

Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project

Upper Salmon Basin Watershed News

NEWS ABOUT RESTORING FISH IN CENTRAL IDAHO Winter 2002

“To Enhance, Protect and Restore Fish Habitat”

Inside this issue:

Habitat & Passage Improvement Projects	2
Pacific Salmon lifecycle	2
Tech Team Members	3
Historical Overview	3
VIP Visitors	3
Coordinator’s Comments	4

Advisory Committee Members

- * V. Don Olson, Chairman
- * Ted O’Neal, Custer SWCD
- * Lynn Herbst, Lemhi SWCD
- * Chad Colter, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- * Tom Curet, ID Dept. of Fish & Game
- * Jude Trapani, Bureau of Land Management
- * Mark Olson, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- * Greg Schildwachter, Idaho Office of Species Conservation
- * Trent Jones, Nature Conservancy
- * Chris Swersey, Recreation
- * Glenn Seaberg, US Forest Service
- * Bruce Mulkey, Lemhi River
- * Betty Baker, East Fork
- * Doug Baker, East Fork
- * Jim Dowton, Pahsimeroi River
- * Shannon Williams, U of I Cooperative Extension System
- * Vacant- Stanley Basin, Salmon River, North Fork

Lemhi Irrigation District Water Bank Successful

In the summer of 2000, the Lemhi River experienced times when water flows were non-existent in the section between the 28 Club and the City of Salmon. 2001 was forecasted to be just as dry, and the Directors of the Lemhi Irrigation District recognized that something needed to be done to keep water in this critical reach of river. Because of Idaho Water Law, even if irrigators at those sites cut down on their water usage, other irrigators with junior (later) water rights could call for those flows to irrigate their lands.

Several options were explored with the assistance of the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project in Salmon, formerly known as the Model Watershed Project. One of those options was to form a water bank, but in order to let these irrigators lease their water to a bank and allow those flows to stay in the stream, Idaho Code

would need to be modified.

Through the efforts of the Lemhi Irrigation District’s directors, House Bill No. 358 was enacted. In summary: “It authorized the Idaho Water Resource Board to appropriate a minimum stream flow right in a designated reach of the Lemhi River; and to direct the Idaho Water Resource Board to appoint a local rental committee to facilitate operation of the water supply bank within the Lemhi River Basin.” These flows rights can be rented for less than the entire season, which was also a change to Idaho Code.

Water is a valuable commodity, and funding was needed to compensate those who would volunteer to lease their decreed water right to the Water Bank. This is where the Bureau of Reclamation stepped in with funding to rent this water on a per-acre basis, allowing it to remain in the river. The ad-

ministrator of this agreement is the Lemhi Irrigation District and will in no way negatively affect anyone’s decreed water rights.

By July 1, 2001, eleven irrigators on the Lemhi River elected to lease all or part of their legally decreed water right to the Lemhi Irrigation District’s Water Bank for a total of 21.6 cfs. This meant that they were paid not to irrigate. Crops on these farms and ranches dried up, although most were able to harvest a first cutting of hay before shutting down their water and they were able to graze these lands.

This agreement was in place through the hot summer months of 2001 and made it possible for fish to freely migrate through this critical section of the Lemhi River. This is just one example of locally led conservation efforts that take positive actions to make a difference for natural resources.

“Closing Mouth of Lemhi”

Recorder Herald—Dateline June 12, 1929

R.E. Thomas, Game Warden, Visits an Anglers’ Heaven

As a means of saving the chinook salmon, the game warden has ordered off all fishing or spearing for chinookers at the dam of the Lemhi River near Salmon city, and all that stream below the dam to the mouth, and further to a point on Salmon river 200 feet below the mouth of the Lemhi. “It is a shame,” said the warden, “to allow persons to spear these spawners on their way to the business of egg-laying. Such fish as escape in this part of the Lemhi are usually driven back to the main river, and thus are lost for use. Such reckless destruction of parent stock is destined to reduce the harvest of eggs, until eventually the spawning business here will be abandoned, and nobody will profit by such a move.” Mr. Thomas asks the people of this district to lend a helping hand to save the spawners of chinook or King salmon; for the success of this hatchery means the preservation of the fishing industry in this vicinity.

Habitat and Passage Projects Implemented

Following is a partial list of projects in various stages of implementation.

Lemhi Watershed

- Lemhi River off-stream stock water development
- Whitefish Ditch water control structure
- Livestock feeding facility relocation
- Eliminate 2 diversions and convert to sprinklers
- Canyon Creek off-stream stock water development and riparian fence
- Lemhi-Big Springs stream protection with 11,550' of fence, bridge, and hardened cattle crossing
- Lemhi River riparian fencing on 4600' of stream

- L-3 & L-3a—Remove diversion structure and replace and improve diversions to improve fish passage
- L-6 / S-14—Proposed project will transfer water rights from the Lemhi River to the Salmon River to improve streamflows

Pahsimeroi Watershed

- Reconnect Falls Creek and Little Morgan Creek to mainstem river (planning)
- Change point of diversion
- Eliminate diversion by conversion to sprinklers
- Anderson Springs stock water development
- 1800 ' of riparian fence

East Fork Watershed

- Herd Creek 1&2 modification for fish passage
- EF 10-13 modification for fish passage
- Streambank plantings

Salmon River Watershed

- S-11/12 diversion consolidation to improve fish passage
- 12-mile project
- Holman/Kinnikinnick Creek barrier removal
- 2 miles of riparian fence near Stanley (proposed)

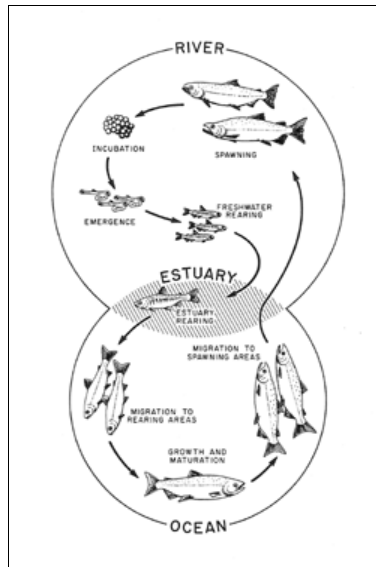
Rebuilding salmon runs is a complex process because salmon lead complex lives.

Pacific Salmon Lifecycle

Salmon spend 40 to 75 percent of their lives at sea, but little is known about the interplay of natural processes and human related activities that affect ocean conditions.

Salmon research indicates that smolts head into hostile waters when they start out to sea. Studies of the El Nino warming, deterioration of the ozone layer and shifts in ocean currents, seem to coincide with their woes.

The upsurge of cold, nutrient rich water from the ocean depths is one natural phenomenon that benefits salmon smolts as they enter the ocean. What prompts this seasonal cold-water upwelling is not well understood. Yet when the upsurge is delayed, as it



sometimes is, young salmon smolts don't get enough to eat, so more of them die.

Equally disturbing is the changing chemistry of an ocean that is growing algae in places where the waters had been too cold and clean before. The middle of the oceans have been the site of large-scale algae blooms, indicated that the water temperature is high and oxygen is relatively low.

It appears that survival of returning salmon from the ocean is poor during warm, dry weather trends and improves when the overall trend is cold and wet.

If weather predictions are correct, the coming winter should be colder and wetter than normal which

could mean more salmon surviving to make it home to spawn next spring.

Given time, salmon have proven they can weather these fluctuations. Freshwater habitat and passage have long been known as issues in salmon survival, but only now are we learning the importance of ocean conditions.

**Upper Salmon Basin
Watershed News**
Published at
206 Van Dreff, Suite A
Salmon, Idaho 83467
Phone 208-756-6322
FAX 208-756-6376
E-mail mws@salmoninternet.com
Web site: www.modelwatershed.org

Staff
John Folsom Project Coordinator
Allen Bradbury Project Planner
Katie Slavin Office Manager
Carl Rudeen Environmental Compliance Specialist

Coordinated by
Idaho Soil Conservation Commission
Custer Soil & Water Conservation District
Lemhi Soil & Water Conservation District

USBWP Technical Team Makes Projects a Reality

The staff of the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project would like to give credit where credit is due. The major workload to implement conservation projects fall on the Technical Team. They meet on the last Wednesday of each month and the participants are:

- Jude Trapani, Chairman, BLM
- Jeff Anderson, Shoshone Bannock Tribes
- Allen Bradbury, USBWP
- Arnie Brimmer, IDFG
- Jana Brimmer, NMFS
- Tom Curet, IDFG
- Kate Forester, BLM
- Dale Gooby, NRCS
- Tom Herron, IDEQ
- Matt Hightree, IDFG
- Patti Jones, BLM
- Jeff Maser, ISCC
- Jolene McCandless, NRCS
- Deb Mignogno, USFWS
- Tom Montoya, USFS
- Mark Olson, NRCS
- Carl Rudeen, IASCD
- Rick Sager, Water Dist. 74
- Al Simpson, BoR
- Bruce Smith, USFS
- R.J. Smith, Lemhi Irrig. Dist.
- Larry Weeks, IDFG



Allen Bradbury, Project Planner, teaches stream health on Challis 5th grade field day

Historical Overview

The influence of European man into these western lands began with the influx of fur trappers in the early 1800's. In an effort to stall the expanding American presence from moving into their historic trapping territories, the Hudson Bay Company deliberately attempted to create a biological desert, devoid of trappable beaver populations.

Before that time, many stream-banks were likely lined with woody vegetation, such as willow, aspen, alder, and cottonwood. This trapping instigated changes in the way the

river functioned. Beaver ponds, which had effectively expanded floodplains, dissipated erosive power of floods, and acted as deposition areas for sediment

"An Indian gave me a piece of fresh salmon roasted, which I ate with relish. This was the first salmon I had seen."
- Captain Meriwether Lewis,
August 3, 1805

and nutrient-rich organic matter, were not maintained and eventually failed. Stream energy became confined to discrete channels, causing erosion and downcutting.

The fish in the Lemhi River were also commercially exploited. The Mormon missionaries at Fort Lemhi reported in their journals that they exported seven wagon loads of dried salmon to Salt Lake City in 1857 (Nash, 1974)

Thomas Garvey built a fishrack about 1/2 mile above the mouth of the Lemhi around 1865, selling the dried fish to the mining camps. This rack was so effective, it was a rare thing for any fish to be caught anywhere on the Lemhi River. In 1878, to forestall an impending conflict with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes due to their shortage of food, settlers in Salmon collected \$400 and paid Garvey to let fish pass. (Walker, 1993)

VIP Visitors 2001

- Bureau of Reclamation—*Joe Spinazola* held special sub-basin meeting in Salmon in May to outline future efforts on the Lemhi River.
- Bonneville Power Admin.—*Allyn Meuleman* assisted with budget proposals and attended meetings.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service—*Debra Mignogno and Ted Koch* attended Tech Team and Advisory Meetings.
- Danish Hydrology Institute—*Carter Borden* and others held special sub-basin meeting in Salmon in October.
- National Marine Fisheries Service—Opened field office in Salmon, led by *Jan Pizano*.
- *Senator Mike Crapo* and staff held special luncheon meeting in August with Advisory Committee members to gather information on fish recovery efforts.
- Idaho Dept. of Water Resources—*Stan Clark* assisted with water bank and irrigation issues
- Office of Species Conservation—*Jim Caswell and Greg Schildwachter* attended Tech and Advisory Meetings.
- Northwest Power Planning Council—*Rayola Jacobson* attended Salmon River tour. *Judi Danielson and Joanne Hunt* attended tour of Lemhi and Advisory Meeting in November.
- Idaho Soil Conservation Commission—*Bob Griffel, Jerry Nicolescu and Kathy Weaver* attended Advisory meetings. *Biff Burleigh* assisted with budget proposals.
- University of Idaho—*Dr. Peter Goodwin and Jasna Muskatirovic* attended DHI meeting and Tech Team meetings.



Upper Salmon Basin Watershed News

206 Van Dreff, Ste. A
Salmon, ID 83467

Phone: 208-756-6322

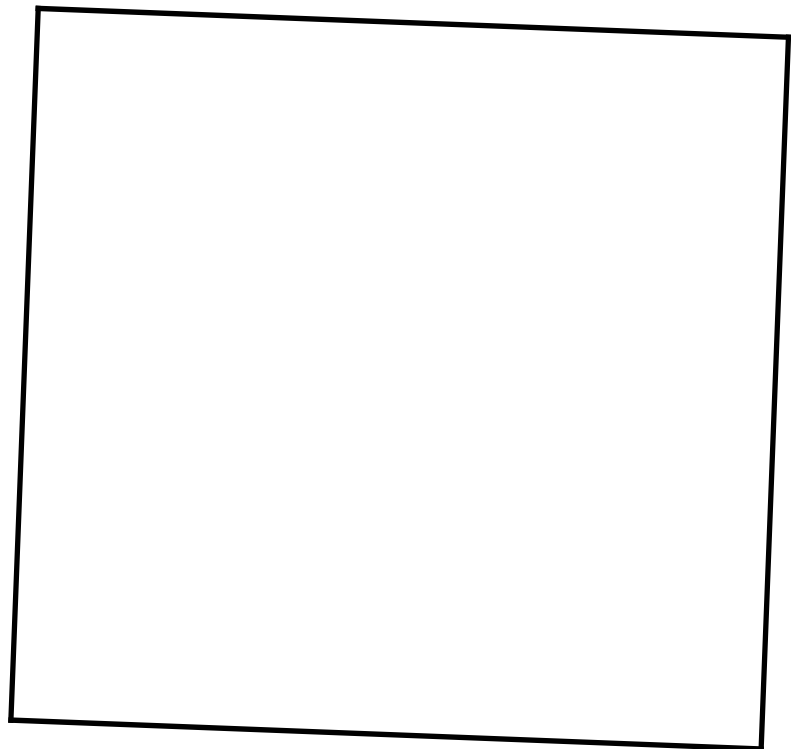
Fax: 208-756-6376

Email: mws@salmoninternet.com

Notice

USBWP Advisory Committee Meeting
February 12, 2002—10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Challis Sr. Center, Challis, ID

We're on the Web!
www.modelwatershed.org



Coordinator's Comments *By John Folsom*

The Salmon River country in central Idaho has what millions of people want—clean water, beautiful mountains, productive mountain valleys, abundant fish and wildlife, and rural values. These are our greatest resources.

But, these resources we enjoy and sometimes take for granted, come linked with many challenges. The very issues that we struggle with can attract funding and support from around the country.

If the residents in central Idaho dare to pioneer new and innovative conservation ideas and agricultural practices and economic sustainability tools, they will find support from natural resource managers, the ranching community, the public, and those with an environmental interest.

I am convinced that we can make better decisions locally about land and water management, economic stability, and the use of conservation tools, than outside entities.

I would like to personally express my appreciation to the USBWP Advisory Committee and Technical Teams for the many hours they spend involved in this project.

Also, we couldn't continue to function without the Lemhi and Custer Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. These individuals volunteer an extraordinary amount of time .

I would also like to acknowledge the Lemhi Irrigation District board for their forward thinking and dedication in finding innovative ways to protect water users and the resource.

There have been many great accomplishments in the Upper Salmon Basin and the credit should go the people that really make it happen.

It is critical that local citizens and landowners educate themselves about the issues and stay informed.

"Ford Fords Salmon River"

Challis Messenger—Dateline August 11, 1926

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Wilcox and family forded Salmon river with a Ford one day during the past week. There were five in the car and the "old boat" sailed through the water of the Salmon river twice just below the Wilson Ellis place on the Pahsamaroi. They experienced no difficulties. This is probably the first automobile to ever ford the Salmon river and it was made possible by reason of the low waters.