

COLORADO GULCH: ENHANCE HABITAT. ENHANCE EXPERIENCE.

By reversing decades of channelization, we can offer more habitat for fish and access for humans. So we can get back to enjoying a Big Wood River full of fish.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Wood River Land Trust
Blaine County

FUNDING

Wood River Land Trust
FEMA & Idaho Office of
Emergency Management
Blaine County Land, Water,
and Wildlife Program
Trout and Salmon
Foundation

RIVER ENHANCEMENTS

- Riparian enhancement
- Wood augmentation
- Bridge refabricating
- Floodplain connectivity
- Bank stabilization and setback

PROJECT COST

Restoration: \$100,200
Bridges: \$350,000-
\$600,000



PROJECT GOALS AND BENEFITS

The Colorado Gulch (COG) river restoration project offers a unique opportunity to enhance floodplain habitat and reconnect historic side channels approximately 1,200 feet of length by removing approximately 1,300 cubic yards (cy) of rip-rap and artificial fill that historically protected the COG road and bridge.

The main limiting factor for salmonid habitat on the Big Wood River (BWR) is disconnection of its floodplain to allow the river to create complex habitat and access critical rearing areas during high flow events.

Disconnection has occurred due to development of homes and other infrastructure that reduced the BWR from an anastomosing channel form to a single channel form for the majority of the river.

Disconnection of historic side channels have reduced rearing and spawning habitat which has led to decreased survival and productivity of salmonid populations in the BWR.

Removal of the rip-rap will also allow us to construct large woody debris structures to enhance complex salmonid habitat, and provide cover by enhancing riparian habitat. Several pedestrian bridges will be constructed to open access to Colorado Gulch and the riparian floodplain.

This project is a great example of how we can reverse decades of bad practices such as channelization, bank hardening, and disconnecting habitats through infrastructure, and enhance salmonid habitat and recreational access.

PROBLEMS AND LIMITING FACTORS AND HISTORY

The 2017 water year for the Big Wood River was above normal. This led to a 50 year flood event for the Big Wood River which compromised the structural integrity of the Colorado Gulch Bridge. The previous road bridge length was too short to allow proper river function and connectivity to the floodplain; which led to the road bridge's infrastructure to be compromised and unsafe for travel during the high flow event of 2017.

In the last 20 years the road bridge's infrastructure was compromised three times due to its short length and restricting the river to the main channel and not allowing connectivity to the floodplain.

The CGB was deemed unsafe for travel in early spring of 2017 and removed on January 5th, 2018. What remains is the bridge abutments, rip rap along the banks, and the bridge approach fill material. Because of this, the area around Colorado Gulch has been channelized, and disconnected from legacy side channels and floodplain habitat.

