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New Fish Detection System in the Pack River

Idaho Fish and Game and Avista biologists, with funding from the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement, recently installed a new fish monitoring system in both the Pack River and Grouse Creek called a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag detection system.



Biologists install a PIT array system in Grouse Creek

This system has been installed in two locations in the Pack River, and one location each in Grouse Creek, Trestle Creek, Granite Creek, and Gold Creek. The Pack River and Grouse Creek antennas were installed in 2023 and Trestle, Granite, and Gold were installed in previous years.

Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout juveniles and adults are tagged with PIT tags. PIT tags are approximately the size of a grain of rice and are encoded with an individual specific ID code.

These work just like the “chips” people put in their dogs.

The monitoring system consists of instream antennae which detect the presence of a PIT tag and records the identification number and time of detection. Each monitoring site is composed of two antennas that are installed in the streambed parallel to each other and perpendicular to the stream flow. They span the entire width of the channel. When fish pass one antenna, and then the other, biologists are able to determine the direction that fish are travelling.

Remote PIT tag antennas operate continuously to monitor the movement of tagged fish. Data is generally downloaded monthly and individual tag detections include a unique tag identification number, time and date of detection, and a record of which antenna detected the tag.

PIT tag data help biologists to estimate the distribution, abundance, and movement of Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Biologists also use PIT tag data to identify migration timing, duration of spawning activities, and instream survival of fish in the Pack River and other Lake Pend Oreille tributaries.



Pit tag average size

"Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."

~ Henry David Thoreau

Grouse Creek Road Reroute

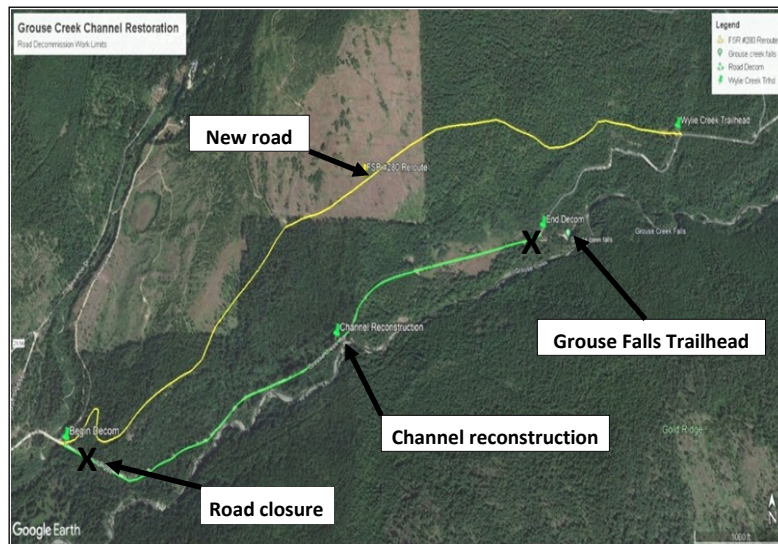
by Kevin Davis, USFS

During the summer of 2023, the U.S. Forest Service Sandpoint Ranger District completed the reroute of the #280 Grouse Creek Road. The reroute goes from the North Fork Grouse Creek Bridge to the Wylie Creek trailhead. The new section of road is about 2 miles long and runs higher up on the ridge. The reroute has been drivable since July and the old section of road is closed off.

inconvenience to the residents who live up Grouse Creek. Also, when roads wash out, it has a negative impact on water quality and the fish that live and spawn there.

Grouse Creek is a productive spawning stream for endangered Bull Trout so it is important to manage the watershed with the utmost care to maintain good fish habitat and water quality. It is also an important spawning stream for Kamloops, which can be seen jumping Grouse Falls in the spring.

The goal of the Grouse Creek Road reroute project was to get the road out of the floodplain so that when Grouse Creek floods it does not divert down the road and wash rock and sediment into Grouse Creek, muddying up the water, silting up buried fish eggs, and altering the channel downstream.



Grouse Creek Road (#280) rerouted out of the floodplain

A second phase of the project will be completed next year. The Forest Service partnered with Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Pack River Watershed Council, and Avista to obtain funding through the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement for the second phase. This will include decommissioning the old road, removing culverts, recontouring the hillslopes, and restoring a section of Grouse Creek to its former floodplain.

Next year the Forest Service will begin removing the old road and restoring Grouse Creek to its former channel. Slash generated from the road construction will be used to cover up the old road, add wood to the new channel, and prevent Grouse Creek from diverting down the old road prism. When the heavy deconstruction is done, native trees and shrubs will be planted in the old road corridor. Access to Grouse Falls will still be via #280 road down from the Wylie Creek trailhead.

Why the need for all this work? This section of Grouse Creek Road was located in the floodplain and regularly washed out. This became a consistent problem in 2012 and the last flood in 2020 washed out over one thousand feet of the road. It was very difficult to re-open this section of road and very expensive. It also presented a major

Roads are always a challenge to maintain and when creeks change course over time, which they do, the Forest Service has to not only look at the best management of the road and public safety, but also the long-term protection of native fisheries and water quality.

Pack River Delta Project—Complete



Pack River Delta Restoration Project (IDFG 2024)

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) has completed the second phase of the Pack River Delta Restoration project. The project started in October 2023 and was completed in June 2024.

The area is now open for public use. The project includes a new access site with a boat ramp, improved waterfowl hunting areas, and increased opportunities for fishing and wildlife viewing.

The project was primarily designed to mitigate the impacts of wildlife habitat degradation due to the operation of the Albeni Falls dam. Eight new islands were constructed with the emphasis on complex habitat development and erosion protection. The islands were designed to include small wet-

land pools, native vegetation, and plenty of wildlife cover. The banks were armored with rock and native willow plantings to reduce erosion.

Pete Rust, IDFG Mitigation Staff Biologist in the Panhandle Region, hopes that both people and wildlife will greatly benefit from this project. The Pack River Delta provides incredible opportunities to enjoy the natural resources we have in north Idaho.

As a reminder, the Pack River Delta area north of the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge to the Highway 95 Bridge is a no wake zone, which includes the recently restored area. Also motorized watercraft are prohibited upstream of the Highway 200 Bridge.

Upcoming Workshops...

Current Topics in Forest Health 2024

This annual course updates forest owners, operators and natural resource professionals on methods to improve forest health.

Dec. 13 | North Idaho College, CDA | \$26

Contact U of I Extension, CDA, 208-292-2525

Idaho Master Forest Stewards Program

Idaho Master Forest Stewards receive over 70 hours of training, much of which consists of selected U of I Extension courses in a wide range of forest health and management topics.

Contact Chris Schnepf at 208-292-1288

IDAH₂O Master Water Steward Certification

The IDAH₂O Master Water Stewards program is offered through U of I Extension to train volunteer, citizen scientists to collect basic water quality data in Idaho streams.

Ongoing | Online | Free

Contact Jim Ekins at jekins@uidaho.edu

Idaho Master Gardener Program

Master Gardeners must complete a minimum of 30 hours of educational training in a wide array of horticultural subjects as well as an additional 30 hours of hands-on training and volunteer service.

Contact U of I Extension, Sandpoint, 208-263-8511

If you would like to receive this publication by e-mail, please contact Sarah Garcia at Sarah.Garcia@id.nacdn.net or call 208-263-5310 x 100. Archived newsletters are available at www.bonnierswcd.org



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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.