

Idaho Model Watershed Project

Annual Report

January 1, 1997 – December 31, 1997

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ABSTRACT

The Model Watershed Project was initiated in the fall of 1992 with a grant from Bonneville Power Administration. The objective of this project is to protect, enhance and restore anadromous and resident fish habitat and achieve and maintain a balance between resource protection and resource use on a holistic watershed basis. The Model Watershed works across agency boundaries with cooperation and volunteer participation by local landowners. Many were cost-shared by a variety of sources, including; Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and U.S. Forest Service. Most of these projects would not have been accomplished without the coordination efforts of the Model Watershed. In 1997, 17.5 miles of riparian fencing were constructed along 8 miles of stream to protect and enhance riparian vegetation and provide streambank stability. Streambanks were also protected using rock structures on 3 separate projects and 4 irrigation diversions were consolidated and improved. Continued to coordinate, Salmon subbasin steelhead hatchbox program, hatching out approximately 760,000 steelhead fry at 20 different sites on public and private land.

**MODEL WATERSHED PROJECT
LEMHI RIVER-PAHSIMEROI RIVER-EAST FORK OF THE SALMON RIVER
YEAR END REPORT TO
BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
JANUARY 1,1997 TO DECEMBER 31,1997**

Work Task #1. Coordinate activities in regards to fish habitat maintenance, enhancement and restoration in the Model Watershed area.

Objective: Maintain, enhance and restore fish habitat in the streams covered by the Model Watershed Plan.

Goal: Implement 50 percent of the high priority action items identified in the Model Watershed Plan by 1999.

Action #1. Assist the Model Watershed Advisory Committee in seeking out and obtaining funding commitments for both financial and technical assistance to implement the riparian initiative and the water management portion of the action plan.

Progress: A. *Worked with various participating agencies on implementing funding from Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Wildlife.*

B. *Submitted 1998 Budget for Administration, Passage, and Habitat to Northwest Power Planning Council.*

C. *Assisted with planning for East Fork Project; Aldous, Sager, and Tyler on Lemhi; P-8a and P-9 in Pahsimeroi.*

D. *Worked with the Idaho Fish and Game and Lemhi County Riparian Conservation Agreement to install electric fence along 1600 feet of Agency Creek to create a riparian buffer zone. Installed rock weirs to further stabilize banks, prevent downcutting and enhance fish habitat.*

Action #2. Participate in sub-basin planning process. Keep the advisory committee informed and address recommendations to this committee relative to the Upper Salmon Basin.

Progress: A. *Sawtooth wildlife Council and Shoshone Bannock tribes toured area and discussed issues of habitat, passage, hatch boxes, and land ownership on June 26. A sub-committee of the Model Watershed Advisory Committee met in July to discuss workloads and possible Model Watershed Project reorganization.*

B. *Coordinator will participated in planning effort for upper Salmon Basin meetings in Stanley in August. Advisory committee will be informed of*

progress. Cathy Baer of Sawtooth Wildlife Council expressed desires to participate on Advisory Committee.

C. Participated in meetings and planning. Consensus of Advisory Committee at this time is insufficient staff and time to expand MWP to Upper Salmon Basin, unless other administrative and project funding is procured.

D. Reviewed proposal for project on Yankee Fork of Salmon River.

Action #3. Assist the Model Watershed Advisory Committee and the Custer and Lemhi SWCDs in making applications for funding from appropriate agencies and foundations.

Progress: A. *Lemhi SWCD received \$23,000 for irrigation diversion consolidation project from IDFG&G.*

B. *Assisted Lemhi SWCD in application to U.S. Forest Service for \$10,000 to improve and protect streambank and riparian area on Salmon River associated with the Lemhi County Riparian Habitat Conservation Agreement. This application was approved.*

B. *Lemhi & Custer SWCD's have received BPA contracts for Stream Habitat Enhancement for FY97 totaling \$175,000 and fish passage enhancement totaling \$90,000.*

B. *Lemhi SWCD has received \$50,000 from Bureau of Reclamation for water conservation projects on Lemhi River. More funding may be available on site-specific projects.*

E. *Both Districts have received \$30,000 grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for projects. These projects are approved by the districts with the assistance of the District Conservationists and Model Watershed Coordinator.*

F. *Funding is still uncertain for the approved State Agriculture Water Quality Program (SAWQP) that was approved for both the Custer & Lemhi SWCD's in 1996.*

G. *Custer & Lemhi SWCD's have received GLCI grants from Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (\$10,000 each) for technical assistance for grazing land conservation.*

Action #4. Seek assistance for the High Country RC&D to solicit private foundation funding to implement actions identified in the model watershed plan.

Progress: A. *No Progress*

Work Task #2. Ensure that the model watershed plan meets accepted environmental and biological standards.

Objective: Ensure that planned actions derive the largest long-term biological and environmental impact.

Action #1. Work with BPA staff to complete the NEPA documentation for action planned in the Model Watershed Plan.

Progress: A. *Completed necessary NEPA documentation for habitat enhancement and fish passage enhancement.*

B. *Watershed projects have been within the scope of BPA's Watershed Management Program Environmental Impact Statement, July 1997.*

Action #2. Develop Biological assessments for review with National Marine Fisheries Service on planned projects which require consultation.

Progress: A. *Developed Biological Assessments for East Fork bank stabilization, Aldous riverbank protection on the Salmon River, and Sager bank protection on the Lemhi.*

B. *Coordinator completed BA's on Model Watershed projects and Lemhi County Riparian Habitat Conservation Agreement projects.*

Action #3. Help the Lemhi County Commissioners develop and present a streamlined process for federal Clean Water Act permits (404 permits) for working in streams and wetlands.

Progress: A. *Worked with Lemhi WAG on TMDL development and ideas on implementation.*

Work Task #3. Coordinate activities that keep people involved in the Model Watershed process.

Objective: Ensure public involvement and support of the Model Watershed Process.

Action #1. Issue three newsletters

Progress: A. *Issued two Newsletters in 1997.*

Action #2. Involve and coordinate local landowners and local interest groups in the hatch box program.

Progress: A. *Under the supervision of Advisory Member/Hatch Box Coordinator, Scott*

Turner, six landowners installed hatch boxes in their properties with the responsibility of tending and monitoring the boxes. 1 million eggs were placed with a hatch out rate of 76%.

- B. *U.S. Forest Service volunteer, Bethany Smith, assisted with monitoring several of the hatch boxes on public lands.*

Action #3. Assist the Lemhi Irrigation District with data collection for the Lemhi River Basin Study.

Progress: A. *Coordinator meets regularly with LID employee to discuss progress and review data. Process will continue through spring of 1998.*

Action #4. Assist the Lemhi County Commissioners and Land Use planning group with implementation of their riparian conservation use agreement.

Progress: A. *Coordinator attended meeting on January 15, 1998 to discuss 1998 TMDL process with WAG.*

Action #5. Assist Hannah Slough Group with streambank stabilization actions to protect spawning and rearing habitat. Conduct planning with adjacent landowners to implement conservation management systems.

Progress: A. *Coordinator assisted with permitting process for streambank stabilization and planning effort for river segment adjacent to Challis. Keeping abreast of issues with Challis group on twelve-mile Salmon River stretch.*

- B. *Phase II project completed in May 1997. Attended follow-up meeting in Challis to assess project and monitor highwater effects.*

Work Task #4. Work with groups and individuals in the upper Salmon River basin to investigate expansion of the model watershed program.

Objective: Investigate model watershed expansion in development of the Model Watershed process to transfer knowledge gained to the upper Salmon Basin.

Action #1. Worked with landowners, Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Idaho Department of Fish and Game to identify needs and opportunities to enhance fisheries in the upper Salmon Basin. Involve the Sawtooth Wildlife Council and the Idaho Conservation League.

Progress: A. *Assisted with stream restoration proposal on Yankee Fork of the Salmon River.*

- B. *Assisted IDFG&G with diversion consolidations of Valley Creek.*

Action #2. With the advisory committee, Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and Idaho's NPPC members, pursue feasibility of expansion of the model watershed process to the entire upper Salmon River basin. (Middle Fork of Salmon River to headwaters).

Progress: A. *Participated in meetings and planning. Consensus of Advisory Committee at the close of 1997 reflects insufficient staff and time to expand MWP to Upper Salmon Basin, unless other administrative and project funding is procured.*

B. Met with Cathy Baer of Sawtooth Wildlife Council to discuss involvement with MW Advisory Committee.

Work Task #5. Direct and assist with the planning and implementation of conservation management systems for ranchers in the model watershed area.

Objective: Install grazing systems and improve riparian characteristics to maintain and enhance fish habitat on priority stream reaches in model watershed area.

Action #1. Assist Lemhi SWCD in hiring Planning/implementation specialist to provide technical assistance.

Progress: A. *Allen Bradbury has been hired and began work on May 19. He is responsible for implementation of most of the projects currently underway in the watersheds. He works under coordinator at the MWP office.*

Action #2. Initiate contact with livestock operators on high priority areas. Develop ten long term agreements with operators for fish habitat maintenance and enhancement activities.

Progress: A. *Agreements are pending or signed for Tyler Ranch, Mark Meyers, Ellsworth Angus, Darwin Neibaur on Lemhi; Dick and Betty Baker, Jim Bennets and Abodi on East Fork; Jim Dowton, Bob Chewing, and Sid Dowton on Pahsimeroi ; and Heber Stokes, Aldous and Howard Cutler on Salmon River.*

Action #3. Meet with three key landowners identified by the above groups to investigate opportunities to develop a model habitat demonstration project in the Stanley Basin on private land.

Progress: A. *Initial review tour held June 26,27.*

Action #4. Work with East Fork landowner group to implement the East Fork stabilization and riparian improvement project. Coordinate with other agencies and

groups on this project for funding and support.

Progress: A. *Dick and Betty Baker bank stabilization contract completed.*

B. *Reviewed Jr. Baker bank stabilization project that was completed in April 1997 after high water. The work significantly stabilized eroding banks and benefitted both the rancher and fish.*

B. *Pursuing conservation easement with Bakers, IDFG and Nature Conservancy for long term management.*

B. *Janine Castro, NRCS Geomorphologist, re-visited East Fork in August to assist with contract on Dick and Betty Bakers and Doug Baker Ranches for bank stabilization and irrigation efficiencies. NRCS Engineer, Dale Gooby, is formulating designs for implementation of future projects.*

Work Task #6. Coordinate with other agencies working on salmon habitat enhancement and restoration in the Model Watershed.

Objective: Make efficient use of time and effort to meet goals of the Model Watershed and the agencies.

Action #1. Coordinator to meet twice with the FSOC committee

Progress: A. *Met in August with Technical Committee members and screenshop personnel to discuss future workloads and movement into habitat enhancement along with diversion screening.*

B. *Attended fish-screen workshop in September.*

C. *Meeting held on June 8 to discuss East Fork flooding.*

D. *Coordinated East Fork 7/8 diversion consolidation and Abody sprinkler system.*

Action #2. Work with the Bureau of Reclamation to complete the model watershed demonstration project by assisting with completion of the L-3a project.

Progress: A. *L-3a project was completed in May. The Lemhi SCD was the contracting agency with BoR funding. The irrigators are very pleased with the project and it was a stop on the Lemhi SWCD's tour on June 4. The total cost was just under \$30,000.*

Action #3. Work with DEQ and the Lemhi SWCD to assist in implementing the Blackbird Mine settlement to protect fishery habitat along the Lemhi River.

Progress: A. *The Tyler Ranch near Leadore is the designated site. The Lemhi County Youth Employment crew is under contract to build riparian management fence systems. The Coordinator assisted in staking 15 miles of proposed fencing. The completion date is scheduled for May 1998.*

B. *Assisted National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Environmental Quality, and Bureau of Land Management to establish key areas and techniques for vegetation monitoring.*

Action #4. Work with State Highway Department to coordinate fish habitat improvement projects planned by Frank Reckendorf near the Bitterroot Ranch on Lemhi River

Progress: A. *Tim Cramer of Idaho State Highway Department has plan and biological assessment. They are in close contact with Model Watershed Office to help coordinate implementation.*

Addendum

1997

Completed diversion structure and bypass system project at L-3A. This eliminated the L-3 diversion from the Lemhi River and reset the L-5 pipe to provide off-channel rearing habitat for juvenile fish. The Lemhi SCD was contracting agency with Bureau of Reclamation funding.

Constructed 3/4 miles of fence on Kesl Ranch on Lemhi River. This will protect critical spawning and habitat areas. This fence was designed by NRCS and funded with a grant to Lemhi SCD on cost-share with landowner. Labor is partially contracted by YEP with assistance from landowner, BLM, and IDFG.

Constructing 15 miles of fence on 8.5 miles of stream in upper Lemhi River on Karl Tyler Ranch. This site was identified in Model Watershed Plan as critical area for chinook spawning and rearing habitat. Noranda Mining Company is the funding agency through off-site mitigation. The Model Watershed has been instrumental at finding a desirable location and negotiating the site-specific needs of landowner, mining company, and law suit trustees.

Eliminated diversion structure from Pahsimeroi River through water right transfer to Salmon River on Parkinson Farm. This reconnected seven miles of habitat that was previously dewatered and allows fish to migrate over the diversion point and access the higher reaches in the river and a series of good quality spring-fed tributaries.

Constructed streambank stabilization on Rick Sager property to improve stream habitat in lower Lemhi River while providing peak flow flood control. This installed an off-channel flood control dike away from the River bank, reducing water velocities to keep a healthy strip of riparian trees and vegetation. Lemhi SCD was funding agency through a grant from Bureau of Reclamation.

Assisted Lemhi SCD in application to U.S. Forest Service for \$10,000 to improve and protect streambank and riparian area on Heber Stokes Ranch on the Salmon River below Salmon. This will construct 4,000 feet of fence and is part of the Lemhi County Riparian Habitat Conservation Agreement.

Coordinated hatch box project. Eight private landowners and 4 agencies participated at 20 sites. 1 million eggs were placed with a hatch-out rate of 76%. 1 million eggs are also promised for 1998. This is a real education tool that makes participants aware of factors that contribute to the success of boxes, such as water temperature and stream sediment.

Riparian pasture management fences were completed in the Pahsimeroi Watershed for the Starr Coleman, Magee Latimer, Howard Cutler ranches totaling 3 miles of streambank. BPA provided funding for the materials and cost-shared in the labor which was provided by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Salmon Corps, with assistance from

NRCS. Follow-up work is underway to halt streambank erosion with vegetation plantings.

Participated in Hannah Slough Project on the Salmon River near Challis. This is phase II for the riparian management and bank stabilization.

Planning underway for fencing projects on two ranches in the Pahsimeroi.

Projects planned on Agency Creek, tributary to the Lemhi, to implement fish passage enhancement on good quality historical salmon habitat.

The River Basin Study conducted by Lemhi Irrigation District completed in December. This has been a cooperative effort between the Lemhi SCD, BOR, BPA, and NRCS. The Model Watershed has been instrumental in coordination of agencies and landowner relations to investigate ground and surface water interaction pertaining to the Lemhi watershed and irrigation uses.

A water quality study is has been conducted for the past three years by the Lemhi Soil Conservation District. This has been a cooperative effort by the SCD, BOR, and NRCS. Five sites have been tested each month on the Lemhi River, from Leadore to its mouth.