

# Upper Salmon Basin Watershed News

NEWS ABOUT RESTORING FISH HABITAT IN CENTRAL IDAHO

Winter 2012



*Photo: Jerry Myers, Trout Unlimited*

## 2011: The Year in Review

This past year the Watershed Program completed several projects to improve fish habitat and benefit agriculture in the Upper Salmon Basin. Upper Lemhi River projects resulted in the removal of migration barriers, allowing fish to access an additional 1.7 miles of upstream habitat. Four unscreened diversions were removed and on-farm efficiencies including sprinkler irrigation were provided to conserve water and increase stream flows. Three fish passage barriers in the form of undersized or perched culverts were removed and replaced with fish friendly bridges. Over two miles of jack pole fencing now protects approximately 28.1 acres of riparian habitat.

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### Watershed Calendar:

- March 12-16** National Ag Week  
**March 14** Custer Soil and Water Conservation District meeting  
**March 28** USBWP Advisory Committee meeting  
**April 5** Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District meeting

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off of the Salmon River and Lemhi Little Springs Creek, allowing for increased streamside shading, cooler waters and decreased sedimentation.



Seth McFarland (right) and Ken Sanders gathering preliminary data on Upper Carmen Creek for the Riparian Grazing Study.

While our emphasis is focused on planning on-the-ground projects, this office initiated and provided support for two research projects. The Upper Carmen Creek Riparian Grazing Study is being conducted by Seth McFarland and Dr. Ken Sanders. A multi-year effort, the project was designed to examine the impacts of short-term fall season grazing within a fenced riparian exclosure. The Lemhi River Basin Groundwater Recharge Study is a long-term project investigating the relationship between agricultural irrigation practices and groundwater recharge. The project is funded by the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund and the Bonneville Power Administration.

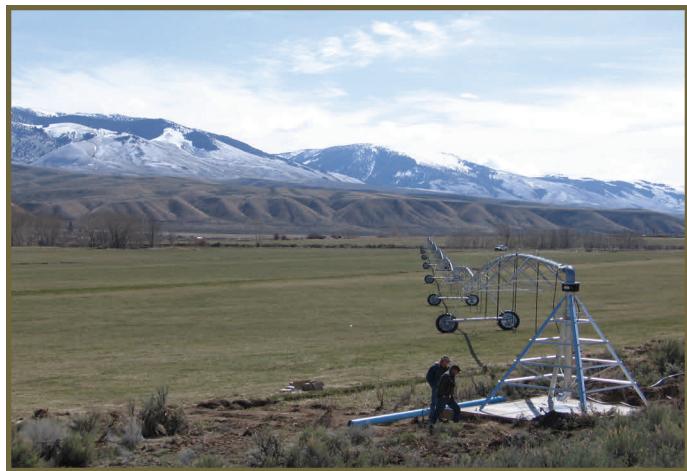


Salmon River Slough Fence. South of Salmon.



Construction of Wallace Creek bridge. The Salmon River is visible in the background.

Our outreach efforts were directed primarily towards youth education and participation in community-related events. We had arguably the most popular booth at the Lemhi County Fair with our edible aquifers and interactive stream table, which engaged children and adults alike. USBWP staff participated in the Natural Resources Awareness Day in Challis in April and gave college students enrolled in Northwest Connections a presentation and tour of projects in June. Salmon High School students learned about the population dynamics and natural history of salmonids in the Lemhi River Basin and how we are helping to restore fish habitat.



New pivots increase irrigation efficiency and provide increased flow to Little Springs Creek, a tributary to the Lemhi River .

Our office participated in the Natural Resource Round-table, which is an ongoing discussion among local

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## People in the News

Lemhi Rancher Bruce Mulkey is the recipient of the 2011 Idaho Cattleman of the Year Award presented by the Idaho Cattle Association (ICA). The award recognizes the state's top cattleman and takes into consideration the recipient's commitment to the ranching lifestyle as well as civic involvement and leadership in the livestock industry. The nomination and selection of the Cattleman of the Year is based upon recommendations from cattlemen from around the state. ICA Executive President Wyatt Prescott said that Bruce has been

active for many years in the policy arena where he has helped to foster the values of the Idaho cattle industry. Bruce was a founding member of the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program Advisory Committee where he still serves as a board member. A former board member of the Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District, Bruce has been a proponent of fish habitat restoration in cooperation with agriculture since the late 1980's. In addition to the ICA award, he was also recently featured in the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission project, Life on the Range ([www.lifeontherange.org](http://www.lifeontherange.org)).



**The [Watershed Program's] greatest accomplishment is changing attitudes. People now know they can make a living and help fish. They know those goals aren't mutually exclusive.** Mike Larkin, past fisheries biologist for Idaho Fish and Game in Salmon.

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groups with similar interests in our community. In an effort to assist local contractors to effectively bid and work on instream construction projects, we partnered with the Bureau of Reclamation, Custer Soil and Water Conservation District and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to sponsor a workshop titled "Rain and Sediment Management and Working in the Dry". The workshop was attended by over 50 people.

The Bonneville Power Administration continues to be a major partner in the basin. In addition to funding the administration of the watershed office, BPA provides funding and support for outreach, research and the conservation and enhancement of anadromous fish habitat.

We are enthusiastic about the new year and the opportunities we'll have to further our efforts with fish recovery. We are continuing to develop ideas on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation bridge to bridge report, and already have projects in progress, including diversion removals, riparian fencing and irrigation efficiencies. Last but not least, we are planning our summer celebration for our 20th year as the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program. Stay tuned for more exciting watershed news throughout 2012!

\* Please contact us if you'd prefer to receive our e-newsletter

## Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program

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NEWS ABOUT  
RESTORING FISH  
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CENTRAL IDAHO

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To :

**Our Mission:** Protect and restore the region's significant fish habitats through a partnership approach that respects agriculture and improves our way of life.

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### Coordinators Comments By Hans Koenig

This issue of the Watershed Newsletter features a review of last year's completed projects. Although the images depict scenes of people and equipment at work, putting a project on the map involves more than backhoes and stream bypasses. Indeed, the average project can take up to three years from the concept phase to construction. Most of the time in between is dedicated to obtaining environmental compliance such as various permits and concurrence from a myriad of alphabet agencies. It is a testament to the determination and patience of our landowner partners that projects ever make it from the planning table to the moving of earth and water. For those who joined us in this adventure during the past year, our thanks for staying the course.

The success of projects can be measured in a variety of ways including increased stream flows, removal of fish passage barriers, agricultural efficiencies and plain old dollars and cents. On two projects completed last year, we partnered with Lemhi County Road and Bridge to replace old culverts with new bridges. The savings to the county was estimated at over \$200,000. The benefit to fish was substantial. The partnership forged between us is invaluable.

There is much more to successfully managing a community-based watershed program than accomplishing

on the ground projects. While our planning efforts are primarily focused on agricultural improvements and habitat enhancement to benefit anadromous fish, we take the opportunity to participate in activities and events that promote the Watershed mission and support our community. Staffer Abbie Gongloff represented us at the 21st Annual Kids Ice Fishing Derby, a free event offered to local children. Eighty-two kids, ages 1 through 16, caught over 200 rainbow trout during the 4 hour derby in Hyde Creek Pond, just South of Salmon.

"Happy Trails" to Taylor Dixon, a Hydrologist with the Idaho Department of Water Resources. Taylor has taken a position with the National Weather Service in Portland, Oregon. He spearheaded the groundwater recharge research in the Lemhi River Basin for the past two years. Taylor also drafted the comprehensive research plan to examine the effects of agricultural practices on groundwater recharge and led the data modeling as well as the field work. We wish him the best in his new job.

Our cover photograph was taken by Jerry Myers of Indian Creek. Jerry has been a river guide and outfitter for nearly three decades. Today, he dedicates his time to managing the Indian Creek Ranch and overseeing habitat restoration projects for Trout Unlimited. Jerry's lens captures two of his life's passions- the Salmon River and fishing.