

**BLACKFOOT RIVER**  
**Wildlife Management Area**

**Management Plan**  
**July 1999**

**Idaho Department of Fish and Game**  
**Southeast Region**  
**1345 Barton Road**  
**Pocatello, Idaho 83204**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) is located 16 miles north of Soda Springs in Caribou County. It is one of the properties managed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) to provide wildlife habitat and wildlife related recreation. The Department owns 1720 acres, holds a lease from the Idaho Department of Lands on an adjacent 640-acre parcel, and manages a 40-acre parcel owned by the USDI Bureau of Land Management. The area includes 7 miles of the upper Blackfoot River and surrounding uplands (Figure 1). The land was purchased from The Conservation Fund using the Land Acquisition and Habitat Development account, Teton Mitigation Funds and Ducks Unlimited MARSH funds. Operating funds come primarily from license revenues with some Pittman-Robertson (Federal Aid) cost-share. Management will focus on restoration of native plant communities for wildlife habitat and improvement of cutthroat trout habitat. Access for hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing on BRWMA will be maintained as possible without compromising wildlife habitat values.

This plan includes the vision and mission for BRWMA; the goals, objectives and strategies for its management; and descriptive details of its location, wildlife, vegetation and history. It supplements the Department's Policy Plan 1990-2005: A Vision for the Future, and was developed using public involvement. Appendix IX provides details of the issues and discussion topics from the final public open houses held during the planning process in 1996. This is a long-term plan for management of BRWMA, with an indefinite life span. The plan will be modified as necessary to accommodate adaptive management, and to incorporate available new knowledge and techniques.

The mission of the BRWMA is to enhance wildlife and cutthroat trout habitat and provide opportunities for wildlife and fisheries related recreation. Big game, upland game, waterfowl, furbearer and nongame habitat needs will be considered in management of the area. Needs of nongame and sensitive species will be evaluated before vegetation manipulations are implemented to benefit game species.

Grazing management is an integral part of this plan. The present strategy of fence maintenance to reduce trespass grazing will permit recovery of native plant communities, improve streambank condition and improve cutthroat trout habitat. Closely regulated grazing on BRWMA may be used as part of a land-use trade to increase plant vigor and improve upstream water quality.

Motorized vehicles will be restricted to established roads. Four parking areas, with maps and information signs, are provided for access to the Blackfoot River and surrounding upland areas. Establishing good working relationships between neighboring landowners and the Department is another objective. A working group of neighboring landowners, other agencies and interested parties has been established to address management issues on BRWMA. Weed control, boundary marking, fence maintenance and a potential land-use trade agreement will also contribute to this effort.

**Figure 1. Map of Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area.**

## **VISION**

The BRWMA will be managed to provide diverse upland and riparian communities for game and nongame wildlife species and improve cutthroat trout habitat.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the BRWMA is to: 1) for the benefit of wildlife and fish species maintain or improve vegetation type diversity while improving plant vigor through grazing, burning and spraying; 2) enhance cutthroat trout habitat using grazing management, bank stabilization and revegetation techniques; and 3) provide opportunities for nonconsumptive and consumptive public use that are compatible with maintaining high quality wildlife and fish habitat.

## **DURATION OF PLAN**

This is a long-term plan for management of BRWMA, with an indefinite life span. The plan will be modified as necessary to accommodate adaptive management, and to incorporate available new knowledge and techniques.

## **LOCATION**

The Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) is located in Caribou County approximately 16 miles northeast of Soda Springs. The legal description includes part or all of T 7S, R 44E, parts of Sec. 7,8,9 and 17. Topographic map coverage appears on USGS 7.5-Minute Series Upper Valley Quadrangle.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The BRWMA includes 1,720 acres of the upper Blackfoot River drainage bisected by approximately seven miles of the meandering Blackfoot River (Figure 1).

A section of land belonging to the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) lies to the east of the property. The Department acquired the lease on the endowment section with the Stocking property. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns 40 acres on the northeast corner, which the Department manages. The remaining surrounding property is owned by the Caribou National Forest (CNF) and private ranching operations.

Vegetation is dependent on climatic factors as well as land use and management history, but generally displays a complex of four dominant groups: 1) willow-dominated riparian areas, 2) sedge-dominated wet meadows, 3) aspen and Douglas fir forests, and 4) sagebrush-grasslands.

The Blackfoot River WMA provides year-round habitat for moose. The aspen/conifer forested hills provide some winter habitat for elk, but most of the big game migrates to the Georgetown front, the 90 Percent Range and possibly to Tex Creek to the north. Due to snow depths, limited forage availability and thermal cover on the WMA, the area is not considered big game winter range. Elk and mule deer use the WMA in the spring, summer and fall.

Many species of waterfowl, including mallards, teal, gadwall, pintail, widgeon, Canada geese and sandhill cranes nest and rear their young on the WMA. Upland game species on the WMA include blue grouse and ruffed grouse (Appendix III). Caribou NF personnel recorded the presence of a sage grouse lek near Angus Creek in 1967.

The Blackfoot River historically supported a high quality cutthroat trout fishery. Catches of 5 pound cutthroat were not uncommon and 10 to 15 pound fish were occasionally reported (Thurrow 1980). In recent years, particularly since the early 1960's, anglers and fishery workers have observed an apparent decline in angler success and in the size of trout harvested. Fishery management changes and increased precipitation since 1993 have resulted in a trend toward cutthroat trout recovery.

The BRWMA provides 400-500 angler days (\$17,200-21,500), 50-75 big game hunter days (\$2,750-4,125), 30-40 waterfowl hunter days (\$685-914) and 25-30 upland game hunter days (\$870-1,043). The total value of sportsman days is \$21,505-27,582. The BRWMA is also used for outdoor appreciation and trapping.

## **MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

### **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, MONITORING**

#### **Issue 1: Riparian habitat for wildlife and fish has been degraded along the Blackfoot River and its tributaries.**

Discussion: When Thurrow (1980) surveyed fisheries habitat on the Blackfoot River and its tributaries, he documented conditions of bank instability, extensive cutting, deposition and sediment traps, and unstable bottom materials accompanied by minimal aquatic vegetation where moderate to heavy livestock use occurs. He also noted the past eradication of willows as facilitating the impacts of livestock. Surface mining has contributed to sedimentation and reduced water quality. High selenium concentrations in the upper Blackfoot River watershed due to surface mining activities is currently under study. A major component of the BRWMA mission is to restore and maintain the cutthroat habitat in the upper Blackfoot River system. Working with regional fisheries resources we will explore all opportunities to improve cutthroat trout habitat both on and off site (Appendix IX). Fisheries personnel have already implemented bank stabilization projects on the Blackfoot River and have planned additional spawning habitat improvements on tributary streams.

Goal: Restore riparian and upland vegetation vigor on-site and riparian vegetation offsite.

- A. Objective: Improve stream bank and streambed habitat along the Blackfoot River and Angus Creek.

Strategies:

1. Install gates and 6-7 miles of fence to prevent trespass grazing, with a target of 1-2 miles per year, subject to constraints of time and budgets.
2. Plant willows and encourage sedge recolonization.
3. Work with NRCS plant materials center personnel, Department reservists and volunteers to place revetments along vertical stream banks and explore other bioengineering techniques.
4. Provide support and encourage continuation for the Adopt-a-Wetland program.

- B. Objective: Pursue a land-use trade grazing agreement with upstream neighboring landowners with the commitment that any livestock grazing on the BRWMA be consistent with the mission statement and ultimately benefit wildlife and fisheries on the WMA.

Strategies:

1. Meet with upstream landowners to explain the desired outcome of a land-use trade.
2. Work with grazing specialists to generate a grazing plan for approximately 2,040 acres of Department and IDL property.
3. Work with Regional Fisheries Manager and grazing cooperator to identify cutthroat trout spawning sites off-site.
4. Arrange for streambank renovation and riparian fencing to protect trout spawning habitat on cooperator's property.
5. Seek funding grants to support fencing riparian zones to separate them from grazing pressure. Riparian pastures may be developed once the native vegetation has had a chance to re-establish.
6. Involve BRWMA Working Group in any decisions involving grazing on the WMA.

- C. Monitoring:

1. Place 10 utilization cages in key areas to determine forage utilization by livestock.
2. Annually monitor established photo points on upland sites and in riparian areas to record changes in plant succession and species composition over time.

**Issue 2: Perpetuation and enhancement of big game, upland game and nongame wildlife populations and habitat (Appendix IX).**

Discussion: One component of the BRWMA mission is to provide quality wildlife habitat. Within budget and time constraints, we will explore every reasonable method to improve habitat for all wildlife species that occur on the area. Any habitat manipulation that takes place on

BRWMA must be in keeping with the BRWMA mission. Although predation may also have an impact on wildlife populations, area management will not be directed at controlling predation; rather, management will focus on providing the forage and security needs to produce healthy wildlife populations.

I. Goal: Provide secure spring, summer and fall habitat for big game species.

A. Objective: Provide secure calving and fawning areas for elk and mule deer.

Strategies:

1. Clearly mark boundaries and gate roads to prevent entry by motorized vehicles.
2. Place informational signs explaining the purpose of the closure.
3. Time livestock grazing so that it does not interfere with big game or waterfowl production.

B. Objective: Provide high-quality forage for big game species.

Strategies:

1. Work with graduate student from Idaho State University to generate a vegetation inventory and monitoring system to determine the effectiveness of habitat manipulation.
2. Based on information from vegetation analysis, consider prescribed burns, aspen cutting and other habitat manipulation practices.

C. Monitoring:

1. Closely monitor and enforce any grazing agreement to ensure benefits for wildlife.
2. Implement proposed vegetation monitoring system when available.

II. Goal: Enhance upland game and nongame nesting and brood-rearing habitat.

A. Objective: Provide secure nesting and brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl and upland gamebirds.

Strategies:

1. Preserve natural perennial and ephemeral springs and seeps.
2. Prevent heavy grazing in meadows, seeps and riparian zones by implementing and enforcing a grazing management plan.
3. Time livestock grazing so that it does not interfere with big game or waterfowl production.

B. Objective: Maintain or increase populations of nongame species.

Strategies:

1. Maintain or improve the diversity of native vegetation types.

2. Enhance dense, food-bearing shrubby cover in riparian zones through reduced grazing pressure and plantings.
3. Evaluate habitat needs for nongame wildlife and provide developments as necessary.
4. Consider non-target and sensitive species before habitat manipulation practices are put into effect.

C. Monitoring:

1. Monitor use of nongame nest boxes.
2. Perform follow-up reptile and amphibian survey of area.
3. Record observations of sensitive species.
4. Monitor nongame breeding bird populations with "listening post" routes.

**Issue 3: Need to provide a variety of nonconsumptive and consumptive recreational opportunities consistent with BRWMA mission (Appendix IX).**

Discussion: Part of the mission of BRWMA is to provide adequate public access for consumptive and nonconsumptive public uses without compromising the quality of wildlife habitat, wildlife security, or the outdoor experience of area users. License fees have been used in the purchase of WMA property and license holders, as well as others, expect reasonable access to these properties.

Foot access causes few problems for wildlife during typical years. An exception on BRWMA would be during elk calving and waterfowl nesting. In contrast, motorized vehicle access may be detrimental to wildlife security and the condition of animals. Increased vehicle access during hunting season also increases big game vulnerability. Also, many area users may define the quality of their outdoor experience by the amount of vehicle traffic or number of other people they encounter. For these reasons, we will work to provide opportunity for a range of users while protecting wildlife and fish values on the area.

Goal: Manage access to provide quality opportunities for fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife appreciation.

A. Objective: Provide high quality opportunities to fish for cutthroat trout.

1. Strategies:

- (a) Maintain four parking areas along County Road 95 and Forest Road 102 to provide access to the Blackfoot River and adjacent uplands.
- (b) Continue unrestricted walk-on fishing on BRWMA.
- (c) Maintain and enforce fishing restrictions on the Blackfoot River and its tributaries.
- (d) Evaluate the potential to develop walking trails 20-30 feet away from the stream in high-use areas to prevent damage to river banks.

- (e) Evaluate the need for future handicapped access to the Blackfoot River.
    - (f) Provide primitive boat launch for float boats and canoes.
  - 2. Monitoring:
    - (a) Conduct surveys of area users at approximately five year intervals to monitor needs.
    - (b) Compile user survey data collected incidentally throughout the year.
- B. Objective: Provide access for high-quality big game, upland game and waterfowl hunting.
  - 1. Strategies:
    - (a) Maintain security cover for game animals during the hunting season by limiting motorized vehicles to open and maintained roads.
    - (b) Allow horse access and provide parking facilities.
    - (c) Post access maps at parking areas.
  - 2. Monitoring: Maintain enforcement patrols during hunting seasons to ensure compliance.
- C. Objective: Provide opportunities for wildlife viewing and other nonconsumptive uses.
  - 1. Strategies:
    - (a) Develop a BRWMA brochure to include a map and species list by June, 2000.
    - (b) Continue unrestricted walk-on recreation.
    - (c) Permit primitive camping, but provide no facilities other than a portable toilet during the fishing season.
    - (d) Permit cross-country skiing.
    - (e) Restrict dog training to designated areas and only during open dates.
    - (f) Maintain boat access to the river and evaluate the need for developing a river reach map.
  - 2. Monitoring: Monitor public uses to adapt to future needs for recreational opportunities.
- D. Objective: Manage motorized vehicular traffic on BRWMA.
  - 1. Strategies:

- (a) Work closely with IDL, CNF and private landowners to identify important wildlife areas and to develop and implement road closures, where necessary.
  - (b) Erect an interpretive sign with a large map showing parking areas and points of interest by June, 2000.
  - (c) Evaluate snowmobile use on BRWMA and determine its impact on wintering wildlife.
2. Monitoring: Conduct random enforcement patrols during winter months.

**Issue 4: We must maintain and/or improve working relationships with neighboring landowners.**

Discussion: It is important that we establish a working relationship with neighboring landowners and permittees by maintaining open lines of communication. BRWMA has many neighbors and CNF permittees with cattle that are not always closely monitored. There have been some trespass livestock problems because our fences were either nonexistent or needed repair. Building and maintaining our boundary fences will control potential and current trespass livestock problems.

Noxious weeds must be controlled to prevent their spread to neighboring property. The wildlife profession and agri-business have disagreed in the past over the effects of "weeds." Wildlife biologists consider broad-leaved herbaceous plants to be a critical component of the diverse vegetation that comprises wildlife habitat. These forbs (or "weeds") provide density or visual obstruction, increasing the chances of successful nesting. They also provide food for a variety of wildlife species. In contrast, the agricultural industry views them as a threat to their livelihood by reducing crop production and forage value. We now agree that weeds are everyone's concern. Noxious weeds are usually exotic plants that have not evolved with the natural controls that native plants have. Noxious weed infestations often result in a monotypic plant community which is unsuitable as wildlife habitat. Infestations in cropland and rangeland tend to reduce yields, forage quality and wildlife habitat values. By statute, noxious weeds must be controlled by landowners to prevent their spread to neighboring property.

A working group has been formed for BRWMA to facilitate communication between the Department and the public. This group consists of neighbors, sportspersons, land management agency representatives and permittees, and concerned citizens.

- I. Goal: Work to control noxious weeds (mandated by state law) which cause poor neighbor relations and may pose a threat to native vegetation on BRWMA.
  - A. Objective: Control noxious weeds, especially Canada thistle and yellow toadflax, on BRWMA.

Strategies:

- 1. Identify noxious weed problem areas and map them.
- 2. Apply chemical herbicides with 4-wheeler and backpack sprayers using seasonal temporary employees and permanent staff.
- 3. Release biological control insects for Canada thistle and yellow toadflax.

4. Work with Caribou County weed control officer to identify and help control noxious weeds.

B. Monitoring:

1. Habitat personnel will maintain logs documenting chemical and biological weed treatments.
2. We will map the location of insect releases and inspect the areas to monitor effectiveness.
3. We will work with Caribou County weed control officer to identify and help control noxious weeds.

II. Goal: Establish all boundaries and address other common concerns.

Objective: Clearly mark boundaries to indicate where private land starts and public land ends.

Strategies:

1. Place or replace boundary markers on the perimeter of BRWMA.
2. Cooperatively maintain approximately 10 miles of common fences.
3. Maintain and/or replace boundary fences and fences along the County Road as time and budgets allow, with a target of 1-2 miles of fence replacement per year.
4. Trespass cattle will be handled as determined by our meeting with CNF and the Caribou County Sheriff's Office in consultation with Department legal counsel.

III. Goal: Maintain forum for information exchange.

Objective: Use working group (including neighbors) to inform interested parties about BRWMA projects and operations and to exchange information on local issues and concerns.

Strategies: Meet with working group formally twice a year (spring and fall) and talk to members regarding issues as the need arises.

**Issue 5: The Department will acquire additional property to help achieve the WMA mission.**

Discussion: The Department has purchased land for many years to improve and protect wildlife habitat as well as to provide public access. The practice has been welcomed by some but has been a topic of controversy for others. Sportspersons have always encouraged the Department to purchase additional land to provide the benefits listed above. However, some of them have been concerned about how land purchases are funded.

County commissions have resisted the Department's purchase of lands because those lands were then removed from the county tax base. Private individuals resented the Department taking productive lands out of the hands of citizens who could farm or graze those lands for income.

Both groups have felt that the Department has had enough problems managing the lands that they already owned without adding more land.

In order to reduce the resistance to Department ownership of land, several steps were taken. First, the Department introduced legislation that now allows "in lieu of taxes" payments to each county where the Department owns land. This satisfied county concerns. Secondly, the Department decided to focus its acquisition dollars towards: 1) key big game habitat, 2) wetlands capable of producing significant numbers of waterfowl and hunting opportunities, 3) access to waterways for fishing, 4) access for hunting, 5) lands adjacent to existing wildlife management areas, 6) upland habitats close to population centers, and 7) sites for fishing reservoir development (Dept. Policy A-14.04). The purchase of agricultural lands will be avoided, mostly due to their high cost. Also, when possible, easements will be purchased to provide access for the public and not take the land from private ownership.

Department policy A-14.04 states "The primary sources of funds for land acquisition are the Land Acquisition and Habitat Development Account [I.C. 36-107(c)], the waterfowl Habitat Improvement Program, Pittman-Robertson and Dingle-Johnson funds, Ducks Unlimited M.A.R.S.H. funds, some limited license funds, salmon-steelhead tag funds, and occasionally mitigation funds. Most of these funding sources have some restrictions on the kinds of properties which can be acquired." This policy controls how a particular acquisition can be funded.

For the WMA's within the Southeast Region, additional land will be acquired if some or all of the following criteria are met: 1) the land is adjacent to the WMA, 2) there is a willing seller, and 3) the land provides a benefit to wildlife (winter range, wetlands, etc).

Goal: To improve and protect wildlife habitat by acquiring land or easements.

A. Objective: Purchase land adjacent to WMA's.

Strategies:

1. Identify land that is being offered for sale and/or that falls within guidelines.
2. Approach owners with proposals that follow all Department policies.
3. Make neighbors and other agencies aware that the Department is interested in land purchases from willing sellers.
4. Inform county commission of any acquisition plan and hold public meeting if requested or deemed appropriate.
5. Identify land that may be acquired through trades with other individuals and/or agencies.

B. Objective: Acquire easements on lands that have high wildlife value and are not for sale.

Strategies:

1. Identify land that is not for sale but that is deemed to have important wildlife values.
2. Approach owners with easement options.

**Issue 6: The Department needs to maintain or remove structures and developments that existed prior to Department management of BRWMA.**

Discussion: Several structures, fences, water developments and other developed features were present on the properties of BRWMA prior to ownership and management by the Department. Most notable of these are the cabin and other outbuildings of the Stocking Ranch, which have value for both their historical significance as a 19th century Idaho homestead and their potential to function as a field station in support of wildlife research and area management. Although it is in need of some repairs and requires ongoing maintenance, the Stocking Ranch cabin is reasonably habitable and retains much of its character as a homesteading family's log cabin. Outbuilding structures, which previously ranged in function from lambing shed to schoolhouse, are generally in a deteriorated condition and would require significant effort to restore to a safe or useful state. Most of the fences on the area, which have not already been replaced or removed, are deteriorated and require extensive maintenance to remain functional.

Because the cabin and fences offer a relatively direct contribution to achievement of the mission of BRWMA, little question exists as to whether or not they should be maintained in a serviceable condition. However, a potential conflict presents itself when Department resources are expended in the maintenance of structures for historical purposes only. It would also be irresponsible to permit the loss of a cultural resource to the citizens of Idaho through neglect. Therefore the Department will seek the advice and support of historical preservation interests before any significant changes are made to the core area of the Stocking Ranch property.

Goal: Maintain Stocking Ranch developments in condition to support BRWMA mission and retain cultural values.

- A. Objective: Maintain Stocking Ranch cabin to serve as a field station for research and management.

Strategies:

1. Conduct routine maintenance using Department and volunteer resources to preserve cabin in functional condition similar to time of purchase.
2. Consult with a historical authority to solicit recommendations for cabin maintenance without detracting from its cultural value.

- B. Objective: Preserve or remove historical structures present on BRWMA.

Strategies:

1. Consult with historical authority or group to identify significant cultural or historical resources present on the Stocking Ranch.
2. Seek interested volunteers to develop a plan for preservation of historical structures which is compatible with the primary mission of BRWMA.
3. Restore or preserve Stocking Ranch structures that have significant historical value using volunteer labor and donated resources.
4. Coordinate the development of historical interpretive information for presentation with brochure and interpretive sign addressed in Issue 3, above.

5. If interest in preservation is lacking or such action becomes unfeasible, destroy any hazardous structures to preclude development of an attractive nuisance.
- C. Monitoring: Gather opinions of area users as part of surveys in Issue 3 above, and BRWMA Working Group regarding preservation of historical values, and adapt area management as appropriate in response.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

#### **Physiography and Climate**

The BRWMA lies within the Great Basin/Rocky Mountain vegetation transition zone. Elevation in the vicinity ranges from 6400 feet along the Blackfoot River to 7000 feet on the ridgetops. Landforms in the Blackfoot River drainage are primarily the result of horizontal thrust faulting and subsequent erosion (USDA Forest Service 1978). Sedimentary beds were buckled and overthrust by forces from the west. A series of ridges and valleys extend north and south as a result of this faulting and folding.

Geologically, the upper valley contains alluvium consisting of silt, clay, sand and gravel (Cuplin 1961). The surrounding mountains are composed of sedimentary shales, sandstones, limestones of the Paleozoic age, quartzites and conglomerates. Phosphoria formations also exist which contain phosphatic shale (Thurow 1980).

Soils are generally light clay with fine gravel texture, but vary greatly depending on slope and aspect.

The area has a semi-arid climate characterized by hot summers, cold winters and frequent southwesterly winds. The climate is moderated by predominantly moist, warm air masses moving inland from the North Pacific Ocean. Occasional arctic air masses bring extreme winter cold. Climatic conditions are influenced locally by major mountain ranges, which lie north to south, lying across west to east airflows.

Winter weather is cold, with mean daily temperature in January rarely exceeding 20°F, and minimums of -20°F are not unusual. Temperatures range from -40°F to 90°F. Annual precipitation is 15-20 inches, more than half of which falls in the winter as snow.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) includes the ranch that was homesteaded by Rasmus Rasmussen in the 1880's. The Rasmussen home was a two-room log house. North of the house, the Rasmussens built a one-room schoolhouse. A teacher came in, stayed with the family and taught the children. Other buildings on the property included a cheese house and a blacksmith shop.

John Jay Stocking purchased the 160-acre ranch in 1907 and purchased additional land over the next twenty-five years. The ranch then totaled 1,720 acres.

John raised hay, which was shipped by rail to sheep men in Cokeville, Wyoming. The Stockings built a large barn on the ranch. It was a landmark in the area until it was destroyed in the late 1970's.

The last member of the Stocking family to operate the ranch was Reverent (Revie). Through all of the years that the Stocking family owned the ranch, it was a sheep operation. However, for the last ten years, Revie Stocking leased the ranch to a cattleman from Rockland.

The Department first became interested in purchasing the Stocking Ranch in 1970. The importance of the Blackfoot River fishery to Idaho sportsmen and the need for public access were the primary considerations.

In 1994, The Conservation Fund purchased the Stocking Ranch and subsequently sold the land to the Department.

### **APPENDIX III**

#### **DEVELOPMENT HISTORY**

A log cabin and three log sheds are located on the WMA. Department personnel, with the help of reservists and volunteers, have begun to refurbish the cabin for use as a field station. This work includes construction of a new porch, reconstruction of one wall of the cabin and hauling away truckloads of trash from inside and outside the cabin. Work to be completed on the cabin includes installation of a wood stove, interior cleaning, rodent control and addition of the necessary furniture.

Four parking corrals have been established along the upper Blackfoot River for anglers, hunters and other users.

Boundary fences and fences along the County Road need to be maintained and/or replaced as time and budgets allow. The northeast corner of the BRWMA needs to have boundary fencing installed. During the summer of 1995, we erected a barbed-wire fence to prevent trespass grazing in the Angus Creek area. In 1996, we installed an electric fence to separate potential grazing pasture from the Blackfoot River riparian corridor. A survey was conducted on the south boundary, and a barbed-wire fence was constructed to reduce trespass grazing from the adjacent CNF allotment.

**APPENDIX IV  
LAND AND WATER CONTROL**

**LAND ACQUISITION:**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Acquired From</i>
1995	DU, HB530, Teton Mitigation	1720	The Conservation Fund

**LEASE:**

<i>Effective Date/Length</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Leased From</i>
3/2/95, 10 years	640	IDL

Bottom lands along the Blackfoot River and tributaries exhibit a high forage-vegetative productivity potential (USDA Forest Service 1978). Consequently, a majority of the drainage is privately owned and used for cattle grazing. Caribou National Forest land in the area is managed for multiple use including timber production, cattle and sheep grazing, and recreation. Extensive phosphate reserves lie in southeastern Idaho in the vicinity of the WMA. A 40-acre parcel of FMC Corporation's federal phosphate lease is located on North Dry Ridge within the BRWMA property. An exploratory drilling project is proposed on this lease beginning 1999. Operating mines exist along the Blackfoot River drainage on private and National Forest lands. Open-pit mining techniques are utilized and result in surface disturbances consisting of trenches, drill pads, access roads and mine spoil sites.

**WATER RIGHTS:**

Water rights on Dip Creek, Pine Creek, Angus Creek and the Blackfoot River were transferred to the Department when we purchased the property. The Department also controls the water right to an unnamed spring near the cabin. These water rights are for stock watering and domestic use. Several irrigation water rights were also transferred to the Department with the property, but are subject to revision under the Snake River Basin Adjudication. The following stockwater and domestic water rights were recommended by the Idaho Department of Water Resources for approval under the Snake River Basin Adjudication in 1998 with beneficial use as the basis for the claims:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Point of Diversion</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
27-11276	Spring	T 7S, R 44E, Sect. 8	0.04 cfs
27-11272	Angus Creek	T 7S, R 44E, Sect. 8	0.09 cfs
27-04095	Blackfoot River	T 7S, R 44E, Sect. 9 & 17	0.02 cfs
27-04094A	Dip Creek	T 7S, R44E, Sect. 16	0.09 cfs

## **APPENDIX V**

### **VEGETATION AND HABITAT TYPES**

#### **VEGETATION**

In 1996 and 1997 a preliminary inventory of both riparian and upland vegetation on Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area was completed by a graduate student from Idaho State University and was the primary source of the following list of plants (Maroney 1998).

#### **TREES**

Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)  
Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)  
Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)  
Subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)  
Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperis scopularum*)

#### **SHRUBS**

Silver sagebrush (*Artemesia cana*)  
Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemesia tridentata*)  
Prairie sage (*Artemesia ludoviciana*)  
Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*)  
Snowberry (*Symphocarpos alba*)  
Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)  
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)  
Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*)  
Booth's willow (*Salix boothii*)  
Wolf's willow (*Salix wolfii*)  
Geyer's willow (*Salix geyeriana*)

#### **FORBS**

Common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)  
Yarrow (*Achillea millifolium*)  
Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)  
Meadow thistle (*Cirsium scariosum*)  
Blackhead (*Rudbeckia occidentalis*)  
Pineapple weed (*Matricaria matricariodes*)  
Green bluebells (*Mertensia viridis*)  
Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)  
Capitate sandwort (*Arenaria congesta*)  
Common horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)  
Smooth scouring rush (*Equisetum laevigatum*)  
Newberry's milkvetch (*Australis newberryi*)  
Prairie lupine (*Lupinus lepidus*)  
Velvet lupine (*Lupinus leukophyllus*)

Silvery lupine (*Lupinus argenteus*)  
Long-stalked clover (*Trifolium longipes*)  
Alsike clover (*Trifolium hybridum*)  
Gold smoke (*Corydalis aurea*)  
Steer's head (*Dicentra uniflora*)  
One-flowered gentian (*Gentiana detonsa*)  
Sticky purple geranium (*Geranium viscosissimum*)  
Richardson's geranium (*Geranium richardsonii*)  
Hedge nettle (*Stachys palustris*)  
Nettle-leaf hyssop (*Agastache urticifolia*)  
Yellow bells (*Fritilaria pudica*)  
False Solomon's seal (*Smilacina stellata*)  
Wartberry fairybell (*Disporum trachycarpum*)  
Brandegee onion (*Allium brandegei*)  
Geyer's onion (*Allium geyerii*)  
Common camas (*Camassia quamash*)  
Sego lilly (*Carochortus eurycarpus*)  
Wild blue flax (*Linum perenne*)  
Long-leaf evening primrose (*Oenothera subacaulis*)  
Striped coral orchid (*Coralloriza striata*)  
Spotted coral orchid (*Corallorhiza maculata*)  
Pearl twist (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*)  
Common plantain (*Plantago major*)  
Western polemonium (*Polemonium occidentale*)  
Least navarretia (*Navarretia minima*)  
Small-flowered gymnosteris (*Gymnosteris parvula*)  
Long leaved phlox (*Phlox longifolia*)  
Snakeweed (*Poliginum blistortoides*)  
Alpine sorrel (*Rumex paucifolius*)  
Western spring beauty (*Clatonia lanceolata*)  
Dark-throat shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*)  
Plantain leaf buttercup (*Ranunculus alismaefolius*)  
Sagebrush buttercup (*Ranunculus glabberimus*)  
Jove's buttercup (*Ranunculus jovis*)  
Nodding vase flower (*Clematis viscosissimum*)  
Old man's beard (*Guem trifolium*)  
Large-leaved avens (*Guem macrophyllum*)  
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)  
Northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*)  
Bulbous fringe cup (*Lithophragma bulbosa*)  
Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja minita*)  
Little flowered penstamon (*Penstamon procerus*)  
Elephant's head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*)  
Leafy lousewort (*Pedicularis racemosa*)  
Butter and eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*)

## **GRAMINOIDS**

Common Timothy (*Phleum pratense*)  
Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*)  
Koleria (*Koleria nitida*)  
Purple onion grass (*Melica spectabilis*)  
Letterman needlegrass (*Stipa lettermanii*)  
Columbia needlegrass (*Stipa columbiana*)  
Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*)  
Fowl bluegrass (*Poa palustris*)  
Soft chess (*Bromus mollis*)  
Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*)  
Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*)  
Foxtail (*Hordeum jubatum*)  
Meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*)  
Tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*)  
Great Basin wildrye (*Elymus cinereus*)  
Meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*)  
Creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*)  
Winter bentgrass (*Agrostis scabra*)  
Six-weeks fescue (*Festuca ovina*)  
Northern mannagrass (*Glyceria borealis*)  
Water sedge (*Carex aquatilis*)  
Clustered field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*)  
Beaked sedge (*Carex rostrata*)  
Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*)  
Parry sedge (*Carex parryana*)  
Short-beaked sedge (*Carex simulata*)  
Needle spikerush (*Eleocharis acicularis*)  
Common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*)  
Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*)

The vegetation of BRWMA generally occurs in seven community types, including conifer woodlands, aspen/shrub, aspen/grass, sagebrush/grass, dry meadows, wet meadows, and riparian. The following list identifies the specific wetland community types found on BRWMA.

## **WETLAND PLANT COMMUNITY TYPES (JANKOVSKY-JONES 1997)**

Salix boothii/*Carex utriculata*  
Salix geyeriana/*Carex aquatilis*  
Salix wolfii/*Carex aquatilis*  
*Carex utriculata*  
*Deschampsia cespitosa*  
*Carex aquatilis*  
*Carex simulata*  
*Eleocharis acicularis*  
*Eleocharis palustris*  
*Artemisia cana*/*Poa pratensis*  
*Salix boothii*/*Poa pratensis*

**APPENDIX VI**  
**WILDLIFE AND FISHERY RESOURCES**

**MAMMALS**

Moose (*Alces alces*)  
Elk (*Cervus elaphus*)  
Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)  
Coyote (*Canis latrans*)  
Black bear (*Ursus americanus*)  
Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)  
Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)  
Mink (*Mustela vison*)  
Weasel (*Mustela* spp.)  
Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus nutallii*)  
Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)  
Northern pocket gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*)  
Deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)  
Mountain vole (*Microtus montanus*)  
Sagebrush vole (*Lagurus curtatus*)  
Chipmunk (*Eutamias* spp.)  
Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)  
Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)  
Bushy-tailed wood rat (*Neotoma cinerea*)  
Merriam shrew (*Sorex merriami*)

**BIRDS**

Blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*)  
Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*)  
Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)  
Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)  
Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)  
Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)  
Rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)  
Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)  
American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)  
Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*)  
Black-billed magpie (*Pica pica*)  
Common raven (*Corvus corax*)  
American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)  
Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)  
Brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)  
Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*)  
Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)  
American Widgeon (*Mareca americana*)

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)  
Common merganser (*Mergus merganser*)  
Green-winged teal (*Anas carolinensis*)  
Cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)  
Blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*)  
Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*)  
Vesper sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*)  
Yellow-rumped warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)  
MacGillivray's warbler (*Oporornis formosus*)  
Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)  
Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*)  
Song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)  
Chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)  
Dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*)  
Ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)  
Steller's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)  
Spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)  
Green-tailed towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*)  
House finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)  
Evening grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)  
American goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*)  
Lazuli bunting (*Passerina amoena*)  
Calliope hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)  
Broad-tailed hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*)  
Common flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)  
Yellow-bellied sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*)  
Eastern kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)  
Western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)  
Willow flycatcher (*Empidonax trailii*)  
Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)  
Long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*)  
Spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*)  
Killdeer (*Charadrius wilsonia*)  
Common snipe (*Capella gallinago*)  
Sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*)  
Sora (*Porzana carolina*)  
Double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*)

## **AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES**

Tiger salamander (*Abystoma tigrinum*)  
Boreal chorus frog (*Pseudacris triseriata maculata*)  
Northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*)  
Western terrestrial garter snake (*Thamnophis elegans*)  
Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

## **APPENDIX VII**

### **HABITAT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) is managed by the Regional Wildlife Biologist assigned to the East Habitat District of the Southeast Region, under the supervision of the Regional Habitat Manager. Funding is provided by Federal Aid to Fish and Wildlife, the Department fisheries management program, as well as Fish and Game license fees. Equipment will be borrowed from the regional pool or other regions, rented or contracted.

The habitat management program on BRWMA is focused primarily on vegetation management in order to carry out the mission of providing quality habitat for wildlife and fish. Numerous techniques are available to manage vegetation, each depending on the objectives, limitations, potential natural vegetation and present state of a given site. Soils and climate are the primary constraints, which determine the long-term potential for the plant species diversity and abundance on a site, which in turn determine the presence and carrying capacity of animal species there. The habitat management program for BRWMA will apply techniques such as planting desirable species; chemical, biological and mechanical control of less desirable species, including noxious weeds; fertilization of selected areas; prescribed burns; and control of livestock to maintain forage and permit recovery of riparian areas. Any of these techniques may be applied when appropriate to achieve site-specific objectives, although vegetation management often requires no intervening action other than permitting natural ecological processes to occur.

In order to evaluate the outcome and efficacy of management actions, monitoring is essential. An important component of the habitat management program on BRWMA is vegetation monitoring. Annual monitoring of vegetation using fixed transects provides a measure of species diversity, abundance, and utilization which can be used to evaluate previous actions and identify the need for additional action. Utilization cages permit comparison of forage consumption between grazed and ungrazed sites. Photographs taken annually at fixed photo points provide a visual record of change over time. By comparing results in treated and untreated areas, the efficacy of vegetation manipulations is evaluated. Using an adaptive management approach, future activity on a site will be planned based on the results of past activities as well as new techniques available or additional knowledge gained.

Monitoring for effects of vegetation management on wildlife is also important. Because it is not practical to measure these effects directly, the habitat management program on BRWMA will depend on regional game surveys to provide evidence of wildlife response. Waterfowl breeding surveys may also be conducted periodically. Monitoring fish populations in the Blackfoot River is done using mark-recapture sampling methods to obtain population estimates. As future funding permits, monitoring may be expanded to include increased site-specific and time-based surveys of wildlife populations on BRWMA and additional fish production estimation.

Although all available information is utilized in planning management actions, baseline information for BRWMA is not yet compiled in a comprehensive format, and some is not available. As part of the habitat management program, baseline mapping of soils and habitat types will be compiled as part of a future revision to the management plan.

Department personnel will post signs on WMA boundaries, some of which need to be surveyed. We will also monitor recreational use in the area to evaluate its impacts on wildlife and fish.

A working group, comprised of southeast Idaho residents who had expressed an interest in the BRWMA, was formed in 1995 to permit public input and communication with Department personnel. The working group includes neighboring landowners and livestock permittees, area users, a member of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and the Soda Springs District Ranger.

## **APPENDIX VIII**

### **TRAVEL PLAN**

The Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) is open to public travel with the following restrictions:

- All motorized vehicles must remain on open, established roads year-round. These roads include the following: 1) Forest Road 095, the Blackfoot River Road, from the cattle guard north of the Trail Guard Station through the Lanes Creek Road to the BRWMA boundary, and 2) Forest Road 102, the Diamond Creek Road, from its junction with Forest Road 095 to the BRWMA boundary.
- Visitors may not harass or otherwise disturb wildlife during non-hunting seasons.
- Horseback travel is permitted throughout the area in a manner compatible with achieving wildlife and fish habitat management objectives.

Four parking areas have been established along authorized travel routes (Figure 1), providing access to the Blackfoot River and uplands.

## **APPENDIX IX**

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

The regional wildlife habitat staff conducted three open house public meetings in March, 1996. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the future management of the Wildlife Management Areas in the Southeast Region. Meetings were held in Aberdeen, Pocatello, and Soda Springs.

We created displays demonstrating 1995 projects and the future management issues that we had identified prior to the meetings. We encouraged the attendees to give us written or verbal comments regarding management of the WMA's and any issues they felt that we need to address in our future management. We provided comment sheets for this purpose.

Over 400 invitations were mailed to neighbors, cooperators, legislators, sportsmen's groups, land management agencies and concerned citizens. Display advertisements were placed in area newspapers and a news release was issued concerning the open house meetings.

Fourteen people attended the public open house in Aberdeen on March 11, twelve attended the open house in Pocatello on March 12, ten people attended in Soda Springs on March 13 and two people telephoned with their input. The final document will be provided to the public in an open house forum in February, 1999.

The following is a list of issues mentioned by members of the public at the open house meetings, or in written comments, with a discussion of each issue.

#### **Issue 1: Establish a fish-rearing facility on BRWMA.**

Discussion: This idea was proposed as a method to help speed up the recovery of cutthroat populations in the Blackfoot River system. Fisheries biologists place fertilized cutthroat trout eggs in incubation boxes in some of the Blackfoot River tributaries. When the fry hatch and swim up, they enter the river from these tributaries and, it is hoped, return to these streams to spawn as adults. The project has been implemented with incubation boxes placed in tributaries of the Blackfoot River on BRWMA in 1997 and 1998 and will continue subject to evaluation of its efficacy by regional fisheries biologists.

In 1990, after considerable study of historical data and meetings with the public, the Fish and Game Commission approved an upper Blackfoot system fishery management plan to restore the wild cutthroat trout. The plan included ample harvest opportunity for hatchery trout in the reservoir, selective release of all wild cutthroat trout in the reservoir and limited harvest opportunity of only post-spawning cutthroat trout in the upper river and its tributaries. In October, 1997, the Commission approved rules allowing no harvest of cutthroat trout in the upper river and its tributaries. Artificial flies and lures with one barbless hook (no bait) are required as well. The plan also proposed to improve habitat. The 1995 purchase of the Stocking Ranch at the head of the Blackfoot River by the Department was a major boost to habitat improvement as well as guaranteed hunters and anglers access to 6.4 miles of the upper Blackfoot River (18.5% of the river's total length) and 1.3 miles of lower Angus Creek. Riparian areas on the BRWMA have been rested from livestock grazing other than trespass from 1995

through 1998. Stream bank stability has improved and sedge and willow communities have expanded. The only uncontrolled aspect of fishery habitat on the BRWMA is the quality of water entering the area from adjacent upstream lands. The proposed land use trade with upstream neighbors will partially alleviate this water quality problem on the BRWMA.

Ideal cutthroat trout habitat exhibits the following characteristics: cool, clean water with deep pools for cover and resting, clean gravel bottom for spawning, aquatic insect diversity, stable stream banks and riparian vegetation for shade and woody debris. We are using available funding and manpower into rehabilitating trout habitat in the Blackfoot River on the BRWMA. With improved habitat, the cutthroat trout numbers will increase.

**Issue 2: I would like to see more educational programs for families and children in Bear Lake and Caribou counties.**

Discussion: Wildlife Management Areas provide excellent opportunities for educational programs dealing with wildlife and fish habitat. They also provide examples of habitat manipulation practices that can be used to benefit wildlife and fish. However, this issue seems to deal more with educational programs that do not necessarily relate to the management of our WMAs and, therefore, is outside the scope of this document.

We currently work with schools and summer camps to provide speakers on wildlife topics. Conservation officers, biologists and I&E staff make presentations to civic groups, in school classrooms and at outdoor activities. We also use volunteers/school groups to carry out habitat improvement projects.

**Issue 3: Big game crossing Highway 30 at Georgetown Summit are frequently involved in vehicle/game collisions.**

Discussion: This continues to be a problem not only at GSWMA, but also at the PWMA (Highway 91) and MWMA (Highway 89). The Idaho Department of Transportation (IDT) has erected warning signs. The cost of building and maintaining a deer and/or elk-proof fence would be prohibitive. We will work with IDT to improve conditions if this section of Highway 30 is upgraded in the future.

By improving the quality and quantity of the available forage, we are working to reduce depredation problems as well as the incidence of big game/vehicle collisions.

**Issue 4: No more money should be spent on pheasants - spend more money on native species.**

Discussion: Pheasants are the most popular upland game bird in Idaho. As a result, pheasant production is an important goal at SWMA. However, pheasants are not an indigenous species to Idaho, or even to the United States. Although pheasant hunting has become a traditional past time, there is a percentage of professionals, hunters and non-consumptive users who would prefer to focus Department time and finances on the native species of the area (sharp-tailed, sage and forest grouse). The thought is that in order to maintain populations of exotic bird species, if indeed it can be done, unacceptable levels of funding will be required. Since these birds are not evolved for this environment, extensive and expensive alterations are needed to create suitable

habitat. Native species, on the other hand, are suited to this area and can be managed more effectively without having to artificially manipulate the habitat.

In conjunction with the wide-spread appeal of the ring-necked pheasant is the fact that much of the funding available for upland game bird management is generated by the popularity of pheasant hunting. A major thrust of the Habitat Improvement Program, which is funded by the sale of upland game stamps, is to improve habitat for pheasants and some other upland game birds. Sharp-tailed, sage and forest grouse are not, at this time, included in that program.

**Issue 5: No license funds should be spent on nongame projects.**

Discussion: Most of the Department programs are funded, either directly or indirectly, by hunting and fishing dollars. This segment of the population is more interested in consumptive uses of wildlife and, therefore, prefers that their money be used in a way that benefits that type of use. They prefer that dollars generated by license sales go toward improving hunting and fishing. Efforts are being made on a National level to create a means by which the non-consumptive recreational users will also help support Wildlife and fish programs. But at this time, the major share of wildlife programs are funded by the consumptive users.

All projects that are targeted specifically for a nongame species will be funded through appropriate nongame funds or through donations. Most projects that are funded with license dollars also provide significant benefits to nongame species. However, the reverse is not necessarily true. Many of the nongame projects are nesting structures that are only suitable for nongame species. Most license-funded projects are general habitat-oriented plantings.

**Issue 6: Do not use any license fees for the pheasant release program.**

Discussion: As mentioned in Issue 4, above, some hunters prefer that Department funds go toward the management of native game bird species. In addition to that segment of the Department's constituency, is a group that prefers to put money into managing for wild bird populations rather than game farm pheasants. Pheasants Forever is an example of a group that promotes wild bird management and denounces game farm production.

Research has shown that stocking pheasants is NOT a viable solution to increasing a population. The sole reasoning for the stocking program is to provide hunting opportunity. In addition to not supplementing the wild population, research has also shown that introducing pen-reared pheasants, in fact, can be detrimental to the wild population by attracting predators, spreading disease, and passing on genetic problems. The stocking program currently costs the Department approximately \$50,000 per year for the birds. Department employee time and operating expenses are additional. This program has been in place for many years and has developed a strong support base. Seniors and young hunters seem to most benefit from this type of hunting.

Currently, hunters that pursue the game farm pheasants on a WMA purchase a WMA pheasant permit. In effect, the people that use that program pay for the program. The permit allows a hunter to harvest 10 pheasants from a WMA where game farm birds are released.

**Issue 7: On Sterling WMA, leave 10-20 acre plots of 3-4" vegetation for goose pasture, .May through July. Use grazing and burning to achieve and maintain these areas. One acre per 100 acres.**

Discussion: As the new grazing plan is developed, consideration will be given to how to best provide goose pasture and not adversely impact waterfowl nesting habitat. Neighbors have brought this point up previously. Although attempts have been made to provide this type of area, they have been ineffective. American Falls Reservoir is an extremely large body of water that attracts thousands of geese. The acreage that SWMA could manage for goose pasture is insignificant when compared to the available area around the reservoir. Other landowners adjacent to American Falls Reservoir often provide the conditions for goose pasture just by the nature of the land use. These uses, however, typically do not provide high quality nesting cover. A main stumbling block for the Department is the cost and labor involved to adequately fence an area in order to control the grazing intensity that would be required to provide goose pasture. An additional concern would be that this high intensity grazing would be incompatible with the SWMA goal of providing quality nesting cover.

Goose pasture management may be considered for the BRWMA. There again, we will consider the overall need for this habitat component. We will also consider costs in terms of reduced nesting cover which may be at more of a premium than goose pasture.

**Issue 8: There is still a weed problem on Sterling WMA.**

Discussion: Traditionally, the wildlife profession and agri-business have disagreed on the effects of "weeds". This disagreement has been the root of the neighbor relations problem on SWMA for many years. Wildlife biologists considered the "forb" component (broad-leafed, herbaceous plants) as a critical part of the vegetation that makes up wildlife habitat. The forbs provide density and visual obstruction that increases the chances that a nest will be successful. The agri-business community however saw weeds as a threat to their livelihood in the form of reduced crop production. Eventually it became obvious to the wildlife supporters, that "noxious weeds" are everyone's concern. By law, weeds that are listed as "noxious" must be controlled by landowners. "Noxious" weeds are usually exotic plants that have not evolved with the same natural controls as native plants. The result of a noxious weed infestation is a monotypic plant community that usually is not suited for most wildlife species. These infestations tend to reduce crop and range yields, as well as reduce the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat. It now is accepted that noxious weed control is a problem for everyone. There still is a division between the two groups concerning forbs that are not on the Noxious Weeds list. This may be one of those issues that is never resolved. However, SWMA neighbors do acknowledge that the Department has recognized the problem and is taking active measures to fulfill their responsibility.

A major effort has been made over the past years to control noxious weeds on SWMA. This effort will be continued for as long as necessary or as long as finances allow. Crews of temporary employees have used tractors, 4-wheelers and backpack sprayers to work on problem areas. A helicopter has also been hired for aerial spraying. The Bingham County Weed Supervisor makes periodic checks on the area to help identify problem spots. Logs are kept of the time and dollars spent on this problem.

These efforts to control noxious weeds are carried out just as intensively on all of the WMA's in the region. In particular, Department staff and temporary employees as well as the Bannock County Inmate Labor Detail have sprayed, dug and pulled dyer's woad and white top on PWMA. Department personnel have sprayed dyer's woad, thistle and henbane on GSWMA and MWMA. We have sprayed and pulled Canadian thistle and yellow toadflax on BRWMA. The regional habitat biologist stays in contact with the county weed supervisors in regards to weed infestations, new technologies for controlling weeds and contracting with counties to help control weeds.

### **Issue 9: Predators need to be controlled on SWMA.**

Discussion: For many years wildlife professionals believed that because predators and prey evolved together, predation would not impact a prey species beyond the tolerance of that prey population. Recent research has shown that in some instances this previous theory does not hold true. In cases where habitat quality and/or quantity has been severely degraded or where predator levels are being sustained at unusually high levels, prey populations are being significantly impacted. In particular, waterfowl numbers are being suppressed at unhealthy levels by predators such as feral cats, skunks, foxes and raccoons. All of these predators are maintaining unusually high populations levels because of human subsidized den sites and food sources. These subsidies combined with fragmented nesting cover for waterfowl allow the predators to have an insurmountable advantage over nesting birds.

Research has shown that predation on the SWMA waterfowl nests is consistent with that unusually high impact. Since the top priority of SWMA is waterfowl production, a change in management seems to be appropriate. Several possibilities exist which include, but are not limited to, predator habitat management, sub-lethal poisoning, trapping and re-locating, and lethal removal. The statewide goal on WMA's is to achieve 30% nesting success. The recent study showed that SWMA is well below that level. The goals of the WMA do not include removing all predators. The goal is more to create a better balance between predators and their prey.

### **Issue 10: Do not construct a new building on SWMA**

Discussion: A common perception by the public is that the Department spends more dollars on equipment (such as trucks) than on wildlife. In fact, equipment and facilities are critical to the Department being able to effectively carry out its programs.

The "Headquarters" on SWMA is used to store equipment, provide a work area for repairs and construction, and provide a shelter for employees and visitors during meetings and events. The current facility on SWMA is inadequate. The building is not weather proof, animal proof or secure. Equipment and supplies are constantly being damaged by birds and mice. In addition, conditions are conducive to health problems, such as Hantavirus, associated with deer mice. Very little work can be done inside of the building during the winter because of the cold temperatures, rain, wind, and snow accumulation. Equipment that is stored outside of the building is subject to vandalism and theft because of the poor condition of the fence and the remoteness of the compound. Finances will not allow a new building to be constructed entirely

with Department funds. A continuing effort is being made to locate outside cost sharing to help fund the project.

**Issue 11: Crop sharing should be stopped on SWMA and that land planted with habitat.**

Discussion: The purpose of WMA management is to develop and/or protect wildlife habitat. Every reasonable opportunity to improve habitat is explored; however, financial and/or logistic problems often constrain projects. Because of SWMA's unique situation of being a relatively small area surrounded by intense farming and grazing, habitat enhancements are required to sustain wildlife populations at levels requested by the public. Otherwise, the acreage could not provide the necessary habitat requirements. Additionally, wildlife species such as the ring-necked pheasant are closely linked to agriculture. In order to manage for pheasants, a farming program is necessary to provide the feeding, nesting and wintering habitat. Finally, in an effort to provide a diverse landscape to provide for a variety of wildlife species, woody cover plantings are needed to provide nesting, wintering, loafing and escape cover for nongame as well as game species. Currently, all agricultural land that is farmed on SWMA (approximately 366 acres) is part of the share-crop program. Cooperating local farmers provide compensation to the Department in exchange for the opportunity to farm on the WMA. The compensation is in the form of food plots, maintenance, planting of trees and nesting cover, and irrigation of trees and nesting cover on the WMA. No cash payments are made to the Department. This form of compensation is critical to the functioning of SWMA. The Department does not have access to equipment or the means to develop irrigation to properly supply the needs of wildlife populations. This program provides the Department with additional habitat developments on the WMA that, otherwise, would not be feasible. However, it is also important that the Department, and the resource, get a fair return on the leases that are made.

**Issue 12: Restrict access to roads and trails necessary to satisfy diverse recreation objectives.**

Discussion: Part of the mission of WMA's is to provide adequate public access for consumptive and non-consumptive public uses without compromising the quality of the habitat, the wildlife security, or the outdoor experience. License fees have been used in the purchase of WMA property and license holders, as well as others, need to have adequate access to these properties. The questions that arise are "How accessible should the land be?" and "What kinds of access are appropriate?" Foot access does not seem to cause many problems for wildlife during most of the year. An exception in the case of PWMA would be during a severe winter when animals are stressed by the cold temperatures and/or snow levels.

Vehicle access, however, can be detrimental to the quality of wildlife security and to the condition of the animals. Higher vulnerability during the hunting season is also a direct result of increased vehicular access. In addition, many sportsmen and women define the quality of their experience by the amount of traffic or the number of other hunters they encounter during an outdoor experience. The Department has always tried to provide opportunity for a wide range of constituents while protecting wildlife and its habitat.

### **Issue 13: Neighbor relations need to be improved on SWMA.**

Discussion: Since the inception of SWMA, neighbors and sportsmen have voiced concerns with the management practices used on the area. Often, the criticisms or suggestions were contradictory, unrealistic or contrary to the purpose and goals of the WMA. The topics included: "Not enough grazing," "Too much grazing," "Not enough farming," "Too much farming," "Too much wildlife," "Not enough wildlife," "Too many weeds," "Not enough vegetation." There were however, several suggestions that warranted a change and were incorporated. The Department has worked very hard to make sure that neighbor relations receive equal consideration with sportsmen concerns. The Department understands that effective management of SWMA is significantly easier with the cooperation and support of the local landowners. Over the past few years, relations have improved greatly. An ongoing effort is being continued to further improve the relationships with neighbors. An Aberdeen office day has been established to allow better access to Department employees by neighbors. A local working team has been developed that is made up of local landowners, the local Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist, and sportsmen. This group meets to discuss issues, provide input and to help disseminate information. This is part of the increased effort to keep neighbors informed about activities on the WMA. Improving communication is a top priority and several areas for improvement have been identified. However, despite all efforts, there are several chronic issues that may never be completely resolved to the complete satisfaction of some citizens (i.e. goose depredations and weeds). In these instances, it is important that both parties understand the positions and that efforts are made to minimize the impacts.

### **Issue 14: The public should never be locked out of a WMA. The BRWMA should have some sort of motorized access to forest property on both the north and south side of the river.**

Discussion: In comparing this issue with Issue 12, one can see that as WMA managers, Department personnel are caught in trying to satisfy constituents who have varying ideas regarding the kind and amount of access that should be provided on our WMA's. Some sportsmen and women want increased levels of motorized access while other hunters and anglers want to see reduced levels of motorized access. The Department has attempted to provide varying degrees of motorized access on the WMA's in the Southeast Region. Please refer to the travel plans and maps for each WMA.

Motorized access to the Caribou National Forest (CNF) exists on the south side of the Blackfoot River at this time. Access can be gained by fording the river near the southwest corner of the BRWMA and following a four-wheeler trail up a draw along the west boundary of the BRWMA. Also, access can be gained by driving up Kendall Canyon to Mill Canyon at the southeast corner of the BRWMA.

Access to the CNF is also available on the north side of the Blackfoot River by driving up the Rasmussen Valley road and on to a road system on Rasmussen Ridge.

**Issue 15: Children, senior citizens and handicapped people need closer access to the Blackfoot River.**

Discussion: As stated previously, public access is a major part of the mission of all Department WMA's. This includes access for those of all physical abilities. Varying levels of barrier-free access is considered on all Department properties and is provided based on the level of use at each area. At the current time, the level of use at the BRWMA does not warrant the expenditure of funds and manpower that would be involved in creating barrier-free access. This situation will undoubtedly change as more people use the area for hunting, fishing and outdoor appreciation. We will continue to monitor the level of use and respond to the needs of our users. We will also consider providing barrier-free access at points further downstream that receive higher levels of traffic.

**Issue 16: Mutual cooperation with other land management agencies (USFS and BLM) to accomplish habitat improvements.**

Discussion: Wildlife and their associated habitats obviously cross the jurisdictional boundaries of several agencies and private land ownerships. Cooperation with these other land managers is necessary to provide the best possible habitat for wildlife and fish. We have worked with these agencies on wildlife and fish habitat projects on Department lands and well as on BLM, USFS, IDL and private property.

Projects such as prescribed burns, bitterbrush and Hobble Creek sagebrush plantings and Hobble Creek sagebrush seeding have been carried out on PWMA in cooperation with BLM. We have also planted bitter brush seedlings on critical winter range on BLM land.

The regional habitat biologist is working on an Coordinated Resource Management Plan for the Georgetown Summit area with IDL and private landowners. The Department would then have the opportunity to influence a larger portion of the big game winter range than that encompassed by the GSWMA. We also work with IDL and USFS in the BRWMA area on grazing and logging issues.

**Issue 17: Exclude livestock grazing on elk calving meadows on the BRWMA.**

Discussion: The presence of domestic livestock can displace elk from traditional calving areas. Therefore, the timing of any livestock grazing that occurs on the BRWMA should be such that it does not interfere with elk calving. Any livestock grazing done on the BRWMA must be consistent with the mission of the area and will be timed so as not to conflict with wildlife production and/or use of the BRWMA.

**APPENDIX X**

**FEDERAL AID PROJECT STATEMENT AND PROGRESS REPORT**

The following document is included as part of the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) management plan. The Federal Aid Project for BRWMA is part of the annual management plan for the Southeast Region East Habitat District, so only selected portions of the document are specific to BRWMA. Conversely, these excerpts reflect only those WMA activities relevant to the Federal Aid Project and may not include a complete list of planned activities for the current year on BRWMA.

**FEDERAL AID PROJECT STATEMENT AND PROGRESS REPORT**

State: Idaho, Project Number: Other Funds, Project Leader: Jerry Deal, Period: 7/1/98-6/30/99  
Southeast Region Habitat Management

EAST HABITAT DISTRICT AND GEORGETOWN, MONTPELIER, PORTNEUF AND BLACKFOOT RIVER WMAs

Management Priorities:

1. Big Game Winter Range
2. Public Access for Hunting and Fishing
3. Other Wildlife Appreciation and Production

ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY CODE	UNITS OF WORK		COST		COMMENTS
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
<b>BIG GAME WINTER RANGE</b>						
<b>Management Program – Vegetation Rejuvenation</b>						
Coordinate collection of bitterbrush and sagebrush seed	1322	1 week		1440		Species benefited:
Coordinate planting of 8000 bitterbrush and sage brush seedlings on WMA's and other public lands	1322	1 week		1440		Species benefited:

ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY CODE	UNITS OF WORK		COST		COMMENTS
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
Coordinate with Bureau of Land Management to perform controlled burn on Portneuf WMA	1710	.5 week		720		Species benefited:
Monitor vegetation transects on Montpelier, Georgetown and Portneuf WMAs	1332	2 weeks		2,880		Species benefited:
Control noxious weeds on all areas	1211	4 weeks		5,760		Species benefited:
<b>Management Program - Control Trespass Grazing</b>						
Supervise construction of boundary fence at Portneuf WMA Quinn Creek area	1211	2+ miles 3.5 weeks		5,040		
Repair and maintain boundary fencing on WMA's and conservation easements.	1211	25 miles 3 weeks		4,320		Species benefited: Elk, waterfowl, cutthroat trout
<b>Management Program - Provide Security</b>						
Maintain winter road/trail closures with gates and signing	1211	.5 week		720		Species benefited:
<b>PUBLIC HUNTING</b>						
<b>Management Program - Provide Access</b>						
Maintain signs and information boards at all WMA's	1211	1 week		1,440		Species benefited:
Place/replace boundary markers and other information signs at Georgetown Summit, Montpelier, Portneuf and Blackfoot River WMA's	1211	1 week		1,440		Species benefited:

ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY CODE	UNITS OF WORK		COST		COMMENTS
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
Provide/maintain access roads/trails and parking areas	1211	1 week		1,440		Species benefited:
Control noxious weeds in cooperation with counties	1211	(See winter range)				Species benefited:
Monitor hunter and angler use, enforce regulations and WMA management policies	1211	1.5 week		2,160		Species benefited:
<b>OTHER WILDLIFE APPRECIATION AND PRODUCTION</b>						
<b>Management Program - Provide Nesting and Brooding Habitat</b>						
Vegetation rejuvenation through burning, herbicides, and grazing	1322	(See winter range)				Species benefited:
Provide nest sites with structures and by preserving snags	1322	.5 week		720		Species benefited:
<b>Management Program - Monitor Grouse Breeding Populations</b>						
Conduct lek counts and drumming counts	1460	.5 week		720		Species benefited:
<b>Management Program - Provide Public Access</b>						
Provide and maintain access roads/trails and parking areas		(See public hunting)				
Compile species lists for distribution	1630	1.5 weeks		2,160		Species benefited:

ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY CODE	UNITS OF WORK		COST		COMMENTS
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>						
<b>Management Program - Provide Technical Assistance</b>						
Review environmental impacts of proposed projects	1710	8 projects 2 weeks		2,880		Species benefited:
Assist landowners on wildlife management practices	1720	25 landowners 6 weeks		8,640		Species benefited:
<b>Management Program - Administrative Duties</b>						
Develop planning documents, review and evaluation	1620	15 documents 6 weeks		8,640		Species benefited:
Complete long-term management plans for WMAs	1630	6 weeks		8,640		
Maintain files; prepare administrative documents (reports, budgets, purchasing requests, time sheets, etc.)	1630	6 weeks		8,640		Species benefited:
Other duties (as assigned)	1630	5 weeks		7,200		Species benefited:
<b>Management Program - Cooperation With Other Agencies</b>						
Coordinate and meet with citizen working groups associated with Portneuf and Blackfoot River WMAs		2.5 weeks		3,600		
Attend coordination meetings, tours, and meetings related to projects by land management agencies	1630	1 week		1,440		Species benefited:

Total PR Contract With Overhead	\$0
Other Funds	\$82,080
Grand Total	\$82,080

**NARRATIVE**

This project will provide 8,000 acres of big game winter range and benefit 500 wintering elk and 1,000 wintering mule deer. The 1,720-acre Blackfoot River WMA will also provide waterfowl breeding habitat and improved cutthroat trout habitat on several miles of the Blackfoot River. This project will provide an estimated 3,000 person-days of hunting opportunity and 1,500 person-days of wildlife viewing and fishing opportunity.

## Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area Plan

Submitted by:

Jerry Deal, Regional Wildlife Biologist

Date:

Reviewed by:

Paul Wackenhut, Regional Habitat Manager

Date:

Tom Parker, State Wildlife Habitat Manager

Date:

Approved by:

Dexter Pitman, Regional Supervisor

Date: