



IDAHO

Introduction and General Description

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Idaho began as a small “on-the-ground” restoration program in 1988. The program has grown at a steady pace since then. In Idaho, the focus has been on the restoration of degraded riparian areas along streams, and shallow wetland restoration. Recently, there has been increasing interest for in-stream restoration. We work with our partners to restore habitats by constructing riparian fencing, planting native shrubs and trees, bioengineering streambanks to control erosion, and restoring wetlands through water control structures and other methods.

The major vegetation communities within Idaho are the cedar-hemlock-douglas fir forests of the Rocky Mountains, the Palouse grasslands/agricultural lands, and the Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem of the Great Basin. The major watersheds are the Snake River, the Salmon River, the Clearwater River, and the northern tributaries to the Columbia River such as the Kootenai, St. Joe and Clark Fork Rivers.

Habitats of Special Concern

Focus areas for restoration within the Partners Program include (1) private lands along rivers

containing threatened and endangered anadromous (migratory) fish such as bull trout, (2) riparian projects in the arid desert portions of the State, and (3) wetland restoration projects targeted to improve water quality along many of our degraded rivers and streams.

Threats

The settlement of Idaho brought many developments that degraded or removed many of the State’s wildlife habitats. Water diversions for irrigated agriculture diminished fish habitat in the streams. Dams for water storage or flood control blocked access for fish to many rivers. Streams and rivers were channelized and leveed, reducing diversity of habitats for fish and other wildlife along the former floodplains. Water quality has been degraded by the input of agricultural chemicals and sediments into the streams. Livestock grazing has impacted the riparian vegetation that provided shading, cooling, insects, and woody debris for fish habitat in the streams. Invasive species have encroached on valuable niches in the environment and degraded habitat for many fish and wildlife species.



Bull trout. Photo courtesy of Plum Creek Timber Co.

Conservation Strategies

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to protect migratory birds, anadromous fish and declining plant and animal communities.

Wetlands

Many migratory birds are wetland dependent. Wetland restoration techniques include construction of small berms to restore hydrology, establishing a variety of wetland types within a complex, and removing levees that block floodwaters from entering wetlands. Wetland restoration costs are typically \$300-\$500 per acre.

Streams and Riparian Areas

The most common restoration technique is the construction of fences to exclude livestock from streams and riparian (streamside) areas. This allows for natural regrowth of the native shrub vegetation. Where the native vegetation has been removed through spraying and natural

revegetation will take too long to recover, we plant native shrubs and trees. Planting native trees and shrubs along streams is beneficial because it helps protect property from bank erosion and sloughing, reduces sediments entering the streams, and provides improved habitat for fish and wildlife.



Completed installation of a “J-hook” in Twin Creek. This device improves in-stream fish habitat.

In-stream work includes the removal of fish passage barriers, planting willow bundles in the edge of the stream to reduce sediments, and putting meanders back into channelized streams using natural channel design techniques. Restoring channelized streams requires special expertise and is higher cost than other types of restoration that the Partners Program does, but the benefits are outstanding for our stream and river resources and the fish and wildlife that depend on them. Riparian restoration costs are generally \$500-\$800 per acre.

Partners

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Lemhi County Soil and Water Conservation District
Butte County SWCD
Owyhee County SWCD
Ada SWCD
Bingham SWCD
Custer SWCD

Community Planning Association of Ada
Teton Regional Land Trust
Garden City Parks and Recreation
Idaho Foundation for Parks and Land
The Nature Conservancy
Ducks Unlimited
Pheasants Forever

Accomplishments

- < About 150 landowners have worked with the Idaho Partners program to restore habitat on their lands
- < Over 3,500 acres of wetland habitat have been restored
- < Over 120 miles of riparian habitat has been restored
- < Over 20 miles of fish habitat have been opened up through fish passage barrier removal
- < Over 15 miles of in-stream habitat has been restored
- < Over 175 acres of special trust species habitat has been restored

Future Needs

- < Restore or enhance 50,000 acres of wetlands, in northern and eastern Idaho, and along the Snake River Basin. These habitats are important for waterfowl, for water quality improvement and for enhanced land values.
- < Restore, protect, and enhance 100 miles of riparian habitat state-wide to improve water quality, and to restore fish habitat, especially salmon and bull trout habitat.
- < Work with landowners to restore habitat for threatened and rare northern and southern Idaho ground squirrels.

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- < Work with landowners along the Snake River to restore water quality through providing wetlands to clean the agricultural waste water before it returns to the river.



CONTACT

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August 2001