

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE ISRP ON

Project Number: 23007

Project Title: Conservation Easement, Baker Ranch, and Salmon River East Fork

- Regarding the issue of saving 70 cfs. Within the confines of current Idaho water laws, there are no assurances that saved water will remain in the stream. Diverters downstream of the proposed conservation easement have historically received sufficient amounts of water to meet their irrigation needs without de-watering the stream. The topographic and geographic nature of the East Fork drainage precludes the consumption of significant amounts of additional water downstream. Therefore, agricultural expansion within the narrow canyon is highly unlikely.
- Previous efforts to reduce consumptive use of water from the East Fork have been successful downstream. Two irrigation ditches downstream were eliminated and replaced with a sprinkler system. Change in land ownership is occurring with the acquisition of agricultural property by conservation groups. It is inevitable that Idaho water law will be changed to provide for more stringent control of diversions and establishment of minimum instream flows. This eventual shift in attitude and utilization of lands along the east fork will only serve to guarantee the benefits to be derived from implementation of the East Fork Conservation Easement proposal.
- The conservation easement would first be negotiated for "no livestock" within the riparian fence. The general consensus of the Model Watershed technical team was that a zone grazing plan could be implemented without jeopardizing the restoration goal. The grazing plan would be a negotiable item in the agreement should the "no livestock option" threaten any agreement by the landowner.
- The proposal assumed a cross-buck wooden rail fence 42 inches in height. This was felt to best accommodate wildlife common to the area while restricting livestock. It also assumes the best longevity for the area. The area is near the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and the cross buck fence would be compatible with the SNRA visual goals.
- The cost of the cross-buck fence was estimated using previous experience for the Stanley area. Contractors are not locally available. We estimate the price at \$4/f t or \$21,000/mile times 5 miles of riparian area (\$105,000), plus the zone fences if needed (\$45,000), plus one timbered wet area \$10,000. Hopefully this is slightly higher than needed.
- The landowner would be responsible for maintenance of the fence.
- The conservation easement would require the holder to allow access to Idaho Department of Fish and Game for inspection of the property but would not necessarily be open to the public.
- The landowner said he would enter into an agreement but there is never any guarantee until the lawyers and other parties agree. An assessment was completed for the riparian portion of the agreement. It would require modification to include the entire ranch. Our hope was that Mr. Baker would take \$1 million, the fence would cost less than our projected \$160,000 and some demolition would be required to remove some old dikes, headgates and old fish screens that do not meet NMFS criteria.

From: "BERT BOWLER" <bbowler@IDFG.STATE.ID.US>
To: GWCB.GWPDx(Trina)
Date: 2/12/01 2:22PM
Subject: High Priority Project Response

Trina,

Here is IDFG's (IOSC) response to High Priority Project #23007
Conservation Easement, Baker Ranch, and Salmon River East Fork
bert