Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART

Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Proposal

Portneuf Watershed Partnership

Planning Project

Applicant
City of Pocatello
PO Box 4169
Pocatello, ID 83205

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PORTNEUF WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

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Attachments

Executive Summary

Date: December 5, 2023
Applicant: City of Pocatello
Project: Portneuf Watershed Partnership Planning Project
Project Location: Pocatello, Bannock County, Idaho
Project Manager
Name: Hannah Sanger, City of Pocatello Environmental Administrator
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Applicant Category: Existing Watershed Group
Project Funding Request: Project Total Cost: $300,000 Funding Request: $300,000

The Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP) seeks to use the Portneuf Watershed Partnership Planning Project to expand its stakeholders, conduct additional outreach, expand its existing watershed restoration plans to cover more of the watershed, and conduct stream flow modeling. The PWP is composed of the City of Pocatello, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho State University faculty and students, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, and many others. The Portneuf Watershed, located in southeast Idaho, flows from its headwaters on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes across non-reservation land before it returns to the Reservation where it discharges into the Snake River at American Falls Reservoir. This path adds jurisdictional complexity to and impetus for sustaining river-related ecosystem services. The basin is a HUC8 semiarid basin with both water scarcity and water quality problems, largely due to irrigation and fertilizer applications in agricultural production, stream channel erosion, as well as stormwater runoff in the Pocatello area. As part of this project the PWP will work on increasing the diversity of its membership, bringing in additional agricultural partners and irrigation districts. Outcomes of this grant include facilitation and administration of the existing watershed group, continued outreach to the public, research, and project planning and prioritization.

Project Time scale: 36 months (January 2025 – December 2027)
Assuming an agreement is in place with Reclamation by April 2025, contracts will be in place by October 2025 for facilitating the PWP, conducting watershed restoration plans, and conducting stream modeling. Final reports and project closeout will be in November 2027. The Project will be accomplished within the three-year allowance.

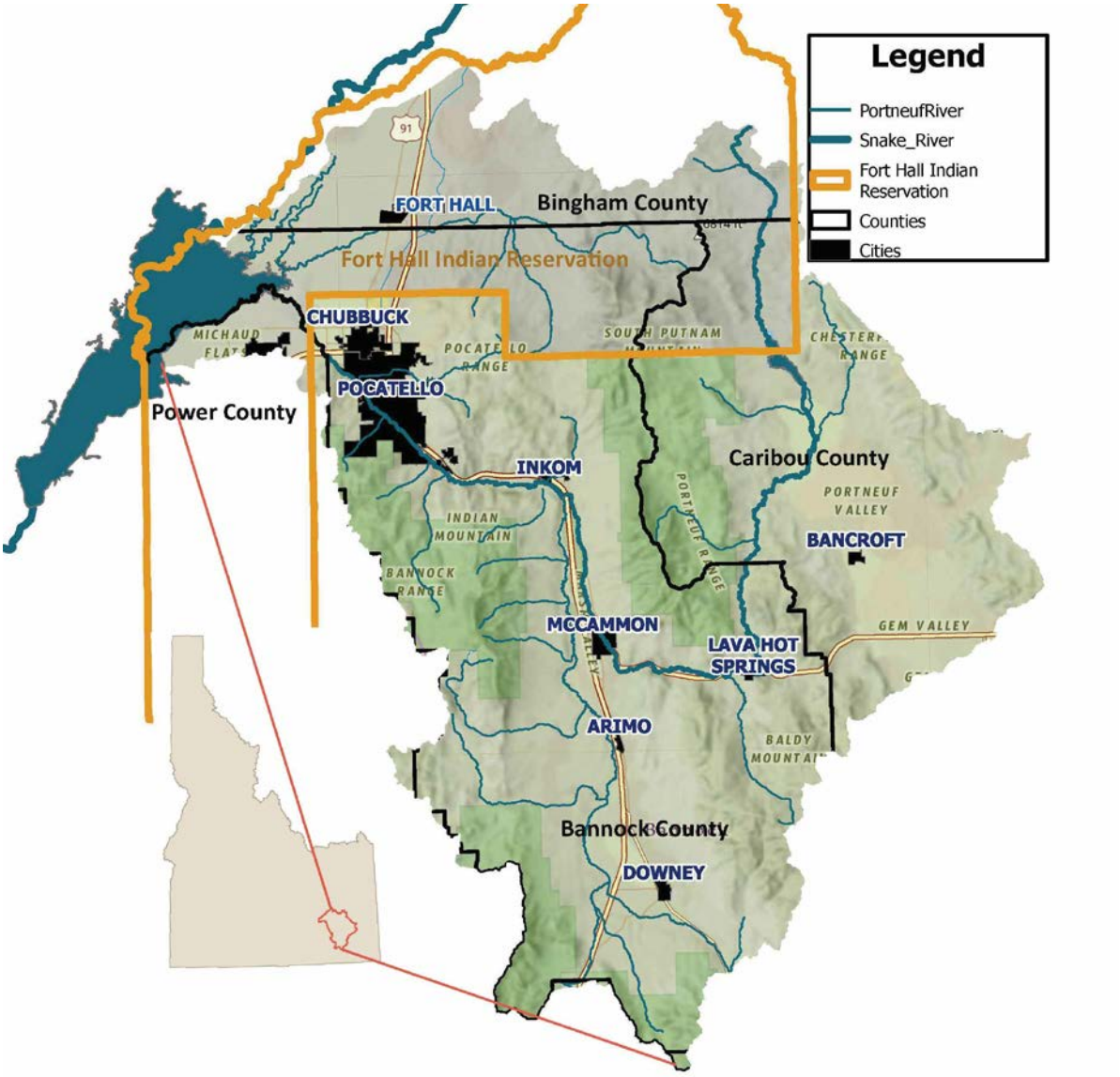
Federal Facility use: The proposed planning efforts are not focused on a federal facility and will generally not involve federal land. Limited amounts of BLM and USFS land are along the Portneuf River or its tributaries and may be part of a larger watershed restoration plan.

Project Location

The Portneuf Watershed (8-digit HUC# 17040208), which flows into the Snake River at American Falls Reservoir, is primarily located in Bannock County, Idaho (but also Bingham, Power, and Caribou Counties). Its major city is Pocatello and its headwaters and mouth are on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. A significant length of the river flows outside of the reservation between its headwaters and its mouth.

Applicant Category

Figure 1: Portneuf Watershed location



Please identify whether you are seeking funding as a New or existing Watershed Group and explain why you chose to apply under that Applicant Category. As part of this discussion, please provide: A brief history of the group, including discussion of: (1) when and how the group was initiated, and (2) ongoing projects or efforts (e.g., previous watershed planning activities).

The Portneuf Watershed Partnership seeks funding as an Existing Watershed Group.

Background and Group Initiation:
The Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP), initially established as the Regional Geographic Initiative (RGI) working group in 2001, has evolved through various names, including the Greater Portneuf Water Resource Partnership (GPWRP), before settling on its current title. This group was developed to improve the implementation of watershed monitoring and restoration objectives within the Portneuf watershed. During its RGI phase, the group successfully established the Portneuf River monitoring network, which is now fully funded by private, municipal, and state sources. The RGI played a significant role in promoting the adoption of mustard green manure as an alternative to pesticides on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. This practice has proven effective in controlling weeds and reducing reliance on chemical herbicides. It has gained widespread acceptance and is now adopted by landowners on and off the Reservation. Additionally, the RGI developed and contributed to new outreach programs that have directly reached thousands of individuals across the watershed through environmental fairs and university K-12 educational projects.

The Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP) member groups have been actively involved in various projects throughout the Portneuf Watershed, spanning from its headwaters on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation to its confluence with the Snake River. These projects encompass a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving the health and sustainability of the watershed. The following projects represent just a few examples of the PWP's dedication to improving the Portneuf Watershed. Through their ongoing efforts, the PWP member groups are working to ensure this vital ecosystem's long-term health and vitality.

Ongoing Projects or Efforts.
Over the years the PWP member groups have undertaken projects along the entire Portneuf Watershed, from its headwaters on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation on down to the Portneuf River bottoms. This watershed-wide work will continue and as an example includes:

Upper Portneuf

- **Riparian Fencing (early 2000s):** Idaho Fish & Game, the Portneuf River Partners and many volunteers have worked together to install and repair riparian exclusion fencing on the Upper Portneuf above the city of Lava Hot Springs.
- **Pebble Creek (2014):** US Forest Service, Portneuf River Partners, Idaho DEQ, the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District, NRCS, Conservation Basics and others worked together to reroute two stream channels at the base of the drainage into their original meanders, restoring aquatic habitat and improving grazing management.

Middle Portneuf

- **Portneuf River Restoration at Topaz Landing (2011):** The Portneuf River Partners secured ownership of approximately 8 acres of riverfront property, transferred ownership to the Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG), and restored the deeply incised streambanks and provided public access.
- **USGS Gage- Portneuf River at Topaz (2013):** Through a collaborative effort material was added to stabilize the river banks and preserve this important monitoring feature.
- **Price Road Wetlands Preserve (current):** ITD is conducting streambank and wetland restoration work for Section 404 mitigation.

Marsh Creek

- The Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District and watershed partners have implemented over $2M of projects on Marsh Creek (Phases 1, 2 and 3), include installing off-stream watering, building sediment basins, conducting stream restoration, etc.

Forest Service lands

- **Bannock Guard Station (2012):** Aquatic and riparian habitat were improved by restoring approximately 1,000 feet of Mink Creek, modifying a nearby parking area, and stabilizing three streambanks.
- **South Fork Mink Creek Road (2011):** Undersized culverts at three road crossings were replaced with 12-foot bottomless arch culverts to greatly improve stream health and aquatic organism passage. Approximately 900-feet of road was relocated out of the floodplain, two stream meanders were restored, and the area was planted with willows.

Pocatello area

- **Centennial/Rainey Park (in design):** Funding has been received (BOR) to move an Army Corps of Engineers levee back to create an inset floodplain with the flood control project to restore some of the wetland and riparian habitat destroyed by the flood control project, improve water quality, and improve community access to the river.
- **Portneuf River Oxbow Project (in design):** Funding has been applied for (to BOR) to develop plans to restore approximately two (2) miles of historic oxbows and associated floodplain that were disconnected from the Portneuf River by the installation of railroad tracks in the mid-1800s.

Portneuf River Bottoms.

- **Siphon Road fish passage (2000):** The existing irrigation diversion was modified to allow fish passage on the Portneuf River, just downstream of Siphon Road.

Eligibility of Applicant.

Write a narrative summary indicating how the applicant meets the eligibility requirements, as described in Section C.1. Eligible Applicants. Include an explanation of the applicant's role in the New or Existing Watershed Group.

The City of Pocatello, a unit of local government, qualifies as an eligible applicant. The City of Pocatello is applying as the fiscal sponsor of the Portneuf Watershed Partnership, an existing Watershed Group.

Project Description

Provide a detailed description of the activities that will be completed under this grant and the overall goals of the project. Please identify which of the Task Areas described in Section C.4. Eligible Projects you will address as part of this project, including a detailed discussion of what activities you will undertake within each Task Area.

The **Portneuf Watershed Partnership Planning Project** will use grant funds to build on existing Watershed Plans and Stakeholder Engagement Activities (e.g. Portneuf River Vision[1], Middle Portneuf River Assessment Report[2], Portneuf River Bottoms Plan, Idaho State University research, US Forest Service Watershed Plans, and the Portneuf River Partnership Website[3]) to

[1] City of Pocatello and US Army Corps of Engineers (2016). Portneuf River Vision Study. https://river.pocatello.gov/documents/planning/2016.RiverVision.ExecutiveSummary.final.small.pdf

[2] Biota Research and Consulting (2014). Assessment Report - Portneuf River Assessment Project.

[3] Portneuf Watershed Partnership website. https://portneufwatershed.org/

conduct four primary activities, including 1) developing a predictive model of the Portneuf River basin to inform water management decisions, 2) Marsh Creek willow planting, 3) expanding existing watershed restoration plans to cover more of the Portneuf River; and 4) PWP group facilitation, diversity expansion, and community engagement.

Funding is sought for the following tasks:

Task A: Watershed Group Development

- Mission, vision and goals updating
- Expand existing outreach activities, including, but not limited to:
    - Developing informational materials about the watershed and the purpose of the PWP (e.g., brochures, advertisements, website, videos)
    - Updating the existing outreach plan
    - Conducting stakeholder meetings to broaden the membership across the watershed
    - Participating at community events
    - Targeting outreach to specific groups and individuals (e.g., attending meetings of other groups)
    - Meeting with individual landowners
    - Supporting tours of past watershed management projects
- Recruit additional members including:
    - Irrigators
    - Grazing associations
    - Grower's associations
    - Cattlemen associations
- Strengthen engagement with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- Hire a facilitator to lead the PWP group and conduct outreach and coalition building, as well as the Watershed Restoration Planning activities

Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning

- Expand Watershed Restoration Plan beyond the two existing plans covering 1) the middle Portneuf from Lava Hot Springs to Topaz Road, and 2) the lower Portneuf on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. Analyze new and existing watershed restoration plans to identify and prioritize watershed management projects.
- Conduct stream flow modeling:
    - Evaluate instream flow and groundwater recharge opportunities.
    - Develop a predictive model representing the Portneuf River Basin which will be available to estimate the timing and amount of surface flows that can be diverted to for a particular set of water right conditions.
    - Identify water acquisition opportunities to increase instream flow and aquifer recharge. This would include prioritizing water rights for acquisition. The City of Pocatello has $2M+ in bond money reserved for surface water rights acquisition.
- Develop outreach targeting Marsh Creek landowners:
    - Develop outreach materials and conduct outreach with Marsh Creek landowners to reduce the primary source of sediment into the Portneuf River (Marsh Creek streambanks), by encouraging them to agree to plant willows in riparian areas.

    - Assess if any appropriately located landowners would be willing to install a wetland on their property to capture runoff and filter out sediment.
- Interview watershed group members, landowners, Federal agencies, and state and local governments to determine how the watershed can be improved.
- Review watershed-specific best management practices for water quality and determine how to incorporate into projects:
    - Implement best management practices outlined by government agencies.
    - Assess County and City residential development code for compliance with these best management practices and as appropriate, make suggestions for modifications.
    - Increase the role of science to better understand the biological and physical needs for improved river health in the Portneuf River Watershed in order to identify key reaches for instream flows and fishery needs.

Evaluation Criteria

E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity & Geographic Scope (30 points)

Points shall be awarded to proposals based on the extent to which they encourage collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders across the watershed. Please describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will include a diverse array of stakeholders.

E.1.1.1. Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

For Existing Watershed Groups, a description of the stakeholder groups (e.g. agriculture, municipal, recreation, environmental, Tribal) within the watershed that affect or are affected by the quantity or quality of water within the watershed ("affected stakeholders"). Describe their role in the watershed and how they interact with the water resources and identify specific organizations, entities, or individuals that make up these groups.
For Existing Watershed Groups, an explanation of the specific individuals, entities, and organizations already participating in the watershed group and whether the current participation is representative of the affected stakeholders within the watershed. In other words, if the watershed group is already diverse, please provide support demonstrating the diversity of the group. Provide a description of the stakeholders that are involved, what their involvement in the group entails, and reference any letters of support or pledges/donations from affected stakeholders.

The Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP) was established in 2001 to improve implementation of monitoring and watershed restoration objectives in the Portneuf watershed. Its mission is "to improve surface and ground water resources in the greater Portneuf watershed through partnership, outreach, research, monitoring and restoration activities."

It is a collaborative organization loosely made up of a diverse group of local, state, federal and tribal government staff and elected officials, non-profits, agricultural interests, university faculty and students, and local industry. This includes:

- Federal: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).
- State: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (Idaho DEQ), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC), and Idaho Transportation Department (ITD).
- Local: Bannock County, City of Chubbuck, and the City of Pocatello
- Agricultural: Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District (quasi-governmental), also the previously mentioned NRCS and ISWCC.

- Tribal: Shoshone Bannock Tribes.
- Local Industry: Simplot and JUB Engineers.
- Non-profits: Portneuf Resource Council, Portneuf River Partners, The Nature Conservancy, Portneuf Greenway Foundation, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, and Trout Unlimited.
- University: Idaho State University Departments of Biological Sciences, Geologic Sciences and Political Science.
- Individual Agricultural Producers: Chris Banks
- Individual citizens: Mike Larkin and Sue Skinner

The letters of support (see Attachment F) demonstrate the depth and diversity of entities and organizations engaged in the PWP. These entities are committed to working on developing watershed restoration plans, increasing PWP engagement with diverse water users, participating in funding and/or design of restoration projects, and conducting much needed watershed modelling. Currently, representatives meet monthly (in person and online) to share activities and information about the watershed.

Most of the PWP stakeholders are focused on implementing watershed monitoring activities (IDEQ, ISU, City of Pocatello, Shoshone Bannock Tribes), implementing engagement and restoration projects on their own land (IDFG, City of Pocatello, Shoshone Bannock Tribes, US Forest Service, BLM, ITD, Simplot), or finding funding to implement restoration projects on private land (SSLT, TNC, TU, PSWCD, ISWCC, NRCS, USFWS, JUB Engineers). Collectively the partners work together to implement restoration and watershed improvement projects throughout the entire Portneuf Watershed.

The PWP initially focused on developing and implementing a robust continuous monitoring program throughout the watershed to guide restoration implementation and Clean Water Act compliance activities. This continuous monitoring program (assessing turbidity, dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, and conductivity every 15 minutes) perseveres to this day and is supported now by Idaho DEQ, City of Pocatello, Simplot, Idaho State University, and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

The PWP seeks to continue capturing stakeholder interest by coordinating meetings, soliciting their input on addressing important issues to protect the watershed, hosting speakers, supporting studies that are pertinent to the partnership, and responding to individual member needs in regard to protecting habitat and water quality.

For Existing Watershed Groups, if the group does not already represent the full stakeholder diversity of the watershed, provide details on how you plan to target affected stakeholders to ensure that your group will represent a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed.

While the PWP is quite diverse in its membership, additional effort will be made to deepen engagement with specific sectors, including:

- Agricultural Representatives:
    - Irrigators (canal companies), Grower's Associations, Grazing Associations, and Cattlemen's Associations.
    - Small hobby farms, particularly along Marsh Creek (listed below).

    - Increase representation by agricultural producers.
- Marsh Creek Representatives: Effort will be made to include agricultural representatives from the Marsh Creek drainage (which is the largest source of sediment coming into the Portneuf River), as well as municipal representatives from the cities along it.
- Water Consultants: Effort will be made to bring the legal and engineering firms working on water issues in the watershed to the PWP, particularly as the group focuses on Water Modelling.
- Shoshone Bannock Tribes: While the PWP email list includes half a dozen tribal members, effort will be made to deepen engagement with the Tribes. This may include hosting PWP and engagement meetings at Tribal offices.
- Other Municipalities: Membership from other municipalities along the river including Lava Hot Springs, McCammon and Inkom

Existing PWP members have contacts to reach out to all of these entities. At a minimum they will be added to the general PWP email list and specifically targeted with outreach materials regarding watershed plan and modelling efforts.

For Existing Watershed Groups, a description of the structure of the watershed group. Is there a formal membership process or is participation more informal? If a formal membership process exists, ensure your responses under this criterion make it clear which watershed group participants are formal members and which act as partner organizations. How are decisions made within the watershed group? Does a board of directors make decisions or are decisions made on a consensus basis? If the watershed group has a board of directors, how are board members chosen? Any other support demonstrating that the watershed group will include a diverse membership.

The PWP is an informal organization without a board of directors. Interested persons are added to the PWP email list (currently at ~90 members) and invited to attend monthly meetings. Agendas are set by an executive committee, which meets monthly to discuss the upcoming agenda. The members of the executive committee are selected by PWP members by consensus and have no formal role, except that at present the City of Pocatello is the group facilitator and the secretary is rotated throughout the group. All decisions are made by consensus.

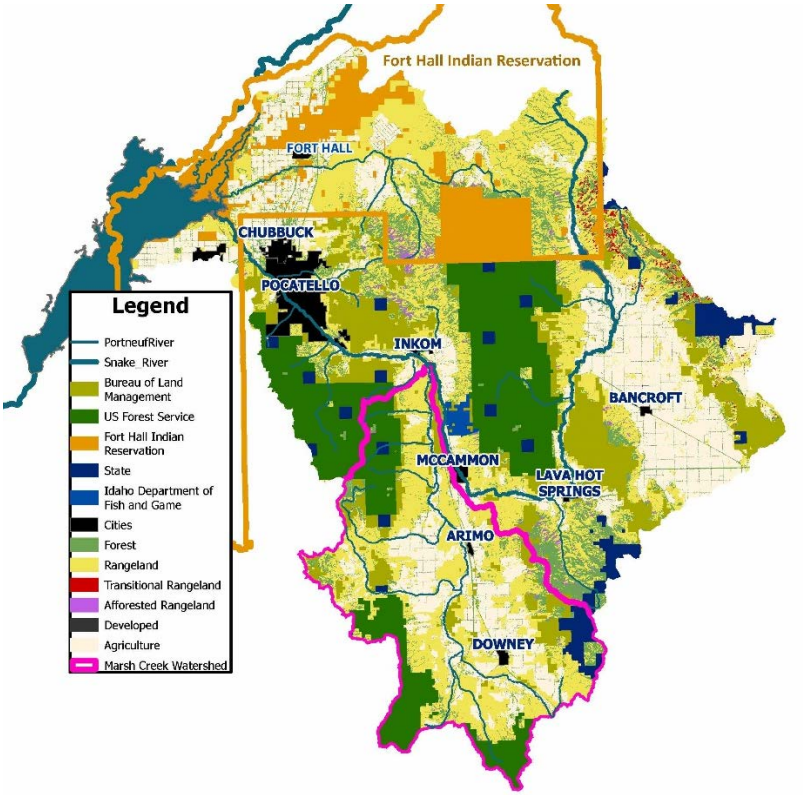
E.1.1.2. Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope Under this sub-criterion, higher priority will be given to Watershed Groups representing the full geographic extent of the watershed. Applicants will receive points based on the extent to which they intend to do work and include stakeholders from across the entire extent of the watershed. In addition, proposals that target small to medium sub-basin sized watersheds, will be given priority over large or very small watersheds. Provide a map illustrating the geographic boundaries of the area in which the watershed group will work, the location or boundaries of the stakeholder groups within the area and indicate which stakeholders are currently involved in the group and which will be targeted through outreach. If a map of stakeholder locations cannot be provided, please describe the geographic scope of the area to the best of your knowledge, including where specific stakeholders are located within the watershed.

Work on the project will occur throughout the entire Portneuf watershed (see Figure 2). While PWP stakeholders have jurisdiction over particular pieces of land on the map below (e.g. Tribes – Fort Hall Indian Reservation; BLM/USFS- Federal Lands; Idaho Fish and Game – Fish and Game lands; Municipalities – Cities shown on the map), all stakeholders also work throughout the watershed. Additionally, there is significant grazing and cropland use throughout the watershed (particularly upstream of Pocatello). Large swaths of rangeland cover the hillsides below BLM land. Most of the agricultural land is alfalfa, wheat, barley, safflower, or potatoes. Upland tracks are generally owned by the Forest Service and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes.

Most of the stakeholders described above have offices in the Pocatello area, and generally have responsibilities throughout the entire HUC8 Portneuf River Watershed. Exceptions include:

- The Shoshone Bannock Tribes are focused on areas within the reservation, but also own some property elsewhere in the watershed.
- BLM and USFS are focused on federal lands, as well as streams on private lands connected to these federal lands.
- The City of Pocatello, is focused primarily within the municipal boundaries of the City but is concerned with the entire watershed in terms of the quantity and quality of water reaching the City.

Figure 2: Portneuf Watershed: Agricultural Land Use and Federal/State Land Ownership - see Attachment A for larger image



The grazing, cropland and irrigation associations targeted have specific geographic foci areas and so several will be targeted from each sector to improve watershed coverage. Specific emphasis will be made to gain representation from the Marsh Creek area.

Describe the extent to which the planned membership of the watershed group will represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the group intends to work. If applicable, describe the extent to which the watershed group already represents the geographic scope of the area.

The PWP members cover the entire watershed. The PWP members represent the full geographic scope of the watershed and efforts will be made to expand that representation. Federal and State

resource agencies such as the BLM, USFS, USFWS, NRCS, IDEQ, IDFG, ISWCC and ITD have management and other responsibilities throughout the basin. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have management and other responsibilities similar to the State and Federal agencies on the portions of the watershed located on the Fort Hall Reservation and they maintain an interest in portions of the watershed formerly occupied by native people. Agricultural interests are represented throughout the watershed by the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District and as noted the PWP will make a concerted effort to expand its membership to better reflect agricultural, municipal and recreational interests throughout the basin.

Describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will target stakeholders that represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the watershed group will work. For example, will outreach focus on stakeholders in a certain part of the watershed the have historically not been represented in the watershed group.

Many existing members of the PWP have significant outreach experience gained through public involvement activities performed under NEPA and other programs. Public outreach to the general public and potential new PWP members will be led by a facilitator hired for this purpose and will include print and broadcast advertising, direct mailings, on-line solicitations, workshops and public meetings and personal contacts. Existing personal relationships of current PWP members with agricultural, tribal, recreational and municipal interests will be used to actively recruit new members and expand the participation of existing members. The PWP will also leverage the existing mailings and social media campaigns organized by many current PWP members.

Describe why you have chosen to work within the watershed area you described. For example, if the watershed group is only working along the river corridor, describe why they are not working within the larger watershed area.

The PWP's work will cover the entire watershed. While much of the watershed is tribal (Shoshone- Bannock), federal (USFS and BLM), and state (Idaho Department of Lands and Idaho Fish and Game) lands, the Portneuf River and related groundwater is an important source of water for municipal, agricultural, recreational, and natural (native vegetation and wildlife) users. The quantity and quality of the water available to these users can only be ensured and protected if the impacts to and impacts from all water users are considered and managed on the basis of the entire watershed.

E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B— Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

E.1.2.1. Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues. Please describe in detail the critical issues or needs of the watershed. Provide quantitative and qualitative support to describe the severity of the critical issues or needs. If the concerns are not yet severe, describe why it is important to address the concerns preemptively and explain the potential impacts of not addressing the concerns.

The watershed is a HUC8 semiarid basin with both water scarcity and water quality problems, largely due to irrigation and fertilizer applications in agricultural production, stream channel erosion, as well as stormwater runoff in the Pocatello area.[4]

[4] Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (2010). Portneuf River TMDL revision and addendum. *TMDL, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality*, 1-415.

- **Water supply and drought impacts** are a concern because they reduce available habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms as the Portneuf River drops from 250 cfs winter flow to 25-50 cfs in the summer.
- **Water quality impairments and ecosystem degradation** also reduce available habitat with increased stream temperature, increased turbidity and increased nutrients.

River Geography

While it shares problems common to many rivers in the U.S., the Portneuf River is unique among rivers in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest as it originates and ends on a Native American Reservation (Fort Hall Indian Reservation of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes), with the majority of the river's path on non-reservation lands. Draining 1,350 square miles (Figure 2), its land use cover is 60 percent rangelands, 41 percent shrubland, and 19 percent grasslands; 28 percent is grazed, 14 percent is in cropland, 13 percent forested, one percent urban area, and one percent water. On and off the Reservation, it meets the water needs for more than 90,000 people, passing through five cities off the reservation (but on lands that were originally part of the reservation): Lava Hot Springs, McCammon, Inkom, Chubbuck, and Pocatello, the largest urbanized city in the region - population 57,092 based on the 2020 census - and located near the base of the watershed.

Water Supply Threats

Consumptive use for irrigation lowers discharge during summer by 70 percent compared to if the river were unregulated. With low annual precipitation, ranging from 12 inches in the City of Pocatello to 30 inches in the mountains, and high potential evapotranspiration, as large as 61 inches in the lower Portneuf valley, about 8 percent of the watershed is irrigated, and 85 percent of the irrigation withdrawal is from surface water. The water consumption by irrigation accounts for 94.5 percent of the total consumptive use in the watershed.[5]

During the past two years, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has begun requiring monitoring of surface water diversions in the Portneuf River and implementing calls to curtail those water rights - often around the year 1900 - as part of their Snake River Aquifer water rights calls. They have also sent letters indicating that groundwater pumping may be curtailed for water rights later than 1954. Improved modeling of the Portneuf River drainage will help watershed partners plan for the future and understand the impact of water right calls in the Portneuf River basin on water rights delivery hundreds of miles downstream on the Snake River.

Water Quality Threats

The Portneuf River is a major tributary to the Snake River that has documented water quality problems that affect aquatic life and threaten the benefits provided by this shared and culturally significant resource. The river is listed by Idaho DEQ as ecologically impaired, with causes including high concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus, and turbidity from suspended sediments, as well as having low flows and low dissolved oxygen in its downstream segments. The high nitrogen concentration and turbidity are mainly associated with agricultural practices

[5] Marcarelli, A. M., Kirk, R. W. V., & Baxter, C. V. (2010). Predicting effects of hydrologic alteration and climate change on ecosystem metabolism in a western US river. *Ecological Applications*, *20*(8), 2081-2088.

and fertilizer application, whereas the high phosphorus concentration is related to Simplot's phosphorus processing complex located downstream of Pocatello.[6]

Seasonally, the river experiences elevated sediment loads associated with agricultural activities in upper parts of the watershed. For example, agricultural land use along Marsh Creek (Figure 3) has led to water quality conditions that have placed it among the worst 22 streams in Idaho for soil erosion problems and listing as the number one priority stream affected by agriculture. Marsh Creek, the largest tributary to the Portneuf River, significantly contributes to the high nutrient and suspended sediment loads from intensive agricultural activities and resulting stream channel erosion within the drainage area. Where Marsh Creek enters the Portneuf River by Inkom, the river turns brown from Marsh Creek.

Watershed partners have studied the health of the Portneuf River in detail, including deploying an extensive network of sondes since 2001 to continuously measure water quality and leveraging these data to conduct in-depth water quality and ecosystem process studies. As a result, watershed partners have been implementing upstream Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce sediment input. These BMPs include off-stream watering, sediment ponds for agricultural land, setting back cut-banks, and planting willows along streambanks. The largest source of sediment to the river is bank erosion.[7]

Figure 3: Marsh Creek entering the Portneuf River and turning it brown (Inkom, Idaho)

Ongoing restoration projects in the Marsh Creek watershed have been assessed for their improvement to water quality, indicating that while water quality is still sediment impaired today, it is significantly improved from 1969 with a 75 percent reduction in the flow-normalized annual sediment flux documented. Since 1982, an estimated $62.9M have been spent on conservation and restoration programs within Marsh Creek. A time-series comparison between conservation investments and suspended sediment flux shows a strong negative correlation between dollars spent and flow-normalized flux with six and seven years lags. Despite

[6] Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (2010). Portneuf River TMDL revision and addendum. *TMDL, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality*, 1-415.
[7] Meese, G. A. (2018). Farmers, Fences, and Fine Sediment: Using Long-Term Water Quality Data and Aerial Imagery to Quantify the Impact of Best Management Practices in Marsh Creek, ID (Masters thesis, Idaho State University).

considerable investment in conservation actions, from 2004 to 2012 Marsh Creek still exceeded high- and low-flow suspended sediment limits more than 50 percent of the time.[8] Most of this sediment comes from bank erosion, particularly un-vegetated banks. In 2017 Idaho State University students and faculty assessed the length of Marsh Creek documenting bank vegetation condition as well as cattle use of the area.

Impairments described in Marsh Creek are present to a lesser degree in other portions of the watershed on and off the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. For example, on the upper Portneuf River, within the Reservation, water quality impairments and habitat degradation have been attributed to livestock in riparian habitats. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Water Quality Program monitored two 200 meter reaches of the Upper Portneuf River in 2005 as part of a Reservation-wide bio-assessment project. *E. coli* concentrations were well above meeting State water quality objectives, and over 90% of the particles within the stream's wetted width were fines. The Tribes' modified Stream Macroinvertebrate Score for the lower of these two reaches was 44, below the median score for other Reservation streams of 51.5, and the richness of Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera was much lower than the average for the Idaho Basin Bioregion.[9]

River-based Ecosystem/Watershed Health Threats

High summer water temperatures and high sediment levels have resulted in low aquatic life populations in the lower watershed, including Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The straightened stream channel has also reduced habitat for aquatic species such as the Northern leopard frog. It is many river miles from the relatively healthy floodplain that occurs at the Portneuf's confluence with the Snake River – downstream of the project site – to cool, clean waters upstream of the Pocatello. Moreover, healthy habitats in several tributaries are isolated from one another by the poor conditions of the mainstem Portneuf River in the area. Such spatial disconnections greatly threaten watershed health and the maintenance or restoration of threatened species in the area.

The channelized nature of the Portneuf River provides for little habitat complexity, increasing the importance of restoration projects to provide refuge areas. A study conducted by ISU's Stream Ecology Center documented that the reduced habitat complexity corresponded with lower aquatic insect diversity, lower production of adult insect emergence, and fewer and less diverse riparian insectivores (e.g. spiders and birds) than in other areas where more habitat complexity has been preserved or restored.[10]

In addition to the monitoring of water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrates by IDEQ, species counts are tracked by Idaho Department of Fish and Game and by Idaho State University faculty and students. On the reservation, the Shoshone Bannock Tribe also track fisheries health.

[8] Meese, G. A. (2018). Farmers, Fences, and Fine Sediment: Using Long-Term Water Quality Data and Aerial Imagery to Quantify the Impact of Best Management Practices in Marsh Creek, ID (Masters thesis, Idaho State University).

[9] Grafe, C.S., C.A. Mebane, M.J. McIntyre, D.A. Essig, D.H. Brandt, and D.T. Mosier. 2002. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Water Body Assessment Guidance, Second Edition-Final. Idaho Department of Environmental Quality; Boise, Idaho.

[10] Ortiz, J., C.V. Baxter and D. Lybecker. *In preparation.* A social-ecological investigation of riverine habitat complexity: insect emergence, terrestrial insectivores, and public perceptions.

Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts

PWP's plan will directly support many issues, goals, and objectives listed within existing water plans in Idaho including:

- **Idaho Water Resource Board's Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan**, which covers part of the Portneuf Watershed (and to which the Portneuf Aquifer is hydraulically connected), that states the following goals:
  - Increase predictability for water users by managing for a reliable supply.
  - Create alternatives to administrative curtailment.
  - Manage overall demand for water within the Eastern Snake Plain.
  - Increase recharge to the aquifer.
  - Reduce withdrawals from the aquifer…
- **The Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2019-2024**
  - Idaho Fisheries Management Plan outlines an important objective for the Portneuf River that is aligned with PWP goals: to improve water quality and trout habitat in Portneuf River from Pocatello upriver to Lava Hot Springs by seeking opportunities to pursue better water quality and quantity management.[11]
- **Idaho Water Resource Board in the 2012 State Water Plan**
  - Section 8A: Sustainability of Idaho's Water Resources, adopted in 2016, which states: "Stewardship of Idaho's water resources begins with the realization that the water resources of the state are not inexhaustible. Therefore, it is necessary to manage and administer Idaho's water resources and protect Idaho's water quality. Stewardship, by necessity, also includes taking affirmative steps to address declining trends in the resource, where those trends exist, and to establish policies that will prevent future unsustainable declines…"
- **Bannock County Comprehensive Plan** goals and objectives, including:
  - "Continue to encourage development of the Portneuf River into a recreational waterway while respecting agricultural operations; Establish standards to help keep water clean (i.e. aquifers, surface waters, drinking water sources, floodways, waterbodies, streams, rivers and community, municipal and domestic wells)."

E.1.2.2. Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits

Please respond to the following questions as applicable to your proposed project. Linking your response to the critical watershed issues you identified in response to Criterion B1, please provide an explanation of why your proposed watershed group activities are an important next step for addressing the issues. Based on current information, what are the expected benefits of the proposed activities? To the extent possible, describe the anticipated benefits. Provide quantitative and qualitative support for the expected benefits (e.g., cite to relevant data sources or literature, provide examples where applicable). What stakeholders will benefit from the proposed project?

The Portneuf Watershed Partnership has identified four projects to address the issues listed above, namely **water supply**, **water quality**, and **watershed health**:

- Water Supply Benefits – Predictive Model
- Water Quality Benefits – Marsh Creek willow planting and landowner engagement

[11] Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) (2019). Fisheries Management Plan 2019 – 2024. Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, USA.

- Water Quality Benefits – Watershed Plan
- River-based Ecosystem/Watershed Health Benefits – Outreach

Water Supply Benefits - Predictive Model.

A significant outcome of this project will be the development of a predictive streamflow and water rights model representing the Portneuf River Basin which will be available to inform water management decisions affecting both the Portneuf and Snake River Basins which are managed conjunctively. The predictive model will be used to estimate the timing and amount of surface water flows that can be diverted for a particular set of water right conditions. It will be necessary to evaluate water rights and diversions throughout the basin to represent the existing water management. The model will provide an enhanced understanding of surface supply throughout the irrigation season. The work described will build off of streamflow forecasting methods developed in the Wood River Basin and will develop workflows to make these methods more transferable and lay the groundwork for similar modeling in other sub-watersheds of the Snake River Basin.

Beneficiaries: This tool would also allow water users in the region to make planting and irrigation decisions early in the spring with some foreknowledge about the likelihood of water supply shortages. This tool would provide agricultural users with information that they can actually use and interpret to make time-sensitive decisions vital to their success, and benefit the community that they live in. The surface water forecasting model will support those that seek to make proactive fisheries and other watershed management decisions instead of being reactive to the hydrologic conditions

Restoring important components of the hydrologic regime will likewise require watershed-specific approaches. Purchase of water rights can assist restoration, but it is too expensive to implement on a watershed scale. Enforcement of water rights law during the past year in the Portneuf River Basin is likely reducing diversions from the Portneuf River so that this water may be left in the system to satisfy senior rights holders downstream. The proposed project will provide the assessment and watershed restoration plans necessary to take advantage of restoration opportunities.

Combined with this effort the PWP facilitator would also identify water acquisition opportunities to increase instream flow. Many cold-water tributary streams have been fully disconnected from the Portneuf River resulting in warmer stream temperatures and decreased gravel recruitment. Identifying where the City of Pocatello should spend its $2M+ of reserved surface water rights acquisition funds would greatly improve water quality once implemented. A significant review of water resources and irrigation use up Marsh Creek has already been conducted.[12]

Quantitative and Qualitative Support: For this grant the PWP will work with Dr. Kendra Kaiser, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geosciences at Boise State University, where she works as a watershed hydrologist that focuses on applied research questions that she co-produces with regional stakeholders. She uses field data collection, remote sensing and other

[12] Idaho Department of Water Resources - Sukow, Jennifer (2021). Groundwater Resources in Marsh Valley, Bannock County, Idaho. Open File Report. https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/publications/MarshValleyFinal-20211027.pdf

diverse data sources to create statistical models and data visualizations to improve our understanding of working western watersheds. She seeks to help water managers and users across agricultural and urban environments adapt to our changing climate through this work. Most recently she applied this work to the Wood River Basin in Idaho.

Water Quality Benefits – Marsh Creek willow planting and landowner engagement

This project will increase engagement of Marsh Creek landowners with the PWP and streambank Best Management Practices. The PWP has begun developing a set of goals, objectives, and tasks for the Marsh Creek drainage, with the primary goal to stabilize the stream bank, which is constantly eroding.

The PWP coordinator would be tasked with a significant workload up Marsh Creek, reaching out to landowners and engaging them in agreeing to plant willows along the streambank. This drainage is composed of many small and some larger landowners. These landowners would be presented with outreach material illustrating the benefit of planting willows. Outside of this project, ongoing willow planting days would be organized engaging the PWP and landowner community. Sales or easements along large tracts would be solicited for the future acquisition and development of wetlands that could capture some of the sediment. The City of Pocatello and other PWP partners have funds set aside which would be used to support any desired willow planting outside of this project.

Currently, the NRCS, the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Idaho Association Soil Conservation Commission work diligently in the Portneuf Watershed to engage with large landowners along local streams, but there is significant work to be done engaging with smaller landowners to improve stream health. Marsh Creek has a large number of small landowners with 100-feet of streambank each.

Dedicating staff time to outreach with these landowners has been identified as a top priority for improving streambank conditions in this drainage. To increase the planting of willows along Marsh Creek the PWP facilitator will leverage landowners to share information with their neighbors. The PWP intends to expend significant effort to recruit the first handful of landowners to participate in willow planting.

Beneficiaries: Decreasing bank erosion up Marsh Creek (and thereby reducing stream turbidity) will greatly benefit downstream water users, particularly in the City of Pocatello which has been working diligently to increasing river-based recreation through floating and fishing.

Quantitative and Qualitative Support: This drainage is the primary source of sediment in the lower Portneuf River. Research by Idaho State University graduate students determined that the source of the sediment in Marsh Creek is bank erosion - not agricultural runoff.[13] There is significant cattle access to the stream and little woody vegetation - such as willows - along the stream. While some of the stream channel has been straightened, most of its wetlands have been disconnected from the stream with one-foot tall levees.

[13] Meese, G. A. (2018). Farmers, Fences, and Fine Sediment: Using Long-Term Water Quality Data and Aerial Imagery to Quantify the Impact of Best Management Practices in Marsh Creek, ID (Masters thesis, Idaho State University).

Water Quality Benefits – Watershed Plan

Development of watershed plans for portions of the Portneuf River and its tributaries will enable PWP members to easily identify areas with steep cut banks needing restoration, which often exceed 10-feet on the Portneuf River. The watershed plan will include:

- Assessment/Current condition inventory
    - Historic Channel overlay - a 1941 aerial is available for most of the watershed.
    - Hydrologic Regime analysis
    - Channel Morphology
    - Sediment Attributes, transport competence and transport capacity
- Desired goals and outcomes
- Implementation Plan
    - Restoration and stream enhancement objectives. This will involve significant outreach to the PWP and landowner community.
    - Restoration Treatments
    - Restoration Prioritization

Beneficiaries: Implementation of the proposed river restoration and stabilization treatments will benefit local agricultural operations, aquatic and riparian ecological systems, regional economic conditions, recreational opportunities, and private lands and landowners along the river corridor.

- Bank stabilization efforts that reduce severe erosion will protect adjacent lands, agricultural operations, and private infrastructure.
- Floodplain reconnection (through both fill and excavation) will increase hydrologic support for proximate agricultural lands.
- Riparian fences and improved river crossings will enable rotation of grazing activities and control of livestock movement, while off-channel water facilities will provide predictable sources of high quality water that is readily accessible to livestock.
- Predictable fine sediment movement, deposition, and storage in areas with suitable equipment access will benefit the operations and maintenance requirements of the Marsh Valley Canal.
- Improved fluvial, aquatic, and riparian conditions throughout the assessment reach will increase aesthetic qualities and private property values.

Implementation of restoration treatment is contingent upon landowner permission and regulatory agency authorization. Information in the Watershed Plans is intended to facilitate project advancement, although spatial treatment extents, cut and fill quantities, and individual treatment details may need to be identified in more detail based upon the scope and scale of individual implementation efforts. Design treatments implemented sequentially, in part, or collectively will result in substantive benefits to the ecological and functional values of the riverine system.

Quantitative and Qualitative Support: River restoration and stabilization activities will have diverse ecological and biological benefits that are commensurate with existing Portneuf River management strategies. The IDFG Fisheries Management Plan for 2019-2024 states that in the assessment area reach, "The main problem for fish is severe bank erosion…", and that department objectives include improving water quality, trout habitat, and riparian habitat.[14]

[14] Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) (2019). Fisheries Management Plan 2019 – 2024. Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, USA.

Prioritized river improvement treatments are designed to reduce bank erosion and fine sediment inputs into the watershed, which will result in improved water quality. Channel narrowing and gradient distribution will improve fine sediment transport continuity, which will reduce fine sediment inundation and expose clean gravel substrates. Channel narrowing and increased over head cover will also reduce solar inputs and associated increases in water temperature. Alteration of channel geometry and profile will achieve self-maintaining riffle-pool sequences that provide diverse habitat types for fish and macroinvertebrates. Resulting increased flow velocities, localized scour, and surface turbulence will increase cover, spawning, and feeding habitat for local trout populations. Improved floodplain connectivity in specified locations will enable natural energy dissipation during peak flow conditions and improve hydrologic support for diverse riparian vegetative communities. Implementation of prioritized restoration treatments will result in economic benefits associated with improved recreational opportunities.

River-based Ecosystem/Watershed Health Benefits – Outreach

The PWP seeks to increase stakeholder and community engagement with this effort. Phone calls and one-on-one conversations will be used to recruit stakeholders to join the email list and attend PWP monthly meetings. Direct mailings, social media and open houses will be used to share watershed information with broader community.

The PWP will track conversations, mailings, open houses, and social media posts and will modify outreach activities based on feedback received from landowners. The PWP will also track where willows are planted. A GIS map already exists of bank condition - e.g. vegetated with willows, vegetated with grasses, bare.

Additional outreach will be focused on engaging with residents as they float and fish the Portneuf River to reconnect them with the river's health and history. PWP partners have already installed several signs and have plans for more.

Beneficiaries: This effort will benefit the entire watershed by ensuring that projects are meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Increasing agricultural engagement with the PWP will help fund more projects on agricultural land. Increasing PWP engagement with disadvantaged populations - located in the City of Pocatello and on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation – will also ensure that implemented projects are meeting the needs of these groups.

Quantitative and Qualitative Support: As noted in numerous federal Equity Action Plans, it is critical that numerous outreach strategies are utilized in order to increased engagement with disadvantaged populations.[15] The PWP intends to use the proposed project to increase engagement with two disadvantaged populations (City of Pocatello and Shoshone Bannock Tribe) as well as agricultural producers. These agricultural producers do not reside within disadvantaged population census tracts, but are challenging to reach. Improvements made on the land owned by agricultural producers will benefit everyone in the watershed.

[15] Environmental Protection Agency (2022). E.O 13985 Equity Action Plan. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/epa_equityactionplan_april2022_508.pdf

E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed (20 points)

Include a preliminary project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work including major tasks, milestones, and dates. For each task and milestone, indicate who will have the primary responsibly for completion. Proposals that provide a detailed project schedule broken down by tasks and subtasks with identified milestones will be prioritized. Proposals with a budget and budget narrative that provide a reasonable explanation of project costs will be prioritized. Describe any new policies or administrative actions required to implement the plan or project being designed.

MOU Execution –*January 2025-March 2025*

It is anticipated the grant award will begin in January 2025. The City of Pocatello will work together with the Grants Management specialist to provide the necessary documentation and account setup to execute an MOU by April 2025.

Hiring and Team formation –*January 2025-June 2025*

While the MOU is being executed, PWP staff time (particularly from the City of Pocatello) will be devoted to securing a PWP Project Manager and drafting Scope of Works, RFS (if needed) and contracts for the Water Supply Predictive Model, and the Watershed Restoration Plans.

- Secure a PWP Project Manager.
    - Responsibility: City of Pocatello
- Secure a Design Team for the Water Supply Predictive Model.
    - Responsibility: City of Pocatello
- Secure a Team for the Watershed Restoration Plans
    - Responsibility: City of Pocatello

Coordination and Outreach –*June 2025-December 2028*

The hired/contracted facilitator will take responsibility for facilitating the PWP and expanding stakeholder and community involvement in watershed issues.

1. Continue to expand and develop stakeholder interest in the PWP by coordinating meetings, transcribing and disbursing minutes, hosting speakers and studies and identifying further outreach needs.
    a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator
2. Increase outreach to the public by developing a public relations strategy.
    a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator
3. Assess County and City development requirements along streambanks for alignment with best management practices.
    a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator
4. Increase capacity to develop improved communication among members of the PWP, increase public awareness, and improve information sharing using a central storage repository of documents for the PWP.
    a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator
5. Host a public event (in Pocatello and in Lava Hot Springs) in order to share information.
    a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator

Project Management – Marsh Creek Landowner Outreach –*June 2025-November 2028*

The hired facilitator will conduct additional outreach with Marsh Creek landowners to increase willow planting along streambanks in the future. The stream is generally six-feet across and one-foot deep with three-foot banks. *Anticipated completion – November 2028*

a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator

Project Management – Water Model Development –*June 2025-August 2028*
The City of Pocatello anticipates entering into a two-year contract with Boise State University for this work, which would be conducted by a graduate student with oversight from Dr. Kendra Kaiser. Funds will be used to develop a predictive streamflow and water rights model representing the Portneuf River Basin which will be available to inform water management decisions affecting both the Portneuf and Snake River Basins which are managed conjunctively. *Anticipated completion – August 2028*

a. Responsibility: Contracted firm (Kendra Kaiser, Boise State University)

The hired facilitator will assess water rights that could be purchased by the City of Pocatello ($2M+ in reserves) to best improve stream conditions by lowering temperatures, increasing gravel recruitment, and providing improve fish passage. *Anticipated completion – August 2028*

a. Responsibility: Hired/contracted Facilitator

Project Management – Watershed Restoration Plan–*April 2025-November 2028*

1. Prioritize stream sections for doing watershed restoration planning. *Anticipated completion – April 2025*
    a. Responsibility: PWP
2. Complete watershed restoration plans, including conducting watershed assessments/inventories, working with the PWP to develop desired goals and outcomes, and writing an implementation plan. The timeframe will be developed and revised as part of the contracting process. *Anticipated completion – November 2028*
    a. Responsibility: Contracted firm

E.1.4. Eval Criterion D—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities 15 pts)

E.1.4.1. Climate Change *Points will be awarded based on the extent the project will reduce climate pollution; increase resilience to the impacts of climate change; protect public health; and conserve our lands, waters, and biodiversity. Provide details & examples on how the project will address impacts of climate change and help combat the climate crisis. Does this proposed project strengthen water supply sustainability to increase resilience to climate change? Does the proposed project contribute to climate change resiliency in other ways not described above?*

The **Portneuf River Partnership Planning Project** seeks to increase the watershed's resilience to climate change.

Idaho's climate is expected to become overall warmer, drier in summer, wetter in winter, and more variable during the next 50 to 70 years.[16] Researchers estimated past and future hydrographs and patterns of ecosystem metabolism in the Portneuf River, where water use and climate change are both expected to alter hydrology in the immediate future. Their analysis suggests that consumptive uses (mostly irrigation) have already reduced annual stream flow by 35%.[17] In contrast, climate change is unlikely to change total water budgets in rivers of the Pacific Northwest by more than 10% in the next 30 years.[18]

[16] Idaho Department of Fish and Game. (2023). Idaho state wildlife action plan. 2023 rev. ed. Boise (ID): Idaho Department of Fish and Game. https://idfg.idaho.gov/.
[17] Marcarelli, A. M., Kirk, R. W. V., & Baxter, C. V. (2010). Predicting effects of hydrologic alteration and climate change on ecosystem metabolism in a western US river. *Ecological Applications*, *20*(8), 2081-2088.
[18] Snover, A. K., A. F. Hamlet, and D. P. Lettenmaier, (2003). Climate change scenarios for water planning studies. Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society 84(11): 1513-1518.

During the summer it is 15 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit cooler in the shade than in the direct sunlight. Riparian plants act as insulation, keeping the wind and sun off the water. Through this work PWP will identify areas for riparian plantings. Willows and cottonwoods help keep the stream cooler and reduce evaporation. The project will also identify where streambanks are incised and suggest treatments. Streams with muddy dark substrates are typically 5 to 10 degrees warmer than streams with clean gravel substrates.

The 2023 Idaho State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) states that addressing effects of climate change "will require extensive stakeholder collaboration, planning, and problem solving. Established relationships among conservation partners and stakeholders, including industry and resource managers, create opportunities for proactive, voluntary, and community-oriented solutions. Collaboratively enhancing and incentivizing these partnerships into the future will be necessary for sustaining Idaho's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), vital natural resource-based economies, and communities." PWP strives to address effects of climate change in just the way outlined above.

Further, goals of the PWP are directly in line with climate-related actions to reduce effects of climate-related stressors that are outlined in the Idaho SWAP[19]:

- Promote and incentivize collaborative programs, projects, and BMPs on private and public lands that benefit joint SGCN and resource-based industry climate-related goals and objectives.
- Implement soil and water conservation projects and BMPs to benefit water supplies, water quality, soil health, and resilience to climate-related stressors.
- Reduce water temperatures by improving and maintaining instream water flows, seasonal runoff patterns, and stream channel processes.

E.1.4.2. Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities

Disadvantaged and Underserved Community Benefits: *• Please use the White House Council on Environmental Quality's interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, available online at Explore the map – Climate &Economic Justice Screening Tool (https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov) to identify the disadvantaged communities that will benefit from your project. • If applicable, describe how the proposed project will serve or benefit a disadvantaged or underserved community, identified using the tool described above.*

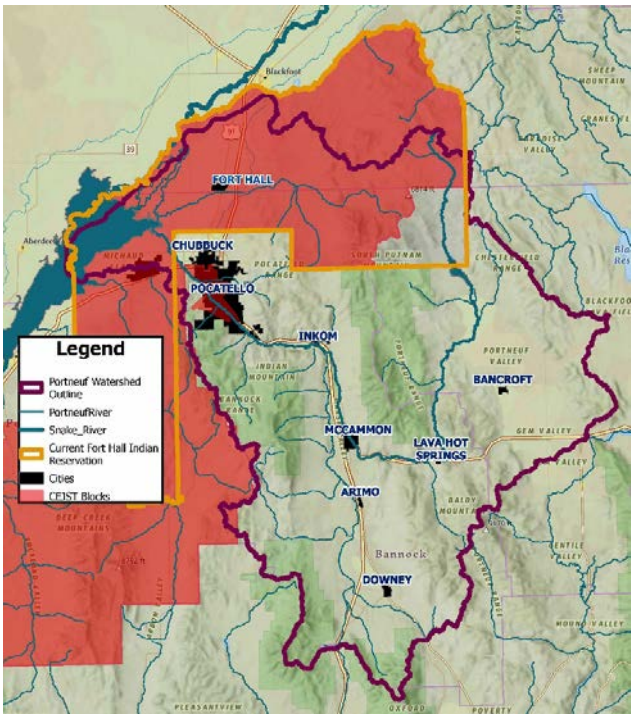
The proposed project will benefit Pocatello and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation's twelve Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) identified neighborhoods by improving recreation opportunities, riparian health and water quality. See Figure 4 – Disadvantaged Population Map. The City is at the bottom of the watershed and so will benefit immensely from upstream water quality and riparian health improvements. (https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#11.04/42.8381/-112.4269).

In particular, the PWP will use this project to expand its methodology for public engagement, reaching out to a broader community through various outreach strategies. The City of Pocatello and US Army Corps of Engineers were wildly successful in its outreach with the 2016 Portneuf

[19] Snover, A. K., A. F. Hamlet, and D. P. Lettenmaier, (2003). Climate change scenarios for water planning studies. Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society 84(11): 1513-1518.

River Vision Study, including targeting disadvantaged populations.[20] These strategies will be expanded upon to increase community engagement with this project, ensuring that the watershed plans developed meet their needs.

Figure 4: Disadvantaged Population Map - see Attachment B for larger map



The twelve tracts are identified as 16011940000, 16077960100, 16005940000, 16005000800, 16005000900, 16005001000, 16005001300, 16005001400, 16005001500, 16005001601, 16005001602, and 16005001603. Most of the watershed's 90,000 residents live within these census tracts. Within the nine tracts off of the reservation, there are numerous disadvantaged components, which include:

Poverty Level – 66-80th percentile for percent of the population in the tracts that are at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty line.

Formerly Used Defense Sites & Proximity to Superfund Sites – Two of the tracts meet this criteria.

Projected wildfire risk – 90-99th percentile for percent of households in these tracts at risk of wildfire. Almost all tracks meet the 90 percent threshold for this criteria.

Project Flood Risk – Two tracts are in the 92-96th percentile for projected flood risk.

Expected population loss rate – 91-97th percentile for percent of households at risk of fatalities and injuries from natural hazards each year. Almost all tracts meet the 90 percent threshold for this criteria.

[20] City of Pocatello and US Army Corps of Engineers (2016). Portneuf River Vision Study. https://river.pocatello.gov/documents/planning/2016.RiverVision.ExecutiveSummary.final.small.pdf

The proposed project's benefits to the three CEJST identified neighborhoods that cover the Fort Hall Indian Reservation are discussed below. These three CEJST identified neighborhoods also include the following disadvantaged components:

Poverty Level – 81-91st percentile for percent of the population in the census tracts are at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty line.

Unemployment –95-98th percentile for household unemployment. Two census tracts meet the 90 percent threshold for this criteria.

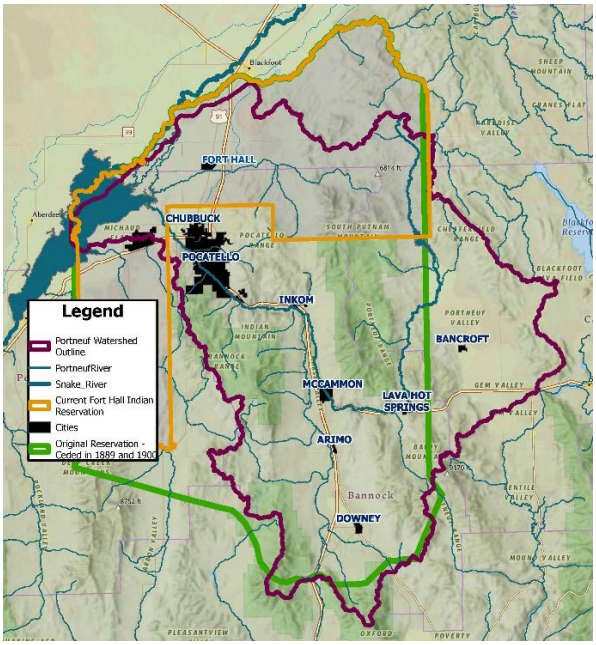
Asthma, Diabetes and Heart Disease – 90-97th percentile for percent of people over 18 who have been told they have these diseases in 1-2 of the census tracts.

Tribal Benefits: *Does the proposed project directly serve and/or benefit a Tribe? Benefits can include, but are not limited to, public health and safety by addressing water quality, new water supplies, economic growth opportunities, or improving water management. Does the proposed project support Reclamation's Tribal trust responsibilities or a Reclamation activity with a Tribe?*

The Portneuf River begins and ends of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. The Portneuf River bottoms on the reservation are a nursery for cutthroat trout and are revered by tribal members. While the Tribes have a Watershed Plan for these bottoms, they currently are dependent on water quality provided by their upstream partners. The proposed project aims to improve that water quality and provide habitat that supports the cutthroat trout life cycle.

The original Fort Hall Reservation - Treaty of Fort Bridger, 1868 - included much of the Portneuf Watershed. Prior to that it contained 1.8 million acres, an amount that was reduced to 1.2 million acres in 1872 as a result of a survey error. The reservation was further reduced to its present size through subsequent legislation and the allotment process (see Figure 4).

Figure 5: Portneuf Watershed and Historic/Current Fort Hall Indian Reservation Extent - See Attachment C for larger image



D.2.2.3 Project Budget

Please see **attached** project budget and budget narrative.

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-federal entities	
1. City of Pocatello	$0
Non-federal subtotal	**$0**
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	**$300,000**

D.2.2.4 Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

D.2.2.5 Required Permits or Approvals

D.2.2.6 Required Permits or Approvals

D.2.2.6. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

D.2.2.7 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

D.2.2.8 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

Please see **Attachment 1** for responses to all of these items (D.2.2.4-D.2.2.8). The project does not include monitoring, measurement, and other field work.

D.2.2.10 Letters of Support

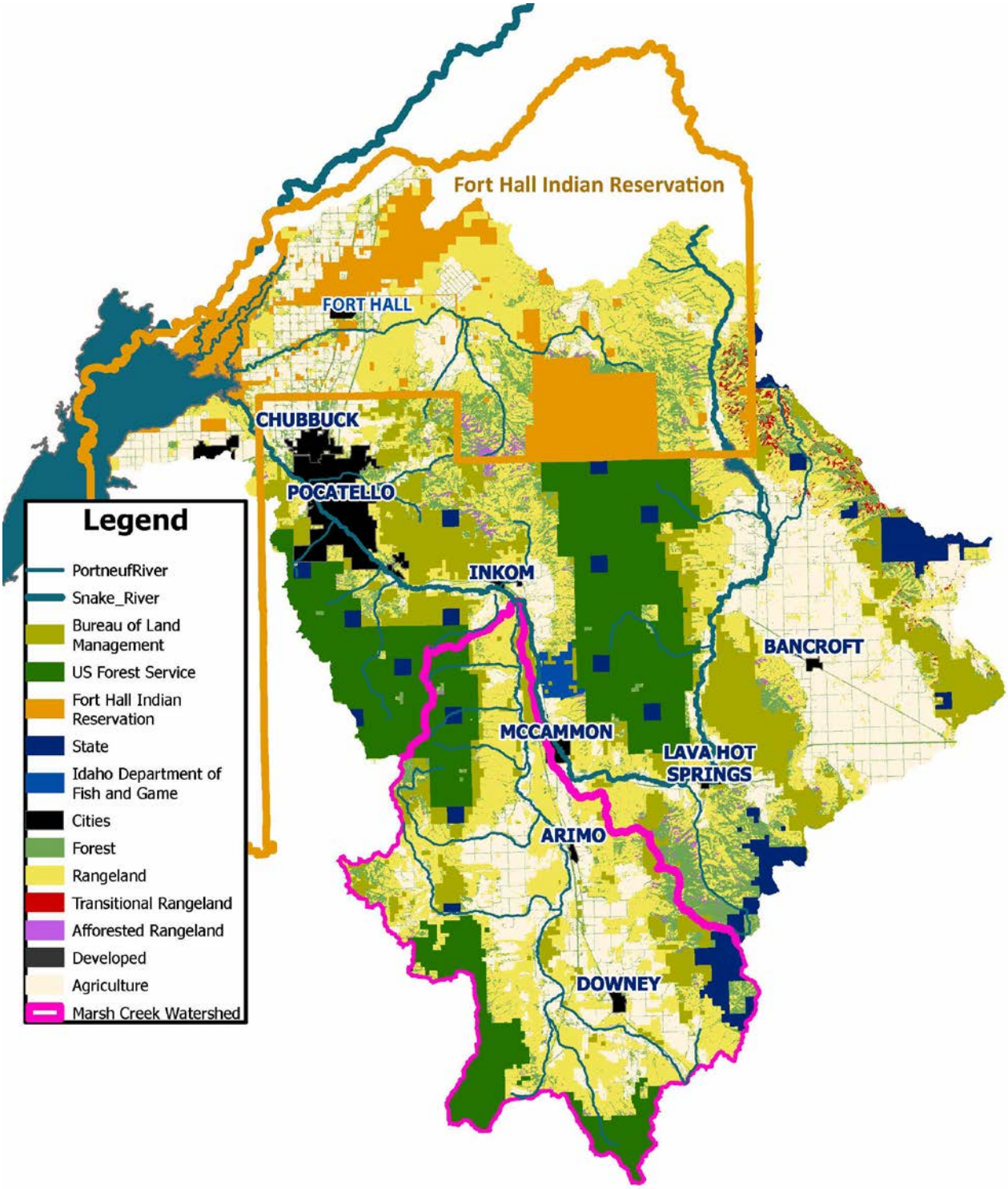
Please see **Attachment 3** for the letters of support provided from many PWP stakeholders and partners:

- Idaho Conservation League (ICL)
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)
- Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC)
- Idaho State University (ISU)
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Portneuf Resource Council (PRC)
- Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD)
- Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust (SSLT)
- Shoshone Bannock Tribes (Tribes)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Trout Unlimited (TU)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- United States Forest Service (USFS)

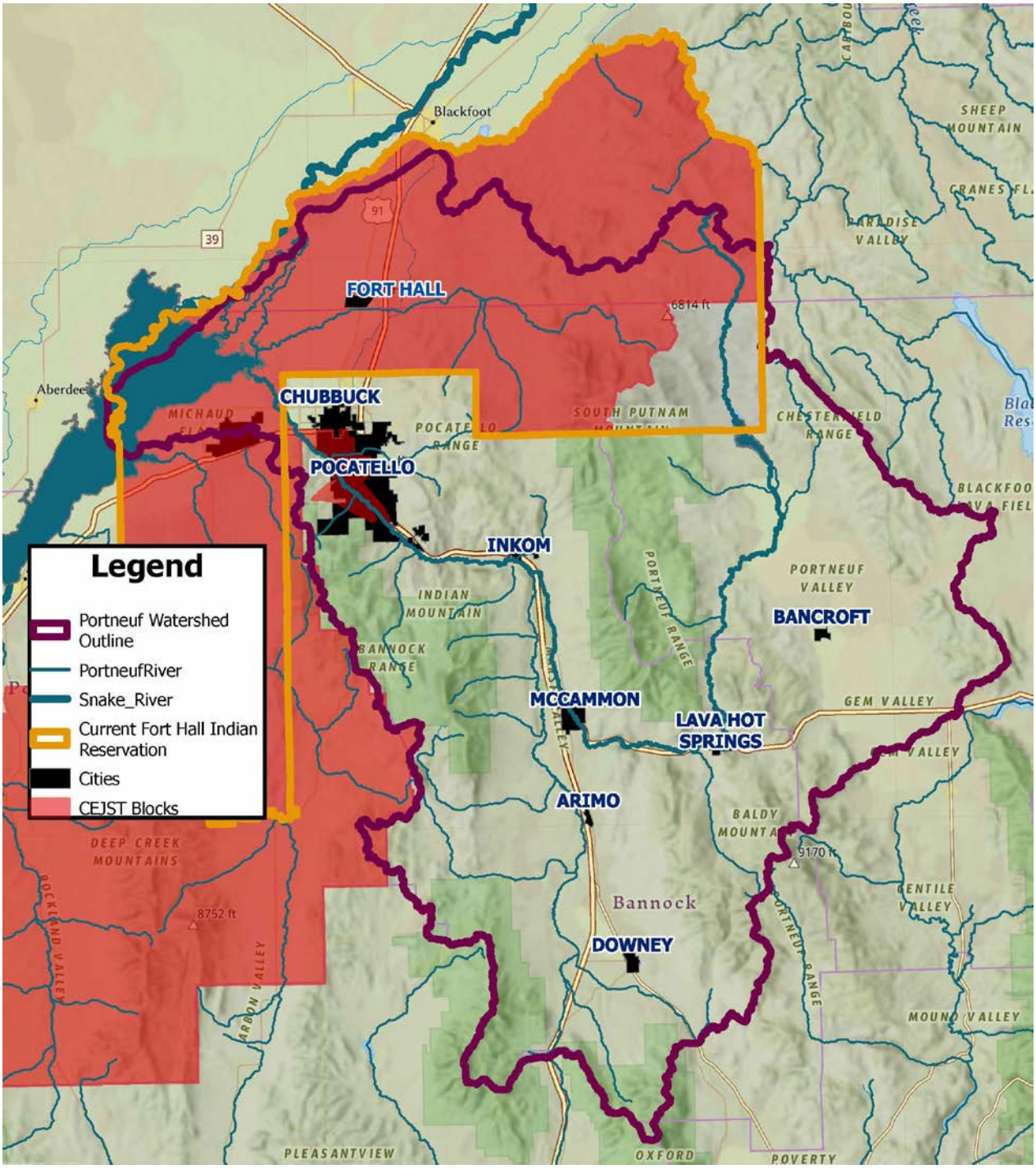
D.2.2.11 Official Resolution

Please see **Attachment 4** for a copy of the Official Resolution, which was approved by the City Council on November 16, 2023.

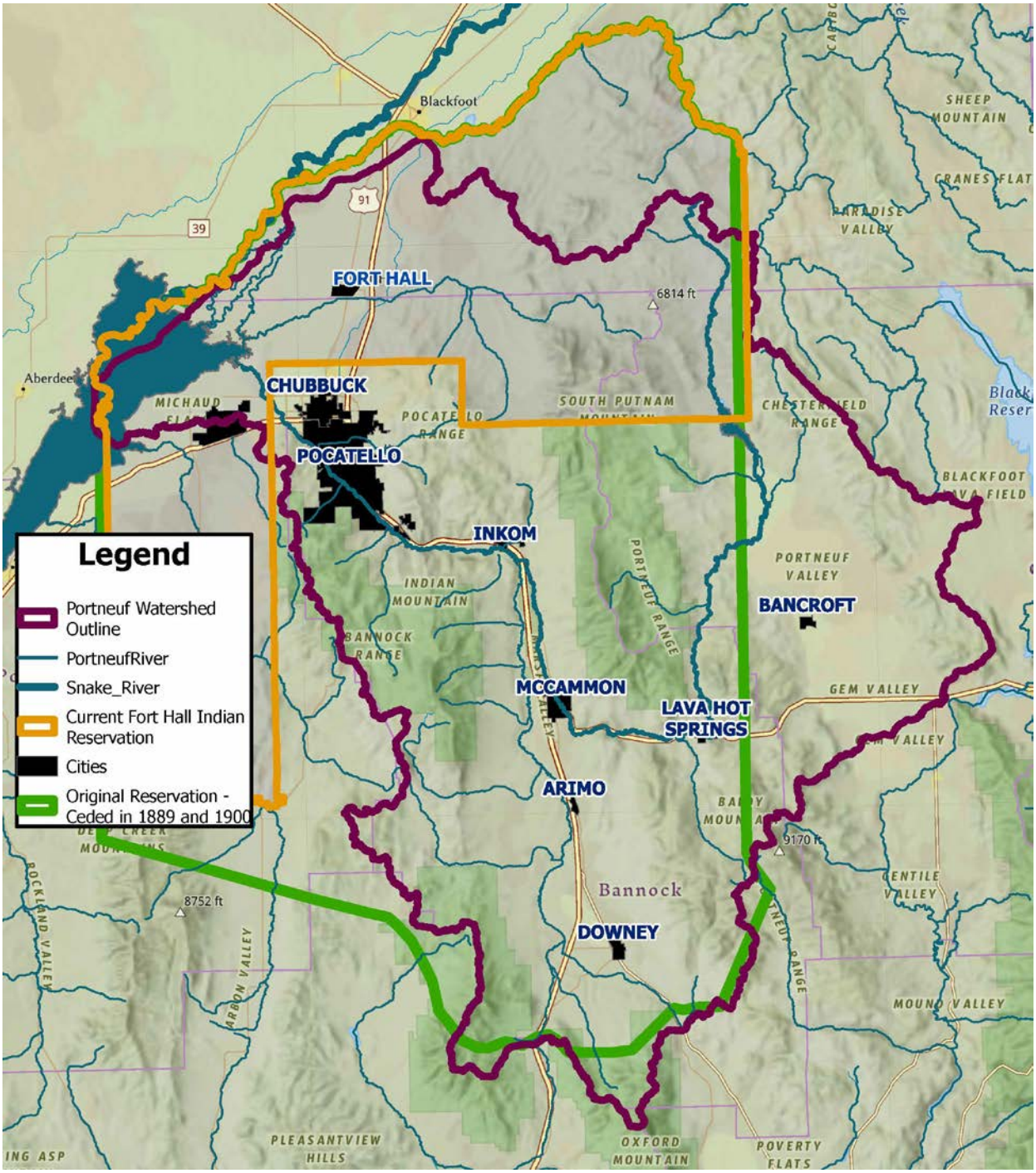
Portneuf Watershed: Agricultural Land Use and Federal/State Land Ownership



Disadvantaged Population Map



Portneuf Watershed and Historic/Current Fort Hall Indian Reservation Extent



D.2.2.4. Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

The project does not include monitoring, measurement, and other field work. The project proposal does not include on the ground activities and therefore Section H.1. is not applicable to this application.

D.2.2.5. Required Permits or Approvals

You must state in the application whether any permits or approvals are required and explain the plan for obtaining such permits or approvals.

No permits or approvals are required for this project. It does not include any monitoring, measurement, or other field work.

If a Project Design Grant proposal includes improvements to Federal facilities, Reclamation may also require additional reviews and approvals prior to implementation to ensure that any necessary easements, land use authorizations, or special permits can be approved consistent with the requirements of 43 CFR Section 429 and that the development will not impact or impair project operations or efficiency.

The project does not include improvements to Federal facilities.

D.2.2.6. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

The City verifies that there is no overlap between the proposed project and any other active or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel.

The proposal submitted for consideration under this program does not in any way duplicate any proposal or project that has been or will be submitted for funding consideration to any other potential funding source, including both Federal and non-Federal.

If at any time a proposal is awarded funds that would be duplicative of the funding requested from Reclamation, the City will notify the NOFO point of contact or the Program Coordinator immediately.

D.2.2.7 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

Per 2 CFR §1402.112, "Financial Assistance Interior Regulation" the City of Pocatello confirms that no Conflicts of Interest, actual or potential, exist at the time of submission.

Applicability

The City shall comply with all Conflict of Interest requirements as stipulated in the NOFO and grant award. The City ensures that the City and its employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to Federal financial assistance agreements.

The City will adhere to the conflict-of-interest provisions in 2 CFR§200.318 for the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients and by sub recipients.

Notification

The City will disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the DOI awarding agency or pass-through entity if applicable in accordance with 2 CFR §200.112.

The City has adopted internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The City will be responsible for notifying the Financial Assistance Officer in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that have been reported by sub recipients.

D.2.2.8 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

The City of Pocatello submits a Single Audit report for is most recent Fiscal Year (FY2021 ending 9/30/2021) through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. The City's Employer Identification Number (EIN) associated with that report is: 82-6000244. The Audit is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse website and is File Name: 18945820211.

D.2.2.11. Official Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-31

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF POCATELLO, A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF IDAHO, APPROVING SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION UNDER THE WATERSMART ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PROJECTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023, NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NO. R23AS00109.

WHEREAS, the Portneuf River watershed suffers from both water scarcity and water quality problems; and

WHEREAS, a top priority short-term project from the 2016 Portneuf River Vision Study is working with other stakeholders throughout the watershed to address water management needs; and

WHEREAS, to submit an application under the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program for Fiscal Year 2023 program, per Notice of Funding Opportunity R23AS00362, the applicant is required to adopt an official resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF POCATELLO AS FOLLOWS:

1. The City of Pocatello Mayor has legal authority to enter into an agreement and has the authority to review and support the application being submitted.

2. The Pocatello City Council has reviewed and supports an application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Management Program Phase I project.

3. The City of Pocatello agrees to work with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

RESOLVED this 16th day of November, 2023.

CITY OF POCATELLO, a municipal corporation of Idaho

BRIAN C BLAD, Mayor

ATTEST:

KONNI R KENDELL, City Clerk

D.2.2.10. Letters of Support

United States Department of the Interior

IDAHO FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office - Chubbuck
4425 Burley Drive, Suite A
Chubbuck, Idaho 83202
Telephone (208) 237-6975
www.fws.gov/idaho

Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section, Attn. NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in Southeast, Idaho.**

This letter transmits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office's (IFWOs) support to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho. We understand the importance of this river to the local community and the restoration of this section of river will overall beauty of the area as well as create better habitat for native fishes and aquatic species.

The IFWO applauds the efforts of the City of Pocatello, and the multiple partners involved in taking the lead on restoring this important habitat. Their proposed project will expand and refine the work of the Portneuf Watershed Project (PWP) Restoration Group, of which the Service is an active participant.

The Service supports the actions and goals that have been set to improve this habitat as follows:
Goal 1 – Protect, restore, and enhance western native trout populations and measure success in improving the status of western native trout.
Goal 2 – Ensure protection and enhancement of intact watersheds, and enhancement or restoration of habitats that have been impacted by human activities or catastrophic natural events.
Goal 3 – Develop collaborative approaches and partnerships among agencies and stakeholders that emphasize cooperation and shared effort and increase funding to implement high-priority projects for the protection, restoration, or enhancement of western native trout.
Goal 4 – Develop and implement effective communication, education, and outreach programs as a tool to increase public awareness and encourage partnerships that benefit western native trout.

We strongly encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal. It furthers IFWO's efforts to improve the health of the Portneuf River Watershed.

This letter offers the IFWOs commitment to continue its collaboration and support for this effort. If you have questions, please contact Matt Bringhurst at (208) 509-2558 or via email at matthew_bringhurst@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

ELLIOT TRAHER

Digitally signed by ELLIOT TRAHER
Date: 2023.12.04 08:43:53 -07'00'

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Westside Ranger District | 4350 S. Cliffs Drive
Pocatello, ID 83204
208-236-7500
Fax: 208-236-7555

File Code: 1560
Date: November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho

The Westside Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest **enthusiastically** supports the City of Pocatello's grant application to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.

The project proposed by the City of Pocatello, supported by many partners in the local area, is a perfect example of a locally led ecosystem restoration planning effort consistent with the America the Beautiful Initiative. The project would support a semi-rural community in southeast Idaho surrounded by public land (Forest Service and BLM) connected through trails, creeks, wildlife corridors, and watersheds.

The Westside Ranger District commits to supporting this project consistent with our authority and ability, and to participate in educational opportunities associated with the project. **We have a close collaboration with the City of Pocatello, and I can attest to the many excellent projects Hannah Sanger has led and implemented to improve the community.** USFS staff commit to working with the City of Pocatello and other watershed partners to provide project design review support and to collaborate on educational opportunities associated with the project.

I strongly encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal. Although not directly adjacent to National Forest System lands, this project furthers the mission of the Forest Service's efforts to improve the overall health and diversity of the Portneuf River Watershed. **I believe the project design has the ideal scope and scale for realistic implementation to achieve broad- scale benefits to the entire watershed.**

Sincerely,

KIM OBELE Digitally signed by KIM OBELE
Date: 2023.11.27 14:08:37 -07'00'

KIM OBELE
District Ranger

444 Hospital Way #300
Pocatello, ID 83201 • (208) 236-6160

Brad Little, Governor
Jess Byrne, Director

November 16, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.**

To Whom it may concern:

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) supports the City of Pocatello's grant application to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho. This project will reinvigorate community engagement (particularly with the Shoshone Bannock Tribe) with watershed restoration and conduct much needed watershed restoration planning.

IDEQ has participated in many projects to make improvements to the water quality in the Portneuf River. We have a monitoring network set up on the river with over 20 years of data. IDEQ provides expertise regarding water quality conditions, trends, and beneficial use support in the basin. DEQ has a lead role in implementing the Portneuf River TMDL plan including administering grant funds to be used on water quality improvement projects along the river and its tributaries. DEQ also has an advisory role in commenting on Idaho Department of Water Resources-issued Stream Alteration Permits and has Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification authority for federally-approved actions (NPDES, 404 and FERC permits) potentially affecting water quality.

The IDEQ Pocatello Regional Office staff commit to working with the City of Pocatello and other watershed partners to provide project watershed restoration planning support. This grant would support efforts to collaborate on educational opportunities associated with the project as we move toward attaining ecological integrity in the Portneuf River watershed.

We strongly encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal as this project strongly supports IDEQ's efforts to improve water quality in the Portneuf River watershed. If further information is required, please contact me at jennifer.cornell@deq.idaho.gov.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cornell
Surface Water Manager
Pocatello Regional Office IDEQ

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
SOUTHEAST REGION
1345 Barton Road
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

Brad Little / Governor
Jim Fredericks / Director

November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: Robin Graber
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Portneuf Watershed Partnership funding – City of Pocatello

Dear Ms. Graber,

Please consider this acknowledgment of the City of Pocatello's request for funding to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to support the Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP). Idaho Department of Fish and Game has worked in cooperation with the City of Pocatello and other Portneuf watershed partners in recent years to improve access, floatability, and riparian habitat on the Portneuf River. The PWP member groups have been actively involved in various projects throughout the Portneuf Watershed, spanning from its headwaters on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation to its confluence with the Snake River. These projects encompass a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving the health and sustainability of the watershed.

The PWP's mission to "improve surface and ground water resources in the greater Portneuf watershed through partnership, outreach, research, monitoring and restoration activities" is consistent with the Department's Mission as well as objectives to reestablish connectivity in watersheds and enhance riparian habitats (IDFG 2019b) and increase opportunities for fish and wildlife-based recreation as well as for wildlife viewing and appreciation (IDFG 2019a). We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this project and look forward to working with the City of Pocatello and other partners on improving this natural and recreational resource.

Department staff are available to provide any additional technical input or assistance required. Please contact Becky Johnson, Technical Assistance Manager in the Southeast regional office at (208) 236-1258 or becky.johnson@idfg.idaho.gov if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Garren
Regional Supervisor, Southeast Region

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

TRIBAL WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 306
Fort Hall, Idaho 83203

Phone: 208-239-4583
Fax: 208-239-4592

November 29, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Atten NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.**

The Shoshone Bannock Tribes' Water Resources Commission supports the City of Pocatello's grant application to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.

For decades, the Shoshone Bannock Tribes have been actively engaged with watershed partners, both on and off the reservation to improve water quality in the Portneuf River Basin. The Tribes manage a robust cutthroat trout fishery in the Portneuf River bottoms, about 10 miles downstream of the proposed project area. The proposed project is a critical step towards improving water quality upstream of the reservation and providing a refuge area for these fish and other aquatic organisms.

Tribal staff are open to working with the City of Pocatello and other watershed partners to provide watershed restoration plan and project design review support and to collaborate on educational opportunities associated with the Portneuf Watershed Partnership. We have recently implemented stream restoration projects on the reservation that complement this effort. The Portneuf River starts on the Fort Hall Reservation, leaves the Reservation, and goes through municipalities in which it is heavily degraded by the time it gets back to the Reservation. We continue to make improvements to the Portneuf River both on the head end and downstream when it returns to the Reservation. It is an important resource to the Tribes and our Fisheries and we have made a commitment to improve water quality on it. This project is an important step to improve water quality on lands we do not control but impacts us greatly.

We encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal. It furthers tribal efforts to improve the health of the Portneuf River Watershed.

Sincerely,

Arnold Appeney, TWRC-Chair

Emma George, TWRC- Vice Chair

Frances Roy, TWRC-Treasurer

Sonae Watson, TWRC-Secretary

Michaeline Edmo, Srgt-At-Arms

United States Department of Agriculture

December 1, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Portneuf Watershed Partnership Planning Project

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is pleased to support the City of Pocatello's Water Smart Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in Southeast, Idaho.

The proposed project will greatly improve watershed outreach, particularly with landowners, farmers, and ranchers within the watershed. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is continuously working with these individuals to implement best management practices. The watershed plans created by this project will help us have bigger impacts with restoration projects being implemented on private land.

We are pleased to add our support to this effort and are committed to working with the City of Pocatello and other community partners on project implementation.

Sincerely,

Taylor Uphoff

Taylor Uphoff
Conservation Team Leader

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pocatello Service Center
1551 Baldy Ave., Ste. 2
Pocatello, ID 83201
Phone: (208) 237-4628 Fax: (855) 524-1685

IDAHO
CONSERVATION
LEAGUE

November 30, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Idaho Conservation League's Support for the City of Pocatello's WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Idaho Conservation League, we are pleased to submit this letter of support for the City of Pocatello's application for the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART-Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast Idaho.

Since 1973, ICL has worked to be Idaho's voice for clean water, clean air, and wilderness-foundational values for Idaho's extraordinary quality of life. As Idaho's largest and oldest state-based, non-profit conservation organization, we represent approximately 25,000 supporters, many of whom have a personal interest in improving water quality and environmental health throughout Idaho.

ICL commends the City of Pocatello and other entities who envisioned this project and are moving it forward. We are pleased to support this grant proposal, with its aim of reinvigorating community and tribal engagement with watershed restoration and developing watershed restoration plans. Thank you for your consideration and please reach out with any questions you may have about our support.

Sincerely,

Josh Johnson
Central Idaho Director
Idaho Conservation League
jjohnson@idahoconservation.org
(208) 345-6933 x 301

Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District

214 East Center Street
Pocatello, ID 83201
(208)339-6023
www.portneufswcd.weebly.com

November 20, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

FROM: Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.**

The Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District supports the City of Pocatello's grant application to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.

The Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District promotes conservation and protection of our natural resources and develops and implements soil erosion control programs on a local level. We have been working with the City of Pocatello for many years on restoration projects. The proposed project will be an important catalyst for increasing river restoration activities and community engagement with the river.

The proposed project is greatly needed to help watershed partners prioritize restoration projects and increase engagement with watershed health issues and restoration. As such it will also greatly improve habitat in the Portneuf River for fish and wildlife.

Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District staff commit to working with the City of Pocatello and other watershed partners to provide watershed restoration planning review support and to collaborate on educational opportunities associated with the project.

We strongly encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal.

Kevin Koester
PSWCD Board Chairman

SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: 11/17/2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation
1839 C Street NW
Washington DC, 20240

RE: Portneuf Watershed Partnership – USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Management Grant Application (2023).

To Whom It May Concern:

The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission is pleased to add our support to the City of Pocatello's USBR WaterSMART Cooperative Management Grant application.

The proposed project will focus on watershed modeling, watershed management planning, will work towards increasing the diversity of stakeholders represented by the Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP), improve public awareness, and spur constructive dialog amongst residents and land users. These steps will be an essential precursor to collaborative on-the-ground solutions to the complex issues facing communities within the watershed.

We support this effort and are committed to working with the City Pocatello, the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District, and other community partners with voluntary conservation of Idaho's natural resources.

Sincerely,

Delwyne Trefz, Administrator
Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission

322 E. Front St., Suite 560 • P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720
P: 208.332.1790 • F: 208.332.1799 • www.swc.idaho.gov

Idaho State
UNIVERSITY

Department of Biological Sciences
College of Science and Engineering
921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8007 • Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8007

To: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

From: Colden V. Baxter, Director, Stream Ecology Center and Center for Ecological Research & Education, Idaho State University

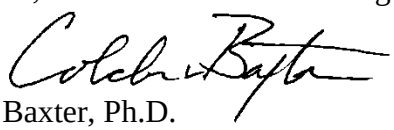
Re: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho**

I write to commit and describe support for funding through the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho. I am Professor of Ecology at Idaho State University, and director of ISU's Stream Ecology Center and Center for Ecological Research & Education (CERE). I have been a participant in the existing Portneuf Watershed Partnership (PWP) since I started in my faculty position at ISU nearly 20 years ago. It has served as a crucial entity in communicating and coordinating when it comes to efforts to improve water quality and restore habitat, plan and prioritize research and monitoring, and strategically identify project needs. It has also fueled responsive feedback between university science, government agency managers, representatives from community organizations, and the public of our area.

I commit to continued participation in the PWP, particularly in the proposed efforts to develop watershed restoration planning and prioritization, as well as scientific activities to support adaptive management of water resources and habitat in the basin. I bring to these efforts 3 decades of experience as a freshwater ecologist studying streams and rivers, with special expertise focused on the ecology of river-floodplain and stream-riparian linkages that are germane to such watershed planning. I have assisted with planning and evaluating the efficacy of many habitat restoration projects in the past, including river-floodplain connectivity restoration that is part of the focus of efforts in the Portneuf watershed. I have conducted such activities with partners like City of Pocatello, but also the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

I also commit to leveraging existing infrastructure and partnerships associated with the centers I direct to help make the PW P efforts successful. Among other resources, we have collected data throughout the watershed that can, in many cases, inform project prioritization, but also serve as a baseline against which to evaluate project success. These include data on ecosystem processes that will mediate the outcomes of projects for water quality and habitat, as well as past measures of aquatic organisms (e.g., aquatic macroinvertebrates, fishes) and wildlife of riparian areas and wetlands (e.g., birds, bats, amphibians, spiders) that are often either the focus of projects, or sentinels for project success. I am enthusiastic about expanding the role of the PWP through this grant support, and if it if funded I am eager to contribute to this effort.

Sincerely,



Colden V. Baxter, Ph.D.

Phone: (208) 282-3765 • Fax: (208) 282-4570 • www.isu.edu/bios

The Nature Conservancy

Idaho Chapter Office
950 W. Bannock St.
Suite 210
Boise, ID 83702

Tel (208) 343-8826
Fax (208) 343-8892

nature.org

November 17, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Att'n NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

FROM: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) – Idaho Chapter

RE: **Cooperative Watershed Management Grant to Support the Portneuf Watershed Partnership**

The Idaho Chapter of the Nature Conservancy supports the City of Pocatello's proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.

At The Nature Conservancy (TNC) our mission is to conserve land and water upon which all life depends. The Idaho Chapter of TNC is working to create a more sustainable future for the state's water resources through our Resilient Water Supply program. As part of this effort TNC is a participant in the Portneuf Watershed Partnership, which collectively works to improve surface and groundwater resources across the watershed through research, outreach, monitoring and restoration activities. Through this collaborative effort projects such as the one submitted for consideration will achieve scaled outcomes for the region's natural and community landscapes.

The proposed planning project will provide multiple ecological benefits to the Portneuf watershed including watershed outreach, deeper engagement with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, watershed flow modeling, and having a prioritized watershed restoration plan. Finally, TNC is excited about the proposed project because it will provide not only benefit for the natural system, but benefits to the community as well.

I strongly encourage Reclamation to support this 2023 grant proposal as it furthers TNC's resilient water supply goals and improves the health of the Portneuf River Watershed. I thank you for the opportunity to be involved in this process and to support such an impactful project.

Sincerely,

Best Regards,

Neil Crescenti
Agriculture Program Manager
The Idaho Chapter of The Nature Conservancy

Sagebrush
Steppe Land Trust
For Generations To Come

Our Mission: *To protect, connect, and enhance wildlife habitat, working lands, and community spaces in Southeast Idaho, now and for future generations.*

November 30, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation
1839 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in Southeast Idaho.**

I am writing to express Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust's (SSLT) full support of the City of Pocatello's proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in Southeast Idaho.

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust works with willing landowners to protect open space, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches in the 7 counties of Southeast Idaho. We accomplish this primarily with conservation easements, which protect key areas and natural resources in perpetuity. Although land protection is our main area of expertise, we also support habitat restoration and enhancement for the health of the Portneuf Watershed and its citizens and visitors to the area.

Since 2021, SSLT has been a primary partner with the City of Pocatello to advance the Portneuf River Vision and build community support and engagement with their Portneuf River. The proposed project will provide significant benefits to the health and resiliency of the Portneuf River, while also increasing community engagement with information about the health of the watershed and possible actions that can be taken.

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust staff are committed to working in collaboration with the City of Pocatello (project lead) and other watershed partners to provide project design and watershed restoration planning review, land protection support, and to collaborate on educational opportunities associated with the project. Project goals fall directly in line with our mission, our work with the Portneuf River Vision, and with our Community Conservation program.

We strongly support this project and encourage the Bureau of Reclamation to consider this 2023 grant proposal that will further community efforts to improve the health of the Portneuf River Watershed and create a positive ripple effect of ecological and community impact.

Sincerely,

Matt Lucia
Executive Director

SAGEBRUSH STEPPE LAND TRUST
(208) 241.4662 or (208) 240.6045 • www.sagebrushlandtrust.org
109 N. Arthur Ave, Suite 300, Pocatello, Idaho • Mailing Address: PO Box 1404, Pocatello, Idaho 83204

Date: November 12, 2023

Attention To: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, Colorado 80225

From: The Portneuf Resource Council

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Grant to Support the Portneuf Watershed Partnership

The Portneuf Resource Council is a non-profit dedicated to improving water quality and natural resources in southeast Idaho. We fully support the approval of this grant application as it will directly lead to improved water quality and quality of life for people throughout the Portneuf Watershed.

The Portneuf River flows directly through the City of Pocatello. Restoring a clean and cold river would greatly improve the quality of life for nearly 60,000 people that live within a few minutes of the river. Many of the residents along the lower Portneuf River are lower income and would benefit greatly from a clean river within their neighborhood.

While many projects have been completed in the Portneuf Watershed, water quality is still a major concern. Sediment levels coming primarily from Marsh Creek need to be addressed to improve water quality both within Marsh Creek and the Lower Portneuf River it flows into. Historically Marsh Creek was a significant source of clean water and a quality trout fishery. Loss of connected wetlands and stream bank erosion has resulted in warm water and high sediment outputs from the creek. Much of the sediment from Marsh Creek and the lower Portneuf River ends up in American Falls Reservoir, reducing the storage capacity of the reservoir and resulting in lower water quality throughout the reservoir and the Snake River downstream.

Restoration will require extensive cooperative efforts from private landowners and public agencies working together to reduce these sediment loads and restore Marsh Creek and the Portneuf River as a quality fishery with clean and cold water. Approval of this grant will be a major step in restoring Marsh Creek and the entire Portneuf River Watershed and we look forward to the positive improvements this grant will help create within the watershed.

Sincerely,

Mike Engle

Mike Engle
Chair
Portneuf Resource Council

November 22nd, 2023

TO: Bureau of Reclamation Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn. NOFO Team
PO Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: **Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.**

Trout Unlimited supports the City of Pocatello's grant proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART- Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant for the Portneuf Watershed Partnership in southeast, Idaho.

Trout Unlimited is a non-profit, cold-water conservation organization with 300,000 members and supporters across the United States. Our local chapter (Southeast Idaho Flyfishers) and staff in Pocatello have a long history of work on the Portneuf River. Trout Unlimited has previously engaged on reconnection efforts in the upper Portneuf drainage and restoration projects in the middle part of the drainage.

We believe this proposal has significant benefits to fish and wildlife as well as to the community of Pocatello. The proposed Portneuf Watershed Partnership planning effort is a critical step towards improving water quality and ecosystem health in this watershed. Trout Unlimited is committed to working with our partners in local, state, and federal agencies as well as private interests and other conservation organizations to bring this project to fruition.

We ask that the Bureau of Reclamation fund this grant proposal for the ecological benefits of the Portneuf River Watershed and the community of Pocatello. Thank you for this opportunity of support.

Sincerely,

Hannah

Hannah Murphy || Southeast Idaho Project Manager
208-620-6227
Trout Unlimited
https://www.tu.org/