

Special Update **Idaho's RC&Ds**



**Partnerships Serving
Idaho's Communities**



**Idaho Resource Conservation
and Development Association**



**USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

January 2005

Idaho's RC&Ds:

Bear River

Logan, UT
www.bearriverrcd.org
(435) 753-3871
Scott Ferguson
scott.ferguson@ut.usda.gov

Clearwater

Moscow, ID
www.clearwaterccd.org
(208) 882-4960
Dan Pierce
dan.pierce@id.usda.gov

High Country

Rexburg, ID
www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/hcpd.html
(208) 356-5213
Steve Smart
steve.smart@id.usda.gov

Mid-Snake

Twin Falls, ID
www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mspd.html
(208) 733-5380
Julie Thomas
julie.thomas@id.usda.gov

Panhandle Lakes

Coeur d'Alene, ID
www.plccd.org
(208) 762-4939
Kim Golden
kim.golden@id.usda.gov

Southwest Idaho

Meridian, ID
www.idahorcd.org
(208) 888-1890
Bill Moore
swidrcd@idahorcd.org

Three Rivers

Pocatello, ID
www.3riversrcd.org
(208) 237-4628
Paula Jones
paula.jones@id.usda.gov

West Central Highlands

Emmett, ID
www.idahorcd.org
(208) 365-4475
Russel Manwaring
wchrcd@idahorcd.org

Wood River

Gooding, ID
www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrpd.html
(208) 934-4149
Polly Huggins
polly.huggins@id.usda.gov



Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Association
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
January 2005

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits the discrimination in all its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (Voice and TDD). To file a complaint, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th & Independence Ave., SW, Washington D.C., 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Idaho's RC&Ds are making good things happen in communities across the state.

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program helps local people work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their communities a better place to live. RC&D Councils, made up of leaders from the local community, volunteer their time to initiate projects that will help bring new life to rural Idaho.

Idaho's nine RC&Ds provide a way to:

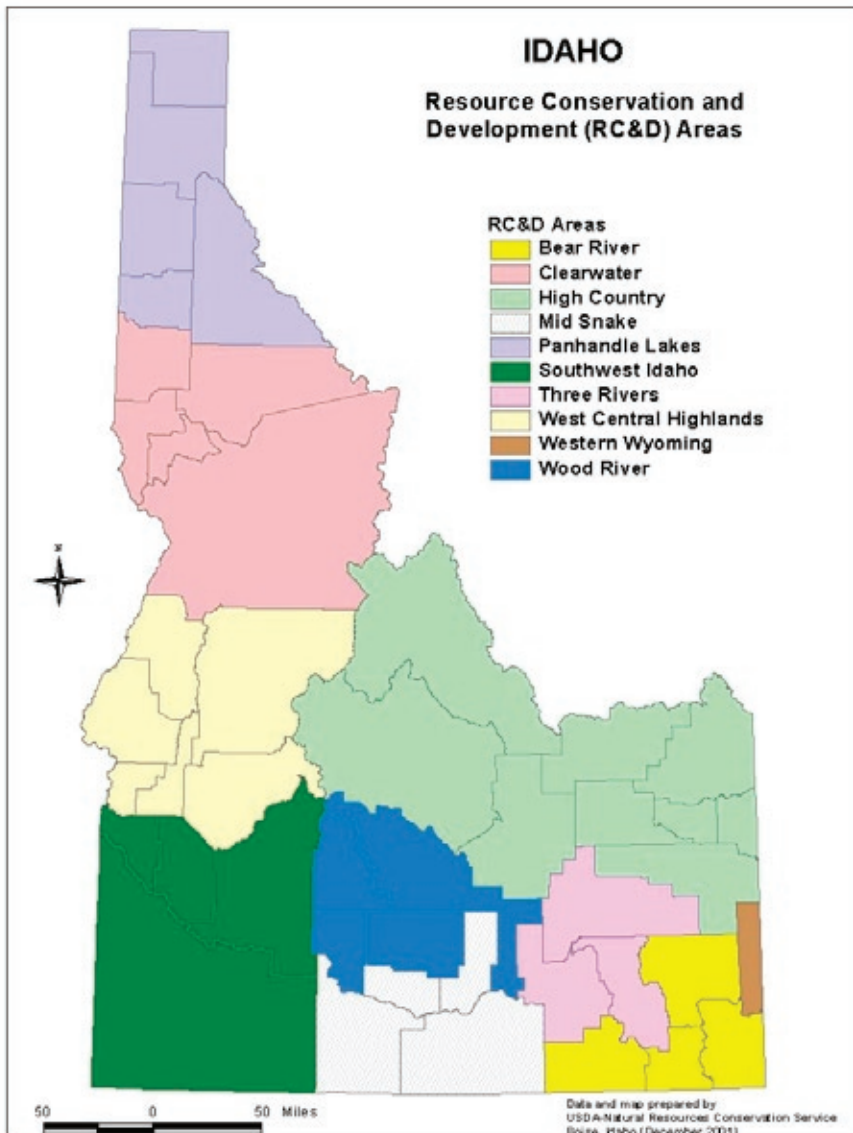
- ❖ Improve natural resources
- ❖ Establish and improve community facilities and services
- ❖ Expand industries and create jobs

RC&D places emphasis on renewable natural resources. If natural resources are managed and used properly, communities can become more sustainable. Renewable resource development can offer more jobs for area

residents either by expanding the existing economy or by stimulating new economic growth. By improving the economy and environment, a community remains or becomes a place where people are able to work and want to live.

Although the RC&D program is directed primarily toward rural areas, it can also include metropolitan counties. The RC&D approach can help any community where resources haven't been developed to their full potential. It isn't limited to low-income areas.

The RC&D program is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS provides facilities and administrative assistance to RC&Ds but local RC&D Councils serve as autonomous entities. In addition, each RC&D functions as a nonprofit entity with 501(c)3 status.



RC&Ds in the News



Top Honors.

Bruce Knight, Chief for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, presents a USDA Honor Award to Southwest RC&D Coordinator **Bill Moore**.

The award went to all of Idaho's nine RC&D coordinators for their work on community wildfire projects. The awards are the most prestigious honors bestowed by the Secretary of Agriculture.



Fuels for Schools.

Idaho Senator **Larry Craig** speaks in support of the Fuels for Schools Program.

The **Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council** is working statewide with a private consultant, the U.S. Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Lands to establish demonstration schools for wood chip heating systems.

"This is a great private and public partnership," says **Kim Golden**, Panhandle Lakes RC&D coordinator. "It will reduce wildfire potential, help the schools save money and promote the local economy."

Accomplishments: Homeland Security

Community Emergency Response Team Created

Following a disaster, first responders and other government service providers may be overwhelmed. Public services may not be delivered everywhere help is needed.

To increase community preparedness the **High Country RC&D Council** is partnering with the Northeast Idaho Emergency Management Planning and Coordination Council to implement a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Project.

The CERT project trains members of neighborhoods, community organizations or workplaces in basic emergency response skills. Once trained, CERT members are then integrated into the emergency response capability for their area. If a disastrous event overwhelms or delays the community's professional response efforts, CERT members can provide needed assistance.

CERT prepares volunteers with 20 hours of classroom and hands-on training. The course is taught in the community by a trained team of first responders who have completed a CERT Train-the-Trainer course. CERT training includes disaster preparedness, fire suppression,

CERT students practice using a blanket to transport a victim to the treatment area.



basic medical operations, and light search and rescue operations.

The project is funded by the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. RC&D provides organizational, grant writing and administrative assistance. To date, the project has trained 27 instructors, taught 30 courses and graduated 308 certified volunteers in seven counties.

Accomplishments: Economic Development

Huckleberries or Elk Steak? RC&D Promotes Specialty Foods

The Clearwater RC&D Council, through its Sustainable Resource Enterprises Committee, is promoting rural specialty food opportunities.

In April 2004, the RC&D helped organize a workshop about opportunities for management, propagation, cultivation and marketing of huckleberries. Continued interest among a core group of individuals led to an October 2004 work session to discuss the formation of an association representing growers, processors, brokers, marketers and researchers who work with huckleberries and bilberries native to the northwestern U.S. and Canada. The Council approved up to \$500 from general operations funds to be used as a cash match



Dr. Dan Barney, University of Idaho researcher, describes differences among several varieties of huckleberries and bilberries during a workshop in Weippe hosted by the Clearwater RC&D Council.

for individual association member dues to help get things started.

In 2003, Rural Roots, a non-profit, producer-based organization working in eastern Washington and north Idaho, and the Clearwater RC&D Council began meeting in Moscow and Lewiston regarding potential USDA slaughter/processing inspection of specialty meat products in the region. A group formed to promote the development of one or more regional facilities that will serve small and mid-sized specialty meats producers needs (elk, buffalo, poultry, pork, goats, sheep, rabbits, beef: natural grass-fed and organic) and provide Certified Organic slaughter and processing services. While there is a healthy demand for specialty meat products, many producers are unable to supply the market due to limited access to USDA-inspected facilities. Group participants have included producers, university faculty, meat processors, economic development organizations, congressional staffers and state agency officials.

“Locating a USDA inspected slaughter and processing facility in this area would increase market opportunities for regional meat products, increase income for independent livestock producers and contribute to the economic health of our rural agricultural communities,” says **Malcolm Dell**, Chair of the RC&D Council’s Sustainable Resource Enterprises Committee.

Intermountain Woodworking Turns Sticks into Bucks

Many Idaho forests are overstocked with small diameter trees that create a fire hazard. Finding a profitable use for this resource is a challenge. When Intermountain Woodworking Inc. moved into a business incubator building in Council, Idaho, they were looking to fill market niches, grow their business and create local jobs. One idea they researched was how to turn cheap supplies of small diameter timber into something marketable.

When they discovered a market niche in molding, wood flooring and paneling that could be met with local small diameter timber, they asked the **West Central Highlands RC&D Council** to help finance the re-tooling needed to produce a saleable product. The RC&D found financing through grant assistance from the Idaho Department of Commerce and the U.S. Forest Service. The company purchased a seven-head molder, planer, straight-line saw and kiln with the funds.

Now, the company is expanding into a larger building to accommodate the new production line and kiln. With the new product capability, Intermountain was able to successfully bid a local job in motel construction, providing all the major woodwork moldings as well as much of their custom-made wood furniture. To date,

three new jobs have been created by this project. This is just a start for a company planning to expand further.



A worker at Intermountain Woodworking feeds materials into the planer to produce a quality board for use in cabinetmaking.

Accomplishments: Economic Development

Partnership Collaborates to Update Mid-Snake Recreation Study

The **Mid-Snake RC&D** is providing support to update the Mid-Snake Recreation Study in South Central Idaho. The RC&D is partnering with the Shoshone District BLM, Idaho Power Company, South Central Idaho Tourism and Recreation Development Association (SCITRDA) and the College of Southern Idaho (CSI) on the project.



Professor Jim Wilson and CSI students use GPS technology to map the Mid-Snake River.

In the mid-1990s, over 110 sites along a nearly 75-mile stretch of the Mid-Snake were surveyed to inventory the recreation assets along the river. After the mapping was done, a report was issued citing challenges, threats and priorities for the river. In 2004, the BLM approached SCITRDA to manage the updating of the Mid-Snake study as a precursor to their General Management Plan in

2006. Idaho Power joined the study providing the protocol

and criteria for the mapping process. This was done to standardize all Mid-Snake data as Idaho Power was collecting data along the river in connection with the re-licensing of their Mid-Snake hydro-power projects. The Mid-Snake RC&D and SCITRDA then turned to CSI's Agriculture Department which was developing a GPS/GIS course for students.

Using equipment provided by the RC&D and CSI, the student team, under the direction of Professor **Jim Wilson**, was orientated to their tasks by Idaho Power and BLM personnel. The team is actively involved in mapping sites along the river and documenting ownership of lands along the Mid-Snake Corridor. Completion of the work is scheduled for June 2005.

The goal of the study is to map the same sites along the river utilizing GPS/GIS technology. The study, when complete, will be published on the web for use by land management agencies, cities and counties, and private land owners. The study will also be a reference for the BLM in the GMP process and the basis for planning along the river for years to come. CSI students are gaining valuable hands-on experience. The college is looking to establish a GPS/GIS certificate program.

RC&D and City of Boise Hold Fish'n Chips Clinic

The **Southwest Idaho RC&D Council, Inc.** hosts the Fish'n Chips clinic each year to instruct and introduce novices to fishing and to showcase the recreational opportunities available in the area. The event is held at Park Center Pond in Boise on Idaho's "Free Fishing Day" in June. Micron furnishes computer upgrades, thus the "Chips" in "Fish'n Chips."

The first time the RC&D coordinated the event, seven years ago, about 150 people attended. This past year, 287 under 14 years old and 206 over 14 registered. However, this does not tell the whole story. The event ran from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., but the registration line started at 8:30 and continued to be backed up until 1:30. The line was so long



that a great number of participants skipped the registration. Two unofficial attendance estimates were 1000 to 1200 people.

Micron provides lunch for everyone and most everyone caught fish. Channel 7 KTVB contributed to this turn-out by providing public service spots and other air time with Larry Gebert during the morning weather forecast.

Event sponsors included the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, City of Boise, Idaho Fish and Game, Micron Technologies, Nagel Beverage, Sportsman's Warehouse, Wal-Mart, Hillcrest Floral and Channel 7 KTVB. A number of national sponsors also assisted after the event was selected by the National Fishing and Boating Organization for sponsorship. Volunteers provided roughly 200 hours of assistance for this project. They represented the Boise National Forest, Idaho Fish and Game, Maurice Sporting Goods, Wal-Mart and private citizens.

This project has become the main public outreach tool each year for the Council. A thousand may attend but several thousand people are exposed to the RC&D concept, or at least the term, through the generous media support. Along with the public support, this has been an excellent opportunity to develop project sponsorship opportunities. One sponsor, the Sportsman's Warehouse, is receiving an award for their work in the community.

Accomplishments: Community Development



RC&D Facilitates New Recreation Options

Rock climbing anyone?

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D recently helped the City of Post Falls Recreation Department and several



Rock climbers at Q'emiln Park in Post Falls.

recreation user groups develop a new plan for Q'emiln Park along the Spokane River in Post Falls.

Post Falls is one of Idaho's fastest growing communities. As the population increases, so does the need for more recreation areas and preservation of open space. Unique recreation user groups, including rock climbers and whitewater kayakers, are recognizing the opportunities for more local recreation, tourism and economic growth.

The first step for Q'emiln Park was to find out what the citizens want their park to look like, what type of experience they want to provide and how it fits within the larger community. The **Panhandle Lakes RC&D** and RC&D Coordinator **Kim Golden** facilitated a four-month planning process resulting in recommendations from a citizen/user group steering committee.

"Kim Golden's, and the RC&D's, help was invaluable in our process to identify users and uses for Q'emiln Park," says **Dave Fair**, director of Post Falls Recreation Department. "He made a difficult process with vying interests manageable, all under a very tight timeline."

Bear River RC&D Youth Camp Celebrating 20 Years

Under a Special Use Permit from the U.S. Forest Service, the **Bear River RC&D** Youth Camp has provided outdoor experiences for youth groups from northern Utah and southeastern Idaho for more than 20 years.

Located near the summit of Emigration Canyon (east of Preston, Idaho) at 7200 feet elevation, the three-acre

camp hosts about 500 youth each year, and the number is increasing. The camp offers culinary water, 14 camping sites, an outdoor theater, a large A-frame building, a flagpole and two restroom facilities. It is available for wilderness-type camping to youth groups, including 4-H, church, scouts and families, or other organizations upon reservation.



Skate Park to Get Kids Off Streets

Gooding City Council Member, **Sharon Seifert**, asked **Polly Huggins**, coordinator with the **Wood River RC&D**, for help to get kids off Gooding's streets. Huggins just happened to be at a Gooding City Council meeting when two young men asked the City Council to build a skateboard park in Gooding and the Council turned to the RC&D for assistance.

From there the Dream Skate Committee was founded. **Jamie Ashmead**, parent of an avid skateboarder, took the lead in working with the students to raise money. They put on a demonstration at the local county fair, sold shirts and held an auction to raise funds.

"We have made great preliminary progress with the youth," Ashmead says. "They have done a fantastic job raising money for the skate park this year."

The Gooding Recreation District has committed all labor in the form of volunteers for construction and ground preparation. They also will provide the insurance coverage and portable restrooms. Land has been donated and the City of Gooding will install a drinking fountain. The Wood River RC&D maintains all fiscal records and has successfully written two grants to complete the project. Construction for the skate park will begin in the spring of 2005.

Accomplishments: Noxious Weed Control

Bug Crew Eradicates Weeds, Helps Kids Grow

The Southern Idaho Bio-Control Program, a.k.a. the "Bug Crew," does a lot more than help eradicate weeds in Gooding, Camas, Lincoln and Blaine Counties. It helps kids grow. **Nan Reedy**, Bug Crew project director for the past six years has seen the positive results.

"For most of the students, this is their first job and they must first learn to be an employee," Reedy says. "That means being on time, dressed appropriately, prepared to work, able to follow instructions, to respect their teammates and work together whether it's entomology, public presentations, or fieldwork."

Reedy has worked with this program since its conception. It all began in Camas County with the **Wood River RC&D** and its partners as a way to incorporate biological weed control with education. At first, five to seven students from the 7th-12th grades in Camas County participated annually. The program has now expanded to include the surrounding counties.

"The unexpected benefit of the Bug Crew is the social aspect of making new friends, learning skills that could lead to a career, and a potential for a huge boost in self-esteem," Reedy says.

Students have learned about entomology, weed identification and the research process. Many have participated for several years and now even siblings are joining the project.

Many sponsors help make the program a success including the Camas Creek Cooperative Weed



No bugs about it. Students learn more than weed control on the Bug Crew.

Management Area (CWMA), Tri-County CWMA, Camas and Gooding Soil Conservation Districts, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Wood River RC&D.

RC&D Coordinates Bio Control

Since 1993, the **High Country RC&D** has conducted a biological control initiative aimed at introducing insects that are natural predators to a variety of invading noxious weeds. To date, 2,618 colonies comprising 24 insect species have been released with the intent of establishing local insectaries.

In 2004, the RC&D and local Natural Resources Conservation Service office partnered with BYU-Idaho to teach students about noxious weeds. As part of **Greg Blazer's** agro-ecology course, students learn about the effects noxious weeds have on the local environment and agricultural economy as well as what can be done to reduce the impacts. Outside the classroom, students are collecting and redistributing insects at various sites and establishing monitoring methods to record the impacts of the biological controls. The RC&D's goal is to develop monitoring techniques that can be used by landowners to assess their own biological release sites.

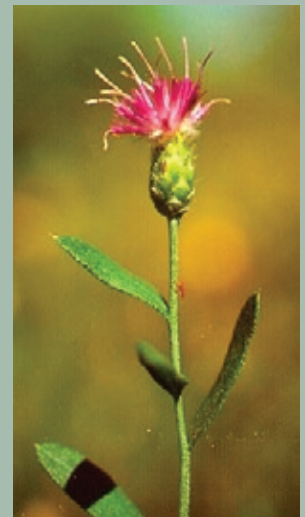


Students sweep a release site for leafy spurge flea beetles.

Frank Church Would Have Been Proud

The **Clearwater RC&D Council** serves as the fiscal agent for the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). The partnership is working diligently on early detection and treatment of spotted knapweed and Rush skeletonweed in remote areas of the wilderness.

The wilderness area includes parts of two National Forests, the Nez Perce and the Bitterroot, where the CWMA group's U.S. Forest Service coordinator has excelled in locating nonfederal funding from a number of sources to match a \$33,000 grant from the National Forest Foundation for weed control.



Spotted knapweed.

Accomplishments: Sustainable Agriculture



Potato Possibilities: Tribe Tries Alternative Crops

Two unusual crops were planted but not harvested on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation last year. These crops, radish and mustard, were disked back into the soil as a “green manure.”

Green manures build soil fertility in a manner similar to animal manures. Besides adding organic matter to the soil, the green manure crops improve water retention and suppress pests and diseases. It is the suppression of soil nematodes that the Tribes, **Three Rivers RC&D** and Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides wanted to know more about.

Local farmer **Todd Jensen** sees potential in green manures, particularly mustard. “It looks like it has a lot of promise,” he said. “It’s definitely an alternative to fumigation.”

Jensen planted mustard again this year as part of the experiment on the Reservation. This alternative proved cheaper than fumigation with yields and quality equal or better than fumigation.

Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Land Use Commissioner **Tony Galloway** says the Tribes support the experiment.



A green manure (mustard) demonstration field on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

Fort Hall already suffers from contaminated water which won’t disappear, but the new practice could provide controls in the future and will probably save the farmers some money, Galloway said. “It’s a good experiment,” he said. “We’re 100 percent behind it.”

Nitrate Levels Decrease as Drain Wells are Closed

Minidoka County is wrapping up a project requiring help from the **Mid-Snake RC&D**, several agencies and dozens of producers.

The Minidoka Land and Water Management Project (the A&B Project) is only fifteen drain wells from completion. Forty-nine drain wells have been closed to date.

The flood irrigation systems used by most producers required a drain well for overflows. Well tests in the late 1990s found nitrate levels above safe standards in 24 percent of the wells, pesticide residue in 81 percent, a coliform bacteria count in 63 percent, and 9,000 tons of sediment. This created immediate concern for Southern Idaho’s drinking water.

Julie Thomas, Mid-Snake RC&D coordinator, spearheaded a request for \$2.5 million to address the wells without burdening agricultural producers. The Minidoka County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Bureau of Reclamation, A&B Irrigation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helped to implement Congressional Earmark funding administered through USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

About 100 producers are receiving financial and technical assistance to convert from flood to sprinkler irrigation.



Dan Strickler, Minidoka County SWCD, stands in a well that is to be capped. When these wells were functioning, they produced a loud suction noise as runoff contaminated with nitrates, pesticides, bacteria and sediment rushed down into the aquifer.

Accomplishments: Conservation

Fuels for Schools Program Gaining Momentum



The **City of Council, Idaho**, recently passed a \$1 million bond to match the \$510,000 in grant funds for the RC&D Fuels for Schools project (see page 2). The **Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council** is coordinating a statewide project to establish demonstration schools for wood chip heating systems.

Idaho Department of Lands Director **Winston Wiggins** is impressed with the project partnership. "The working relationship between the partners is leading to increased opportunities for Idaho communities," he says. "The Panhandle Lakes RC&D has been a great partner in bringing the Fuels for Schools program to Idaho school districts. The Council finds innovative ways to get things done and essential administrative oversight."

RC&D Offers Tools to Get Conservation Done

The Bear River RC&D brings tools to the table.

The RC&D makes portable equipment available to people in northern Utah and southern Idaho that facilitates the planing of woody cuttings for streambank rehabilitation and wildlife habitat restoration.

For example, the Waterjet Stinger pressurizes on-site water into an erosive force that is captured in two hand-held planting wands for creating a hole for each shrub cutting. The RC&D purchased the Stinger for about \$1500 and has generated nearly \$1000 in fees (\$25/day rental) over the past three years.



The Waterjet Stinger with its two pressurized wands.

Ditch Company Helps Bull Trout

The East Fork Ditch Company supplies irrigation water to 54 users in the Council, Idaho, area. When bull trout were listed as a threatened and endangered species, they knew they had to do something to keep them out of their irrigation ditch and make their diversion structure fish-friendly.

With assistance from many partners, the **West Central Highlands RC&D** obtained and administered funds to construct a step pool complex that allows fish to migrate upstream over the diversion. The final touch included installing a horizontal flat-plate screen. This screen, through regulated velocities and turbulence, is self cleaning.

Costs totalled \$88,225, much of it from grants from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Game and the ditch company. Technical assistance was provided by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Northwest Riverworks from Hood River, Oregon, who introduced the new technology of horizontal flat-plate screens.

Agencies and users do an in-field review of the horizontal flat-plate fish screen on the East Fork of the Weiser.



Accomplishments: Conservation

Tree TV: the Forest and the Trees

What's on your TV?

The **Three Rivers RC&D** has worked with several partners to produce Tree TV as a way to provide community members and leaders an opportunity to learn more about the trees in their yards, schools, parks and parkways. The series of 10 videos, completely filmed in the Pocatello area, presents an easy way to learn more about specific trees and tree maintenance as well as the importance of a healthy and diverse community forest.

All of the communities assisted by Three Rivers have asked for better ways to bring information to their citizens relative to community forestry. It is the belief of the local tree boards, Idaho Department of Lands, and Three Rivers RC&D Council that, if our citizens have a better appreciation and understanding of their community forest, the trees and the forest will prosper. And so will the community. Yet information on the benefits of trees and proper tree management has not gotten into the hands of the people within those communities.

These videos are available at local libraries, Extension offices, and at the Three Rivers RC&D office. Each video will also play continuously throughout the year on the community access channel.



The series of videos are:

Episode 1	Trees of Bannock County
Episode 2	Fundamentals of Pruning
Episode 3	Site Selection
Episode 4	Tree Selection
Episode 5	Planting
Episode 6	Training Young Trees
Episode 7	Trees and Water
Episode 8	Tree Problems and Maintenance
Episode 9	Trees and Utilities
Episode 10	Community Forestry

RC&Ds Assist with Mitigation

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set forth a mandate that as of November 2004 no entities could apply for pre-disaster assistance and other programs if they did not have a Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Plan.

With the RC&D Councils being involved the last few years in wildfire education and the fact that the Idaho Fire Plan was signed into agreement with the **Idaho RC&D Association**, it was logical for RC&D Councils to continue by assisting Counties in developing a program to produce overall hazard assessment and mitigation plans. The RC&D Councils formed a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Counties to lead this effort. BLM would provide the funding for the RC&D Councils to contract or otherwise complete the plans. The Councils established local working groups for the project.

The **Southwest Idaho RC&D Council** sponsored plans for three of the four counties in the area for about \$135,000. The RC&D also assisted the Duck Valley Reservation.

The RC&D Councils project that, by the end of 2005, all counties will have a complete all natural hazard assessment and mitigation plan in place and ready to begin implementation.

River Monitoring



While still beautiful, the Portneuf River was placed on the EPA's 303(d) list in 1998, meaning its water quality is impaired. The **Three Rivers RC&D** has worked with community partners to establish seven continuous monitoring stations as part of the process to clean up the river and its tributaries.

