

WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Planning Grant Proposal



Using Collaboration, Trust, Outreach, Planning, and Coordination to Develop a Restoration Plan and Project Designs for the South Fork of the Boise River Watershed in Southwest Idaho



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1. Executive Summary

Date: 5 December 2023

Applicant Name: Trout Unlimited

City, County, and State: Boise, Ada County, Idaho

Length of Time: Three years March 31, 2025 Estimated Completion Date: March 31, 2028

Trout Unlimited (TU) and partners seek to continue management and coordination of the South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative focused on the lower section of the South Fork Boise River (SFBR), located in southwestern Idaho. The watershed is located just east of Boise, Idaho, one of the fastest growing communities in the nation. The SFBR Watershed includes a significant amount of Federal lands – primarily National Forest lands (Boise National Forest) with some Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation lands.

The South Fork Boise River houses a trophy rainbow trout fishery; it also harbors important habitat for several other fish species, including bull trout and mountain whitefish. This river corridor is a designated state protected river also qualifies as a candidate for Federal Wild & Scenic designation. This watershed is of significant cultural importance to the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes.

Under the initial Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant (Grant #R23AP00107) TU brought together 45 individuals for the kickoff meeting representing a diverse group of interests including landowners, local governments, recreation and conservation groups, water use interests, Federal land and water management agencies, state agencies and other affected stakeholders. A long history of uses, including road building, recreation, and water management have resulted in riparian and aquatic habitat degradation among other issues. Impacts from wildfires in 2013 are still obvious on the landscape. The watershed group has begun identify and prioritize major watershed concerns, including, but not limited to: degraded water quality; aquatic, riparian and wetland habitat degradation; loss of stream function; bank and channel instability; and impacts of climate change. Many of these issues are complex and interconnected that will require complex long-term strategies to mitigate.

To continue the thriving South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative, grant funding will support ongoing stakeholder and community outreach, research on feasibility of proposed projects and production of a stakeholder-driven watershed restoration plan that can be used to help prioritize, justify funding for and implement future projects in the watershed.

The watershed group will continue to be focused on the lower portion of the South Fork Boise watershed, which begins at Anderson Ranch Dam (including tributaries) to Arrowrock Dam.

2. Project Location

The Lower South Fork Boise Watershed is in Elmore County in Idaho, approximately 48 miles east of Boise, the state's capital city (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The watershed encompasses approximately 331 square miles of land and drains to the northwest. For reasons outlined below, we propose that the watershed group continues to focus on the Lower South Fork Boise Watershed, namely, the river and its tributaries between Anderson Ranch Dam and Arrowrock Reservoir. This area includes 3 HUC 10 drainages 1705011309, 1705011310 and 1705011311. Anderson Ranch and Arrowrock are both major storage and flood management reservoirs operated by the Bureau of Reclamation.

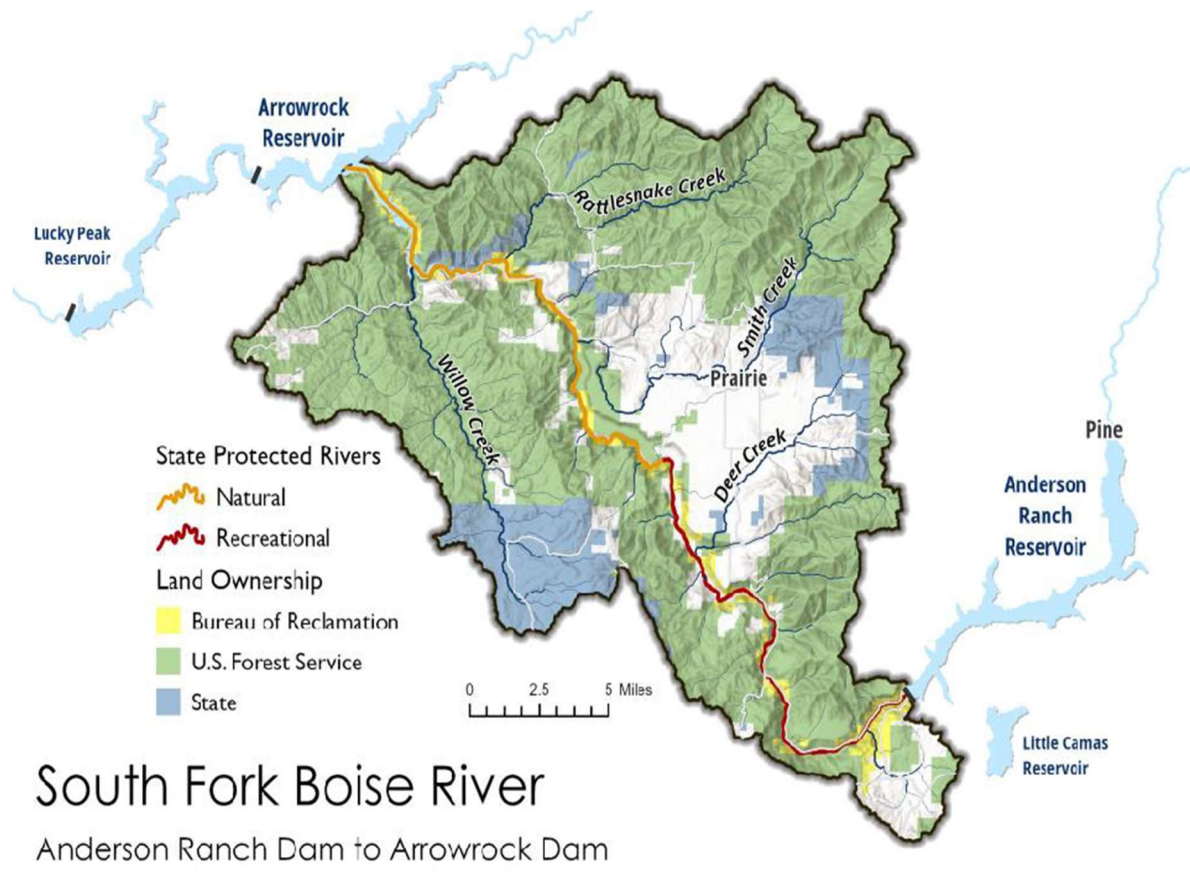


Figure 1. Map of the South Fork Boise Watershed

Technical Project Description

2.1 Applicant Category

Trout Unlimited (TU) is applying for grant funding as an existing watershed group to continue coordination and management of the South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative, in southwest Idaho. TU is applying under this category because the many issues have been identified in the South Fork Boise watershed that are expected to take years of preparation and planning to implement. This will extend well past the end of the current funding in March of 2025.

TU volunteers and staff have worked in the South Fork Boise River Watershed since 1992 including activities such as placing fence lines, scientific data collection such as a genetic study, and outreach. In 2007 and 2008, Boise National Forest officials and TU volunteers assessed spawning habitat in the area. In 2011, TU and the Boise National Forest completed the Pierce Creek Reconnection Project to improve fish passage and connectivity by replacing a non-functioning culvert with a bridge. Please follow this link to view a video about this project <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htMVUOmwa6Q>.

In 2011 and 2013, TU worked with partners Idaho Fish and Game and Bureau of Reclamation to complete further studies regarding flow release and sedimentation impacts of flushing flows, and to better understand how wildfires have played a role in changing the watershed. In 2013 and 2015, TU volunteers hosted riparian planting efforts within the watershed to restore areas along the river damaged by fires and heavy recreation use.

Many of the activities mentioned above included significant cooperation and coordination with numerous government agencies and other stakeholders. For example, the Pierce Creek reconnection project required TU to secure the support of the Mountain Home Highway District, obtain financial support from the Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee, coordinate with area ranchers, and collaborate with officials from the Boise National Forest. Completing the genetic study involved working with Idaho Department of Fish and Game, TU staff scientists and the University of Nevada who performed the genetic analysis.

With the assistance of the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Grant, TU hired a Watershed Manager in June 2023. The Watershed Manager reached out to over 90 organizations/individuals and conducted over 40 stakeholder interviews to better understand concerns, needs and issues as well as potential opportunities for addressing these and improving the watershed. An invitation list of 68 individuals was developed for the Kickoff Meeting held on October 19, 2023. The Kickoff Meeting was well attended with 45 individuals representing a wide variety of stakeholders. The wide variety of complex issues the group aims to address led to a decision to develop six sub-committees. The sub-committees work on details of specific opportunities for improvement in the watershed. Each sub-committee shares information and coordinates with the larger group at quarterly meetings. Some of the larger project ideas like creating new side channels are very complex and will require oversight and management beyond the end of current funding in March of 2025. The overall number of project ideas will also require many of them to be sequenced due to limited funding waiting for further development in the future.

2.2 Eligibility of Applicant

TU is the nation's largest grassroots coldwater conservation organization with a mission to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. TU works to achieve this mission on a local, state, and national level through an extensive volunteer network and dedicated staff. Headquartered outside of Washington, D.C., TU is a 501c (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1959 that currently has approximately 351 staff working in 26 offices and remote in 36 states from Alaska to North Carolina. TU has extensive federal grant management experience, and currently manages over 550 different federal grants, including numerous grants in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation.

In addition to initiating this South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative, TU has led or been involved in several other watershed groups supported by CWMP grant funding, including the Wood River Water Collaborative in Idaho, the Boise River Enhancement Network on the lower Boise River, the Blue River Watershed Group in Colorado, the Bitter Root Water Forum in Montana, the Sun River Watershed Group in Montana, and the Willwood Working Group #3 in Wyoming, and is therefore well-positioned to be the lead applicant on the current proposal.

Additionally, TU works on the ground in communities throughout the West, finding collaborative solutions to the twenty-first-century challenges of drought, habitat loss, and aging infrastructure by convening diverse stakeholders in pursuit of shared goals. In the Yakima River Basin, for example, TU has partnered with the Kittitas Reclamation District to help create a national model for restoring streams by using existing infrastructure and modernizing water delivery system parts to maximize efficiency and increase flows to key salmon and steelhead

tributaries. In the Henrys Fork River watershed of southwestern Wyoming and northeastern Utah, TU has built relationships with NRCS staff and local landowners to implement instream restoration and irrigation efficiency projects throughout the watershed.

Under the existing CWMP grant, TU hired a new full-time TU staff person to act as Watershed Manager for the lower South Fork Boise River watershed. The Watershed Manager contacted over 90 individuals/organizations to inform them about the new watershed group and invite them to participate. They conducted over 40 stakeholder interviews to better understand concerns, needs and issues as well as potential opportunities for addressing these and improving the watershed. The kickoff meeting hosted 45 individuals representing nearly all of the stakeholder groups in the watershed. Participants included a range of local, state and federal agencies, recreation groups, NGOs, local landowners, water districts and staff from all four offices of the Idaho Members of Congress. The website (<https://www.southforkboise.org>) is managed by TU and hosts agendas, meeting notes, presentations, meeting recordings, past project information, and much more. Six sub-committees have been formed to dive deeper into the details of the opportunities for improvement that the group has come up with so far. A StoryMap has also been developed to get everyone on the same page with names, condition and locations of the different tributaries and recreational facilities in the watershed. TU has developed an inclusive watershed group with the need, ability and desire to continue working on issues past the end of the current agreement.

If Reclamation chooses to award this grant, TU will continue to play a very similar role to what it plays now with respect to this collaborative. In the short time of its existence, it is clear that the TU Watershed Manager position provides critical organization, facilitation and collaborative activities for the group.

2.3 Project Description

The goals and objectives of the SFBR Watershed Collaborative will be to:

1. Continue coordination and management of the watershed group in the South Fork Boise River Watershed in southwest Idaho.
2. Facilitate ongoing meetings and discussions among the group concerning issues and opportunities of land and water use in the South Fork Boise River Watershed.
3. Use the results of the recreational user survey to refine and prioritize proposed projects in the watershed for use in the development of a watershed restoration plan.
4. Investigate opportunities for bundling projects together for funding and/or compliance.
5. Coordinate with partners on public outreach to identify and address any concerns from the public on potential projects.
6. Develop a detailed watershed restoration plan. Identify any knowledge gaps that still exist. Prioritize the potential projects developed by the collaborative. Outline potential paths forward for each project including funding sources, environmental compliance needs, permitting requirements, design and construction timelines, design and construction contractors, volunteer or in-kind funding needs and any post construction monitoring.

TU is applying for this CWMP Phase I funding opportunity as an Existing Watershed Group and will be undertaking activities under **Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning** and **Task C: Watershed Management Project Design**. These proposed activities align with the goals outlined above and will help TU and partners continue a South Fork Boise River Watershed Group that is representative of the diverse stakeholders in the South Fork Boise River (SFBR)

watershed and that will be responsive to the watershed concerns. TU will ensure that other funding being used for studies, design or implementation is not duplicative of this grant's efforts. TU has identified the main activities for the development of the SFBR Watershed Plan:

Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning

- Maintain a watershed coordinator. TU proposes that a portion of the grant funds be used to continue to fund a TU position - the South Fork Boise Watershed Coordinator. We will raise the remaining funds needed for the position from other funding sources.
- *Develop a Watershed Restoration Plan*
- Develop the big picture Watershed Restoration Plan that presents an overview and prioritization of potential restoration projects.
- The watershed manager will take the lead in developing a Watershed Restoration Plan.
- *Conducting monitoring activities*
- Some field studies have already commenced using other funding sources. For example, TU and the Boise NF cooperated on eDNA assessments of several tributaries to the South Fork Boise River during summer 2023.
- Staff time would also be allocated to conducting flow measurements and/or training others to conduct measurements using equipment Trout Unlimited already has.
- *Conducting mapping and other technical analyses*
- New LiDAR mapping could inform multiple potential projects and show the current status of the watershed after the post fire debris flows. This grant could be used for some of the staff time to plan and prepare for LiDAR surveys, but would not cover the cost of LiDAR itself.
- A simpler method could also be used to delineate which side channels are currently connected to the main channel at the winter base flows of 300cfs.
- *Working with group members to determine how the watershed can be improved.*
- The watershed manager will continue to facilitate quarterly watershed group meetings as well as continuing to help lead meetings and site visits for what is currently 6 sub-committees.
- *Reviewing watershed-specific best management practices*
- The watershed coordinator will investigate watershed-specific best management practices such as construction timing windows based on endangered species known to occur in the watershed.

Task C: Watershed Management Project Design

- *Completing an analysis to identify specific project locations.*
- Additional public outreach would be used to gain insight into the public perception of proposed changes to recreation facilities such as locations for additional bathrooms and boat ramps. This would be done through a combination of on site signage, email or postal mailers, and information booths at public events.
- *Completing site-specific project design and engineering*
- Design and engineering of most projects would be conducted under separate funding. Simpler projects like riparian planting and beaver dam analogues have pretty good prescriptions and models for the basic design and could be done by the group.
- *Developing project timelines and milestones.*
- Individual project timelines and milestones will be developed by the watershed manager in coordination with the watershed group.
- *Researching what type of site-specific environmental compliance will be necessary*
- The watershed manager will work with the watershed group to identify environmental compliance needs. To improve efficiencies the group will investigate options for bundling

projects together for environmental compliance. Different agencies have different categorical exclusions under NEPA. Research into these differences may allow specific projects to be prioritized for one source of funding vs another.

3. Evaluation Criteria

3.1 Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity & Geographic Scope

3.1.1 Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

Affected Stakeholders & Support for the South Fork Boise River Watershed Group

TU will prioritize working to ensure that the Watershed Group represents a diverse collaboration of stakeholders for the South Fork Boise River (SFBR) watershed. Table 1 lists the SFBR Watershed Group members that shows full representation of the geographic scope of the area. The group currently encompasses interests from the watershed itself, the nearby city of Mountain Home as well as the Wood River, Magic and Treasure valleys. TU will work with this group to continue to identify and invite additional stakeholders.

With 45 individuals attending the kickoff meeting and a very diverse range of potential actions for the group we have decided to divide into sub-committees to dive into the details. The six sub-committees include; Signage Outreach and Education, Irrigation and Agriculture, Habitat, Recreation, Roads and Trails, and User Survey. The engagement level among existing partners is very high with six individuals representing 5 different groups volunteering to act as leads or co-leads for sub-committees. Sub-Committees will present their progress and coordinate with the full watershed group at quarterly Watershed Collaborative meetings.

The group currently operates on an informal basis, and it is expected to remain that way. There is no formal membership and anyone who wants to join sub-committee or quarterly meetings is welcome to join. With members from across a broad geographic range, all meetings with the exception of field trips will have a virtual option. All meetings are currently planned to be recorded through the virtual meeting setup and made accessible to the public. The current plan for decision making is a consensus-based approach. Further discussion is needed at upcoming quarterly meetings to address what happens if there is no consensus as well as addressing the recent guidance that does not allow state employees to vote when participating in groups.

The SFBR Watershed Group will continue to work to engage with the Tribes and incorporate their needs, ideas, and goals into the Group's work. Tribal connection to the area is evidenced by the Danskin Rock Shelter, containing an extraordinary depth of cultural deposits and rock art within its walls.

Guides and Outfitters are prohibited on the South Fork of the Boise River. However local fly shops and whitewater shops have many customers that frequent the South Fork Boise River and come in for recommendations since they can't hire a guide. Idaho Angler and Angler's fly shops based in Boise are both very interested in improving the watershed for both business and personal use benefits.

All of the recreation groups, businesses and environmental conservation groups listed in Table 1 are concerned about user impacts as the watershed has seen dramatically increased use in recent years. The increased use has led to the user footprint expanding outside of the existing infrastructure facilities for campsites, boat ramps and bathrooms. User made campsites and boat ramps are degrading water quality by increasing sediment input and damaging riparian vegetation. The locations and limited number of public bathroom facilities is likely degrading

water quality. Some individuals have noted that they no longer visit the watershed due to the impacts from inadequate facilities for the level of use the watershed is receiving.

Flow changes in the tributaries have resulted from climate change as well as wildfire impacts. Farmers/ranchers, recreation groups and many state/federal agencies are concerned that tributaries are not provided as much water as they used to. Tributaries that were documented as optimal spawning areas for trout in the 1970s are now running dry during the summer. Grazing allotment permit holders and local ranchers are finding it harder to provide water for cattle.

There are a limited number of affected stakeholders that have not been actively engaged with the watershed group. The Mountain Home Highway District and the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) are both important entities for the group, but have had limited engagement. The Mountain Home Highway District maintains some of the main roads in the watershed and cooperated with TU and the Boise NF on the Pierce Creek bridge project in 2011. IDWR provided a letter of support for the original grant funding but has not been actively engaged recently. The watershed manager is actively seeking alternative contacts within these organizations in an attempt to engage them with the group. The next step if that doesn't work is to have other entities within the group reach out.

Targeted Outreach-The Signage/Outreach and Education sub-committee will assist the SFBR Watershed Group to refine the communications and outreach plan to promote involvement from the community, recruit additional stakeholders, and provide information. This plan will involve updating the www.southforkboise.org website, the StoryMap and creating outreach materials such as brochures, business cards, stickers, and signage.

The User Survey sub-committee expects to have initial results from the user survey in late spring or early summer of 2025. These results will help identify additional issues, user groups and stakeholders that may have been missed. This funding will allow for targeted outreach to those individuals and entities that are identified through the user survey.

In addition, TU and the SFBR Watershed Group will conduct further stakeholder engagement by continuing a community presence through attending local events, hosting river events, and advertising in local publications. TU will follow up with interested contacts after events, and will reach out to potential members, through personal emails and phone calls. Quarterly SFBR Watershed Group meetings will be open to any interested stakeholder and sign-in/contact sheets will be used to take attendance and follow up with those who attended the meeting. The group will also continue to conduct stakeholder interviews and on-site visits to observe, understand, and document watershed concerns, needs, and issues.

4.1.2. Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope

The South Fork Boise River (SFBR) watershed is located in southwestern Idaho. Between Anderson Ranch Dam and Arrowrock Reservoir it covers approximately 331 square miles (211,840 acres), across portions of Elmore County and is an hour's drive east of Idaho's capital city, Boise, the state's largest metropolitan area (**Error! Reference source not found.**). TU proposes to focus solely on the South Fork Boise River and its tributaries below Anderson Ranch Dam, referred to as the Lower South Fork Boise, within the larger watershed (HUC 17050113) due to the nature of use, resources present, conditions, and user demographics. Main uses of this area include livestock grazing, recreational fishing, hiking, whitewater rafting, and wildlife watching. Access to many areas within the Lower South Fork is limited due to roadless

area designations as described in further detail below. Accessible roads in the area cater to recreationists, local residents and farmers/ranchers. Maintenance and management of the roads is done by both by the Forest Service and Mountain Home Highway District.

ENTITY	SECTOR
Trout Unlimited	Environmental Conservation
Landowners/Residents	Community Members
<i>Congressional Representatives for: Simpson, Fulcher, Crapo, and Risch</i>	US Congress
<i>Danskin Cattle LLC</i>	Ranching, Agriculture, Private Landowner
LG Davison & Sons, Inc.	Ranching, Agriculture, Private Landowner
<i>Boise Valley Fly Fishers</i>	Recreation
Magic Valley Fly Fishers	Recreation
Idaho Whitewater Association	Recreation
Idaho State ATV Association	Recreation
Mountain Home ATV Club	Recreation
<i>Idaho Conservation League</i>	Environmental Conservation
<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>	Environmental Conservation
<i>Idaho Rivers United</i>	Environmental Conservation/Recreation
<i>Idaho Wildlife Federation</i>	Environmental Conservation/Recreation
<i>Ted Trueblood Chapter -Trout Unlimited</i>	Environmental Conservation/Recreation
<i>Hemingway Chapter -Trout Unlimited</i>	Environmental Conservation/Recreation
Land Trust of the Treasure Valley	NGO
<i>Idaho Department of Environmental Quality</i>	State Agency
<i>Idaho Department of Fish and Game</i>	State Agency
<i>Idaho Department of Water Resources</i>	State Agency
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation	State Agency
Idaho Water Users Association	Irrigation and Water Interests
Water District 63	Irrigation and Water Interests
Shoshone Paiute Tribes	Tribal Government
City of Prairie	Local Government
Elmore County Commissioners	Local Government
Mountain Home Highway District	Local Government
<i>US Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	Federal Agency
<i>Boise National Forest</i>	Federal Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Federal Agency
<i>Bureau of Reclamation</i>	Federal Agency
Boise State University	University Research
University of Idaho	University Research
<i>Anglers Fly Shop</i>	Business
Idaho Angler Fly Shop	Business
Boise River Canyon Shuttle Service	Business
Lost River Outfitters (Ketchum)	Business

Table 1. Bolded organizations were represented at the SFBR Watershed Collaborative Kickoff Meeting or have been actively participating but could not make the meeting. Italicized groups have submitted letters of support for this or the original funding.

The Lower South Fork Boise, starting at Anderson Ranch Dam, is in Elmore County and extends

to Arrowrock Reservoir. Within the watershed, the Forest Service manages 59 percent, 31 percent of the lands are privately owned, and 10 percent are managed by the State of Idaho. The small town of Prairie has a population of just 116 and is located north of the river near the center of the watershed. The primary uses or activities in the watershed have been dispersed and developed recreation, livestock grazing, farming and timber management.

The SFBR below Anderson Ranch Dam runs nearly 29 miles and is designated a state-protected river in the state water plan. Under Federal Wild and Scenic River eligibility studies the southernmost segment, beginning just below Anderson Ranch Dam, has a Recreational classification and is 13.1 miles long. The middle segment has a Scenic classification and is 3.1 miles long (Danskin Bridge to Trail Creek). The northernmost segment is classified as Wild, and is 12.3 miles long. The river is considered eligible for Wild and Scenic River status because of its outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, and hydrologic values.

The river corridor is highly utilized by recreationists and will be a focus of the watershed group. Potential projects in other areas of the watershed will be included in the Watershed Management Plan. Beaver dam analogues and bridges or culverts on ATV trails can provide benefit throughout many areas of the watershed. Private landowners are actively participating in the watershed group. The group hopes to show positive results on these private lands that may entice other landowners to join the group. Many of the individuals participating in the group are engaged because they enjoy fishing on the river. However, they realize that healthy tributary habitat can support spawning and rearing as well as reduce water temperatures that could greatly improve the mainstem fishery. The focus may be on improving the mainstem river, but projects are expected throughout the watershed because everything flows downstream.

3.2 Evaluation Criterion B—Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs

3.2.1 Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

A primary goal of this proposal to continue coordination, management and facilitation of the newly established watershed group. Initial conversations with partners involved to date have identified the following issues:

- a. **Development**-The Treasure Valley is one of the fastest growing communities in the nation and within Idaho. Recreational use of the watershed is increasing as population growth in southern Idaho continues, and this affects the lands along the river and reservoir and surrounding area. Wildlife and fish habitat are affected by soil compaction and erosion near the river and riparian areas. The riparian corridor will continue to see this development pressure which has proven to result in riparian vegetation loss and bank stabilization degradation.

Due to our population boom, public agencies are only beginning to encourage safe and responsible recreation for all within the watershed. For example, in 2021, the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission produced a video about the SFBR (<https://youtu.be/17isH6Vem9g> or you can also find it at www.southforkboise.org). The video urges responsible recreation behavior as the area continues to see increased use.

Public land recreation, such as off highway vehicle use and occasional angler wandering, also impacts private lands via trespass and other indirect effects.

New rapids that formed due to post fire debris flows have limited accessibility to sections of the river via official boat ramps. Other official ramps do not allow trailers to be backed into the river. User made boat ramps are being created to avoid the rapids and allow easier retrieval of boats (Figure 2) but are causing damage to fish and wildlife habitat as well as degrading water quality by removing riparian plants and increasing erosion. The collaborative will work to

identify ways to maintain or improve boat access on the river while also maintaining or improving water quality and fish and wildlife habitat.

IDFG recognizes the SFBR as an important quality fishing resource and recreation hub for the Treasure & Magic Valley communities. The Boise National Forest manages a number of public access sites for fishing and boating along the SFBR. The Forest and Mountain Home Highway District manages the road next to the river where culvert crossings potentially inhibit fish passage to tributary spawning areas. Gullies have been created where water is concentrated by culverts passing under the road as it exits the canyon heading north to the town of Prairie. Sediment from these gullies may create a permanent or seasonal barrier where it is washed into Pierce Creek (Figure 3). Agencies will play an important role in a watershed group considering improved accessibility and ways to promote proper recreational use.

USFS recognized the impacts of increased usage within the watershed as far back as the 1990s. A failed proposal was developed to limit the areas allowed for camping and river access while creating an official pay campground to concentrate usage impacts away from the river corridor (Taylor 1991). Designated camping areas are still seeing users expand into adjacent meadows or forests as well as damaging riparian areas. Without a reservation system and limited enforcement of the 14 of 28 day stay limits many camps are often set up but unoccupied to reserve prime spots. Most campsites do not have fire rings and many user made rock fire rings are being made within the floodplain. Campsites at official and user made boat ramps cause conflicts between user groups and have caused even more user made boat ramps to be developed along with their negative impacts on habitat and water quality.



Figure 2. Image of a user made boat ramp to gain access to a river section without having to run a new rapid.



Figure 3. Sediment washed down from the road headed out of the canyon toward Prairie deposited in Pierce Creek.

- b. Water Supply** -Water storage and flow management at Anderson Ranch Dam affects downstream reaches of the SFBR. Flows are regulated according to an adopted Bureau of Reclamation operations manual and in accordance with state-granted water rights delivering water to water users through the downstream reservoirs and diversions. We regard the current operations as a model of compatibility for meeting downstream water rights along with providing benefits of a wild trout fishery in a tailwater system, operations that have been in place for nearly 40 years.

The regulated flows benefit fish populations in the SFBR in important ways, such as the long-established winter flow releases of 300 cfs. However, some emerging challenges seem to be appearing for fish populations and aquatic and riparian habitat. These challenges include the loss of natural high flows that would periodically inundate the floodplain and route sediment, water and debris to foster channel migration, renewal of riparian vegetation, and habitat diversity.

Supply of river gravel is interrupted by the dam, which reduces spawning and rearing habitat for fish and alters macroinvertebrate community composition. Flow Regulation has led to channel narrowing and a significant loss of side channels (Tranmer et al. 2020). The average width of the combined mainstem and side channel river corridor has decreased by over 50% (Tranmer et al. 2020).

The habitat sub-committee could build into a forum to foster dialogue and mutual learning regarding timing of water releases and flow management levels. The Henry's Fork Drought Management Planning Process that operates in eastern Idaho represents an excellent example of the type of forum and process that could be beneficial here. The SFBR watershed group could serve as a similar forum to create cooperative planning efforts with Reclamation to identify flow

release regimes to potentially address fishery enhancement opportunities while also ensuring recognition and protection of existing water rights. Reclamation has requested that some topics like fish stranding be introduced to the group after the initial relationship building stage. This will allow trust to develop prior to addressing some of the more controversial topics. This will likely be a multi-year process that would need to be managed by the watershed coordinator into the three years of this grant.

Water supply issues and pending proposals affecting the area include the proposed raise of Anderson Ranch Dam, pump storage and diversions or withdrawals from Anderson Ranch Reservoir by Elmore County, as well as by Cat Creek Energy. Each proposal separately or in combination can affect flow management in the SFBR downstream of Anderson Ranch Dam and will also affect the Reservoir elevations. A forum and process like the one for the Henry's Fork mentioned above could also improve opportunities for dialogue about the potential downstream implications of these pending proposals – with knowledge that the decisions about such proposals will unfold from other processes already underway.

Water management on tributaries has a direct influence on the tributaries themselves, but also can influence the flow and temperature of the mainstem river. Any on-farm improvements will be coordinated between the landowners and NRCS. The watershed group plans to work with Water District 63 and irrigators to investigate the interest in and feasibility of an array of potential projects on shared sections of the irrigation systems. Potential projects include ideas like converting open earthen canals to piped systems, installing fish screens and automation on headgates, converting tributary water rights to mainstem water rights and installing beaver dam analogues.

c. Aquatic, Riparian, and Wetland Habitat Degradation and Loss of Endangered Species

Habitat- IDFG considers the SFBR to be a trophy rainbow trout fishery in the 28-mile stretch downstream from Anderson Ranch Dam. Bull trout are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are present both in the SFBR downstream of the dam as well as a large tributary, Rattlesnake Creek. The bull trout in the South Fork are considered part of the Arrowrock Core Area. Most bull trout in the SFBR are likely to spawn in tributaries to the North and Middle forks of the Boise River. They return to the stable winter conditions below Anderson Ranch Dam to overwinter and sometimes spend a full year growing before leaving to spawn again. These populations are directly impacted by water quality water resource management in the SFBR watershed.

The loss of spawning gravels in the SFBR downstream from Anderson Ranch Dam places a premium on the need for spawning habitat for species that bull trout prey on in the main river. Yet aside from Pierce Creek, where a bridge was built in 2011 to replace a culvert by TU and partners, barriers remain to aquatic organism passage between the river and important tributaries where additional spawning habitat could be available. Rattlesnake Creek can create a delta formation at its mouth where it meets the receding Arrowrock Reservoir (Figure 4). This shallow sandy delta formation has the potential to act as a migration barrier and concentrate predators during bull trout migrations (Prisciandaro 2015). Since Rattlesnake Creek is the only known spawning tributary that flows into the SFBR below Anderson Ranch Dam, most bull trout in the SFBR also must spawn in tributaries to the North and Middle forks of the Boise River and navigate the transition zone of Arrowrock Reservoir that changes as reservoir levels change. Due

to the larger flow volume, this area is not shallow like Rattlesnake Creek, but it does have extremely high turbidity under certain conditions. This occurs when the reservoir levels drop below previously deposited sediment and the river creates a new channel (Prisciandaro 2015).

Riparian vegetation is not functioning properly in some areas due to impacts from roads, recreation, livestock grazing, wildfires, and water releases from Anderson Ranch Dam. Composition has changed in many riparian areas because of disturbance, lowered water tables, and introduced plant species. Non-native plants have increased, and other wetlands species have decreased. Native cottonwoods and broadleaf shrubs have also decreased and are not regenerating in many areas.

The watershed experienced a wildfire in 2013 that burned 43% of the watershed and has had long lasting impacts to vegetation (Figure 5). Some habitat rehabilitation has occurred along the river shortly after the 2013 fire, but no major restoration work happened in later years. The watershed management group is working to identify and prioritize areas for riparian plantings. Additional LiDAR or other surveys may be needed to model the best areas to plant with the highest likelihood of plant survival under the altered hydrograph from the dam. Long-term management is expected to be needed under the additional years of funding in this grant.



Figure 4. Sandy delta formation at the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek.



Figure 5. Aftermath of Elk Complex Fire (2013)

- d. Water Quality-** Water Quality impairments are a concern in the watershed resulting from historic anthropogenic and natural impacts to the area. As a result of these impacts, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) assessments have found that multiple streams in the subbasin are not supporting beneficial uses for Salmonid Spawning and Cold Water Aquatic Life. In 2009, the US Environmental Protection Agency approved temperature TMDLs for multiple tributaries to the South Fork Boise River, creating opportunities for water quality improvement project implementation plans. Three waterbodies in the area need such implementation plans according to DEQ's most recent Integrated Report. In addition to the waterbodies needing implementation plans as mentioned above, DEQ notes in its support letter that there are several other waterbodies in the South Fork Boise River watershed which would benefit from a cooperative watershed management program. Recreation users and landowners have voiced concern over presence of didymo (algae) on the stream bed, seemingly more prevalent in warmer years. TU is in a great position to lead the collaborative on investigating management options for didymo. TU's science staff has investigated the topic already and created an annotated bibliography on didymo that suggests water quality may play a role in didymo concentrations (www.tu.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annotated-Bibliography-on-Didymo-v2.pdf). Also, it appears there is an absence of freshwater mussels, which used to be more abundant. The SFBR Watershed Group can continue to serve as the forum to discuss these water quality concerns and raise awareness of them.
- The number of bathrooms (pit toilets) in the watershed is not adequate for the amount of usage the area receives. In addition, along the river corridor itself the bathrooms are located at boat access points and not concentrations of camping spots. Most campsites do not have a bathroom within easy walking distance. This has led to issues where cat holes are being dug within the floodplain and in many cases no holes are used at all. This not only creates an unpleasant experience, but it likely impacts the water quality.

Cattle grazing on private land as well as USFS lands are using both tributaries and the mainstem river as water sources. This leads to water quality issues with some streams identified as having high levels of E. coli. Off-site watering can improve conditions for the cattle by providing a clean water source while also improving water quality for fish wildlife and human use downstream.

Aquatic habitat is degraded in some areas due to elevated water temperatures, habitat fragmentation, and accelerated sediment. Decline of the riparian canopy also adversely affects stream temperature where loss of shade occurs after wildfire or decline and loss of mature trees. Recruitment of new trees is hampered by flow regulation and, to date, limited revegetated efforts.

3.2.2 Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits

The goal of the existing CWMP funding (that expires in March of 2025) is to develop relationships and trust amongst the watershed group while identifying and determining the general feasibility of potential projects to address the issues identified above. A recreational user survey is expected to be providing a significant amount of information by the time this additional funding could become available in spring of 2025. This user survey will allow the watershed group to prioritize projects and locations to investigate further under the funding from this grant application. The group would address the items in Task C: Watershed Management Project Design for each project and integrate all of the projects into a watershed Management plan under Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning.

The watershed group will allow for all stakeholders to have a voice in the decision-making process and put forward well designed project proposals. Some issues such as addressing the imbalance between the number of recreationists and the number of bathrooms could be addressed within the term of the existing grant by adding porta potties. To properly address the issue however more time would be needed to identify appropriate locations based on the results of a planned recreational user survey, complete design and cost estimates and identifying the needed permitting and environmental compliance for installing additional pit toilets. Issues such as stranding are very complex and changes to the ramping rates could impact many stakeholders from power generation, water users, fishermen, whitewater and drift boat users, and IDFG. Other improvements, such as overwinter habitat improvements, may be needed for any reduction in stranding to have any population level impact. Relationship and trust building within the watershed group as well as potential research projects (funded outside of this grant) may be needed prior to the watershed group being able to suggest actions in the future watershed management plan.

Environmental compliance is expected to be one of, if not the major bottleneck to implementation of improvement projects within the watershed. The experience of TU's watershed manager in environmental compliance will assist the group in identifying efficiencies in separating or bundling projects for compliance. Using the different categorical exclusions available to different federal agencies to determine which projects to prioritize through the different funding mechanisms to limit overall compliance workload as well as spread out that work among agencies will also take coordination from the watershed group.

- Based on current information, what are the expected benefits of the proposed activities?

Expected benefits from a majority of the likely projects include a reduction in fine sediment inputs, a reduction in water temperatures and overall water quality improvements. Beaver dam analogues could also increase summer base flows and decrease water temperatures in tributaries

while capturing fine sediment and create spawning habitat by sorting gravels below structures (Bouwes et al. 2020). Specific irrigation related projects have not been identified, but Water District 63 and the local Watermaster are active in the group and may be interested in specific projects once more trust is established among the watershed group. Specific projects that could be pursued; saving water by piping open earthen canals, reducing fish and debris entrainment into canals while providing accurate flows to farmers by modernizing headgate structures, improving tributary connectivity and reducing the need for push up dams by investigating the potential to pump water from the mainstem rather than diverting tributaries for irrigation, and investigating ways to reduce temperature and water quality issues from return flows.

The average conveyance loss through irrigation distribution systems in the US is 15% (NBER 2022). Piping canals could reduce losses from both seepage and evaporation and is often more cost effective than lining canals. Existing diversion structures in the watershed are mostly a combination of rocks wood and tarps that require frequent maintenance, often divert all existing streamflow and block fish movement. IDFG fish surveys in one creek documented water temperatures over 30°C (IDFG 2011). This is likely caused by a combination of low flow below diversions and warm return flows from flood irrigation.

Water District 63 has indicated headgate automation and/or remote operation capabilities could be beneficial in the watershed. This could ensure farmers are getting their allocated water while allowing either junior water rights holders to receive their water or potentially allow water to remain in-stream for fish and wildlife benefits. Although this grant funding cannot fund on-farm irrigation efficiency improvements, the watershed group could help build relationships and identify potential areas that could be priorities for NRCS funding.

Loss of riparian shade can lead to increases in maximum water temperature averaging 3.3°C per kilometer in the tributaries (Ryan et al. 2013). The loss of riparian shade on a larger river will have less of an impact, but riparian plantings to aid in post fire recovery in both tributaries and mainstem habitat are expected to lead to a significant reduction in water temperatures. Riparian plants also can act as velocity breaks trapping fine sediment during high flow events. The altered hydrograph below Anderson Ranch Dam on top of the impacts from climate change have inhibited the recovery of riparian areas after the fires in 2013. Manual planting efforts in the years after the fire were minimally successful. Modeling done to predict planting locations with the highest survival rates or identifying the need for supplemental watering could greatly improve planting success. Combined with beaver dam analogues in the tributaries that can mitigate incised channels the assisted riparian recovery could greatly improve temperature and water quality conditions.

- [What stakeholders will benefit from the proposed project?](#)

All of the stakeholders listed in Table 1 could potentially benefit from the proposed projects. Farmers, ranchers and private landowners could see increased summer base flows and additional water available for on-farm use. Recreation and environmental groups could see improved fishing, safer and more enjoyable trails, improved amenities and an overall more pleasing aesthetic to the watershed. IDFG and local businesses could see increased revenue from a more sustainable increase in usage. Water District 63 could see improved management and allocation of available water. USFWS could see benefits to endangered species and their habitats. Overall, all stakeholders would benefit from the collaborative information sharing, decision making and understanding of the underlying reasons for certain decisions or actions.

- To the extent known, describe the project(s) for which the watershed group will complete a design. What type of site-specific project design and engineering will the watershed group complete?

The watershed group has not yet gotten to the point of choosing or prioritizing projects. Initial conversations and the meetings make it seem like design would likely be contracted out and funded under other grants for more complex projects such as mainstem side channel creation, and the Prairie road sediment management. The group would develop as much detail as possible in the Watershed Management Plan that could be used in the future as the description in a Request for Proposals for these more complex projects. Simple models or prescriptions could be used by the group to design projects such as riparian plantings, beaver dam analogues as well as bathroom and campsite locations and layout. There may be expertise within the group or the agencies involved to assist with design drawings and construction cost estimates of new boat ramps or modification of existing ramps as well as new trail bridges or culverts. The potential irrigation system modifications have not been discussed in enough detail to determine the level of design that would be needed or if the group has the capability of conducting that design work or not.

- To the extent possible, describe and quantify the potential benefits of the watershed management project that would result from the design process.

One of the likely bottlenecks to improving the watershed is the limited capacity of federal staff to complete NEPA and ESA activities. Having the diverse support of the watershed group will show the federal agencies that these projects are important to prioritize not only for funding but for timely compliance work as well. The watershed group will be able to support compliance efforts by bundling similar projects together and targeting funding that allows for spreading out the workload.

Although some projects have been great success stories, like the Pierce Creek Bridge, we have already seen projects within the basin not be as successful as expected. The area around the Pierce Creek Bridge has successfully re-established many riparian plants. However, many of the plants that were manually planted were not connected to the water table and did not survive. Proper design work could have made this and other planting project much more successful. Other projects like creating new mainstem side channels that are hydraulically connected at winter base flows will take extensive amounts of planning and design work. Comparing existing pre fire water penetrating green LiDAR data to more recent post fire non water penetrating red LiDAR data will allow for identification of potential side channel locations. Although existing data would not be adequate to design new side channels this process would allow for identification of areas that would need new green LiDAR collected instead of the much larger investment in collecting new data for the entire river.

3.3 Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed

Trout Unlimited's Watershed Manager will have the primary responsibility of completing all of the Milestones listed below. Trout Unlimited received a CWMP grant to complete Task A, so there are no new policies or administrative actions needed to implement these milestones.

Activity	Milestone	Start Date	End Date
<i>Activity 1-Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning</i>			
Maintain watershed coordinator position	Maintain Staff Position	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2028
Plan, manage and facilitate Full Group Meetings	Hold quarterly meetings	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2028
Lead or assist in planning, management and facilitation of sub-committee meetings	Hold sub-committee meetings	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2028
Draft list and prioritization of projects for plan	Develop List	April 1, 2025	August 1, 2025
Draft Watershed Restoration Plan	Develop Draft	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2026
Final List and Prioritization of Projects	Finalize List	October 1, 2025	March 31, 2026
Final Watershed Restoration Plan integrating Task C into one document	Finalize Plan	April 1, 2026	March 31, 2028
<i>Activity 2- Task C: Watershed Management Project Design</i>			
Identify locations for potential projects	Identify Locations	August 1, 2025	March 31, 2026
Identify pre-project data needs (surveys, LiDAR, loggers etc)	Identify data needs	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2026
Identify projects with design requirements the watershed manager or group can perform vs projects design will be contracted out on	Identify design contract needs	April 1, 2026	March 31, 2027
Develop in house design for applicable projects	Develop design	April 1, 2027	March 31, 2028
Develop detailed project descriptions for outside design contractors	Develop documents for design	April 1, 2027	March 31, 2028
Develop individual project milestones and timelines	Project Milestones and Timelines	April 1, 2027	March 31, 2028
Identify permitting and environmental compliance needs for each project	Compliance	April 1, 2027	November 30, 2027
<i>Activity 3: Public Interviews & Background Research</i>			
Attend at least 4 public outreach events per year	General Public Outreach	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2028
Connect with additional stakeholders	Targeted Outreach	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2026
Conduct stakeholder interviews with affected parties not active in meetings	Stakeholder Outreach	April 1, 2025	March 31, 2028

3.4 Evaluation Criterion D— Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities

341 Climate Change:

Climate change is already impacting our cold-water resources. Adaptation measures like habitat improvements, at the core of TU's mission, moderate the negative impacts of a changing climate. Over decades, we have determined that collaborative conservation is by far the best approach to addressing the impacts of climate change. Building partnerships and coalitions is something TU does well, and we are always looking for opportunities to partner with other like-minded groups. TU is uniquely qualified to influence the formulation and implementation of an environmentally sound and responsible climate policy at the national, state, and local levels. TU's more than 300,000 members and supporters, most of whom are sportsmen, sportswomen, and anglers, have detailed knowledge of local and regional conditions, and a long and successful history in planning and carrying out conservation projects. TU also has a highly qualified and capable professional conservation staff. And TU has a proven track record of science-based analysis using respected tools such as the Conservation Success Index (CSI) for evaluating and mitigating impacts on coldwater fisheries and their watersheds throughout North America.

Specific projects like beaver dam analogues can provide an opportunity to address issues within the basin related to climate change. Beaver dam analogues can increase summer base flows and reduce stream temperatures (Bouwes et al. 2020). The wider riparian areas created in areas with beaver dam analogues can also act as fire breaks and refugia during wildfires that will be more prevalent in a future with climate change.

TU will bring this history of success to the South Fork Boise River Watershed Group to convene diverse stakeholders, assess watershed needs, and collaboratively work toward solutions that benefit South Fork watershed residents, those who enjoy recreating in the area, state and federal agencies, Tribes, ranchers, and the environment. As the formation of SFBR Watershed Group is being led by a conservation organization, climate change is at the forefront of the proposed project. Through identifying watershed concerns, convening affected stakeholders in the watershed, implementing a communications strategy that provides watershed information and opportunities to engage to the local community, and working with science-based approaches, the SFBR Watershed Group will help ensure a united front to address climate change impacts.

342 Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities

The watershed covers sections of two census tracts (16039960100 and 16039960200). Both of these census tracts are listed as disadvantaged on <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov>. Although some of the proposed projects will benefit visitors to the watershed, multiple potential projects have the potential to benefit these disadvantaged communities. Although the watershed is just downstream of Anderson Ranch Reservoir, all of the water users in the watershed use natural flows from tributaries and not stored water. An increase in summer base flows from beaver dam analogues and water savings from efficiency improvements like piping earthen canals could act as a new water supply providing economic growth opportunities for the community. IDEQ notes that some areas of the basin have water quality issues involving fine sediment, nutrients, and bacteria (<https://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/total-maximum-daily-loads/boise-river-south-fork-subbasin/>). Off-site watering for cattle, beaver dam analogues and riparian planting in the tributaries would help address public health and safety by improving water quality. The current user made boat ramp situation has led to vehicles and trailers not only parking along the road but backing trailers into the water directly off the side of the road. This is a safety issue for the local community that commute on these roads including

farmers and ranchers towing trailers. Improving boat ramp facilities could help alleviate this safety issue. Improving signage and education of the public through outreach could also alleviate some of the private property trespass issues that landowners are managing. Some previous recreational users of the watershed have stopped visiting because of the condition of recreational facilities from overuse. Addressing the overuse issue by providing proper recreational facilities could increase usage of the watershed and provide economic growth for the two stores in the small town of Prairie.

3.4.3 Tribal Benefits:

While the South Fork of the Boise River was historically a prized fishery of the Shoshone-Paiute and Shoshone- Bannock Tribes, with historical sites such as Danskin Rock Shelter and Danskin Lookout providing evidence of summer camping grounds of the Tribes used for fishing and fish preservation. It is unclear how much Tribal activity exists today in the South Fork Boise Watershed.

Trout Unlimited’s new Watershed Coordinator will continue to do everything within their power to steward the relationship between the Shoshone-Paiute Nation and Shoshone-Bannock Nation and the proposed watershed group. We hope to foster open communication and cooperation to which the Tribes will feel welcomed and comfortable coming forward with their input on the management of the watershed. TU will bring our mission and experience to the South Fork Boise River Watershed Group to convene diverse stakeholders, assess watershed needs, and collaboratively work toward solutions that benefit South Fork Boise watershed Tribal partners, residents, state and federal agencies, ranchers, and the environment.

TU has a proven track record of finding and empowering long-term stewards from affected communities. This deep experience will be put to use with the SFBR Watershed Group by attending public events, hosting a river clean up, advertising in local papers, and holding meetings that are open to all interested parties. These activities are designed to ensure that those who participate feel heard, that lines of communication between participants are opened, and that participants feel their input is valued. Convening all affected stakeholders in such a fashion helps create and restore trust among all participants, including Tribal Nations.

4. Project Budget

4.1 Budget Proposal

Total Project Cost Table

Source	Amount
Costs to be reimbursed with the requested Federal Funding	\$299,275.49
Costs to be paid by the applicant	\$0.00
Value of third-party contributions	\$0.00
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$299,275.49

4.2 Budget Narrative

Salaries and Wages-Funds from this grant will be used to cover 75% of Trout Unlimited’s Watershed Coordinator to lead efforts for the oversight, management and facilitation of the South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative. We plan to raise funds from other sources to secure the remaining funds needed to fund a full-time position. The workplan for this position will include conducting or managing completion of Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning and Task C: Watershed Management Project Design as well as the responsibilities listed below for the management of the SFBR Watershed Group.

Table 2. Proposed Budget

Budget Item Description	\$/Unit	Quantity	Unit	Total Cost
Salaries and Wages				
TU Watershed Coordinator - 2025	\$31.92	1572	Hours	\$50,178.24
TU Watershed Coordinator - 2026	\$32.88	1572	Hours	\$51,683.59
TU Watershed Coordinator - 2027	\$33.86	1572	Hours	\$53,234.09
Grant Accountant - 2025	\$33.65	24	Hours	\$807.60
Grant Accountant - 2026	\$34.66	24	Hours	\$831.83
Grant Accountant - 2027	\$35.70	24	Hours	\$856.78
Fringe Benefits				
TU Watershed Coordinator 2025	53.67%	\$50,178.24	Percentage	\$26,930.66
TU Watershed Coordinator 2026	53.67%	\$51,683.59	Percentage	\$27,738.58
TU Watershed Coordinator 2027	53.67%	\$53,234.09	Percentage	\$28,570.74
Grant Accountant - 2025	53.67%	\$807.60	Percentage	\$433.44
Grant Accountant - 2026	53.67%	\$831.83	Percentage	\$446.44
Grant Accountant - 2027	53.67%	\$856.78	Percentage	\$459.84
Travel				
Local travel (meetings, outreach, site visits) 3 years	\$0.65	8,550	Miles	\$5,557.50
Supplies and Materials				
Public outreach signs	\$110.00	10	Signs	\$1,100.00
Marketing materials	\$2,500.00	1	Lump Sum	\$1,500.00
Contractual / Construction				
Booth Space at public events	\$300.00	4	Events	\$1,200.00
Total Direct Costs				\$251,529.33
Indirect Costs				
Predetermined-NICRA	19%	\$251,529.33		47,790.57
Total Estimated Project Costs				\$299,319.90

The Watershed Coordinator responsibilities will include (but not be limited to): managing the SFBR Watershed Collaborative, facilitating meetings, continuing to invite and interview potential stakeholders, produce and maintain outreach and web based content including the Story Map and other marketing materials, attending local/regional events to provide additional outreach, leading

public and stakeholder tours of the SFBR Watershed, working to understand public opinion on potential projects in an effort to lessen the potential for issues during Federal Agency public scoping.

Grant accountants are supported 50% by the federally negotiated overhead rate. The amount budgeted for the grant accountant will be for approximately half the hours spent each year on the project and reflect actual expenses. Time spent on the project includes, but is not limited to; financial reporting, billing, processing expenses for payment, monitoring expenses, and assisting the Coordinator in other aspects of grant management as needed.

Fringe Benefits-TU's current fringe benefit is 53.67% and is included in the budget. Both Salary and Fringe costs reflect a 3% per year for planned increases.

Travel-Travel costs are associated with the Watershed Coordinator position. Most of the travel will occur throughout the South Fork Boise Watershed to visit potential stakeholders. Travel will also include project site visits and multi-agency meetings.

Supplies and Materials- Funds from the grant will be used for general office and marketing supplies including brochures, business cards, rack cards, stickers, and a banners. Trout Unlimited will attempt to negotiate free or discounted booth space at public events, but will likely have to pay for many of them. Public outreach signs are planned for multiple access and recreation locations in the Watershed. These will direct the public to our website and StoryMap so they can learn about and provide feedback on potential projects. The specific sign locations will be determined by the group as projects get better defined. Any environmental compliance needed for sign installation would be covered under a USFS special use permit that will be needed prior to installation.

Contractual/Construction-Funds will also be used for advertising costs which could include advertisements in the Idaho Statesman and other local/regional resources.

Other-Grant funds will be used for costs associated with the domain and hosting for the SFBR Watershed Group website.

5. Environmental and Cultural Resource Considerations

As this project is designed to develop a watershed management plan and project design documents, no environmental compliance will be necessary for implementation. The signs being purchased will require USFS special use permits for install after the group cooperatively identifies locations. At that point USFS would conduct any needed compliance work for install. That typically falls under a categorical exclusion.

6. Required Permits or Approvals

Although most if not all of the proposed projects will require a range of permits, approvals and compliance with NEPA and ESA, funding from this grant we only be used for planning and design including the creation of a watershed restoration plan. A few simple activities such as river clean up trips may require special use permits from the USFS. Installation of the signs purchased under this funding would also need a special use permit from USFS that would cover any required NEPA or ESA compliance. For this equipment the NEPA is expected to be a categorical exclusion and the ESA, if needed, would be a no effect letter to the file.

7. Letters of Support

Please see Table 1 and Appendix B for letters of support. In addition to the support letters for the initial funding for starting the Watershed Group Trout Unlimited has received letters of support from: all four members of Idaho's congressional delegation, Anglers Fly Shop, Boise National Forest, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Boise Valley Fly Fishers, Idaho Department of

Environmental Quality, Idaho Rivers United, and Idaho Fish & Game.

8. Official Resolution

The official resolution will be submitted immediately following Trout Unlimited's first monthly board meeting after notification of award.

Appendix A: Literature Cited

- Bouwes N., N. Weber, C.E. Jordan, W.C. Saunders, I.A. Tattam, C. Volk, J.M. Wheaton and M.M. Pollock. 2020. Ecosystem experiment reveals benefits of natural and simulated beaver dams to a threatened population of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). *Nature-Scientific Reports*. 6:28581
- IDFG 2011. Idaho Department of Fish and Game- Fisheries Management Annual Report Southwest Region 2010. Nampa, Idaho.
- National Bureau of Economic Research. 2022. A national estimate of irrigation canal lining and piping water conservation. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Prisciandaro, A. 2015. Interactions between Fluctuating Reservoir Water Levels and Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) Ecology. Masters Thesis. University of Idaho.
- Ryan, D.K., J.M. Yearsley and M. Kelly-Quinn. 2013. Quantifying the effect of seminatural riparian cover on stream temperatures: implications for salmonid habitat management. *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 20:494-507.
- Taylor, M. "Agency Offers Proposals for South Fork Boise" *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho), January 31, 1991, p.8.
- Tranmer, A.W., R. Benjankar and D. Tonina. 2020. Post-wildfire riparian forest recovery processes along a regulated river corridor. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 478

Appendix B: Letters of Support



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Suite 378
Boise, Idaho 83709

<https://www.fws.gov/office/idaho-fish-and-wildlife>



Kira Finkler, Director
Trout Unlimited
910 West Main Street, Suite 342
Boise, Idaho 83702

Subject: Southfork Boise Watershed Collaborative - WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant - Letter of Support

Dear Kira Finkler:

The Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, would like to express support for further funding of the South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative (Collaborative) under the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant. The Collaborative has brought together local landowners, interest groups, and state and federal agencies to work towards improving watershed conditions within the lower portion of the South Fork Boise River watershed, below Anderson Ranch Dam. The grant money would fund the Collaborative's efforts for watershed planning and watershed management project design, which are vital next steps.

Recreational use along the South Fork Boise River and surrounding tributaries has increased substantially and will continue to increase as surrounding populations grow. Recreation-related impacts are a concern for the South Fork Boise River and Rattlesnake Creek, because they are occupied by federally threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and are designated critical habitat for bull trout. The Collaborative is a valuable tool in bringing a diverse group together to come up with management solutions for the ongoing and future impacts to the area. The Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office looks forward to continuing participation in the Collaborative to protect and improve habitats for federally listed species, and other native species of plants, wildlife, and fish.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to support this important work. If you have any questions regarding this letter of support, please contact Ciara Cusack of this office at ciara_cusack@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

**KATHLEEN
HENDRICKS**

Digitally signed by
KATHLEEN
HENDRICKS

for Lisa Ellis
State Supervisor

PACIFIC REGION 1

Idaho, Oregon*, Washington,
American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands

*PARTIAL



File Code:

Date: November 30, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the Trout Unlimited efforts for the South Fork Boise Watershed collaborative.

This collaborative effort will provide opportunities for the federal and local agencies to work together with local stakeholders and members of the public. These efforts could have long term projects and outcomes that will see lasting benefits to the watershed.

Through the next several months and years of these planning meetings and working groups, as a Federal Agency, we hope to see cooperative projects.

As the District Ranger for the Mountain Home Ranger District on the Boise National Forest I fully support the application for addition funding to keep this collaborative group moving towards positive outcomes.

Sincerely,

ADRIENE HOLCOMB
Mountain Home District Ranger





December 4, 2023

United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 9
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706

Re: Support for Trout Unlimited's USBOR WaterSMART Grant Application Pertaining to the South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative

To whom it may concern,

Idaho Rivers United (IRU) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit environmental advocacy organization that is dedicated to protecting Idaho rivers and restoring our native fish populations. For over 30 years, IRU has been working to defend Wild and Scenic rivers, advocate for endangered salmon and steelhead populations, reform hydropower policy, and promote enhanced water quality across the state's waterways.

I write in support of a further three years of funding (beyond March 2025) for the South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative under the WaterSMART grant program. Funding would allow Trout Unlimited (TU) to continue to act in a management, oversight, and facilitation capacity for the collaborative over a sustained period of time.

The Wild and Scenic eligible South Fork Boise offers a blue-ribbon fishery and opportunities for whitewater rafting, camping, and other recreation in a scenic, canyon setting with great access from the Treasure Valley. This resource is ever-growing in popularity, making now a critical time for stakeholders that care for and rely on this river to collaborate on identifying issues and going about developing durable solutions and planning for the conservation and restoration of the remarkable values this stretch of water possesses. The certainty securing this grant will provide the Collaborative will be important in engaging in smart planning for the future of the South Fork.

Sincerely,

Stephen Pfeiffer

IRU Conservation Associate

stephen@idahorivers.org



STATE OF IDAHO

DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

1445 N. Orchard Street, Boise ID 83706
(208) 373-0550

Brad Little, Governor
Jess Byrne, Director

November 17, 2023

United State Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 9
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83702

Subject: Trout Unlimited Idaho's application for a Continued Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for a South Fork Boise River Watershed Group

To Whom it may Concern,

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) understands Trout Unlimited's ongoing interest and concerns with riparian and aquatic habitat degradation and water quality impairments in the South Fork Boise River watershed, resulting from historic anthropogenic and natural impacts to the area. As a result of these impacts, DEQ assessments have found multiple streams in the subbasin are not supporting beneficial uses for Salmonid Spawning and Cold Water Aquatic Life. In 2009 the US Environmental Protection Agency approved temperature TMDLs for multiple tributaries to the South Fork Boise River, creating opportunities for water quality improvement project implementation plans. The following waterbodies need such implementation plans according to DEQ's most recent Federal Integrated Report:

- Lime Creek - 5th order (Temperature TMDL Complete)
- Smith Creek and tributaries - 1st and 2nd order (Temperature TMDL Complete)
- Smith Creek - 3rd order (Mule Gulch to SF Boise River) (Temperature TMDL Complete)

In addition to these waterbodies, there are several other waterbodies in the South Fork Boise River watershed which would benefit from a cooperative watershed management program.

DEQ is supportive of the objectives proposed by Trout Unlimited's watershed group and is of the opinion that such a group would benefit the overall water quality improvement and beneficial use support of the South Fork Boise River watershed.

Sincerely,

Lance Holloway
Water Quality Manager

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lance Holloway".

2023AKD18

C: Aaron Scheff, Chase Cusack

December 1, 2023
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 9
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706

Re: Trout Unlimited Watershed Management Program for a South Fork Boise River Watershed Group.

To Whom It May Concern: Anglers Fly Shop writes to continue our support for Trout Unlimited South Fork of the Boise River (SFBR) Watershed Group.

Anglers Fly Shop has been serving Boise anglers for over 20 years. As a gateway for a generation of local anglers, we recognize stewardship as a responsibility and see comprehensive, connective community representation as an essential part of both healthy communities and fisheries.

Anglers Fly Shop believes that Trout Unlimited's proposal to bring landowners, local governments, recreation and conservation groups, water use interests, Federal public land and water management agencies, state agencies, and tribal governments to the table is smart planning for the future of the South Fork Boise River Watershed. We are excited in the direction this group has taken so far, encouraged by the support from all groups interested in this watershed, and have chosen to involve the staff at Anglers Fly Shop assisting with leading one of the committees.

Sincerely,



John Wolter
Owner
Anglers Fly Shop



BOISE VALLEY FLY FISHERS

December 3, 2023

Brian W. Martin, President
Boise Valley Fly Fishers
PO Box 311
Boise, ID 83701

United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 9
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706

Re: Letter of Support for Trout Unlimited to Extend South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative Management Grant

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to you as the representative of the Boise Valley Fly Fishers in full support of the extension of the grant for Trout Unlimited to continue the South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative Group Management. In 2022, Boise Valley Fly Fishers (BVFF) wrote in support of the initial grant being awarded to Trout Unlimited (TU).

BVFF is a fly fishing member organization from Idaho's Treasure Valley with an active membership of 293 individuals and businesses. Our interest in the South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative Group includes watershed and fishery conservation, access, facilities, public education, and more.

TU has been doing an outstanding job managing the collaborative group and BVFF looks forward to participating in future restoration planning sessions and project development and design.

Thank you for your consideration of our input.

Sincerely,

Brian W. Martin
BVFF President

BVFF PO Box 311 Boise, ID 83701 <http://www.bvff.com/>

Boise Valley Fly Fishermen, Inc. is an IRS 501 (c) (3) Non Profit Organization ID# 82-0350521

Mike Crapo
United States Senator
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

James E. Risch
United States Senator
483 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress
2084 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress
1520 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2023

Commissioner M. Camille Calimlim Touton
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

Dear Commissioner Touton:

We write in support of Trout Unlimited's (TU) application for funding through the US Bureau of Reclamation's (USBOR) WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program. We are aware that TU has previously received funding from the US Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program to establish a new watershed group in the lower South Fork Boise River (SFBR) Watershed.

TU's proposal aims to continue the collaboration efforts of the SFBR Watershed Collaborative by bringing together diverse stakeholders. If granted funding, the collaborative will develop a comprehensive plan that focuses on improving water quantity and quality. The ultimate goal is to enhance conditions for local residents and recreational visitors alike.

The South Fork Boise River (SFBR) Watershed holds immense value for many Idahoans, offering world-class fishing and recreational opportunities in close proximity to the Treasure Valley. Additionally, this watershed serves as the home to a large and diverse farming and ranching community. Ensuring the long-term health and viability of the SFBR will require the active participation of multiple stakeholders, as they come together to address issues and explore opportunities associated with land and water usage within the watershed.

We commend TU's proposal to engage landowners, local governments, recreation and conservation groups water use interests, federal public land and water management agencies, state agencies and tribal governments in support of the SFBR Watershed. We kindly request the US Bureau of Reclamation to thoroughly consider and support TU's request for funding.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mike Crapo in blue ink.

MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of James E. Risch in blue ink.

JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Mike Simpson in blue ink.

MIKE SIMPSON
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Russ Fulcher in blue ink.

RUSS FULCHER
Member of Congress



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
SOUTHWEST REGION
15950 North Gate Boulevard
Nampa, Idaho 83687

Brad Little / Governor
Ed Schriever / Director

November 17, 2023

United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 9
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706

Re: Trout Unlimited Idaho Water Group's application for a Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for a South Fork Boise River watershed group

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) supports Trout Unlimited Idaho Water Project's grant proposal to continue funding efforts towards the South Fork Boise River (SFBR) watershed group. The proposal's objectives include the following:

- Coordination and management of the development of a watershed restoration plan.
- Work with stakeholders in the development and prioritization of watershed management project actions.
- Coordination and management of project design activities, including actions, locations, and development of basis of design documents.

IDFG has closely collaborated with TU during the first year of the watershed group and has participated in the kickoff meeting and several sub-committee meetings. This collaborative includes a diverse group of stakeholders including land and water management agencies, counties, private landowners, NGO's, and user groups. IDFG believes USBR's continued funding of the management and oversight of these efforts are critical to the success of the South Fork Boise Watershed Collaborative watershed group.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Royse".

Josh Royse
Regional Supervisor

Keeping Idaho's Wildlife Heritage