

# **Scoping Information Package**

## **Warm Springs Preserve Restoration and Enhancement Project Ketchum, Idaho**

This information package summarizes a U.S. Department of the Interior's WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) program project proposal from the Wood River Land Trust (WRLT) for the City of Ketchum to restore aquatic habitat within Warm Springs Creek, create side channels, enhance floodplain connectivity, improve flood water conveyance, establish native plant communities, improve pedestrian connection to adjacent neighborhoods, and provide public park amenities including walking trails, off-leash dog access, Nordic ski trails, public restrooms, picnic tables, benches, and interpretive signage. The project is located on Warm Springs Creek in the city of Ketchum, Idaho.

The WaterSMART program establishes a framework to provide Federal leadership and assistance on the efficient use of water; integrate water and energy policies to support the sustainable use of all natural resources; form strong diverse partnerships with states, tribes and local entities; and coordinate with other Department bureaus and offices on water conservation activities. Through the WaterSMART grants program, the Bureau of Reclamation provides cost-share funding to entities promoting the sustainable use of water resources, improving the ecological resilience of rivers and streams, and conserving water for multiple uses through collaborative conservation efforts.

Federal actions are analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences. Reclamation is asking for comments to better identify issues and concerns associated with this proposal.

### **Purpose and Need of Action**

Reclamation's purpose for the Proposed Action is to fulfill the objectives of a WaterSMART program proposal to rehabilitate riverine, riparian, floodplain, irrigation, and public park amenities at the Warm Springs Preserve. This project would improve the Warm Springs Preserve diversion and reduce annual maintenance requirements, improve the complexity of Warm Springs Creek aquatic habitat (through pool creation, point bar establishment, and riffle bed feature creation), install woody material to improve stream function and aquatic habitat, create multiple perennial side channels and hydraulically connected floodplain, install new bridges to improve public access, revegetate riparian and floodplain areas with native vegetation, and improve pedestrian access and public park amenities. The property was historically used for cattle ranching from the 1880's to the 1940's. Subsequent land uses included the establishment and operation of the Warm Springs Inn and restaurant, a rodeo arena, a golf course, tennis courts, and fishponds. This history of impactful land uses and the vegetation clearing completed to facilitate those uses has degraded the project reach of Warm Springs Creek and the adjacent riparian and floodplain areas. The property currently provides limited aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

## **Proposed Action**

Warm Springs Creek historically meandered through a narrow river valley, within which it maintained a high quality riverine and riparian corridor with a connected and functional floodplain. The creek and floodplain were stabilized over time through the placement of riprap and fill intended to protect residential developments and historical land uses, and the fluvial system now exhibits degraded aquatic habitat, reduced vigor and quantity of riparian vegetation, and limited floodplain connectivity (Figure 1). Riparian and terrestrial vegetation were also removed to accommodate historical land uses, and the riparian zone and surrounding area currently provide limited habitat for avian and terrestrial wildlife.

Primary components of this project include restoration of aquatic habitat within the existing creek, creation of side channels, enhancement of floodplain connectivity, flood conveyance improvements, and establishment of native plant communities. The project would improve the Warm Springs Preserve diversion by creating a constructed riffle and removing the existing concrete headworks. The existing headworks would be replaced with a channel that is designed to divert perennial flow into the proposed diversion/side channel (“Baldy Channel”). The project would also establish additional side channels (the “Dollar Channel”, “Sunny Channel”, “Challenger Channel”, and “Roundhouse Channel”) that would provide increased and diverse aquatic habitat (Figure 2).

The project would create pools, point bars, and constructed riffles in the mainstem of Warm Springs Creek to develop an overall more complex riverine network. Installation of large and small woody debris structures to promote in-channel complexity, force hydraulic response (scour, deposition, split flow, floodplain connection, sediment sorting, and overall hydraulic diversity), and provide cover for juvenile trout. The project would include excavation to lower designated areas of the floodplain to allow more frequent activation, improve floodplain inundation and conveyance, improve flood water attenuation, and reduce instream hydraulic forces during peak flow events (Figure 3). Treatment quantities associated with in-stream work, riffle bed creation and log placements, and side channel and floodplain grading are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Warm Springs Preserve treatment quantities.

Summary of Impacts to Waters of the U.S. or Wetlands				
Type	Area (acres)	Area (sq. ft.)	Quantity (cubic yard)	Material
Channel Fill (Filling)	0.41	18,010	1,222	Riffle Material
Channel and Pool Excavation (Excavation)	0.65	28,417	978	Native alluvium
Wood Material (Filling)	0.19	8,155	731	Woody Material (for Habitat Structures)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>54,582</b>	<b>2,931</b>	

The project would install two new bridges where the parking lot access road crosses a proposed floodplain swale and the proposed Baldy Channel. The span of these crossings is proposed to be 1.5 times the width of the bankfull channel in order to allow for fish passage and natural stream processes. The project proposes a 15-foot span for the Floodplain Swale Channel and a 30-foot span for the Baldy Channel.

The project would include revegetation of extensive riparian, floodplain, and terrestrial areas using native vegetation. Pedestrian connections to the adjacent River Run Lodge and Warm Springs Village would improve public accessibility, and the project would establish walking trails, off-leash dog access, informal activities (i.e., frisbee golf, dog walking), open fields for informal gatherings (i.e., picnics), Nordic ski trails, a public restroom/water bottle refill station, wayfinding signage, donor recognition elements, history of the property/donor interpretive signage, picnic tables, and benches.

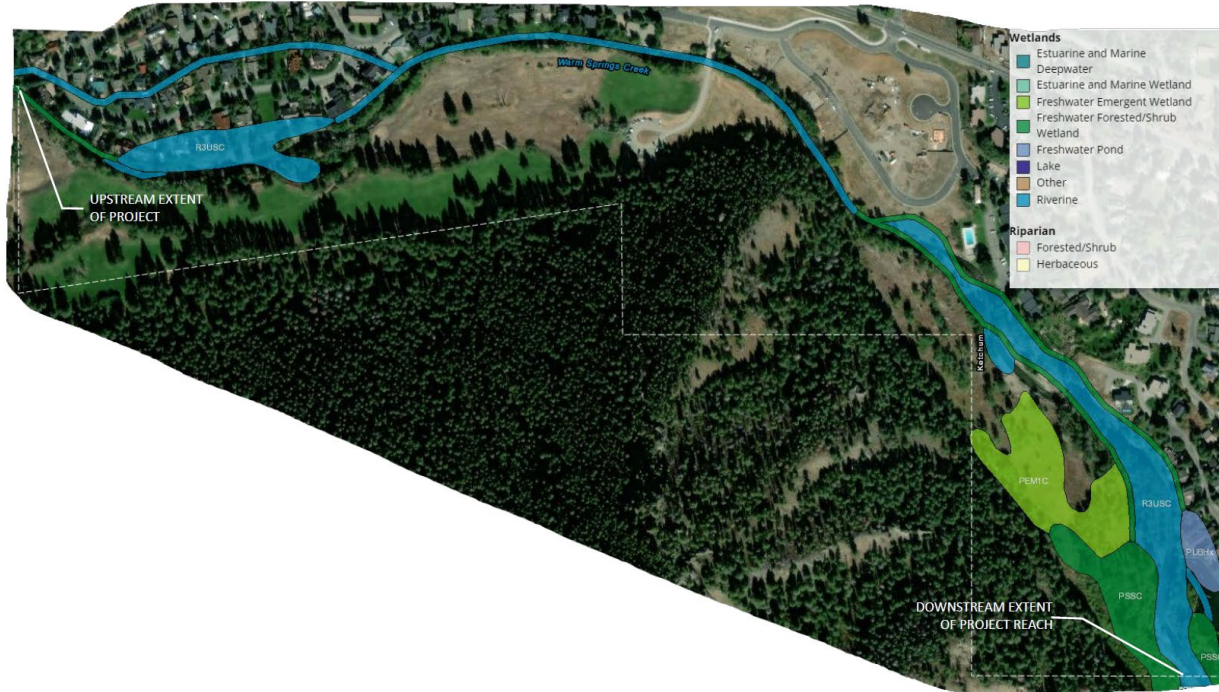


Figure 1. Existing condition and NWI mapping within the Warm Springs Preserve project area, Ketchum, Idaho.

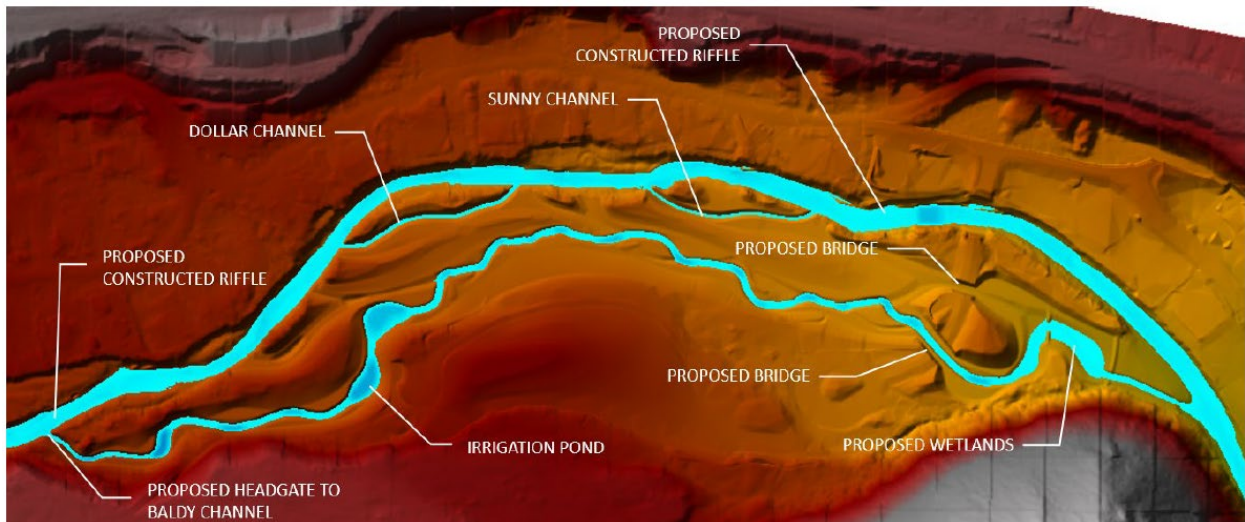


Figure 2. Proposed condition inundation depth and extent at low flow conditions, Warm Springs Creek.



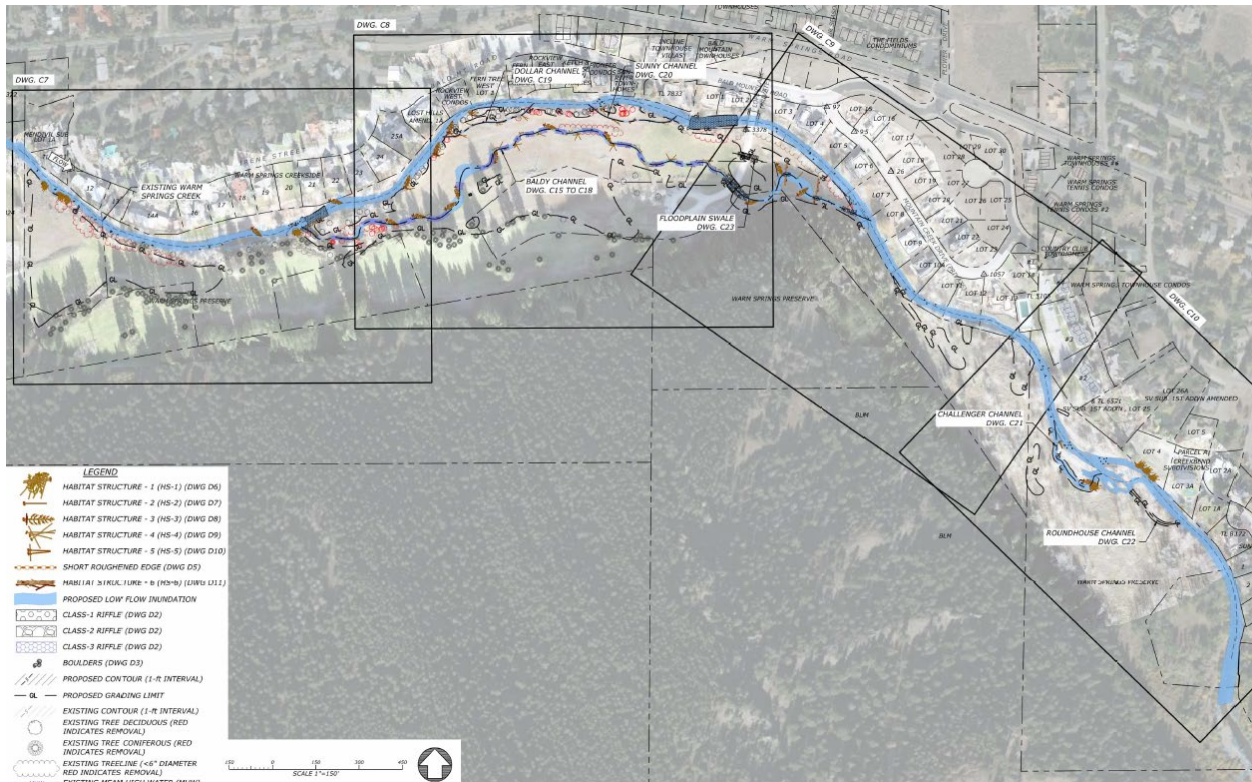


Figure 3. Proposed site conditions, Warm Springs Preserve project area.

## Location and Background

The Warm Springs Preserve project reach is located along Warm Springs Creek in Ketchum, Idaho (Figure 4). The project area reach of Warm Springs Creek is located upstream of the confluence with the Big Wood River. The stream reach is about 4,800 feet long and is located about 2 miles west of downtown Ketchum, Idaho. In 2022, the City of Ketchum took possession of 65 acres of the Warm Springs Ranch property and established the Warm Springs Preserve for public use. The City of Ketchum has partnered with the WRLT and various stakeholders including the Friends of the Warm Springs Preserve to create a renewed landscape to enhance the public streamside park.

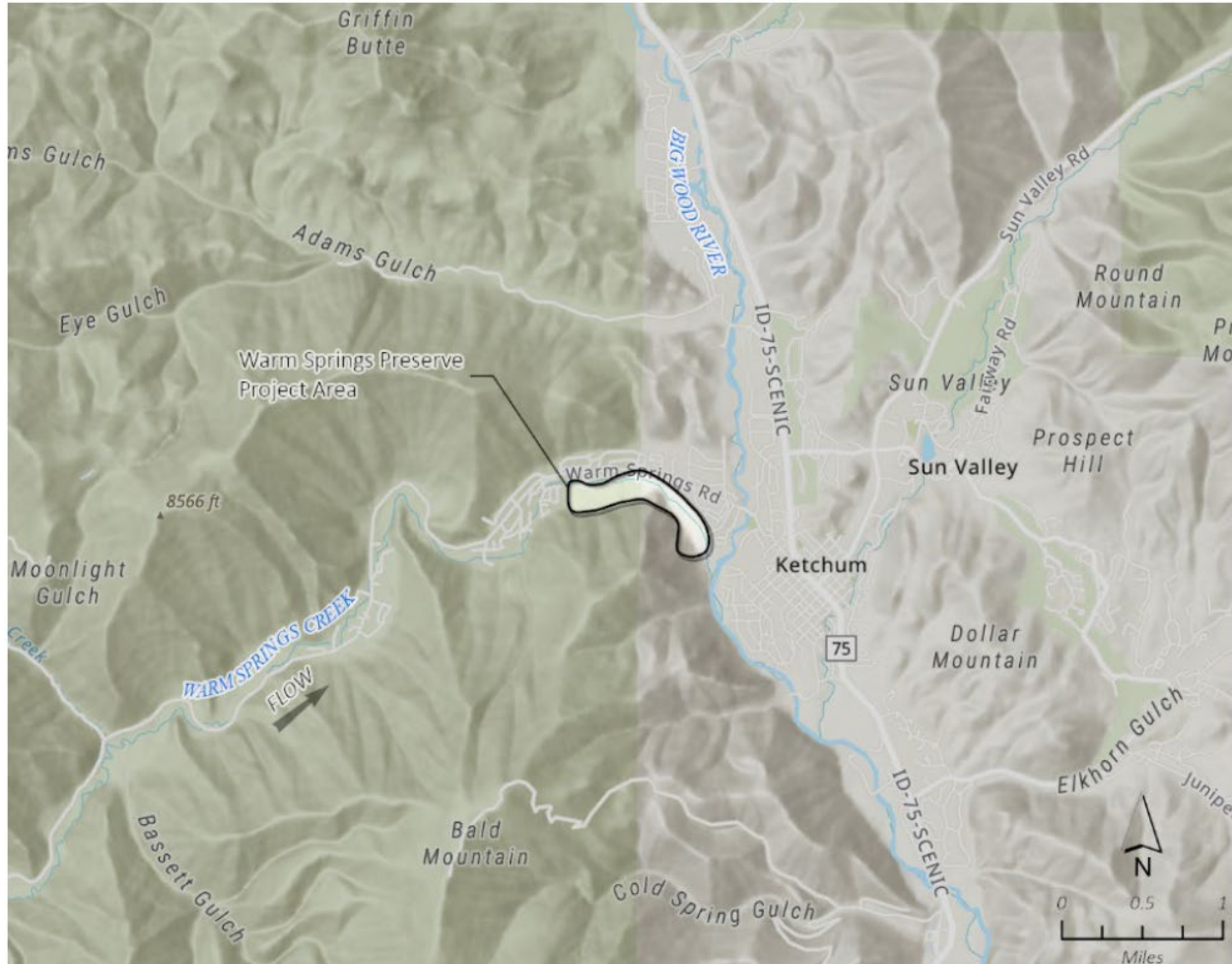


Figure 4. Location of the Warm Springs Preserve in Ketchum, Idaho.

### **Preliminary Alternative Development**

The environmental assessment would include consideration of the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative. Additional alternatives could be developed as needed throughout the NEPA scoping process.