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Work to Commence on Big Wood River to Manage Surface Water, Improve Drainage, Ensure Water for Agriculture, and Enhance Habitat

Hailey, ID - Blaine County (the Idaho Water Resources Board Grant Sponsor), the City of Hailey, Flood Control District #9, and Trout Unlimited are putting state funding to work to repair some of the Big Wood River problems that either contributed to, or resulted from, the river overflowing its banks during the 2017 flooding. The design and implementation of river treatments will also improve floodplain function and riparian areas by using techniques aligned with the river's geomorphology.

Blaine County requested and received \$121,331 from the Idaho Department of Water Resources to implement changes that will shorten the duration of surface water impacts and improve drainage within the Della View neighborhood (Hailey) during low river flows.

The total project cost is \$306,334. The Flood Control District #9 will contribute \$111,779 to the project and Blaine County will contribute \$60,000 cash to the project and \$13,224 of in-kind grant administrative services. Specifically, the City of Hailey will utilize grant funds to create water conveyance channels and drainages in the Della View neighborhood. Blaine County will conduct work through a contract with Biota Research and Consulting to activate a western channel in the Big Wood River to convey high stream flows. All of this work is designed to minimize future flooding in the Della View neighborhood where some residents were kept out of their homes for over a month in the spring of 2017.

The work on the western channel will activate a side channel on the west side of the Big Wood River across from Heagle Park in the Della View Subdivision. This will be done by excavating material to clear the historic overflow channel against the Della Mountain hillside and installing sufficient rock grade control structures to prevent enlargement of the re-established secondary channel. This project also includes selective clearing of debris. Debris configurations that impede establishment of the functional channel form would be modified and debris configurations that complement the functional channel form would be allowed to remain in place. For example, debris that would otherwise impair conveyance into the re-established western channel would be removed. Debris that is stabilizing banks would remain in place. Existing debris will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if debris is complementing or detracting from the design functional channel form.

The City of Hailey's work under the grant includes improvements to a connected system of drainage ditches in the Della View area and through Heagle Park. The ditch designs vary depending on their location. Ditches will be designed to convey surface water back towards the Big Wood River.

To address water supply for agriculture in Blaine County just south of Bellevue, Flood Control District #9 and Trout Unlimited have acquired funds to repair damage to diversion structures and reduce sedimentation. In August, the Flood Control District #9 was awarded a \$90,000 grant from Idaho Department of Water Resources

for flood mitigation and stream restoration off Glendale Road. Earlier this year, Trout Unlimited received a \$65,000 grant from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality for the same project.

The Baseline Bypass canal, the Glendale diversion, and the Bannon ditch (located just south of Bellevue) were constructed in the 1920s to deliver water to approximately 6,300 acres of agricultural land south of Bellevue. Extreme high water in the spring of 2017 severely eroded portions of the Bannon ditch and required emergency instream work to protect the Bypass canal. Now, the altered river channel does not adequately deliver water to the three headgate structures. Sedimentation and erosion in this reach also lower water quality for fish and other aquatic life.

Trout Unlimited, the Flood Control District #9, and affected water users will implement instream treatments to repair the damaged irrigation infrastructure and ensure irrigation water delivery. This work will also benefit the river by stabilizing streambanks, enhancing riparian habitat, reducing the need for ongoing channel manipulations, and improving water quality. These measures will decrease future flood damage by dispersing flow velocity, protecting stream banks, and creating floodplain benches to absorb high flows.

“This funding and these projects demonstrate that collaborative efforts are productive,” said Keri York, Big Wood River Project Manager for Trout Unlimited. “Our community and our river will benefit from this work – it’s a win-win.”

Immediately after the Idaho State Legislature allocated funding for stream channel improvements in June, 2018, York pulled local stakeholders together to brainstorm the best methods to utilize the State funding locally. Idaho Water Resources Board reviewed and approved the joint effort filed in a grant application by Blaine County, thereby accomplishing the State’s effort to put funding to good use where it is needed.

For additional information or questions please contact:

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