

Water Quality Improvement Projects on the Emmett Ranger District: 1951-2013

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Improving water quality conditions is often the focus of management strategies on Forest Service lands throughout the nation. Adaptive management, whether formally acknowledged or adopted out of necessity, is a recurring theme in the evolution of Best Management Practices implemented to ensure management actions do not degrade water quality. Four projects from the Emmett Ranger District of the Boise National Forest with the theme of improving water quality are presented. 1) A historical photographic study conducted in Anderson Creek watershed documenting the effects of road construction and timber harvest on erosion and sedimentation was revisited 62 years later during the fall of 2013. This is contrasted with current efforts to address road-related sedimentation and work toward meeting the goals of the sediment TMDL for the Middle Fork Payette River. 2) A trail reconstruction project and trail use reclassification was conducted in Bull Creek with the goal of reducing sedimentation and improving Critical Bull Trout Habitat. After a 7 year closure, the trail re-opened to the public in 2012. 3) Installed in the mid-1980's, in-stream habitat enhancement structures (log weirs) were placed in Squaw Creek with the goal of increasing the frequency and quality of pools for native fish. Over time, these static structures inhibited natural channel dynamics, degrading stream conditions. In 2012, all structures were removed and photo monitoring was established. 4) Expansion of dispersed campsites in the upper Squaw Creek area has led to accelerated sedimentation and impacts to soil quality and Critical Bull Trout Habitat. In 2013, several sites were hardened using crushed basalt aggregate and barrier rocks. This work reduced expansion of dispersed sites toward streams and stabilized soils on access ways and parking areas. More sites are planned in 2014.