

## **Project ID: 199505702**

### **Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Program**

*Please Note: Project numbers/titles/sponsors shown in the ISRP Preliminary Review document are incorrectly associated. Corrected number/title/sponsor shown above.*

**Sponsors:** Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

**Subbasins:** Headwaters (and all other subbasins in the Upper Snake Province)

**FY 03 Request:** \$3,592,141

**3 YR Estimate:** \$13,582,681

**Short Description:** Protect, enhance, restore and maintain wildlife habitats to mitigate for construction losses at Minidoka and Palisades dams.

#### **Responses requested by the ISRP:**

*The ISRP requested a coordinated response from the sponsors of the four wildlife mitigation project proposals in southern Idaho (199505700-03). Accordingly, the responses for these projects are identical except for No. 199505700 that includes information about a plant material center at Deer Parks Wildlife Mitigation Unit.*

#### **1. ISRP Comment:**

This is one of four Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation proposals (199505700 through 03). All are more or less identical... The response should more clearly point out their continuing relationship to each other... The ISRP comments on each are mostly identical... and a coordinated response from the sponsors would be appropriate.

#### **Response:**

The four separate Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation (SIWM) proposals are for independent, interrelated projects. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT) have been implementing the SIWM project since 1996 in the geographic area now designated by the Northwest Power Planning Council (NWPPC) in the 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program as the Middle and Upper Snake Provinces. The shift to province based program funding and management made it necessary for IDFG, SBT and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes (SPT) to divide the ongoing SIWM project along province boundaries. The SBT and IDFG submitted separate wildlife mitigation proposals in the Upper Snake Province and the SPT and IDFG submitted separate proposals in the Middle Snake Province because IDFG, SBT and SPT are separate management agencies with differing authorities through state and federal law.

The 1980 Power Act recognizes and gives deference to IDFG, SPT and SBT as the fish and wildlife managers in the southern Idaho geographic area. These three separate entities are cooperating to implement BPA funded wildlife mitigation actions. The SBT and IDFG have operated under an MOA since 1996 to implement wildlife mitigation projects together and the SPT has recently become an actively involved member of SIWM with the initiation of a wildlife mitigation project on the Bruneau River. IDFG,

SBT and SPT currently work together under the draft Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Work Groups Operating Guidelines and Guiding Principles For Middle and Upper Snake Provinces (copy attached). Coordinated planning and implementation of projects helps BPA meet its mitigation obligations in the provinces and independent contracting of funds helps assure accountability.

## **2. ISRP Comment:**

The M&E program is underdeveloped. The proponent mentions that they are a member of the interagency work group supporting Proposal # 199206100 “Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation”, but should have included and more completely developed the plans for monitoring and evaluation that were developed by the Albeni Falls Workgroup and reviewed by the ISRP in the addendum to report ISRP 2001-4 “Review of Draft Albeni Falls M&E Plan”.

### **Response:**

In proposals No. 199505700 and No. 199505701 for the Upper and Middle Snake Provinces, IDFG identifies an FTE (split between the provinces) to implement a coordinated M&E program so that M&E activities in northern Idaho are done in full cooperation those in southern Idaho – a statewide M&E program. The ISRP has provided the impetus for development of increased M&E activities for wildlife mitigation projects throughout the Columbia Basin. Previous project proposals did not include adequate funding to develop and implement an effective M&E program. This proposal reflects both an increase in the M&E program and implementation of M&E at the statewide level. Although we conduct monitoring activities on all of our mitigation projects, with the current proposal we acknowledge the need for increased funding to implement a monitoring program that will inform an adaptive management process.

IDFG is a member of the Albeni Falls Workgroup and IDFG initiated and cooperated in the development of the Albeni Falls M&E Plan (a copy of the Draft Albeni Falls M&E Plan is attached with this response). Wildlife habitat losses from hydropower development in southern Idaho are different than those found at Albeni Falls. The southern Idaho losses include a wider range of target species and cover types because upland habitat was lost in addition to wetland types. SIWM has already adopted the Albeni Falls M&E Plan for use in southern Idaho in wetland cover types and we are in the process of expanding that plan to include techniques for monitoring upland habitat and wildlife species. We anticipate having the draft Southern Idaho Monitoring and Evaluation Plan completed and ready for review by August 1, 2002. We are requesting that ISRP assist us with this project by reviewing and commenting on the draft plan.

In its SIWM proposals, IDFG proposes using the Albeni Falls template to develop monitoring protocols with ties to national databases. Techniques or protocols developed for Albeni Falls or SIWM will be used in the statewide wildlife mitigation monitoring program. Using a coordinated statewide wildlife mitigation monitoring program, in coordination with SBT and SPT, we are eager to begin using the “top-down, nationwide

habitat and land-use monitoring program with consistent sampling procedures across the Columbia Basin...” suggested in the December 11, 2001 letter from ISRP Chair Rick Williams to NWPPC members, as soon as it is developed.

### **3. ISRP Comment:**

This proposal suggests using a programmatic approach rather than identifying specific actions and specific land purchases. Given this approach, it is necessary for the sponsors to describe their prioritization protocol in detail... they should ensure that this Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation proposal is consistent with the habitat acquisition and restorations plans developed by the Albeni Falls Workgroup and reviewed by ISRP in the addendum to the report ISRP 2001-4 “Review of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes’ Habitat Acquisition and Restoration Plan”.

### **Response:**

Acquisitions and easements implemented by the sponsors of this project are consistent with guidance that already exists in the Council’s 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program (see Section 11.2.D). As mentioned in the project history section (Section e.) of the proposals, project prioritization began with the preparation of protection, mitigation and enhancement plans. Much of the general information in those plans is still valid and some of the specific parcels identified as important mitigation areas are still unprotected. Also noted in the project proposals was the use of GAP analysis and of the Nature Conservancy’s eco-regional planning tools to provide information to focus mitigation efforts. Timely information about wetland conservation needs is available from a series of wetland conservation strategies that are currently being developed for Idaho. References for these documents are listed in the project proposals.

The project sponsors have long used a process for determining consistency with the fish and wildlife program and for ranking individual properties. In the past, project ranking was done at the Columbia Basin level by the members of the CBFWA Wildlife Committee using criteria that were developed by the region’s fish and wildlife managers. These criteria are still useful to many CBFWA member organizations including IDFG, SBT and SPT. Attached is a copy of our current criteria, Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Work Groups Program Consistency and Project Ranking Criteria.

### **4. ISRP Response:**

Objective 3 is to develop a plant materials center to provide a predictable and reliable supply of site adapted native plants and seed for habitat and rehabilitation projects. This objective seems to (*sic*) opportunistic given availability of land and irrigation facilities at the Deer Parks Wildlife Mitigation Unit. The response should give specific evidence of the non-availability of native plant material, explain why the private growers (or other suppliers) in Idaho and the region cannot or will not contract to provide plant material, and evaluate the loss of wildlife habitat if this land remains in agricultural production.

**Response:**

Agricultural lands at the Deer Parks Wildlife Mitigation Unit are currently managed using sharecrop agreements. The arrangements typically involve allowing a private party to plant crops and harvest only a portion, with the remainder being left to provide habitat or food for wildlife. Some of the less productive or unsuitable agricultural land is already being converted to perennial native vegetation through the use of the sharecropper's equipment and labor. This system benefits wildlife and wildlife habitat and assures the maintenance of property values and will be continued. The opportunity exists to use sharecrop agreements to provide wildlife habitat and native plant materials at the same time by planting and managing natives instead of agricultural crops on suitable land. Several levels of native plant materials production could be accommodated at Deer Parks including research and field trials of selected species or varieties (Shaw 2002), production of foundation material of varieties that are ready for release but must be "increased" (made available in larger quantities) to provide enough seed so that private growers can begin commercial production (Hoag 2002), and actual commodity production in partnership with private growers using a share crop system.

The demand for native plant materials often far exceeds the supply, especially during years with extensive wildfire rehabilitation needs (Johansen 1997). Demand for native plant materials for restoration and rehabilitation also exceeds supply. There is not enough seed collected or available to be collected from wild lands to meet current demand, let alone potential usage, and currently much of the demand is met from field-grown seed. There is apparently a market for increasing field-grown seed for many species (McArthur et al 1999). Richards et al. (1997) recommends that increased emphasis needs to be placed on development of the ecological and technical knowledge necessary for increasing native seed availability at reasonable local levels.

There is a delay of from one to several years between planting a crop for production of native seed and time of harvest. In addition, a given planting has a limited "life span" during which it will produce a crop before it has to be replanted. In order for private seed suppliers to be willing to risk investing their resources to supply a particular plant material, they must have a reasonable expectation that there will be a market for their product. That is not always the case because the market is unpredictable and can be extremely variable depending on the severity of the wildfire season and funding for other restoration efforts. By using mitigation land at Deer Parks to produce native plant seed (on a share crop basis) it will be possible to reduce the risk and cost to cooperators because part of the investment in planting the crop will be borne by the managers of the mitigation project to provide wildlife habitat. Potential cooperators will be able reduce their risk and cost accordingly.

Some of the land at Deer Parks will be left in agricultural production for the foreseeable future because it provides habitat for several wildlife mitigation target species and helps prevent depredation by wildlife on neighboring private land. Some of the former

cropland will be (and has already been) converted to permanent vegetation to provide wildlife habitat. The use of a portion of the land at Deer Parks to provide native plant materials is an opportunity to carry the benefits of mitigation off-site to other mitigation projects in the surrounding area as well as for restoration and rehabilitation efforts being carried out by other land managers in the region.

**Attachments:**

1. Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Work Groups Operating Guidelines and Guiding Principles For Middle and Upper Snake Provinces
2. Draft Albeni Falls M&E Plan
3. Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Work Groups Program Consistency and Project Ranking Criteria

**References:**

*(Copies of these documents were faxed and mailed to NWPPC on March 14, 2002.)*

Hoag, J.C. 2002 [Personal communication]. Aberdeen, ID: USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Material Center, Aberdeen, ID.

Johansen, J. 1997. In: Shaw, Nancy L.; Roundy, Bruce A., comps. 1997. Proceedings: Using seeds of native species on rangelands; 1997 February 16-21; Rapid City, SD. Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-GTR-372. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station.

McArthur, E. Durant and Young, Stanford A. 1999. In: Monsen, Stephen B.; Stevens, Richard, comps. 1999. Proceedings: Ecology and management of pinyon-juniper communities within the Interior West; 1997 September 15-18; Provo, UT. Proc. RMRS-P-9. Ogden, UT; US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Richards, Rebecca T., Chambers, J. and Ross, C. 1997. In: Shaw, Nancy L.; Roundy, Bruce A., comps. 1997. Proceedings: Using seeds of native species on rangelands; 1997 February 16-21; Rapid City, SD. Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-GTR-372. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station.

Shaw, Nancy L. 2002 [Personal communication]. Boise, ID: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Boise, ID.