

# **Scoping Information Package**

## **Proposal for Rainey Park Stream Restoration and Wetland Creation Project, Bannock County, Idaho**

This information package summarizes the proposal from the City of Pocatello to be partially funded by a WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) grant to perform construction activities necessary to implement a river restoration and wetland creation project.

Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences. The Bureau of Reclamation is seeking input to better identify issues and concerns associated with this proposal further detailed below.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's WaterSMART Program establishes a framework to provide Federal leadership and assistance on the efficient use of water; integrate water and energy policies to support the sustainable use of all natural resources; form strong diverse partnerships with states, tribes and local entities; and coordinate with other Department bureaus and offices on water conservation activities. Through the WaterSMART Grants Program, Reclamation provides a 50/50 cost share, funding entities and promoting the sustainable use of water resources, improving the ecological resilience of rivers and streams, and conserving water for multiple uses through collaborative conservation efforts.

### **Background and Existing Condition**

The Portneuf River is a 124-mile-long tributary to the Snake River that flows through the city of Pocatello in southeastern Idaho. In 1968, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) constructed riprapped levees as part of the Portneuf River Flood Control Project which removed hundreds of acres of wetlands. The levees run 4.6 miles on both sides of the river and end just north of the proposed project area where a 1.6-mile concrete channel runs north from the river. The proposed project area is all on public land and sits between Centennial Park to the southwest and Rainey Park to the northeast. Centennial Park currently consists of large grassy fields with a playground, covered pavilion, restrooms and benches and Rainey Park consists mainly of an unused grass ballfield that sits to the north.

This proposed project is part of a larger Portneuf River Vision Study that was developed in 2016 by the City of Pocatello and USACE. The study includes a wide range of environmental goals to rehabilitate the Portneuf River ecosystem including improving hydrologic functions by increasing floodplain, wetland, and riparian habitat areas, as well as improving water quality.

### **Need for Action**

The purpose and need for the proposed action is to fulfill the WaterSMART grant allowing the City of Pocatello to perform a river restoration and wetland creation project. The health of the Portneuf River has been compromised by these flood protection levees and concrete channels which removed hundreds of acres of wetlands when installed. The WaterSMART grant project

would improve urban river health and access by creating a wetland with a side channel making needed habitat for invertebrates, amphibians, bird, fish and small mammals, as well as a stormwater pond to capture sediment.

### **Proposed Action**

Reclamation proposes to provide funding through a WaterSMART grant for the City of Pocatello to perform a river restoration and wetland creation project occurring within Bannock County in southeastern Idaho (Figure 1). The action would set back approximately 625 linear feet of right bank levee to create a wetland and side channel within the levee, along with ADA-accessible river access for anglers and floaters. Additionally, a stormwater pond would be created to capture the first flush of sediment-laden waters off city streets.

The levee would maintain flood control as the authorized purpose of the federal project. The set-back design would provide a wider and flatter area for the wetland with a 10-foot-wide, paved walking/biking trail on top that connects to existing trail on either end. The wetland would consist of emergent zones along the mainstem of the Portneuf River and constructed side channel and scrub-shrub zones on the slightly elevated benches surrounded by the emergent zones. The side channel would consist of a gravel-cobble gradation and have perennial flow conditions in an average water year. The side channel banks would have erosion control measures and revegetation treatments.

The stormwater pond would sit just east of the proposed wetland with a purpose to direct sediment laden runoff through a 48-inch stormwater pipe from 450 acres of city streets and infiltrate it underground. The proposed project would also include an ADA-accessible path at the south end that leads to the river with a bridge and boardwalk over the proposed wetland. Stepping stones and stairs at the north end of the proposed project would lead back up to the top of the levee.

### **Preliminary Alternative Development**

The environmental assessment would include consideration of the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative. Additionally, alternatives would be developed with the identified issues throughout the NEPA process.

# Exhibits

## 1. Project Area Map

