

Bruneau River Soil Conservation District

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Bruneau, Idaho, 83604



Photo Credit: Idaho Tourism



Photo Credit: ISDA

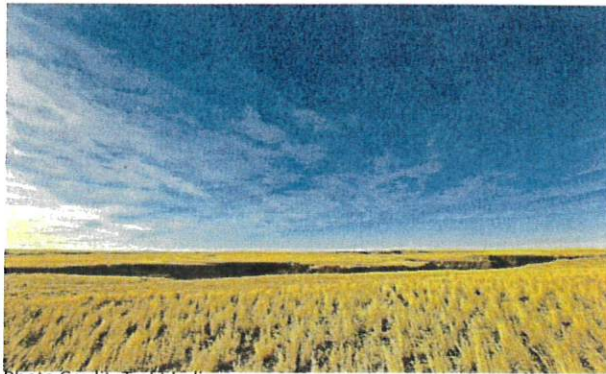


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Annual Five-Year Resource Conservation Business Plan

January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2024

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Forward

The Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District is one of 50s Conservation Districts in Idaho. Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government but are not state agencies. Conservation Districts are charged with carrying out a program for the conservation, use and development of soil, water, and other natural resources.

Conservation Districts were organized in the 1930's in response to the degradation of soils during the Dust Bowl era. Conservation districts are the primary entities to provide assistance to private landowners and land users in the conservation, sustainment, improvement and enhancement of Idaho's natural resources. They are catalysts for coordinating and implementing conservation programs, channeling expertise from all levels of government into action at the local level. Programs are non-regulatory; science-based technical assistance, incentive-based financial programs and informational and educational programs at the local level.

Both by legislation and by agreement the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance to landowners and land users through Conservation Districts. Each Conservation District in Idaho has a signed Mutual Agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Governor of Idaho that establishes a framework for cooperation.

This Annual Five- Year Resource Conservation Business Plan was developed not only to guide the Conservation District, but also to encourage cooperation among landowners, government agencies, private organizations, and elected officials. Through knowledge and cooperation, all concerned can ensure a sustainable natural resource base for present and future generations in the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District.

This document identifies the resource needs in the Conservation District and presents a resource conservation action plan for meeting these needs.

The Board of elected supervisors of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District this thirtieth day of March 2021 do hereby approve the following document known as the Resource Conservation Business Plan. This Plan will be in effect for a five-year period ending December 31st, 2026 during which time it will be updated annually and/or amended, as necessary.

Five-Year Resource Conservation Plan Business Plan (2019 - 2024) Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

Organization of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

The Bruneau River SWCD is a political subdivision of the State of Idaho-authorities, powers and structure contained in Soil Conservation District Law, Title 22, Chapter 27, Idaho Code. Organized in 1953 to provide voluntary land and water conservation technical and financial assistance to landowners and uses within the Bruneau River SWCD boundary.

Function of the Bruneau River SWCD District

To make available technical and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

Who We Serve and Why

The people and natural resources in the Bruneau River SWCD, to conserve natural resources for the beneficial and sustainable use by all.

Mission of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of local land user for the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Vision of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

To help our local producers conserve irrigation water, control noxious weeds, reduce erosion, and develop sustainable agricultural practices to reduce nitrates in our water supply, while maximizing yields and decreasing inputs. This will ensure that farming and ranching will continue far into the future.

Values of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

Sustainable use of natural resources
Support for agriculture activity that uses sustainable, economic feasible practices
Value and respect for the Idaho Conservation Partnership
Conservation education for adults and youth.

Natural Resource Priorities and Goals

It is the goal of the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District, as elected officials, to set high standards of conservation of natural resources by developing a comprehensive action plan for meeting those needs. The top priorities for the Bruneau River SCWD include:

1. Reduction of invasive and noxious species both aquatic and terrestrial
2. Water Quantity
3. Wind Erosion Control
4. Water Quality
5. Public Outreach

1. Reduction of invasive and noxious weeds

Goal: Prevent the introduction of new invasive weeds, limit the spread of existing invasive species and abate the ecological and economic impacts of invasive species in the Bruneau River SWCD

<http://invasivespecies.idaho.gov/noxious-weed-program>

Objective: Coordinate grassroots efforts among local landowners, land managers and other interested individuals to work cooperatively on invasive and noxious weed controls efforts.

- Work with weed management partners to reduce noxious weeds by 25% within the Bruneau River SWCD before 2026.
- Sponsor an annual weed control workshop in March with a targeted audience of 40 landowners/operators.

2. Water Quantity

Goal: Conserve, maintain, or enhance surface flows and groundwater levels by contributing to and serving the Grandview Bruneau Ground Water Advisory Committee as well as create a comprehensive aquifer management plan.

Objective: Work with local dairies and beef feeding operations to identify areas where nutrient management BMP's can be developed and implemented with technical assistance provided by Conservation Partnership collaborators.

- Increase technical support available to the agricultural community to help increase BMP adoption
 - and repair BMPs that are not working properly
 - Work with agricultural producers to reduce overland runoff and associated sediment, pathogen
 - and nutrient pollution.
- Improve water supply reliability and quality

3. Wind Erosion Control

Goal: Minimize soil loss due to wind erosion.

Objective: Target landowners and operators in priority wind erosion areas and encourage participation in EQIP, WHIP and other Farm Bill programs to use conservation best management practices (BMP) to reduce wind erosion.

- By the end of 2026 to have had five landowners of operators who have developed and implemented a conservation plan to reduce erosion on highly erodible cropland.
- Conduct an annual Conservation Tree Sale program to encourage constituents to develop conservation and farmstead windbreaks.
- Explore the potential for carbon sequestration credits.

4. Water Quality

Goal: To improve ground and surface water quality in the Bruneau River SWCD by conservation planning, funding and promoting implementation of best management practices.

Objective: To increase awareness of water conservation and improve water quality.

- Make available technical and financial assistance for improved irrigation water management to producers via Idaho Conservation Partner programs.
- Provide up to date water information to District irrigators and water users.
- Continue to manage and operate two quagga checkpoint stations in Owyhee County to mitigate the spread of invasive species in waterways.

5. Public Outreach

Goal: To provide information and education to improve conservation practices in the district.

Objective: Have each individual in the district understand their ability to improve quality of life through conservation practices.

- The Bruneau SWCD will continue to provide up to date information to water users regarding the Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement and the Snake River Basin Adjudication through the District quarterly newsletter.
- Develop and implement an Urban Conservation Outreach Program.
- Conduct an annual youth environmental education program, increase participation in the annual speech and poster contest, and sponsor a team for the annual Envirothon.
- Sponsor a booth at the annual County Fair.

Critical Geographic Areas:

- TBD

Information - Education Priorities and Goals:

- By 02/18/2022, all 6th grade students will have had the opportunity to participate in the conservation poster contest.
- By 04/30/2021, all Conservation District cooperator addresses, and files will be updated.

District Operations Priorities, Goals:

- New supervisors will have completed New Supervisor Training.
- By 02/17/2022, complete effective and efficient operations including accounting, personnel management, training and development, annual planning and reporting.
- In cooperation with Conservation Districts develop and carry out effective legislative outreach program to ensure 90% State matching funds for all Districts.
- Conduct Conservation District elections.

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District:

- Urban impact on agricultural production.
- Poorly planned growth in agricultural areas.
- Increasing small acreage farms, five acres or less.
- Limited availability of State funds for conservation.
- Focus on water quality compared to other conservation and environmental issues.
- Increased paper work to getting the job done.
- Trend to regulate agriculture and ranching.

Strategies to Address Trends

- More educational outreach but not the usual - more outreach instead of publications.
- Determine opportunities to coordinate outreach activities with traditional and non-traditional partners.
- Raising awareness of conservation values with state legislature and elected officials to help decision makers be better informed.
- Strengthen locally led efforts
- Supervisors become more informed on current issues impacting working lands, and Farm Bill programs instead of relying solely on the NRCS District Conservationist.

- Determine how to become involved with County Planning and Zoning issues affecting natural resources.
- Map noxious and invasive weeds to more effectively target weed control efforts.
- Establish a data base to track resource conditions.
- Host an open house to make the public aware of Conservation District goal and objectives.
- Solicit input to improve Annual Plan/Five-Year Resource Conservation Business Plan.
- Take proactive steps to funding water delivery systems on irrigated cropland
- Identify the information methods to communicate with small land owners.
- Sponsor project proposal with other districts.
- Training for Conservation District Supervisors and staff.

Staffing Needs

- None currently

Annual Budget Needs

- TBD

Key Decision Makers

- Citizens in Conservation District
- Owyhee County Commissioners
- Owyhee County Planning and Zoning Board Members
- State legislators
- U.S. Senators, Representatives
- Chambers of Commerce
- Special Interest Groups

Priority Actions - 6 Months

- Seek public comment on Annual Plan/Five-year Resource Conservation Business Plan.
- Board of Supervisors review Annual Plan/Five-year Resource Conservation Business Plan.
- Complete written update of Annual Plan/Five-year Resource Conservation Business Plan.
- Identify budget and staff needs.
- Develop, adopt and submit annual budget.
- Adopt and submit Annual Plan/Five-year Resource Conservation Business Plan.

Physical Description

The Bruneau River Soil Conservation District (District) is located in the eastern part of Owyhee County (Figure 1). Owyhee County is a large natural resource-oriented county which makes up virtually the entire southwestern corner of Idaho (Owyhee County 2009). Owyhee County is bounded on the north by the Snake River and Elmore County, on the east by Twin Falls County, on the south by Nevada, and on the west by Oregon. The District and surrounding areas consist of undulating to rolling tablelands, structural benches, and foothills. The major drainageways in the area are the Bruneau and Owyhee Rivers. The spectacular narrow canyons formed by these rivers are more than 1,000 feet deep in some areas. Steep mountains are in the west-central part of the area. Hayden Peak, the highest point in the County, is 8,403 feet in elevation. The lowest point in the County at 2,225 feet in elevation, is along the Snake River in a band of dissected fan terraces at the northwestern boundary (NRCS 2003).

Bruneau River Soil Conservation District Boundary

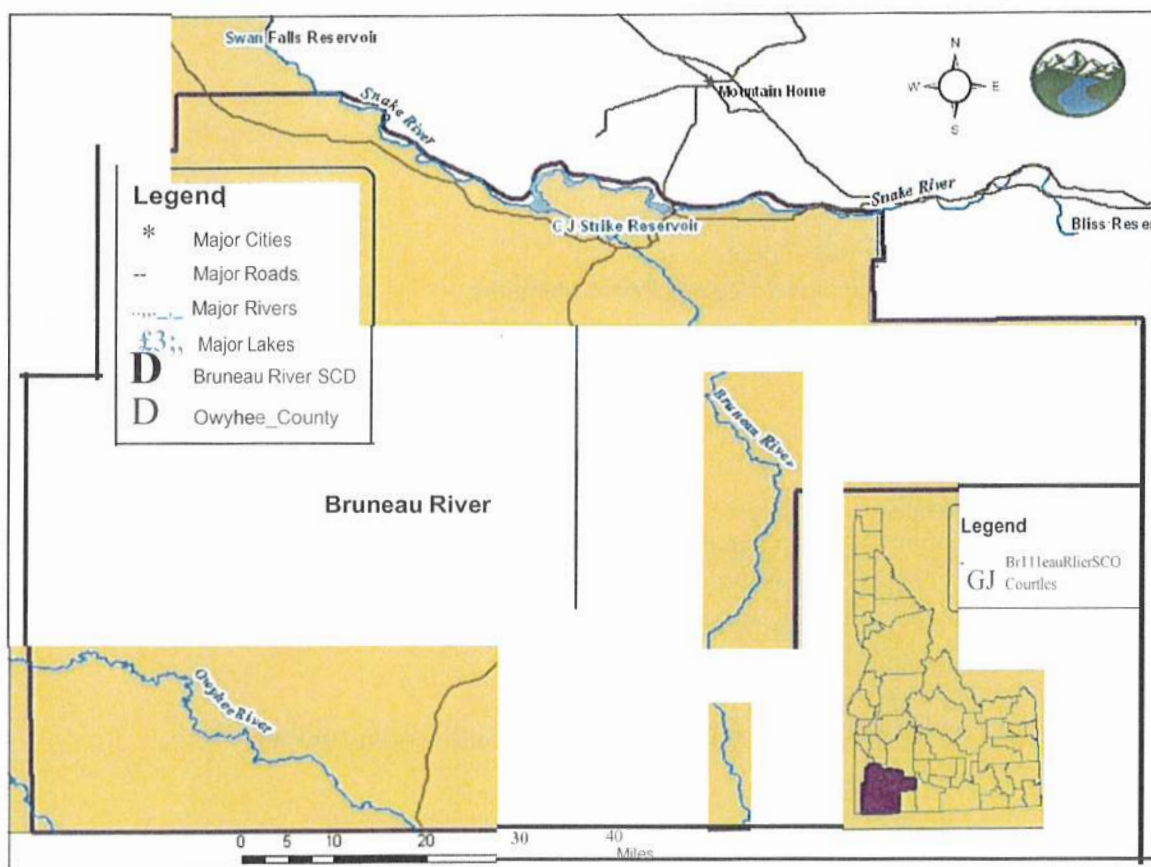


Figure 1. Bruneau River Soil Conservation District.

The climate within the District is characteristic of the Columbia Plateau, an elevated plateau classified as the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. This area is relatively arid with cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers. Mean annual precipitation estimates for District range from 12 inches to 25 inches depending upon elevation (DEQ 2002). Most of the precipitation falls during November, December, and January. During the wetter months the higher elevations receive more moisture than the lower elevations. Snow typically accumulates at the higher elevations during this period and melts during the spring months of March, April, and May. July and August are the hottest months with a mean maximum air temperature typically reaching the high nineties (DEQ 2002).

The District has some of the most rugged and arid land in Idaho; hence, the population centers have been confined to the lowlands along the Snake River. The economy is dependent on agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, and government employment. Industrial development historically has been limited to mining because of the great distance between available markets (NRCS 2003).

The Districts' history is steeped in the tales of rich gold and silver mines which attracted the first non-native settlers. From the first mining efforts in the early 1860s to the present day, mining of minerals has been important to the people who settled and now live in this County. Following the development of the early gold and silver mines came livestock development. Trail herds of cattle from Texas, California and Western Oregon fed here. Sheep were early introduced to provide mutton for the miners (NRCS 2003).

Access rights of way and water rights have historically been critical to the early settlers in this County, and they remain critical today. The federal government owns 76% of the 4.9 million acres of land in Owyhee County. The state of Idaho owns 6.7% of the land, leaving only 17.2% in private ownership (Owyhee County 2009).

Agriculture and Water Supply

Irrigated agriculture in the survey area was initiated by the ranchers that settled stream valleys around Silver City in the late 1860's and the 1870's. Federal land acts, such as the Homestead Act of 1862, the Desert Land Act of 1877, and the Carey Act of 1894, promoted continued agricultural development (NRCS 2003).

Most of the arable land near sources of irrigation water was developed by the turn of the century. Water supplies from rainfall and streamflow, however, proved to be small and unreliable. Spring water developments, stream diversions, excavated ponds, and small reservoirs were constructed to provide more adequate sources of water. The advent of high-lift pumps in the 1960's allowed for the most recent rush to convert arid public land to irrigated cropland. Deep wells and high-lift pumps are used to irrigate more than 75 percent of the irrigated cropland in the survey area (NRCS 2003).

Demographics

The current population estimate for Owyhee County is 11,693 resulting in an estimated 1.5 person per square mile (US Census Bureau 2018). As of 2012 there were 578 farms in Owyhee County totaling 748,771 acres. The average farm size in the County is 1,295 acres. Owyhee County farms generated greater than \$291 million in revenue from crop and livestock sales in 2012 (USDA 2012).

Agencies and Groups Cooperating with the Bruneau River Soil and Water Conservation District

Partnerships are critical to the successful implementation of natural resource conservation projects within the Bruneau Soil and Water Conservation District. Included here are some of the conservation partners and key decision makers we will be working with to accomplish our conservation goals and objectives.

Federal Partners

- USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA-Agricultural Research Service
- USDOI _ Fish & Wildlife Service
- USDA - National Forest Service
- US Bureau of Reclamation
- USDOI - Bureau of Land Management
- US Army Corps of Engineers

State Partners

- Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Idaho Department of Agriculture
- Idaho State Legislators
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Fish & Game
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Office of Species of Conservation

County Partners

- Owyhee County
- Owyhee County Commission
- Owyhee County Planning and Zoning Commission
- Owyhee County Noxious Weed Control
- Elmore County Commission

Incorporated City Partners

- City of Grandview

Other Partners

- Private Landowners and Operators
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation & Development Council
- Irrigation Districts
- School Districts
- Water users
- Owyhee Cattlemen's Association
- Idaho Power

2022- 2023 Annual Plan of Work
Bruneau River Soil Conservation District

Conservation District Priority Number 1: Reduction of invasive and noxious weeds

Goal(s): Prevent the introduction of new invasive weeds, limit the spread of existing invasive species and abate the ecological and economic impacts of invasive species in the Bruneau River SWCD.

Objective: Coordinate grassroots efforts among local landowners, land managers and other interested individuals to work cooperatively on invasive and noxious weed controls efforts.

Action(s)	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Sponsor an annual weed control workshop	Annually, each March	The Board

Conservation District Priority Number 2: Water Quantity

Goal(s): Conserve, maintain, or enhance surface flows and groundwater levels.

Objective: Work with local landowners to help establish the Grandview Bruneau Groundwater Management area that includes a comprehensive aquifer management plan.

Action(s)	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Increase technical support.	Annually, each March	The Board
Reduce overland runoff, sedimentation, pathogen and nutrient pollution.	Annually, each March	The Board

Conservation District Priority Number 3: Wind Erosion Control

Goal(s): Minimize soil loss due to wind erosion.

Objective: Target landowners and operators in priority wind erosion areas and encourage participation in EQIP, WHIP and other Farm Bill programs to use conservation best management practices (BMP) to reduce wind erosion.

Action(s)	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Enlist one landowner to develop and implement a conservation plan to reduce wind erosion	Annually, each March	The Board
Conduct annual conservation tree sale program	Annually, each March	The Board
Study carbon sequestration credit methodology	Annually, each March	The Board

Conservation District Priority Number 4: Water Quality

Goal(s): To improve ground and surface water quality in the Bruneau River SWCD by conservation planning, funding and promoting implementation of best management practices.

Objective: To increase awareness of water conservation and improve water quality.

Action(s)	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Provide up to date water information for irrigators and water users	Annually, each March	The Board