

**The Pack River  
Watershed  
Council  
Presents...**

# THE RIVER RANGER

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## Featuring:

Migration Matters

## Inside this issue:

Sundance Fire: 2  
Watershed Effects

Tree Seedlings 2  
Program

Pack River 3  
Pick-up

AIS Boat Stations 3

NRCS Cost-share 3  
Programs

**Contact us at:**  
(208) 263-5310

[www.bonnierswcd.org](http://www.bonnierswcd.org)

## Migration Matters



**Rock dam built below Grouse Creek Falls**

In an effort to escape the intense heat of the long hot summer days, people headed for their favorite swimming holes in droves. With water levels in creeks at record lows this year, campers and recreationists began to build or enhance their own cool swimming pools by building rock dams.

Most years these dams are merely a nuisance for fish. But during a drought year, they can create a serious problem.

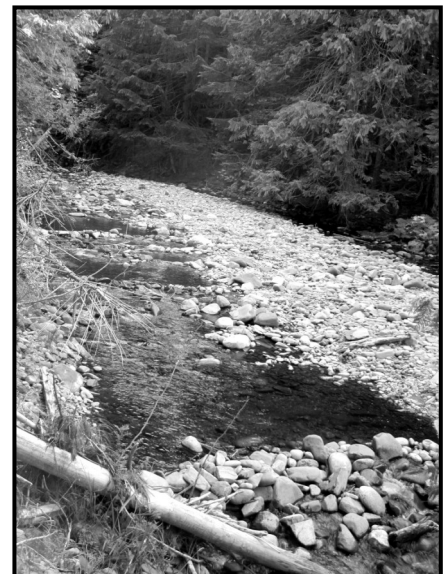
Man-made barriers, such as rock dams can prevent natural fish migrations. It is critical for fish to be able to move around in order to access their spawning and feeding habitats. Flows were so low and hot this year that a rock dam could prevent an entire generation of bull trout from spawning.

In addition to creating problems for spawning fish, these barriers make it hard for resident and juvenile fish to survive the drought. They need to move around so they can access colder pockets of water which are higher in oxygen.

Most people are unaware that these structures are harmful for fish. And they may also not know that it is illegal to build dams in the state of Idaho and Washington.

As part of an educational effort, Tom Whalen, Idaho Fish and Game Conservation officer, began posting signs in campgrounds and near popular swimming holes. However, it is difficult to address the problem of dam building in many areas because there are so many dispersed recreational opportunities.

Fortunately, the solution isn't too complicated. When people are done enjoying their favorite swimming hole, it is easy to take a few minutes to knock a hole in the dam so fish can get through. Anyone who happens to find one of these structures can help give the fish a chance to migrate.



**Multiple structures blocking Grouse Creek**

*“The Sundance and Trapper Peak Fires will forever be remembered as some of the most significant natural disasters in the history of Idaho.”*

*~ Tom Schultz,  
director of the  
Idaho  
Department of  
Lands in Boise, ID*

## Watershed Effects from The Sundance Fire

On September 1, 1967, the Sundance Fire stormed across the Selkirk Divide and into the Pack River drainage. The fire consumed a swath of forest 8 miles wide and 16 miles long in just nine hours. It was one of the hottest, fastest, and most destructive fires in the history of U.S. firefighting. In the end, the Sundance Fire charred 55,910 acres.



**Legacy of the Sundance Fire, 1967**

In the days following the fire, rehabilitation and reforestation efforts were launched. Over the course of several years, more than 5 million tree seedlings were planted and 777, 600 pounds of grass seed were spread by air in an effort to stabilize the soil and provide habitat.

The effects of the Sundance Fire are still visible more than fifty years later. The fire eliminated much of the forest canopy, and post-fire salvage logging left a legacy of roads.

The Pack River watershed experienced increased rates of erosion and landslides. Hydrological changes include increased peak flows and decreased summer flows as well as increased sedimentation and changes in channel morphology.

The Sundance Fire also impacted habitat conditions for bull trout and other fish species in the

Pack River. The loss of riparian vegetation, led to increased stream temperatures during the summer months. Other stream channel changes included a loss of large woody debris, reduced pool habitat, lower pool volumes, and increased sediment loading.

The trend toward fish habitat recovery is slow. However, as vegetation reestablishes in the upper Pack River watershed, the quality of fish habitat

will improve. Revegetation will continue to stabilize soils and reduce sediment delivery rates which will improve fish spawning habitat conditions.

As riparian vegetation communities reestablish, streambank integrity will improve providing overhanging banks for fish cover. Riparian vegetation recovery will also improve stream temperature conditions as well as provide a source for future large woody debris recruitment.



### Tree Seedlings

Each year the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors an annual tree seedling sale. This year the District sold over 74,000 seedlings!

We still have 37,000 seedlings available. We have all species with the exception of 15" Western Larch. Contact Amanda Abajian, BSWCD, at

208-263-5310x100 as soon as possible for trees this year as well as for next year's tree seedling order.

The order form for seedlings to be planted in 2018 is available online at [www.bonnernswcd.org/tree-sales](http://www.bonnernswcd.org/tree-sales).

## PACK RIVER PICK-UP

The intense heat of a long hot summer drove local folks to a popular swimming hole in the Pack River for a cool dip and maybe a daring jump off the Colburn Culver Bridge. This special spot has long been a popular swimming hole and continues to be so due to the generosity of the landowner who cherishes the memory of swimming here as a child.

As recreational use of this unique place continues to grow every year, I have noticed an increase in the amount of stuff left behind. T-shirts, beer bottles, dirty diapers and other carelessly tossed items. I felt inspired to take care of this lovely little beach and organized a clean-up party.

I recruited the Pack River Pioneers, a local 4-H group to help with the pick-up. On September 17th, fifteen eager volunteers showed up with latex gloves and garbage bags to see what they could accomplish. To our surprise, we were able to fill over ten 30-gallon bags with random refuse. It felt like a great accomplishment!



*Pack River clean-up day with the Pack River Pioneers*

My hope is to keep this little beach accessible to everyone in the future. Let's keep it clean. Let's make this an annual event!

*"Water should not be judged by its history, but by its quality"*

*~ Dr. Lucas*

**Van Vuuren,  
National**

**Institute of**

**Water Research,**

**South Africa**

### ***AIS Boat Stations***

It is the end of another busy and successful season for boat inspection stations in Bonner County. Inspections were up by 15% from the 2016 boat inspection season.

Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District manages three inspection stations in Bonner county. Inspection stations opened on May 19th and closed on September 4th. They operated from dawn to dusk (5:30am to 9:00pm).

This year the Samuels station inspected 6,780 boats, the Albeni Falls Visitor Center station inspected 8,585 boats, and the Clark Fork station inspected 5,734 boats.

121 boats were found to have plant matter attached. 49 watercraft were cleaned with hot water. No Quagga/

Zebra mussel fouled watercraft were found in Bonner County.

Throughout the state of Idaho 90,780 watercraft inspections were performed. 30 mussel-fouled boats were discovered. Most of these boats were travelling from the Great Lakes or from Lake Havasu.

Watercraft Inspection Stations are Idaho's first-line of defense against the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Overland travel of contaminated watercraft and equipment is believed to be the single largest cause for AIS movement from one water system to the next.

For more information about invasive species in Idaho, you can visit [invasivespecies.idaho.gov](http://invasivespecies.idaho.gov).

### **NRCS Cost-share Programs**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), together with the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District, continue to offer cost-share programs to assist landowners with land management projects. Although the deadline for 2018 projects has passed, landowners are encouraged to approach the NRCS as soon as possible.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), as well as other Farm Bill programs, is a voluntary US Department of Agriculture conservation program that provides federal match to eligible projects that support forestry, wildlife, agriculture and water quality enhancements or protection.

EQIP is offered to private landowners and managers, and can provide 50 percent in cost-share funds for completed projects. NRCS offers many programs, but they are also available as a cost-free resource for consultation and technical assistance. Contact Greg Becker, NRCS at 208-263-5310 ext. 104.



# Pack River Watershed Council

## The Pack River Watershed Council

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*"The mission of the Pack River Watershed Council  
is to improve water quality and riparian habitat in  
the Pack River watershed for people, fish , and  
wildlife through education, collaboration, and  
cooperative projects."*

*Thanks to Avista Watershed Council Funding, we are able to print and  
distribute this newsletter.*