

Narrative

Table 1. Proposal Metadata

Project Number	2002-061-00
Proposer	Latah Soil and Water Conservation District
Short Description	Restore Potlatch River Watershed
Province(s)	Mountain Snake
Subbasin(s)	Clearwater
Contact Name	Kenneth Stinson
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A. Abstract

The Latah Soil and Water Conservation District (Latah SWCD) is requesting the addition of select work elements to the existing project and related contracts. These additional work elements will allow the Latah SWCD to address significant limiting factors as outlined in the Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan. The additional work elements will allow Latah SWCD to continue addressing upland issues as well as instream habitat and riparian issues.

Latah SWCD is seeking to add the following work elements to the existing project and related contract:

- WE#29 – Increase Instream Habitat Complexity
- WE#30 – Realign, Connect, and/or Create Channel
- WE#84 – Remove/Install Diversion
- WE#186 – Operate and Maintain Habitat/Passage/Structure
- WE#33 – Decommission Road/Relocate Road
- WE#181 – Create, Restore, and/or Enhance Wetland
- WE#27 – Remove Debris
- WE# 184 – Install Fish Passage Structure

The ability to address these additional work elements is supported by language within the original proposal submitted for consideration during the FY07-09 funding cycle.

B. Problem statement: technical and/or scientific background

The Potlatch River drainage suffers from legacy effects from some of the most intensive industrial use among the drainages supporting steelhead in the state of Idaho - virtually all of the drainage has been extensively altered by mining, forestry, grazing, farming, or housing, and these uses continue, which precludes natural or passive rehabilitation from occurring. In many situations, structures are needed to provide habitat complexity that cannot form naturally due to on-going land uses.

Significant portions of the Potlatch River drainage were historically forested meadows that contained perennial streams with relatively high habitat complexity that was created largely by beavers. The meadows were drained for agriculture or grazing, and the streams were relocated into drainage ditches that have no habitat features, and no means of developing habitat complexity through natural processes. Rehabilitation of these altered meadow systems requires reconstruction of stream channels and flood plains through a variety of passive and active methods, and many projects cannot be done effectively without occasional use of instream structures to control the grade, or to stabilize banks where natural meander development is precluded by buildings, roads, or other developments

Inventories of fish habitat in the Potlatch drainage show an extremely low number of pools, caused in part by extreme flashiness in the runoff that scours the streams to bedrock and washes large wood out of the system. This situation has been caused largely by the hydrological modifications in the forest meadows and agricultural lands. These changes cannot be reversed without active restoration as long as the current land uses remain on the landscape. Consequently, designed structures are necessary to stop the scouring and to ensure that structures will withstand moderate floods.

The addition of the identified work elements to the Latah SWCD existing project and contracts will allow BPA funding to be used to address instream habitat concerns within the Potlatch River watershed.

C. Rationale and significance to regional programs

The goal of the Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan is to specify restoration and protection strategies that help restore steelhead to a robust, self-sustaining population in the Potlatch River watershed (Chapter 7, page 1). These strategies include upland and instream restoration strategies.

The Potlatch River watershed provides spawning and rearing habitat for A-run steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and is the primary focal species for this project. A-run steelhead are part of the Snake River Basin steelhead trout evolutionarily significant unit (ESU). Steelhead were listed as threatened under the ESA in August 1997 (62 FR 43937). Critical habitat was designated in the Clearwater as all accessible habitat in September 2005 (70 FR 52630). The A-run steelhead trout runs in the lower Clearwater River have not been affected by hatchery influences.

The Potlatch River watershed is considered one of the primary producing drainages for A-run steelhead trout in the Clearwater River (BLM 2000). Lolo Creek and Potlatch River have the highest potential within the Clearwater River for habitat restoration benefiting A-run steelhead production (BLM 2000).

Recent fish distribution and production surveys, as well as detailed habitat surveys, indicate the greatest potential for restoration of the population lies within the lower tributaries of the Potlatch River. Since the lower tributaries are predominantly agriculture, range and forest lands under private ownership, the restoration challenge for the Potlatch River system is the implementation of efficient and effective habitat restoration strategies that can be adopted on private property by individual landowners.

The Latah SWCD’s BPA contract requires an expansion of the scope-of-work in order to address in-stream issues as identified in the Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan. The Latah SWCD is currently addressing instream issues with funding secured from other sources. However, Latah SWCD’s existing BPA contract is limited to upland treatments and does not allow BPA funding to be used for any outreach, planning, design, permitting and/or implementation efforts that would be address instream habitat issues.

The Latah SWCD is seeking to expand the project and contract work elements to allow work to be done on priorities restoration activities in the upland areas as well as instream.

Linkages and significant to other regional programs was addressed in the original application for funding within the FY07-09 cycle.

D. Relationships to other projects

Linkages and significant to other regional programs was addressed in the original application for funding within the FY07-09 cycle.

E. Project history (for ongoing projects)

Project history is summarized in the original application for funding within the FY07-09 cycle.

F. Proposal biological/physical objectives, work elements, methods, and metrics

The Latah Soil and Water Conservation District is requesting the addition of select work elements to the existing project and related contracts. These work elements will allow the Latah SWCD to address significant limiting factors as outlined in the Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan, both upland and instream activities. Latah SWCD is seeking to add the following work elements to the existing project and related contract.

- WE#29 – Increase Instream Habitat Complexity
- WE#30 – Realign, Connect, and/or Create Channel
- WE#84 – Remove/Install Diversion
- WE#186 – Operate and Maintain Habitat/Passage/Structure
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The ability to address these additional work elements is supported by language within the original proposal submitted for consideration during the FY07-09 funding cycle.

Original FY07-09 Proposal Abstract Language (Page 1 of 30)¹ (*emphasis added*):

“This proposal represents the transition stage from assessment and planning to implementation. Based on recent interagency planning/assessment work undertaken for the development of the

¹ Page reference related to the narrative component of the original application.
200206100 – Restoration Potlatch River Watershed/Request for Expanded SOW

Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan, limiting factors and restoration strategies critical to steelhead spawning and rearing have been identified and prioritized.

In an effort to lower stream temperatures, increase summer flows, decrease surface and channel erosion (and associated nutrient loading), and ***increase riparian habitat complexities***, this project will focus on erosion control and riparian restoration on private agricultural and range lands through direct-seed agricultural systems, erosion/sediment control structures, livestock exclusion fencing, off-site water developments, ***native plantings of riparian areas, and protection of functional riparian areas***. Priority tributaries for restoration work include: Big Bear Creek, Little Bear Creek, Pine Creek, Cedar Creek and Corral Creek.

Latah Soil and Water Conservation District staff, who worked with the previous assessment, planning and coordination stages of this project, will continue developing conservation plans with private landowners to implement best management practices designed for ***the improvement of steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.***”

Limiting Factors and BMPs within Original Proposal (Page 10 of 30) (***emphasis added***)

“In addition to out-of-subbasin factors, which have a significant impact on anadromous fish in the subbasin, five high priority factors have been defined in the Clearwater Subbasin Management Plan (CSMP, 2003, p.82) as the primary limiting factors to aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats in the Clearwater subbasin, as a whole. These priority factors include: ***instream temperatures, sedimentation, loss or disturbance of riparian habitats, changes in vegetative structure, and alteration of environmental processes***. Low summer flows and passage barriers are also factors in the Potlatch River (CSA, 2003, p. 371). The more recent Bowersox study identified the critical limiting factors within the priority watersheds of the Potlatch River to include: high water temperature, high flashy stream flows, low summer base flows, ***lack of complexity in stream composition and migration barriers*** (Bowersox et al., draft)...

Consistent with the Clearwater Subbasin Plan, and more recent fish and habitat survey work, ***implementation projects will be designed to improve steelhead habitat*** and simultaneously, whenever possible, address water quality concerns associated with IDEQ’s Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) processes. This proposal will focus on ***reducing stream temperatures, reducing excess sediment (and associated nutrient loads), increasing and maintaining summer flows, increasing riparian habitat complexity and the removing artificial migration barriers*** in the priority watersheds listed above. These priority issues will be addressed through both BPA-funded implementation projects (See Project Objectives A, B and D) and coordinated projects funded through state and federal agencies (See Project Objective C).”

Original Proposal Objectives (Page 18 of 30) (***emphasis added***):

Consistent with the Clearwater Subbasin Management Plan, and more recent fish distribution, production and habitat survey work, the ***FY07-09 phase of this project will begin implementing Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan*** with a focus on reducing stream temperatures, reducing fine sediments (and associated nutrient loads), increasing and maintaining summer flows, ***increasing riparian habitat complexity and removing artificial migration barriers***. Restoration efforts will focus on the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) on private agricultural and range/pasture lands within, but not limited to, the following prioritized

streams: Little Bear Creek, Big Bear Creek, Pine Creek, Corral Creek and Cedar Creek. This BPA-sponsored effort, in combination with other implementation projects funded by individuals, federal, tribal and state agencies, should collectively *contribute to a measurable increase in spawning and rearing habitat* of A-run steelhead within the Potlatch and Clearwater rivers.

G. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are highlighted in the original application for funding within the FY07-09 cycle. In addition, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game has instituted a significant population study throughout the Potlatch River basin with funding from the Idaho Office of Species Conservation and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF).

H. Facilities and equipment

No additional facilities or equipment is being requested.

I. References

Related references are identified in original application for funding within the FY07-09 cycle. This request for an expanded scope-of-work is related to the priority restoration actions outlined in the Potlatch River Watershed Management Plan.

J. Key personnel

There is no proposed change with respect to key personnel.