Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Implementation

Annual Report 2000

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Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Implementation

**2000 Annual Report for
Project No. 1995-057-01
Contract No. 00000386-00001**

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This report covers calendar year 2000 activities for the Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Implementation project. This project, implemented by Idaho Department of Fish and Game **and** Shoshone Bannock Tribes wildlife mitigation staff, is designed to protect, enhance and maintain wildlife habitats to mitigate construction losses for Palisades, Anderson Ranch, Black Canyon and Minidoka hydroelectric projects. Additional project information is available in the quarterly reports.

Project Background

The following table provides an overview of individual wildlife mitigation projects that have been implemented by Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project cooperators through calendar year 2000.

Project Name	County/Dam	Year	Manager(s)	Acres	HEP	HU
Winterfeld easement	Bonneville/Palidades	1997	IDFG&SBT	422	Yes	383
Kruse easement	Bonneville/Palisades	1997	Teton Regional Land Trust	800	Yes	813
Menan (K1) acquisition	Bonneville/Palisades	1997	IDFG&SBT	140	Yes	317
Noxious Weed Project	Bonneville, Jefferson & Madison/Palidades	1997	IDFG&SBT	Up to 10,000	NA	499
Beaver Dick acquisition (K2)	Madison/Palisades	1997	IDFG&SBT	310	Yes	901
Quarter Circle "O" acquisition	Bonneville/Palisades	1997	IDFG	1/3 of 2,135	Yes	1,254
Soda Hills acquisition	Caribou/Palisades	1998	SBT&IDFG	2,563	Yes	3,896
Big Cottonwood WMA habitat enhancement	Cassia	1998	IDFG	230	Yes*	122
Deer Parks	Bonneville/Palisades	1999	IDFG&SBT	2,556	Yes*	6,918
Krueger	Ada/Black Canyon	1999	IDFG	166	Yes*	57
Rudeen acquisition	Power/Palisades and Minidoka	2000	SBT	2,450	No	2,002

*Field work completed, data analysis in progress.

HEP Analyses

HEP field data collection has been completed for all projects except the Rudeen acquisition. Field work on the Rudeen project is scheduled for summer 2001. Analysis of the Deer Parks, Big Cottonwood and Krueger field data is in progress.

Management Activities at Individual Projects

Winterfeld Conservation Easement

This is a conservation easement on a privately owned farm. The easement is held by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. A conservation easement inspection completed in 2000 confirms that all terms of the easement are being observed. Sharp-tailed grouse leks were again surveyed on and near the property in May 2000 and two of the three leks surveyed were active. One of the owners reported seeing a flock of 50-75 grouse during fall grain harvest. The owners are in the process of greatly expanding the native grass and forb seed production aspect of their farm operation.

Kruse Conservation Easement

This is a conservation easement on a privately owned farm. The easement is held by the Teton Regional Land Trust. A conservation easement inspection completed in 2000 by TRLT staff confirms that all terms of the easement are being observed. An IDFG biologist surveyed the property again in 2000 for sharp-tailed grouse leks. There are several possible 'satellite' leks on the property but exact locations have not been identified. Several colonies of *Aphthona spp.* and *Ceutorhynchus litura* biological control insects were released on the property this year to help control leafy spurge and Canada thistle, respectively. The owners are also using herbicides to control these noxious weeds.

Deer Parks Complex

The Deer Parks Complex is composed of the Menan, Beaver Dick and Deer Parks wildlife mitigation units. O&M is funded under Contract No. 00000654-00001.

Menan Wildlife Mitigation Unit

Activities on this parcel in 2000 included maintaining perimeter fences to exclude livestock and posting boundary signs. Noxious weed control activities included biological control insect releases for leafy spurge, Canada and musk thistles. The recently discovered infestation of Russian knapweed was treated chemically, and resistant plants were hand pulled. Some of the leafy spurge and thistle patches were also treated chemically. A few purple loosestrife plants were located and hand pulled. The 35-acre field was fallowed through the summer to get the annual weeds under control before replanting. We had planned to plant the field in late October, but early snow and cold prevented this. The field will be planted first thing in spring 2001. The seed has been purchased, and we started getting the irrigation system ready to go again. The natural regeneration of willows, cottonwoods, and dogwoods continues to progress very well. The BLM completed construction of a new bridge over the Butte-Market Lake Canal and a new parking area. The old bridge was substandard and the new parking area is located within the access easement. IDFG and BLM treated the noxious weeds and reseeded the disturbed area around the new parking area. Work on the long-term management plan continued through the Palisades Interagency Work Group.

Beaver Dick Wildlife Mitigation Unit

Activities on this parcel included maintaining perimeter fences and boundary signs, and maintaining goose nesting platforms. Noxious weed control activities included release of

biological control insects for leafy spurge, Canada, musk, and plumeless thistles. Weeds treated chemically included leafy spurge, the thistles, and purple loosestrife. In late summer, one of the ospreys raised in the nest on the property became entangled in the old baling twine in the nest. With the assistance of Ricks College personnel (and cherry picker truck), the local IDFG Conservation Officer was able to disentangle the osprey and remove much of the baling twine from the nest. The natural willow regeneration is doing very well on portions of this property. Work on the long-term management plan continued through the Palisades Interagency Work Group.

Deer Parks Wildlife Mitigation Unit

This property remained under lease to the previous owners throughout 2000. Farming, grazing and livestock feeding activities were active under this lease. Funds from the lease were used to repair irrigation pumps and equipment in compliance with terms of the lease. The lease will end in March 2001. IDFG biologists continued monitoring and treating noxious weeds on the property. Biological control insects were released for leafy spurge and Canada thistle. These weeds were also treated chemically. A large patch (> 1 acre) of purple loosestrife was discovered in a river backwater in late August. Enough plants were hand pulled to fill five large trash bags, however there was much more remaining. This patch will need to be treated chemically in 2001. Access is by boat, which will make this patch difficult to treat. Additional slough areas were surveyed for this weed, but so far no other infestations have been located. The IDFG biologist spent considerable time coordinating with the lessees on various logistical issues. In anticipation of the lease ending in March 2001, a sharecrop farm agreement was also developed and reviewed at various levels. A small house on the property is being converted to an administrative facility using lease funds. Work on the long-term management plan continued through the Palisades Interagency Work Group.

Quarter Circle Project (Wildlife Habitat O&M Contract No. 00000653-00001)

Habitat enhancement on the QCO property began in early April to establish permanent wildlife habitat on former cropland. This project has several partners including BPA, IDFG, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). Twenty thousand bitterbrush seedlings were planted using fabric mulch, fertilizer paks and rootdip. This combination works well without supplemental watering and there was an estimated 95-98% survival of the seedlings from spring through late fall. Most plants were very robust and had grown considerably.

Areas not planted with shrubs were fallowed all summer. The lower fields were also drilled with yellow blossom sweet clover to serve as a green manure crop but this was a total failure, most likely due to the unusually dry summer weather. Grass and forb seed for the bench was ordered and delivered but drilling (planting) will have to wait until the cheatgrass infestations are sufficiently under control. This may require fallowing until fall 2001 and then drilling.

The erosion control terraces on the bench were repaired and cleaned out with the help of the Bonneville County Road and Bridge Department. They used their large graders to accomplish the work in a short timeframe. Sediment basins were constructed on the lower fields after consultation with Natural Resource Conservation Service to determine the best locations for the

basins to help control erosion. Work was completed using IDFG equipment and temporary employees.

Boundary signs have been ordered. Posts have been delivered but the signs are still at the printer.

The survey of the upper Tex Creek segment was completed by late summer. Much of the existing fence is close to the line so less fence work may be needed than anticipated. Existing perimeter fences were maintained to control trespass livestock.

Soda Hills Project (Wildlife Habitat O&M Contract No. 00000656-00001)

A complete annual report for this project will be provided by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in a separate document. IDFG activities are described below.

IDFG personnel conducted mule deer population surveys (aerial trend and herd composition counts) over an extensive area that included the Soda Hills project. IDFG personnel and volunteers also trapped and radio-collared 25 mule deer fawns in Idaho Ranch Canyon (the western portion of the property) as part of an ongoing statewide fawn mortality research project.

IDFG personnel also monitored OHV use. The Soda Hills project is included in a larger area closed to shed antler collecting during part of the year to minimize human disturbance of big game while they are on their winter range. IDFG Conservation Officers issued several citations in late spring for violations of the closure. Local IDFG personnel indicate that motorized access to this area continues to cause considerable disturbance to big game. IDFG cost share expenses were not quantified separately for the Soda Hills property.

Palisades Mitigation Noxious Weed Control Project

The Palisades Mitigation Noxious Weed Control Project was funded in 1997 to facilitate use of biological methods to control noxious weeds in the Palisades project area to improve wildlife habitat. Over 500 individual releases of biological control agents (insects) have been made and monitoring has shown the project to be very successful. Insectories have become established at some of the release sites and are now being used as sources of control agents for other areas. All projects require at least a 50-50 match of BPA funds.

Big Cottonwood Wildlife Enhancement (Contract No. 00000644-00001)

Weed infestations were located and treated throughout the project and shrub-steppe restoration efforts have been completed on the 50-acre area. Monitoring indicates emergence of desirable native plant species has been low due to competition from weedy annuals and two consecutive years of drought during the growing season. Managers will continue monitoring in spring 2001.

The 30-acre shrub-steppe rehabilitation area was burned and treated with herbicide (to control cheat grass) in fall 1999. The area was seeded with a grass/forb mix in fall 2000. Sagebrush seed from adjacent shrub-steppe sites will be collected and seeded over snow in December 2001. Plant emergence and species composition will be monitored each spring.

Pasture rehabilitation was initiated in 2000 as part of the first phase of Big Cottonwood Creek riparian restoration. A 20-acre parcel was chemically treated, mowed, and no-till seeded. Stand establishment was low due to drought and a lack of irrigation water. The parcel will be evaluated in spring 2001 and likely reseeded in fall 2001. A severely down-cut segment of the creek (approximately 200-ft.) was stabilized using juniper revetments. Native willow species, collected on site, were planted throughout the segment. Preliminary observations indicate bank stabilization efforts were effective and willow establishment was good. Plans are being finalized to complete the next phase (spring 2001) of riparian restoration on a 300-ft. segment of the creek impacted by agricultural development.

Riparian vegetation monitoring, using established U.S. Forest Service protocol, was conducted in 2000 at nine permanent transects along Big Cottonwood Creek. Results indicate continued improvement in riparian vegetation condition. Recruitment of woody vegetation (primarily willow and cottonwood species), stream sinuosity, bank stabilization, and flood plain width had improved in areas previously impacted by domestic livestock grazing and diversion of water for irrigation. In addition, avian point-count surveys were conducted in 2000 at permanent locations along Big Cottonwood Creek. Qualitatively, results indicate species diversity and abundance are increasing as riparian health improves.

Krueger Acquisition

IDFG manages this property as part of the 35,000-acre IDFG Boise River Wildlife Management Area. Field work for the baseline HEP was conducted in May 2000 and preparation of the management plan and final HEP report are in progress. A large wildfire on the WMA burned through part of the property in September 2000. Shrub stands, riparian areas, native grass stands and perimeter fences were damaged by the fire and firelines were bulldozed during suppression. Fire rehabilitation will be accomplished within a larger effort planned for the Boise River WMA.

Easement Report

Winterfeld Conservation Easement

IDFG personnel visited the site in May and December. The 2000 annual conservation easement inspection report noted all terms of the easement were being observed.

Kruse Conservation Easement

The Teton Regional Land Trust Stewardship Director visited the site in July 2000. The 2000 annual monitoring report submitted by TRLT indicates satisfactory compliance with the terms of the easement.

Accounting of Fund (January – December 2000)

NOTE: Overhead costs are not included. Because each contract period is different and because the IDFG fiscal year is July-June, inconsistencies in cost-accounting occur. Therefore, the amounts below, particularly personnel expenditures, may be slightly imprecise.

Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Implementation (Contract No. 00000386-00001)

Item	Note	Amount spent in 2000
Personnel	Approx. 1.75 FTE Wildlife Mitigation Specialists; administrative help; supervision	\$79,151
Operating	Travel	\$5,957
	Services	\$1,367
	Other (supplies, maps, etc)	\$4,877
Capital Outlay	1 digital camera	\$995
TOTAL		\$92,347

Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation (Contract No. 00000366-00001)

Item	Note	Amount spent in 2000
Land acquisition	Rudeen property, Power County, Sublette Range (Palisades and Minidoka mitigation)	\$1,700,000
TOTAL		\$1,700,000

Deer Parks Wildlife Habitat O&M (Contract No. 00000654-00001)

Expenditures

Item	Note	Amount Spent in 2000
Personnel	IDFG Biologist	\$2,513
	Temporary Employees	\$2,188
Total Personnel		\$4,701
Operating	Equipment/Tools	\$792
	Supplies (seed, herbicides, safety)	\$3,601
	Travel	\$450
	Vehicle Rental	\$585
	Pump & Irrigation Pivot Repairs (lease agreement funds used for these expenses – see below)	\$4,055
	Other Services	\$765
	Land Maintenance Services	\$2,695
	Insurance	\$400
	Radio Maintenance	\$160
	Utilities	\$110
Total Operating		\$23,613
Capital Outlay	ATV	\$4,791
Total Capital Outlay		\$4,791
TOTAL		\$33,105

Revenues

Item	Note	Amount Earned in 2000
Deer Parks/Boyle lease	Lease agreement (January – February 2000 @ \$1,250 / month; March – December 2000 @ \$2,500/month)	\$27,500

Cost Share

Item	Note	Estimated Value in 2000
Personnel	IDFG Biologists License \$ funded Approx. 185 hours w/ benefits	\$4,250
	IDFG Biologists PR \$ funded Approx. 115 hours w/benefits	\$2,750
Operating	IDFG Vehicle Rental	\$1,000
	IDFG Equipment Rental: boat, ATV, weed sprayers	\$1,000
TOTAL		\$9,000

Quarter Circle O Wildlife Habitat O&M (Contract No. 00000653-00001)**Expenditures**

Item	Note	Amount spent in 2000
Boundary Survey	Upper Tex Creek	\$6,575
Erosion Control	Rebuild erosion control terraces - \$3,367 Diesel fuel – \$615	\$3,982
Habitat Enhancement	Mulch fabric - \$1,000 Weed control - \$1,790 Diesel fuel - \$525	\$3,315
Vehicle Rental	IDFG vehicle rental – (480 miles @ .325/mile)	\$156
Boundary signs		\$100
TOTAL		\$14,128

Cost-Share

Item	Note	Estimated Dollar Value
Personnel	IDFG Land Manager (6 days) and Habitat Biologist (11 days)	\$3,505
Erosion Control	Sediment basin construction: IDFG labor - \$550	\$550

Habitat Enhancement	Prepare former cropland for planting to permanent wildlife habitat (IDFG) - \$12,614 Plant 20,000 bitterbrush seedlings: fabric mulch (IDFG & NRCS) - \$8,686 herbicide (IDFG) - \$50 fertilizer paks (IDFG) - \$1,200 bitterbrush seedlings (IDFG & NRCS) - \$4,000 contract labor (IDFG) – \$1,300 grass & forb seed (RMEF & NRCS) - \$ 11,500 IDFG vehicle rental – (1,500 miles @ \$.325) \$488	\$39,838
TOTAL		\$43,893

Big Cottonwood Wildlife Enhancement (Contract No. 00000644-00001)

Expenditures

Item	Note	Amount spent in 2000
Personnel	1 temporary bio-aide	\$10,446
Operating	Equipment, materials, and supplies Equipment service, repair, and fuel Tractor and IDFG vehicle rental Seed/seedbed preparation (including contracted services) Noxious weed control (herbicide, contracted services)	\$1,333 \$448 \$760 \$1,239 \$1,495
TOTAL		\$15,721

Cost-share

Item	Note	Estimated Dollar Value
Personnel	IDFG manager, license-dollar funded (approx. 123 hours plus benefits)	\$3,197
TOTAL		\$3,197

Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation (Contract No. 00000656-00001)

No BPA contract expenditures in calendar year 2000. BLM and IDFG have provided O&M services.