# PROJECT 32002 – Response to ISRP FY 2003 Proposals

Implement Best Management Practices to improve habitat and upland conditions within the Billingsley Creek watershed.

ISRP Initial Review comments for FY 2003 Proposals:

ProjectID: 32002
Implement Best Management Practices to improve riparian habitat and upland conditions within the Billingsley Creek watershed.
**Sponsor:** GSCD
**Province:** Middle Snake
**Subbasin:** Snake Upper Middle
**FY03 Request:** $114,635
**5YR Estimate:** $459,175
**Short Description:** Enhance riparian habitat and reduce nonpoint source pollution within the Billingsley Creek watershed through the development and implementation of conservation plans on private lands, coordinated with state owned and managed lands within the watershed.
**Response Needed?** Yes
**ISRP Preliminary Recommendation and Comments:**
A response is needed. Ties to fisheries biologists such as at IDFG need to be more strongly specified. More detail needs to be provided on monitoring or links to other monitoring efforts that would provide information on fish response. See the programmatic section at the beginning of this report. Details need to be given on prioritization of sites for restoration. Is there a watershed assessment that specifies needed actions? Are there potential benefits of using additional CRP enrollment in this project area?

Ties to IDFG fisheries biologists – Monitoring Fisheries Response

IDFG intends to provide support to this project.

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IDFG's standard Stream Survey will be utilized while conducting fisheries survey in this project (Memorandum August 15, 1994).

idfg standard survey.PDF

The IDFG's BPA funded Native Fisheries Survey in the Upper Snake River Basin protocols will also be utilized where possible (Meyer, 1999).

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Potential biological benefits

The primary intent in this proposal is to move impaired or non-functional riparian areas to a functional system, through non-regulatory actions. Those fisheries benefits will follow upon moving the impaired areas to a functional condition. The first steps towards a functional water body, using the Proper Functioning Condition definition here, must be to reduce stream width-depth ratios by increasing the amount of stabilizing vegetative at bankfull. The riparian vegetation will filter out sediments, thus "widen" or increase the riparian area into the stream channel as well out into the adjacent "upland" area. Billingsley Creek, however, does not have the

storm-driven sediments to "create" that widened effect on the riparian area, thus it needs to be manually encouraged primarily through channel vegetative and other applicable in-stream practices.

The creation of a more appropriate width-depth ratio, increasing overhanging banks, improving pool-riffle-run ratios, and diversify the substrate conditions, cannot but help improve fisheries spawning, rearing, and adult habitat. Quantifying the actual fishery "enhancements" or numbers is difficult. However, quantifying the physical attributes of that desired fishery habitat is not. Therefore, the first and long-term step to be taken will be to document those changes in the physical attributes. Actual fishery HU's will be quantified where possible, with the assistance of IDFG.

Site prioritization

The entire length (7-8 miles) of Billingsley Creek is a priority. The state land (approx. 2 miles), managed by the IDPR (Parks & Rec.), and those private lands will all be considered high priority simply due the short length of the water body and the similarities throughout. However, for non-regulatory planning, those landowners committed to implementing conservation practices will be given priority planning and implementation technical assistance.

Watershed assessments

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There exists a DEQ developed TMDL, which includes a problem assessment, and beneficial use assessments, on Billingsley Creek. Also, a conservation improvement recommendation report exists, which will be updated within the first year of the project. Also, NRCS area-wide planning and individual conservation planning policy require NEPA to be adhered to where applicable. See the above-embedded IDFG letter for specific fishery assessment information.

CRP application

CRP facts.PDF

Idaho does not have a Conservation Reserve Enhanced Program (CREP).

What Idaho does have is the Continuous Signup CRP, which may or may not be available or acceptable to the landowner due to low rental rates. See the imbedded CRP – Continuous signup enhancements fact sheet for some detail on what this program includes. The length of CRP contracts are from 10 to 15 years, with rental rates based on the average dryland cash rent, regardless of any irrigated conditions, where the average cash rent is substantially higher. Qualifying marginal pastures, which is the predominate landuse adjacent riparian areas, qualify only if the are suitable for riparian buffers.

Some areas with potential or existing weed infestation problems are further compounded where CRP is enrolled and riparian areas are inundated with weeds. Weed control is limited adjacent to riparian areas.

For marginal pasturelands adjacent to permanent or seasonal streams, C-CRP "permanent" rental rates range from $30 to $59 per acre, plus an additional incentive, up to 20%, depending on the practice installed such as buffer strips. "Seasonal" rental rates range from $18 to $53 per acre.

C-CRP is discussed with landowners during the development of an implementation strategy for their conservation plan, as well as all other funding sources.