps the one establishment whose customers would likely be affected if the Teton District Board of Health passes a smoke-free air rule Tuesday. All other restaurants and bars in the county voluntarily prohibit smoking cigarettes.

The rule under consideration would make it illegal to smoke indoors in all public buildings in the county. The ban would include bars, restaurants and lines at ski resorts. It also bars smoking within 20 feet of public buildings. A violation would be a misdemeanor, which could mean a \$750 fine or jail time.

While Virginian managers and customers make a last attempt to get their voices heard, county health officials are preparing to celebrate Wyoming's first countywide ban.

So far, almost all public comments during a mandatory 45-day period have been in favor of the rule, county health manager Terri Gregory said.

The health department had received about 37 public comments since the period began in late January. Only three of those were against the rule, she said.

"I can't say that I've heard from any businesses," she said.

The official 45-day comment period ended Sunday, but Gregory said she will allow comments until Tuesday's meeting.

Gregory expects to make the comments available for board members and the media early next week.

The board is prepared to vote on the rule, unless enough changes are made after public input to warrant another 45-day comment period.

Its adoption would be a victory for

## Read, comment on rule

Teton District Board of Health will meet at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the Teton County commissioners' chambers.

The Teton County Smoke-Free Air Rule of 2009 is posted in its entirety at [tetonwyo.org](http://tetonwyo.org). The public can post a comment on the Web site, mail one to P.O. Box 937, Jackson, WY 83001, drop off written comments at 460 E. Pearl Ave., call 733-6401 or e-mail [terri.gregory@health.wyo.gov](mailto:terri.gregory@health.wyo.gov). A copy of the also rule can be seen at the county clerk's office, county library and health department office.

health advocates whose previous attempts to get the Jackson Town Council to pass a no-smoking ordinance failed.

"This speaks loudly to health efforts, and that health is important to this community," Gregory said.

Julia Heemstra of Teton County Tobacco Prevention and her organization's volunteers have been distributing anti-tobacco materials.

"We pride ourselves on being one of the more progressive areas in the state," Heemstra said Monday. "I would love for the county to set the pace on bringing smoking protection."

That feeling is not unanimous.

Virginian Saloon and liquor store manager Max Anderson said she worries customers might stop coming to the Virginian if they can't light up.

"My feeling is the economy is bad enough," she said. "I would hate to see business drop because people are staying home."

Anderson and Virginian complex manager Mike Kraft spoke of the fundraising the saloon's patrons do, including the St. Patrick's muscular dystrophy charity. Anderson said she wondered whether a smoking ban would prevent the Cutter Races and snowmobile Hill Climb crowds from frequenting the Virginian.

Kraft said he has never smoked but he thinks people should have the right to enjoy a cigarette with a beer.

Customer Dave Loy, who stood at the bar's end, agreed.

"I'll vouch for that," he said. "I'm trying to quit, but it's more about the rights."