

Potlatch River Watershed Restoration

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Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

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Latah Soil and Water Conservation District
Potlatch River Watershed Restoration

Forth Quarter & Final Project Report

May 1, 2003 – August 31, 2003

Kenneth Stinson
Latah Soil & Water Conservation District
220 East 5th Street
Moscow, ID 83843

Project No. 2002-061-00
Contract No. 00011844

Potlatch River Watershed Restoration

Project Goal

Improve instream fish habitat in the Potlatch River and the lower Clearwater River through comprehensive watershed planning, implementation of best management practices and expanded water quality and fish habitat monitoring.

Objectives

This proposal has two primary objectives: 1) complete the Potlatch River watershed implementation plan; and, 2) augment existing monitoring efforts in the Potlatch River to broaden the water quality and fish resource data baseline.

Objective 1. Complete Potlatch River Watershed Implementation Plan

In 1994, the Latah SWCD requested that the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conduct a Preliminary Investigation (P.I.) in the Potlatch River. The purpose of the P.I. was to: 1) develop criteria to prioritize subwatersheds for long-term treatment for anadromous and resident fish habitat enhancement and restoration; and 2) compile a list of treatment strategies based on identified resource issues to be implemented in the near-term. Analysis and long-term planning for enhancement and restoration of fish habitat was to have been done through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative River Basin Study Program. This final planning stage was not completed because of NRCS staff cutbacks.

The Latah SWCD will coordinate the completion of the Potlatch River watershed implementation plan so it can be used as the primary planning document for implementing conservation practices throughout the Potlatch River watershed.

Task 1.1 – Reconvene technical advisory group.

In an effort to complete the Potlatch River watershed implementation plan, the original technical advisory group that was organized by the NRCS to develop the Preliminary Investigation in the Potlatch River will reconvene.

Update – Members of the technical advisory group (TAG) met on five different occasions to review the preferred structure for the planning approach and review available documentation of resource conditions throughout the basin. The TAG used the Corral Creek watershed as a model to develop a preferred planning approach that will apply to all watersheds within the Potlatch River drainage. Facilitation staff was hired to assist with the planning process.

The TAG has included participants from the following organizations and agencies:

- Latah Soil & Water Conservation District
- Clearwater SWCD
- Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Idaho Department of Fish & Game
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Lands
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- NOAA-Fisheries
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Potlatch Corporation

Task 1.2 – Inventory existing data bases.

The technical advisory group will inventory and organize existing databases that have been developed for the Potlatch River watershed. In addition, the advisory group will identify data gaps that should be filled in order to fully analyze the resource conditions of the watershed.

Update – Members of the TAG have undertaken a brief review of existing databases for the Potlatch River. Emphasis has been placed on the Corral Creek watershed.

Task 1.3 – Analyze resource data.

Individual agencies represented on the advisory group will undertake resource analysis for their resource issues of concern.

Update – Limited resource data has been undertaken for the Corral Creek watershed. . A contractor has been retained to evaluate fisheries population and habitat information collected in 1994. This information will be compared to the information collected this past summer.

Task 1.4 – Reevaluate subwatershed priorities.

Following an analysis of the existing resource data, the thirteen (13) subwatersheds within the Potlatch River will be reevaluated to identify and prioritize resource conservation needs, programs and projects for each subwatershed.

Update – Emphasis has been placed on the development of a planning process and the installation of monitoring stations on select watersheds within the basin. The subwatershed priorities will be reevaluated with the completion of the fisheries inventory identified in Task 2.1. The reevaluation process will take place in the FY03 contract.

Task 1.5 – Identify implementation strategies and specific projects by subwatershed and treatment unit.

Define specific projects and implementation strategies to address the resource conservation needs within each subwatershed by treatment unit. Implementation strategies will identify the resources of concern, proposed strategies for protecting and enhancing the resources of concern and identifying lead agencies for implementation of the identified strategies. Strategies and projects will focus on fisheries habitat protection and restoration.

Update – Alternative strategies for agricultural and forest lands have been continuously reviewed. Specifically, staff coordinated with the new conservation programs outlined in the 2002 Farm Bill to determine the appropriateness of individual programs and their application within the Potlatch River Basin. Strategies have been coordinated with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG), Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) - Fisheries.

Strategies reviewed include, but were not limited to, sediment reduction from private agricultural lands through the implementation of direct seeding practices, inclusion of highly erosive soils within the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, enhance riparian protection through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and the construction of erosion control structures.

Task 1.6 – Seek public comment on draft implementation plan.

The draft Potlatch River watershed implementation plan will be distributed for public comment. Public comments will be solicited through a variety of formats that may include, but not be limited to, focus groups, community meetings, landowner meetings and formal public comment periods (as required by state and federal policy). Public comments will be evaluated for incorporation as revisions to the draft plan.

Update – The TAG drafted a preferred planning approach and agency adoption process. The process will be finalized in the FY03 contract. Staff has met informally with non-profit conservation organizations and supporting agencies.

The TAG has outlined a public review process that will focus at the subwatershed level. Formal community involvement will begin during the FY03 contract period.

Task 1.7 – Write final implementation plan.

The final Potlatch River Watershed Implementation Plan will be published and distributed by the Latah SWCD for public access and electronic copies will be posted on the Latah SWCD's website to enhance public access to the plan. Copies will be distributed to regional land management agencies and resource conservation organizations. Public access to the plan will be through hardcopy at public agencies and electronic copy through agency websites.

Update – A plan outline has been drafted and is under review by the Latah SWCD. Once an outlined is approved by the Latah SWCD, the formal public input process and plan development will begin. This process is outlined within the FY03 contract.

Task 1.8 – Coordinate resources necessary for the implementation of the Potlatch River Watershed Implementation Plan on private lands.

The Project Manager will be responsible for the coordination of the Potlatch River Watershed Implementation Plan. This individual will identify, coordinate and secure the necessary technical and financial resources required for the successful implementation of resource conservation strategies on private lands as outlined in the implementation plan.

Update – District staff have requested funding from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to implement agricultural best management practices (BMPs) within the Potlatch River basin. Currently, the proposal is identified as a priority project for funding. If funding is secured, it will be available in early 2004.

In addition, staff has secured funding through the US Fish & Wildlife Service to replace a small failing bridge on private land in the upper watershed portion of the Potlatch watershed.

Objective 2. Enhance fish habitat and water quality monitoring with the Potlatch River watershed.

Task 2.1 – Undertake fisheries inventory.

In 1996 and 1997 the Potlatch River watershed has affected by severe flooding. The fisheries inventory data that was used to prioritize watersheds identified in Table 3 was collected in the summers of 1995 and 1996. The habitat conditions within these subbasins may have

been severely impacted by the recent flood events. There is a need to undertake a fisheries inventory within the fish priority subbasins of the Potlatch River in order to determine what impact, if any, the recent flooding events had on the fisheries inventory.

Update – The Idaho Department of Fish & Game has been contracted to undertake a fisheries inventory and passage impediment survey throughout the Potlatch River basin. Inventory work began in June and approximately 50% of the watershed has been inventoried.

Task 2.2 – Enhance water quality monitoring.

Currently, the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission is undertaking monitoring for temperature and flow for a limited number of subbasins within the Potlatch River watershed that were affected by the 1995/1996 flood events. This proposal is to expand the number of monitoring sites, sampling frequency and parameters. The data generated from this enhanced monitoring program will be used as baseline information for later studies of BMP effectiveness and TMDL implementation programs.

Update – Technical staff with the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission have reviewed equipment needs for the monitoring stations. Equipment has been ordered for five stations and the stations will be installed within the next several months.

Additionally, the US Geological Service has been contracted to reinstall a gauging station at the mouth of the Potlatch River. This station has been installed and is currently active. The station will provide real-time information to the public through the internet on the USGS website.

Objective 3. Complete required progress reports.

Task 3.1 Completed monthly fiscal invoice reports

Update – Invoices submitted through August 2003.

Task 3.2 Completed quarterly fiscal and narrative report

Update – Quarterly reports submitted per contract.

Task 3.3 Completed year end fiscal and narrative report and FY03 Work Statement

Update – Completed.