



# Upper Salmon Basin Watershed News

NEWS ABOUT RESTORING FISH IN CENTRAL IDAHO

Winter 2006

## Local Golfers Work to Save Fish



### Inside this issue:

<b>SNRA Riparian Fences Installed</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Informational Open House</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund Update</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Work focus shifting</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Coordinator's Comments</b>	<b>4</b>

### Watershed Calendar

- December 12—Advisory Committee Meeting in Salmon
- January 23—Welcome to Lemhi County Open House 4 to 7 p.m. at Salmon Elks

Those familiar with the Lower Lemhi Surface to Groundwater Project have dubbed it a win-win situation for the fish and the Salmon Valley Golf Association (SVGA). This project will preserve the flows in the section of the Lemhi River, downstream from the L-6 diversion to the L-3 diversion, which is a critical reach for fish migration in the river.

The SVGA and the City of Salmon will also benefit from an upgraded sprinkler system, in exchange for pumping water through the installation of three wells instead of using the surface flows which were formerly diverted from L-6 and L-7. SVGA members have donated cash and labor to see this project through.

This idea has been on the drawing board for many years. The City was involved in working out legal technicalities involving water right transfers and contending with protests from citizens that were duly concerned pumping from the shallow aquifer would negatively impact their home wells. Pumping tests were conducted that showed this project would have minimal impact on the wells.

The Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District and the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission's Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project have been committed to seeing this idea become a reality. They have worked together to procure funding from the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund and Bonneville

Power Administration (BPA), although the commitment from BPA was questionable when they withdrew and then reinstated a portion of the funding earlier this year.

The main focus of this project is to keep the water in the

Lemhi River and 3.56 cubic feet per second will be added through this effort. A ground breaking ceremony was held on October 2 and a ribbon cutting / tee-off ceremony will be scheduled in the Spring when all elements of the project are complete.



*Josh Tolman buries mainline for updated system*

**NO, WE HAVEN'T MOVED, BUT YES, WE HAVE A NEW ADDRESS. THE USBWP BUILDING HAS BEEN ANNEXED INTO THE CITY OF SALMON AND ASSIGNED: 955 RIVERFRONT DRIVE, SUITE B. SALMON, IDAHO 83467**

## Hatchery Receives Millions of Eggs

*Recorder Herald — Dateline October 23, 1929*

Three million Chinook salmon eggs were received by the federal hatchery here Monday evening from the state hatchery near Eugene, Oregon. V.H. Dunton of Malloila, Oregon came with the shipment and will return tomorrow.

The eggs are now in the hatchery and in the course of about two weeks will begin hatching, according to Mr. Heffner. The baby fish will be cared for here for a period of five months. By

that time they will be about 2 1/2 inches long and ready to be planted, in the Salmon and Lemhi Rivers.

It was necessary to ship the eggs in this season on account of the light run of Chinook salmon in the Salmon River this summer. It was unusually small as compared to the previous year when a plentiful supply of spawn was secured.

**Trout Ready for Planting**

**Recorder Herald—Dateline October 16, 1929**

**Anyone wanting trout for planting may get them at the hatchery according to a statement by Van A Heffner, in charge of the federal hatchery here. He said that many had already called and taken fish to be put in the Lemhi and Salmon and their tributaries. By getting volunteers to take the trout to various parts of the county in small quantities, a wide area is planted and in this manner the best results are obtained.**

**Riparian Fences Benefit Fish Habitat and Ranchers Alike**

*By: Ruthie Wooding, SNRA Private Lands & Easement Administrator*

During 2004 and 2005, fifteen miles of riparian fence protection was installed on three large ranches in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. These projects were the outcome of hard work and dedicated interagency collaboration using the funding from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Banks along the Salmon River and Valley Creek were protected from grazing impacts in this win-win solution. These projects required willing ranchers to contribute cost sharing and accept the terms and conditions of these grants, the toughest of which is the 35-foot set back from the creek or river bank, in return for a new low maintenance fence and multiple conservation benefits. BPA was willing to pay the extra investment to install log worm and jack fences to protect the fisheries and enhance the historic and pastoral values of this area while preventing damage to riparian habitat and known spawning areas for threatened and endangered fish species. Landowners also voluntarily met



wildlife passable specifications allowing ungulates ease of movement across their range. These fences helped conserve four of the core values the Forest Service is charged with protecting in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

We are very thankful to our federal, state and county partners and most importantly to the landowners who participated in this program. We are also grateful to the talented fence builders who crafted wildlife passable fences that complement the breathtaking scenic views across the Stanley Basin and Sawtooth Valley.

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 955 Riverfront Drive, Suite B  
 Salmon, Idaho 83467  
 Phone 208-756-6322  
 FAX 208-756-6376  
 E-mail: rknight@idahoag.us  
 Web site: www.modelwatershed.org

Staff  
 Russell Knight .....Project Coordinator  
 Allen Bradbury .....Project Planner  
 Katie Slavin .....Office Manager  
 Wendy Koons.....Project Planner

Jeff Maser  
 Water Quality Resource Conservationist

Coordinated by  
 Idaho Soil Conservation Commission  
 Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts  
 Lemhi Soil & Water Conservation District

**Informational Open House Slated**

Lemhi County is currently experiencing rapid growth. New and long-time residents are not always aware what services, organizations, or public agencies have to offer.

The USBWP and Cooperative Extension System are working together to hold a fun and informative event that will provide this information to the community.

On January 23, all families, neighbors and friends are invited to attend this “welcome wagon—open house” at the Salmon Elks Lodge that will help them get acquainted with each other and explore the services that are available. Doors will open to the public at 4 p.m.

Door prizes and refreshments will be on-hand with demonstrations and presentations offered at designated times.

One goal of the Cooperative Extension System at this event is to spur interest in the workshop, “Living on the Land, Stewardship for Small Acreages” to be held at a later date.

Entities that have been invited to provide booths are: Idaho Fish & Game, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Back Country Horsemen, School System, Lemhi Regional Land Trust, and many other service organizations, government agencies, and non-profits.

**Don't Forget to Join Us.**

## Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund Update *By Wendy Koons*

At the close of 2006, the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project (USBWP) will conclude its second year of participation in the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF). The PCSRF was established by congress in FY2000 and is administered nationally by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The Governor's Office of Species Conservation (OSC) administers these fund in Idaho, and has established a PCSRF grant process to award funds to address the five PCSRF program objectives: salmon habitat protection and restoration; watershed and sub-basin planning and assessments; salmon research monitoring and evaluation; salmon enhancement; and outreach and education.

Idaho first received an appropriation from the PCSRF in FY2004 for \$4.9 million. The Idaho congressional delegation was successful in obtaining a portion of the PCSRF subsequent years; \$4.4 million in FY2005, and thus far in FY2006, \$2.2 million. The PCSRF criteria requires a 25% cost share of non-federal matching funds. This cost share obligation has been satisfied primarily through landowner in-kind contributions and state funding sources. Projects awarded funding are allotted two years for completion.

Of the eight projects in the Custer and Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) funded with the FY2004 PCSRF, four have been completed and three remain in implementation with completion expected soon. Projects completed with FY2004 PCSRF appropriations include the Hooper Lane

Riparian Fence in the Custer SWCD, the Cottom Lane Riparian Fence in the Lemhi SWCD, an Alternative Fish Screen Study, and Project Planning and Scoping. The combined PCSRF funding for these completed projects totaled \$154,199.

OSC accepted proposals for the FY2005 PCSRF in March and again in October 2005. To date, three additional projects have been completed in the Lemhi SWCD: Lemhi Little Springs Riparian Fence, Lemhi River Riparian Enhancement, and Big Timber/L-63 Siphon Project, for a total PCSRF cost of \$125,934.

The FY2006 awards were announced in August, with three additional projects in the Lemhi SWCD to receive funding totaling \$281,468.

Throughout 2005, Ingrid Enschede, a project planner hired through the PCSRF to provide technical assistance, worked with the Custer and Lemhi SWCDs and USBWP partners to develop new project proposals that would utilize the PCSRF in the Upper Salmon Basin, emphasizing improved fish passage in priority tributaries. Wendy Koons assumed the duties of PCSRF Project Planner in July 2006 and is continuing to develop new project proposals to address PCSRF objectives. Proposals currently in development for FY2007 consideration will focus largely on tributary reconnections in the Lemhi River watershed.

The USBWP looks forward to continued utilization of the PCSRF for implementation of projects that will contribute to the conservation and restoration of future salmon and steelhead runs.

## Work and priorities shifting for USBWP

Every program needs tweaked now and then, and the USBWP is no exception. When the doors were opened back in 1993, the objectives were straight and simple: write a plan to improve fish habitat.

Since that time, over 140 projects have been completed that were aimed at achieving this objective. Along the way many lessons have been learned and problems solved. There have also been failures and things that just don't turn out as planned.

The focus of the local community and the State of Idaho are shifting. Longtime partners and funding sources are disengaging from the USBWP. This has lead to a new chapter for all of us. The State has undertaken the responsibility to provide service to the local community through the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission.

The current focus of projects center around water quantity. Many tributaries are

dewatered in the summer months, but it is these tributaries that are important thermal refuges for fish. Water is usually cooler and shade and nutrients are more plentiful in these areas. Tributary reconnections are not feasible in every situation. In those instances, the USBWP will seek positive solutions to a complex issue.

Therefore, projects have become more intricate than a riparian fence, although the USBWP will still pursue those opportunities. Projects now involve multiple landowners with the willingness to look at different options for irrigation or stock water needs. These projects take enormous amounts of time to implement and all cooperating agencies need to be on-board to follow through the tedious process of changing land use or water management.

Please bear with us during these times of change, but look for good on-the-ground projects that benefit all aspects of natural resource management.

*“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”*

*Thomas A. Edison (1847 - 1931)*



*Tech Team gains insight on field tour*



NEWS ABOUT  
RESTORING FISH  
IN CENTRAL  
IDAHO

955 Riverfront Drive,  
Suite B  
Salmon, Idaho 83467

To :

Phone: 208-756-6322

Fax: 208-756-6376

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WE'RE ON THE WEB:

[WWW.MODELWATERSHED.ORG](http://WWW.MODELWATERSHED.ORG)

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## Coordinators Comments

*By Russell Knight*



*Breaking ground for Lower Lemhi Surface Flow Enhancement Project. L to R: Josh Tolman, Grounds Keeper; Jack Reed, Golf Association President; Ed Tolman, Lemhi SWCD; Salmon Mayor Stan Davis; Russell Knight, USBWP Coordinator; Dale Gooby, NRCS Civil Engineer.*

This has been an eventful year for the USBWP. In May, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) withdrew funding from the program, prompting the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (ISCC), the parent agency, to take the responsibility to continue service to the Upper Salmon Basin. This has been a very successful partnership and the ISCC will remain the entity funding the coordination activities here.

Project funding is from a variety of sources, including: Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, just to name a few. A Charter is being developed to define how this program is structured and how we work with our cooperating partners.

In addition to restructuring, the USBWP has continued to put good projects on the ground. The pace of implementation has slowed due to the administrative turmoil, as well as the increas-

ing complexity of projects. Tributary reconnections are the focus the State and other entities funding anadromous fisheries projects in the Salmon Basin. These projects are multilayered and tough to get on the ground. I estimate that one reconnection can be accomplished every three years.

There are currently two reconnects in the works, both with tremendous biological value: Iron Creek, tributary to the Salmon River; and Big Timber Creek, tributary of the Lemhi River. There are also 12 to 15 other projects in various stages of planning or implementation. One of those projects is the Lower Lemhi Surface Flow Enhancement Project, or as many of you may know it, the Golf Course. This will be fully implemented by spring 2007 and will leave 3.5 cfs. of water in the Lemhi River at the L-6 diversion.

I would like to remind you not to believe everything you hear. Federal funds did not buy a golf course and the USBWP is not closing its doors.