



BENEWAH SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FIVE YEAR RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN

JULY 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2030

Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District
900 E Street – PO Box 488
Plummer, ID 83851

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FOREWORD

The Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District is one of 50 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 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 Plan/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 Benewah 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.

Certificate of Adoption

The Board of elected supervisors of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District this 31st day of March 2025, 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 June 30, 2030, during which time it will be updated annually and/or amended, as necessary.

As evidence of our adoption and final approval, we do hereby affix our signatures to this document.

Tim Schaffer, Chairman

Larry Cooke, Vice-Chair

Leann Daman, Treasurer

Dave Crabtree, Member

Steve Cuvala, Member

Supporting Idaho Conservation Partners (As applicable)

_____ Natural Resources Conservation Service

_____ Soil & Water Conservation Commission

_____ Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Benewah SWCD, located in the Panhandle of Idaho, encompasses and serves all of Benewah County. The SWCD also contains the southern portion of Shoshone County, primarily south of the divide between the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe River watersheds. The District is bordered by Washington on the west and Montana to the east. The Benewah SWCD totals about 1,566,350 acres; about 2/3 of the district lies within Shoshone County. The largest communities are St. Maries, with a population of about 3,032 and Plummer with 1,055 residents.

As illustrated in **Attachment 2**, lands within the SWCD are managed by multiple entities:

Private	598,970 acres
Tribal	49,160 acres
State of Idaho	91,750 acres
Idaho Fish and Game	2,790 acres
State Parks	8,600 acres
US Forest Service	777,670 acres
Bureau of Land Management	36,710 acres

Land cover is shown in **Attachment 3**.

Forest	1,087,490 acres
Shrub/Range/Transitional Forest	380,170 acres
Cropland	56,225 acres
Grassland	13,560 acres
Wetlands	11,170 acres
Developed	10,990 acres
Open Water	6,290 acres
Hay/Pasture	370 acres

Distribution of private lands by land cover type is listed in **Attachment 3**:

Forest	370,355 acres
Shrub/Range	167,190 acres
Cropland	30,860 acres
Grassland	10,105 acres
Wetlands	9,310 acres
Developed	7,390 acres
Hay/Pasture	235 acres

Tribal land distribution by land cover type is listed in **Attachment 3**:

Forest	18,475 acres
Shrub/Range	3,020 acres

Cropland	25,165 acres
Grassland	630 acres
Wetlands	460 acres
Developed	1,855 acres

Topography consists of rugged forested mountains to the east with narrow valleys that open within the hilly terrain of the west. The gentle hills and prairie lands of the western region are part of the “Palouse” region and contain the most productive farmland. Elevations range from 7,000 foot peaks in the east to 2,128 feet at Lake Chatcolet, the outlet for the St. Joe River. Headwaters for the St. Joe River are along the forested western slope of the Bitterroot Divide on the easternmost edge of the Benewah SWCD. The St. Maries River joins the St. Joe River at the town of St. Maries. The St. Joe River continues to flow across a broad flood plain in route to Lake Chatcolet, at the southern end of Lake Coeur d Alene.

Climate is somewhat humid. Most precipitation occurs from late fall till early spring; summers are warm and dry. Yearly snowfall is much heavier within the mountainous eastern half of the SWCD than in the rolling countryside further west. From west to east, annual precipitation averages range from 20 inches to 65 inches.

DISTRICT ECONOMIC CONDITION AND OUTLOOK

The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District encompasses all of Benewah County and the southern portion of Shoshone County. Location of Benewah SWCD in the State of Idaho is shown on **Attachment 1**. The Benewah SWCD totals about 1,566,350 acres.

Benewah County

Benewah County experienced fairly strong population growth in the early 1990s. Its rural lifestyle and great hunting and fishing opportunities persuaded many people to move there. Then the county stagnated during and after the 2001 recession before growth resumed from 2004 to 2008 as more retirees discovered its attractions. The recession reversed that. Population declined from 9,385 in 2008 to 9,285 in 2010. From 2000 to 2010, the county’s population grew 1.2 percent despite the decline in late 2010. The state grew 20 percent and the nation 9.5 percent. The county seat, St. Maries, had a population of 2,402 in 2010 while Plummer had a population of 1,044 and Tensed 123. In 2013 the total population dropped to 9,044, a loss of 2.6% or 242 residents from 2010-2013.

As of 2023, Benewah County has rebounded to a population of 10,369, marking an 8.8% increase since 2020. This growth, which is the county's strongest since the pandemic, reflects a broader trend of people seeking more space and rural living following COVID-19.

Benewah County's economy remains heavily dependent on forest products. Over one in six jobs is in the forest products industry. Until 2004, the county had only 60 jobs in manufacturing outside forest products. But in 2006, the Coeur d’Alene Tribe purchased Berg Integrated Systems and

moved it to Plummer, where it employed about 100 people. Since then, Berg built and moved to a larger facility in Post Falls and Ground Force, an international manufacturer of mining support equipment, expanded its operations into the old Berg plant in Plummer, but abruptly exited in 2014. Despite the county's beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities, tourism employs just 150. Dependence on forest products makes the county vulnerable to high unemployment particularly following the collapse of the housing industry. Since 2006, extremely low lumber prices have reduced employment. However, lumber prices were on the rise in 2009 and have continued to increase. Even with higher lumber prices, the limited access to timber on Federal lands has created marketing and competitive pricing challenges for many forest owners and managers as a result of previous lumber mill closures and consolidations, reducing lumber purchaser choices for timber landowners.

Shoshone County

The southern half of Shoshone County is included within the boundary of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District. After devastating mine and smelter closures, Shoshone County's population fell 28 percent in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the population declined slightly. Increasingly some Silver Valley towns became bedroom communities for the Coeur d'Alene area. From 1997 to 2007, the population fell 9 percent from 14,051 to 12,838, while Idaho's population grew 22 percent and the U.S. population grew 11 percent. The county seat, Wallace, has a population of 880. The largest cities are Kellogg, population 2,230; Pinehurst, 1,560; and Osburn, 1,390. From 2010-2013 the population of Shoshone County dropped 0.2%, or 29 citizens to 12,690. Shoshone county also saw an increase in population during Covid with a 6.5% increase between 2020 and 2023. The population as of 2023 is 14,026.

DISTRICT RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND CURRENT TRENDS AND NEEDS

- **Cropland**

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service figures, there are approximately 139,944 acres of land in Benewah County that attribute to agriculture. This is a 9% decrease from the 2007 high of 153,591 acres. Individual farm sizes vary from small units of ten acre pieces to ownerships involving several thousand acres with the average farm size being 486 acres.

In comparison to Benewah County, Shoshone County has little agricultural base. Farms and acreage have decreased dramatically in Shoshone County over the same time period (1997-2007). Farmland has continued to decline with a 23% decrease to a total of 2,435 acres of farmland.

Many small farms are leased and farmed by the larger farm operations. A large segment of Benewah County cropland is owned or operated by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Privately owned Indian and Tribal Lands are held by the Federal Government in trust, and administered by the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and presently leases individual and Tribal lands

to the Tribal Farm Enterprise and other reservation area farmers. The Coeur d' Alene Tribe manages these lands. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District and the Coeur d' Alene Tribe. The Coeur d' Alene Tribe employs a full time conservationist and assumes full responsibility for conservation practices applied to Indian owned lands, which they administer. Some private Indian operators have entered into cooperative agreements with the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District.

The majority of the croplands lie adjacent to four major creeks, which drain the western one-third of Benewah County. These lands consist largely of cutover forestland with lesser amounts being prairie-developed soils. The remainder of the cropland is bottomland and bench land lying adjacent to the major rivers and streams in the northern and eastern portion of the county. Actual cropland acreages fluctuate slightly annually due to land use changes through development or conservation from woodland.

The peat soils, on the floodplains of the St. Joe and St. Maries Rivers, are devoted primarily to the production of oats, hay and pasture. The bench land, mostly cutover woodland, is planted to grasses and legumes for pasture and hay with a small amount of grains. Major crops in the west portions of Benewah County consist of winter and spring wheat, lentils, dry peas, barley, oats, and grass seed. Some hay is also produced in this area. Experimental plantings of rape, sunflowers, Austrian winter peas and Timothy have been tested. Although these lesser crops have achieved successful production, the non-availability of markets limit expanded production. Eighteen to twenty six inches of annual precipitation and generally favorable growing and harvesting seasons favor this type of agriculture. These conditions allow for annual cropping with moderate to excellent yields. Individual yields often depend on fertilizer application, varieties of seed and individual management practices.

- **Noxious Weeds**

The following are declared to be noxious and/or undesirable weeds that are detrimental and destructive to agricultural interests in Benewah County. (Benewah County Noxious Weed List)

Quackgrass, Canada Thistle, Perennial Sowthistle, Whitetop, St. Johnswort, Russian and Spotted Knapweed, diffuse knapweed, leafy Spurge, Silverleaf Nightshade, Austrian Field Cress, Perennial Ground Cherry, Camelthorn, Tansy ragwort, rush Skeleton Weed, Bindweed, Dalmation Toadflax, Creeping Rag Weed, Syrian Bean Caper, Austrian Pea Weed, orange Hawkweed, Hounds Tongue, Japanese knotweed, curly leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, yellow flag iris, oxeye daisy, yellow toadflax, and Scotch broom.

Significant infestations of quackgrass become established in sod waterways and roadsides. These infestations enter into seed grass fields and shorten the life established seed grass stands. Some foreign seed markets are not available to Benewah County grass growers due to the zero tolerance of quackgrass seed in bluegrass and fescues.

Canada Thistle and Whitetop infestations are severe in wheat stands and reduce yields. This is

predominant in areas that remain wet late in the season where early applications of herbicides are not effective.

Since 1977, severe infestations of yellow flower hawkweed have invaded grazing areas in the central portions of the County. These infestations have affected the growth of desirable pasture type grasses and have damaged grass hay quality.

In recent years, Ventenata has infested some Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) areas. This weed shortens the life of established grass hay stands (Timothy and mixed grass). Japanese Knotweed has appeared in some urban and housing areas and Italian Ryegrass can be a problem in plantings of small grain crops.

The number of species and severity of noxious and undesirable weeds has made the use of no-till cropping in the Benewah area a questionable alternative conservation practice for many operators.

- **Forestlands**

The forested area lies mostly in the eastern two-thirds of the District and is bisected by two main watercourses, the St. Joe and the St. Maries Rivers. According to the Idaho Department of Commerce statistical figures, Benewah County has 385,800 acres that attribute to forestland. Many years ago, the area's most desirable for farming were logged and cleared for growing crops. Timber still grows in the steeper more inaccessible areas on the west side of the District and is being managed for timber production or woodland grazing. Some areas, however, are still being cleared or considered for conversion to cropland.

In 1910, a fire of major proportion swept through most of the area leaving only pockets of mature growth timber standing. These pockets are found primarily on steep slopes and ridges. As a result of this fire and considerable logging done at the same time, a rather even age growth of timber has been established. Normal maturity to harvest timber in the District will vary from 50 to 120 years depending on the soil conditions and management practices. The practice of reforestation after harvest has been increasing in recent times; however, many areas of extensively cutover land have been left for natural regeneration. This land often has poor ground cover and does not prevent soil losses before natural regeneration can take place.

Although there are several large-acreage landowners within the forested areas, much of the most accessible acreage is being broken up into smaller ownerships. These smaller ownerships often result in higher production due to more intensive management practices and provide an important source of timber close to the mills. Further development of this small acreage often results in the complete loss of land capability.

Private woodland ownership is intermingled in many instances with large industrial, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state and tribal ownerships. This ownership pattern presents difficulties in developing comprehensive management programs and requires the

coordination and cooperation of several ownerships within the area. Each ownership desires different levels of management and timber harvest practices.

Cooperative efforts toward overall better management practices are increasing and the continuation of this trend is anticipated. Past years of poor timber harvest practices have caused severe damage to some watersheds and streams through siltation from roads and skid trails. The Idaho Forest Practices Act has been an important step forward in protecting water quality in the forest areas, but more work is needed.

There are several local markets for forest products as well as available markets outside the District. Logs are also shipped to local mills from outside the District, adding to the supply of raw materials.

Since the wood-fiber market is generally dependent upon the construction industry, stumpage demands and values fluctuate accordingly. This market instability particularly affects the operation of smaller mills that open and close as the demand for wood products change. Woodland owners must have a thorough knowledge of the market conditions prior to planning a timber harvest.

In July 2024, Stimson Lumber Company closed its small-log manufacturing mill in Plummer, Idaho. However, the region still has a relatively high number of operational mills compared to other parts of the state. In Benewah and Shoshone Counties, several mills are still in operation, including PotlatchDeltic's sawmill and plywood mill in St. Maries, Stimson Lumber Company's stud mill in St. Maries, and American Cedar's cedar product mill in Santa. Additionally, numerous small mill operators remain active in the area.

The Christmas tree market also adds to the income from forest products. Plantations have been developed on lesser productive lands with erodible soils either as reforestation projects or planting specifically for Christmas tree production. There is also some minor Christmas tree harvest from natural tree stands within the District.

Forestry is the economic life of the eastern two thirds of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District. Since a part of the local timber supply is cut from out of the area to be processed at local mills, it is very hard to determine the exact cut within the district itself. Recently, the U.S. Forest Service has increased production on the St. Joe District with help from Idaho Department of Lands Good Neighbor Authority.

- **Hay Land, Pasture and Range**

There are about 225,000 acres of grazeable land on the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District. Most is almost entirely grazeable woodland (transitory range) with very little being identified as classic “rangeland”.

- a) **Pasture and Hay Land:** Comprises those areas that are either too steep or wet for crops, or previous cropland now unproductive and allowed to re-vegetate for forage production. In the St. Joe River valley area, it is common practice to remove one or two cuttings of hay (typically meadow grasses mixed with clovers) and then graze livestock in the re-growth until late fall. In the drier upland areas, operators with livestock and cropland use the cropland as pasture much of the time. Conversely, where an operator is not diversified and raises strictly cereal grains, the poorer land classes are farmed on a regular basis. Many poorly managed pastures are weed infested and unproductive. Consequently, ground cover is usually poor in these situations and soil erosion accelerated.
- b) **Rangeland and Transitory Range:** Comprises those areas which are either too steep, dry and rocky to crop annually or manage intensively as pasture, or unmanaged for timber growth and support a grazeable forage part of the time (transitory range). An average forest habitat type, after clear cutting, will produce approximately one Animal Unit Month (AUM) of forage per acre. As ecological succession continues and as land management practices allow, forage production generally decreases to one AUM per six acres in 20 to 25 years. After 40 to 60 years, little or no forage is available for grazing livestock (or very little for browsing wildlife) as the tree canopy shades out almost all-desirable forage.

North Idaho is not a location one immediately thinks of upon the mention of “rangelands”. But some areas do exhibit those classic traits, only on a smaller scale and without sagebrush as a major vegetation component. On the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District, only steep, arid southwest facing slopes of lower elevation mountains and foothills appear as typical rangeland. A very small portion of the District is of this type but it is none-the-less an important feature. Abundant elk and deer (Mule and White-tailed Deer) populations use these areas for winter range. Livestock are also grazed there, usually in conjunction with adjacent pastures or woodlands.

Also counted as rangeland and probably the most productive, but sensitive of the forage producing site are native meadow “stringers” along creeks and streams. These comprise only a fraction of the District’s grazeable land but account for much of the forage produced (possibly ¼ to ½ of all forage on the District’s graze able lands). They are commonly located in mid to upper elevation valley bottoms surrounded by forestland. Since water tables influence most or all of these meadows, they are also referred to as “riparian meadows”. Almost all are in various degraded states due to past or present over use by livestock. Cattle prefer and congregate on these meadows because of the succulent or abundant forage, relative to the less desirable and hard to reach forage found on adjacent woodland slopes. Stream banks typically erode in this

scenario, contributing great amounts of sediment during past run-off periods. Woody vegetation, which normally stabilizes stream and riverbanks, does not establish due to annual grazing and erosion. Additionally, some landowners (particularly those along the lower St. Joe River) indiscriminately burn their pastures, right up to the riverbank, to eliminate accumulations of tall grasses or woody plants (willows, etc.) and to promote early spring green-up. This further complicates the situation for reducing soil erosion and nutrient run off in the adjacent streams.

There is a good potential for improving livestock grazing practices throughout the District; in utilization of existing forage (as well as new locations) and in reducing the impacts of livestock in sensitive areas (riparian zones, tree plantations, big game winter range).

- **Wetlands**

In the Benewah District, wetlands and potential wetlands (those with hydric soil inclusions) are associated with Cald, Latahco, Mottleme, and Porrett Soils. Wetlands are determined using information obtained by the soil survey, Fish and Wildlife Service maps, and FSA aerial slide photography on-site investigations by NRCS staff. Wetlands mapping will be done on an as needed basis for the entire District. Primarily streams and river bottoms contain the wetlands.

- **Outdoor Recreation**

The Benewah District has tremendous recreational potential, which is largely undeveloped. Forested mountains with many miles of scenic roads and trails are available for those who wish to hike or ride in solitude. Fishers and campers can take advantage of many high-mountain lakes and streams. There are big game and an abundance of small game and waterfowl, offering opportunities for hunting or observation.

One of the major rivers in the District is the St. Joe. This scenic river has been classified as "recreational" from Avery, Idaho to the U. S. Forest Service Spruce Tree Campground and as a "wild river" from Spruce Tree Campground to St. Joe Lake. The river offers abundant fishing, boating, canoeing, rafting, and swimming, with easy access. Several high mountain lakes are found within the District as well. These are cataloged in the Idaho Fish and Game publication, Mountain Lakes of Idaho. In most cases, they are accessible by trail only and have infrequent use. One area that holds some of these lakes is the Mallard-Larkin Primitive Area. Found on U.S.F.S. land, the primitive area extends into the southeastern portion of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District. Many other roadless areas in the District provide similar wilderness opportunities but are not so designated. Several developed and undeveloped campgrounds are along the St. Joe River. Additional camping and fishing are available on most of its tributaries. Some streams have been closed to fishing to enhance the native west slope cutthroat trout fishery.

The lower portion of the St. Joe River has approximately 30 miles of slack water, offering much pleasure to boaters and water skiers. Coeur d' Alene Lake, which extends into the northern side of the District, also provides ample water recreational possibilities. These waters provide fishing as well as ice fishing in the winter months.

Rock hounds try their luck at digging for garnets at the Emerald Creek Garnet area, which the U.S. Forest Service supervises. Overnight camping facilities are available. Several off-road vehicle clubs have developed a 1,000-acre area for motorcycles, snowmobiles, and other off-road vehicles. A privately owned motorcycle racetrack near Clarkia attracts racing enthusiasts from all over.

Each community and town within the District has a picnic ground or park, which has been developed to meet the local community's needs. St. Maries has three designated parks. Central Park provides a swimming pool, three tennis courts, several baseball fields, and a football field. Schools, little league programs, and various community organizations use the facilities. Picnic grounds and playgrounds are found in the other parks. The park in Tensed now has covered picnic tables, a basketball court, and bathroom facilities. The community park in Plummer offers playground equipment for young children to enjoy.

Additionally, two state parks are located (almost entirely) within the District. Heyburn State Park is the oldest state park in the Pacific Northwest. Over 5,000 acres of forested land invites you to explore its more than 22 miles of backcountry trails. Three lakes and the St. Joe River comprise the 2,300 acres of water that beckons to water lovers. Heyburn has three campgrounds. It offers developed campsites, hiking, and access to Lake Coeur d'Alene (via Chatcolet Lake and Benewah Lake) and the St. Joe River. Mary Minerva McCroskey State Park, located near DeSmet, just off State Highway 95 in southwest Benewah County, offers hiking trails through old-growth timber and numerous wildflower patches and is managed with minimum development. Recently, several campsites have been developed within the park. One of these campsites offers covered picnic tables, a barbecue pit, and new bathroom facilities. The park is becoming better known and used more than ever.

The "Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes" is the newest recreational development within the district boundaries. Part of the newly constructed 73-mile-long asphalt trail lies within the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District's boundaries. The 10-foot wide asphalt trail is open to walking, in-line skating, road/mountain biking, Nordic skiing, and snowshoeing. Horses and pack stock are not allowed. Motorized vehicles are also not allowed. The trail, which starts in Plummer, generally follows the shoreline of the Coeur d'Alene Lake and then passes through a chain of lakes and marshland environments. It follows the scenic Coeur d'Alene River up into the mountains to Mullan. The uniqueness of the trail isn't simply the beautiful scenery and attractions along its route but an innovative solution to the environmental problems caused by the early miners in the Silver Valley. Silver was discovered in the Valley around 1884, and the rail line was constructed to support the growing mining and timber industries started in 1888. Today's trail follows this original rail line, giving it a gentle grade. When the rail line was built, mine waste rock and tailings containing heavy metals were used for the original rail bed. In addition, the bed was contaminated with accidental ore concentrate spillage. The trail is part of the environmental cleanup in a partnership between the Union Pacific Railroad, the U.S. Government, the State of Idaho, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. The thick layer of asphalt on the trail and the gravel barriers along the trail isolate the contaminants and allow the area to be used again. The trail is divided into two sections based on management. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe manages the portion of the trail within their reservation boundary (14.5 miles between Plummer and Harrison). The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation manages the rest of the trail from Harrison to

Mullan.

Fairs, shows, and contests are a continual part of the recreational opportunity. The Benewah County Fair and Paul Bunyan Days are held in late August. For those interested in horses, the St. Maries and Upriver Saddle Clubs sponsor contests and trail rides throughout the year. The City of Tensed holds a community celebration in the summer when there are enough volunteers to help. They have a parade, entertainment, booths, and exhibits for people to enjoy. The City of Plummer also holds an annual celebration in July when there are enough volunteers. Various organizations sponsor booths; there is entertainment and fun things for the whole family throughout the day.

- **Fish and Wildlife**

Two of the major tributaries of Coeur d'Alene Lake, the St. Joe and St. Maries Rivers, flow within the District boundaries. These rivers contain native populations of resident and lake-run cutthroat trout. Historically, the St. Joe River was among one of the finest trout streams in America, but is now marginal for trout in the lower section and is fair to excellent in the upper reaches.

Introduced game species within the District include rainbow, kokanee, brook trout, brown trout, Chinook salmon, large-mouth bass, sunfish, perch, crappie, bullhead and northern pike. Fishing in these rivers and lakes is good in early summer and again in the fall when water temperatures are cooler.

Mining, logging and forest development, highway construction and other land use impacts have taken a major toll on the drainage fisheries. Heavy metal pollution, stream channelization, sedimentation and migration blocks have had an especially severe impact on cutthroat trout. Increased fishing pressure due to normal population expansion and improved access, and the introduction of competing species has also played an important role in the decline of cutthroat trout.

- **Soils**

The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District is somewhat diverse in soil parent materials and landforms as that it straddles the transition zone between the Rocky Mountains (on the east) and the Columbia Basin (on the west). Soils forming are residual, alluvial, and eolian. Residual parent materials are found throughout the District but are most prevalent in the District's eastern half, while eolian parent materials are most prevalent in the District's western half. Very thick deposits of eolian material (loess) helped form a rolling, hilly prairie region called the "Palouse". Alluvial deposits are found throughout the District but are less common.

The most extensive geologic units in the area are the Belt Series of Precambrian rocks. These metamorphosed rocks, siltite, argillite, and quartzite occur throughout the area. They are highly fractured rocks and soils formed in materials derived from them. They mostly have a high percentage of coarse fragments. Huckleberry, McCroskey, Ardenvoir, and Tekoa soils are typical of this group. These soils also contain some loess blown from central Washington during the late

Pleistocene. Ash from volcanoes in the Cascade Mountains to the west was deposited during the Pleistocene and Holocene.

Basalt flows also occur throughout the District area and form plateaus. The basalt is covered by thick deposits of loess in most places. On terrace escarpments and foot slopes, the loess has been eroded away and the basalt is exposed. Lacy, Bobbitt, Blinn, and Dorb soils formed on these escarpments and have a high percentage of rock fragments mixed with thin surficial deposits of loess and volcanic ash.

Thick loess deposits also mantle the gentler slopes of pre-tertiary rock-cored hills and ridges that were not later covered by basalt flows. The soils that formed in the loess deposits are very deep and have a silt loam surface layer and a silt loam to silty clay subsoil. Some soils that formed in loess, such as Southwick, Taney, Thatuna, and Santa soils, are relict paleosols.

Alluvium in the District area is generally of local origin; it is derived from materials on the adjacent uplands. Because of the wide variety of sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rocks on the uplands, the alluvium contains a wide variety of materials. Alluvium on fans and toe slopes generally has texture and other characteristics that are similar to those on the hills from which the sediment was eroded.

The land surface is generally rugged, consisting mainly of forested mountains and hilly terrain, with relatively narrow valleys that open to the west. In the western part of the District, an undulating prairie region called the "Palouse" represents the most productive farmland. Flowing from the east, the St. Joe River bisects the eastern portion of the District. The St. Joe and St. Maries Rivers join at the city of St. Maries. From here the St. Joe River continues through a broad flood plain and into the Chatcolet Lake (Lake Coeur d'Alene). Chatcolet Lake is the lowest point in the District, at 2,128 feet in elevation. The highest elevations are in the mountainous part of eastern Benewah and southern Shoshone Counties, where some peaks rise to nearly 7,000 feet. The average elevation in the western prairie section is about 2,700 feet.

There are published soil surveys for both Benewah County and Shoshone County in the District office. These are available to the public at any time and can be found online as well.

a) Present Soil Conditions and Trend

The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District falls within two Natural Resource Conservation Service soil survey areas; the Benewah County Area Soil Survey and the St. Joe Area Soil Survey.

Fieldwork for the Benewah County survey began in 1962 and was completed in 1974. It was not issued until 1980 and some of the information printed is outdated. More recent, is the St. Joe survey, which covers the remainder of the District in southern Shoshone County and some portions of Benewah County not mapped in the Benewah County Area Survey. Copies of this survey for site-specific needs are available in our office from the NRCS, as well as the Benewah County Area Soil Survey. Users of soil survey information have included loggers, foresters,

teachers, appraisers, farmers, conservationist, and state, county, and city planners. Survey copies and related assistance can be obtained by contacting the District or the NRCS office in Plummer.

Soil condition and trend can be judged using several criteria, but in north Idaho, the main concern in conservation is soil erosion caused by runoff. Present soil condition on the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District, generally speaking, is fair, with the trend fading slowly in a positive direction. This is based on relative comparisons between erosion losses observed by farmers, loggers, and others many years ago, and today.

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, annual soil losses of 50 to 100 tons per acre were not uncommon on summer-fallowed cropland. In forested areas, others measured soil losses over 80 tons/acre/year, where numerous skid trails and roads were constructed.

Today, great soil losses can still be measured, but with less frequency. Changes in management practices and improvements in equipment are some of the factors which have appreciably reduced soil erosion rates. Nevertheless, it is imperative to maintain and continuously adjust soil conservation practices, just as the users of soil resources forever change their management strategies in response to technological and market influences.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has determined that to ensure this region's ability to produce food and fiber well into the future, we must further reduce soil losses in the District.

b) Soil Erosion

Sheet and rill erosion rates on untreated cropland in the District runs from 17 to 38 tons per acre per year. As virtually all District farmers are participants in the USDA Wheat and Feed Grain Program, most of the acres of highly erodible land (HEL) in the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District are protected under a Food Security Act Conservation Compliance Plan. These plans, fully implemented, are composed of basic and alternative Conservation systems. In 1977, 1,600 acres of HEL cropland were under land treatment contracts through the Idaho Agricultural Water Quality Program. Soil losses from these lands are at or less than "T".

As a result of watershed projects and Food Security Act planning, the District's cropland is experiencing a decrease in soil erosion or an overall upward trend in soil condition.

Soil losses from pasture and hay land seldom exceed one ton per acre per year except when in very poor condition. In general, current management levels on this land use area are low and the condition rating is fair to poor. Noxious weeds are a significant problem, reducing concentrations of desirable species through competition. Actual ground cover is limited in these sites and the soil erosion rates can approach "T". Other critical pasture and hay land areas are associated with the riparian zone and stream banks.

Timber harvesting operations on forested areas in Benewah and Shoshone Counties can cause annual sheet, rill and fully erosion losses of less than 1 ton to 60 tons per acre or more. This erosion is due mainly to road construction and skid trails. At this point, the trend is static.

Mitigation of these losses could come, however, through increased implementation of forest practice Best Management Practices (BMP's).

- **Climate**

The climate of the Benewah District can be described as sub-humid, with warm dry summers and cool moist winters. The average annual precipitation is about 30 inches, with a decided winter maximum. On the average, over two-thirds of the annual precipitation falls in the October to March period. Total yearly snowfall is approximately 59 inches. Very heavy snowfall accumulations do occur on the District's mountainous eastern half while lesser amounts fall on the District's western boundary. Average annual precipitation in these areas range from 65 inches to approximately 20 inches (east to west respectively).

The temperatures in the District are relatively mild. The Average daily maximum temperature in July is only 85 degrees, while the average daily maximum in January is 21 degrees. The average date for the last spring freezes is May 13 and the average date for the first fall freeze is September 28.

BENEWAH CONSERVATION DISTRICT POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

- **Current Supervisors**

Larry Cooke, Member
Tim Schaffer, Member
Dave Crabtree, Member
Leann Daman, Member
Steve Cuvala, Member
Sherry Klaus, Associate Member

- **District Administration & Operation**

Under provisions of the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation District Law, the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of state government managed by a Board of Supervisors elected locally by qualified voters. Although the name of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District implies its location is only in Benewah County, the district also includes the southern half of Shoshone County. The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District is organized with five supervisors who serve a four-year term of office without pay. These supervisors represent cropland, range and hay land, forestlands, etc. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service maintain an office in the USDA Service Center at 900 E Street in Plummer, Idaho, to provide assistance to those who request it.

The Benewah District Board of Supervisors meets monthly at the district office in Plummer on the second Tuesday of the month. There are no meetings during August and November. At monthly meetings, the Board of Supervisors reviews current and upcoming projects. Meetings are attended by

the Benewah SWCD's District Manager, NRCS District Conservationist, and any other agency representatives as necessary. Monthly meetings allow the Board of Supervisors to oversee the operations of the District. The Benewah District utilizes its website and social media to inform and invite the public to its meetings.

Funding for the Benewah District is provided primarily through state and county allocations. Benewah and Shoshone Counties each fund the district. The State of Idaho matches these funds with a percentage allocation. Recent legislation has removed the funding limit by the State of Idaho; therefore, state allocations have changed over the years.

- **District Policies**

It is the policy of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District to provide landowners and land users with assistance in land and water use, conservation and development, and other problems or concerns that they may have. Technical Assistance should be provided to the Board of Supervisors by the NRCS. The Board needs to advise and direct those who benefit from District programs towards better conservation practices with the help of the NRCS. The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District offers many services to the farming and non-farming community.

Technical assistance is offered in areas such as managing dry cropland farming, improving woodland management practices, protecting prime and unique lands and historical sites, and developing recreational facilities that are not destructive to the environment. Non-technical assistance is available through individual or group information/education programs on topics ranging from household chemical hazards to wood stove efficiency tips.

The District currently employs a part-time District Manager. Duties to be performed by the District Manager consist of receptionist, secretarial, bookkeeping, filing, administration of water quality accounts, reporting, organizing Board meetings, conducting elections, managing tree seedling program, managing the District's financials, other general office management procedures, and the continual pursuit of conservation partnerships to create mutually valuable projects and programs for the community. The District Manager is also responsible for conducting the District's Information Outreach activities. These programs may include the following, depending on budgets: community meetings involving landowners/operators, workshops, presentations and contests for local schools, a 6th-grade student resource tour, promoting soil and water stewardship week, submitting articles to the local news media to provide a continual platform of outreach and marketing for the District.

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and the fifty Soil Conservation Districts are tax-supported governmental units accountable to taxpayers for revenue and expenditures. The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Soil Conservation Districts were created and enabled by the Idaho Legislature under Idaho Code, Title 22, Chapter 27. They were given the responsibility to adopt policies to provide for fiscal and program accountability for themselves and Soil Conservation Districts. A uniform accounting and reporting system has been established to enable the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Soil Conservation Districts to be fiscally responsible and accountable. The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District Financial Guidelines are as follows: 1) two

signatures will be required on all checks written 2) The Benewah SWCD Board Treasurer will review the reconciliation report, bank statements, and the monthly financial statements each month 3) The Benewah SWCD Board Treasurer will review and approve all payroll checks and payroll check stubs 4) The Benewah SWCD financial records will be audited or reviewed yearly depending on income limits set by the legislature 5) At least one Benewah SWCD Board member will (A) pick up the completed audit and financial records from the auditor or (B) a request will be made for the auditor to attend the board meeting immediately following completion of the audit 6) The Benewah SWCD Board will request that the auditor present a list of suggested solutions for any record-keeping problems encountered in the audit process 7) The Benewah SWCD Board will review the Financial Guidelines semi- annually.

- **Public Participation/Monitoring and Evaluation**

Public participation is strongly encouraged by the district. The district works with a local working group and uses the local newspapers as much as possible to get involvement from the public. The district also works closely with the FSA and NRCS to ensure the public is well-informed. The Board would like to increase activity in the community, however, to help support our programs. In the future, the Board will actively work to increase awareness of programs available to the community. Possible activities include meetings held in some of the smaller communities within the district, newsletters, and more one-on-one contact with landowners and operators.

The monitoring and evaluation of programs are achieved through monthly financial reports that the board receives at each regular meeting. The district also requires that yearly financial reviews be conducted to monitor programs.

- **Cooperating Conservation Partners**

Technical services are provided mainly through the Natural Resources Conservation Service; however, assistance is also available through other State and Federal agencies through Memorandums of Understanding with the District. The Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission provides support to Idaho's 50 Soil Conservation Districts in the wise use and enhancement of soil, water and related resources. The Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts is a voluntary, non-profit association of Idaho's 50 soil conservation districts cooperating in the management of Idaho's natural resources. The association provides a unified voice for conservation in Idaho.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program - Benewah SWCD has partnered with multiple agencies in both Idaho and Washington to promote conservation practices within the Spokane

River Watershed through the Greater Spokane RCPP. This Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) involves a 5 year commitment to provide education and outreach, monitoring and engineering as well as technical support funded by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The objectives of the RCPP include improvements to water quality, soil and forest health and wildlife habitat.

- **Public Outreach**

The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District recognizes the importance of a conservation information outreach program throughout the entire District. At present, the District displays exhibits at the Benewah County Fair, has sponsored a poster contest at the schools, assists with the 6th Grade Resource Tour, a two-day conservation tour for Benewah and southern Kootenai and Shoshone Counties students. The District has also sponsored tours for cropland, forestry and rangeland. The District needs to help educate the community about the importance of conservation if we are to use and maintain our resources into the future. The District Manager conducts all of the District's Information Outreach activities. Current programs may include the following: community meetings involving landowners/operators, workshops, presentations for local schools, two 5th grade student conservation tours which depend on school budgets, promoting soil and water stewardship week and submitting articles to the local news media.

- **Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance is mainly available from the NRCS. However, other agencies such as Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Idaho Department of Lands, Department of Environmental Quality, etc. offer technical assistance in other areas. Most of this attention has been to cropland production and conservation. The District should not only help with the conservation of cropland, but also look at all other resources and land uses based in the area. Whatever technical assistance is available should be used to help conserve these resources.

The Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District will continue to have a need for increased funding if the District is to continue to grow in all areas. The need for technical assistance will increase, proportionately, with the increase in projects undertaken by the District. This remains the limiting factor to what the District can take on in terms of projects. Current NRCS technical assistance is adequate for our current water quality project workload; however, an increase in NRCS personnel is needed to achieve all goals and objectives.

- **Tree Seedling Program**

The four Conservation Districts of Northern Idaho, including Benewah SWCD partner with the Panhandle Seedling Program to provide seven species of native conifer seedlings to the local communities. The seedlings are planted from locally harvested seed and provide a great opportunity to use well adapted stock for reforestation projects. Over 200,000 Ponderosa Pine, Western White Pine, Western Larch, Lodgepole Pine, and Douglas Fir seedlings are sold each year by the four Conservation Districts of North Idaho. Seedlings are usually available for delivery in

early April, and should be reserved or ordered as early as possible the prior year, starting in early summer for best selection.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES

1. **District Operations, Education, and Outreach:** The district would like to increase the visibility of the conservation work completed in our area.

Information and Education: Although recent budget cuts in the schools have limited participation in the educational outreach days the district has sponsored in the past, efforts to establish an on-going program that can be presented at school or partnered with 4-H are being considered. The district provides continued support for the 6th Grade Resource Tour.

- Conduct Soil Workshop for 6th graders at Natural Resource Tour in July
- Provide support to Idaho State Forestry Contest in May
- Reach out to unconventional partners
- Continue to participate in related public meetings
- Develop larger network of contacts
- Continue to improve conservation based knowledge of district employee
- Sponsor information booth at local high school career fair

2. **Water Quality** Primary emphasis for technical and potential assistance will be directed toward those watersheds identified as designated stream segments of concern. These include; Hangman Creek, Plummer Creek and St. Joe and St. Maries Rivers.

- Hold meetings assessing technical need and gaining public input within each watershed with stream segments of concern and establishing priorities.
- Provide information and assistance in obtaining cost-share funding to control non-point source pollution and soil erosion.
- Plan and apply visible conservation on designated priority watersheds.
- Provide information to landowners/operators on existing practices to reduce soil erosion through the District information outreach. Establish an annual grower educational meeting.
- Make available to the general public, brochures, handouts, etc., that demonstrate practices that reduce erosion.

Portions of eight 4th field HUCs (or eight digit subbasins) are located within the boundaries of the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District.

These watersheds (with Benewah SWCD acres) are listed below.

St. Joe River (incl. St. Maries watershed)	1,150,532 acres
Lower North Fork Clearwater River	198,239 acres
Hangman Creek	125,459 acres
Upper North Fork Clearwater River	41,402 acres
South Fork CDA River	24,178 acres
Palouse River	11,930 acres

CDA Lake	9,423 acres
Rock	2,065 acres

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has concerns about the water quality of numerous waterbodies within the confines of the Benewah SWCD. Several of the subbasins have been assessed and TMDLs determined. Links to the completed documents and short summaries of the assessed subbasins can be viewed on DEQ's website at this address: <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/tmdls/table-of-sbas-tmdls.aspx>

3. **Fish and Wildlife, Recreation and Riparian** These concerns will be addressed along with the number one priority of water quality. The actions outlined as necessary to improve water quality will also serve to address improvements necessary for healthy riparian buffers along waterways, improvements for fish and wildlife and improved recreation opportunities in area waterways.

Status: Two of the major tributaries of Coeur d' Alene Lake, the St. Joe and St. Maries Rivers flow within the district boundaries. These rivers contain native populations of resident and lake- run cutthroat trout. Historically, the St. Joe River was among one of the finest trout streams in America, but is now marginal for trout in the lower section. Introduced game species within the district include rainbow, kokanee, brook trout, brown trout, chinook salmon, large-mouth bass, sunfish, perch, crappie, bullhead and northern pike. Big game found in the district includes white tail deer, mule deer, black bear, elk, moose, cougar and mountain goat. Mountain grouse and upland game birds are abundant in most areas within the district. A variety of waterfowl can be observed and/or hunted in season.

Trends: Fishing in the rivers and lakes is good in early summer and again in the fall when water temperatures are cooler. Mining, logging and forest development, highways construction and other land use impacts have taken a major toll on the drainage fisheries. Heavy metal pollution, steam channelization, sedimentation and migration blocks have had an especially severe impact on cutthroat trout. Increased fishing pressure due to normal population expansion and improved access, and the introduction of competing species has also played an important role in the decline of cutthroat trout. Declining water quality and shoreline encroachment are severe problems for the future fisheries management. Development and road construction are also encroaching on the natural range for wildlife.

Needs: The district needs to continue to promote programs that are beneficial to the fish and wildlife and find ways to make the public more aware of the programs that are available to promote fish and wildlife. Continuing to work with the St. Joe/St. Maries WAG can benefit the rivers and streams within the district.

4. **Forest Lands**

- Promote tree seedling program and increase sales each year
- Educate landowners about proper forest practices

- Support cost-share practices for private forestland through NRCS programs
- Assist with Idaho State Forestry Contest and encourage local participation

Status: The forested area lies mostly in the eastern two-thirds of the district and is bisected by two main water bodies, the St. Joe and the St. Maries Rivers. Areas most desirable for farming have been logged and cleared for growing crops, but timber still grows in the steeper more inaccessible areas. Private woodland ownership is intermingled in many instances with large industrial ownership, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state and tribal ownerships.

Trends: Stricter regulations are also being felt in the timber industry. Resource by-products are not being fully utilized. Cooperative efforts toward overall better management practices are increasing and the continuation of this trend is anticipated. Past years of poor timber harvest practices have caused severe damage to some watersheds and streams through siltation from roads and skid trails.

Needs: The district needs to continue to search for ways that the timber industry can make maximum utilization of live, dead and downed material in the woodlands and must continue to educate the landowners about improved techniques and technologies within the timber industry. Efforts to increase participation in new Forestry Programs will be made.

5. Non-Irrigated Cropland

- Provide information on conservation practices
- Work with NRCS to support conservation plans
- Encourage landowners to use programs designed to assist operators

Status: A large percentage of the district is cropland. Control of soil erosion continues to be an issue. While new techniques and technologies are developing, the conservation practices may be too costly. More diverse agricultural operations are coming into the area along with the need of appropriate resource assistance. While many of the farms are becoming larger in size, there are also farms that are being sold and divided into smaller parcels. Many times, these smaller parcels are then sold again and divided into even smaller pieces.

Trends: Most of the district's cropland is classified as HEL and most operators are USDA program participants. Therefore, most operators now have a Conservation Compliance Plan, which will further reduce soil erosion in the district, if the plans are fully applied. Another trend that is emerging is that of smaller "special interest" farms. However, it appears there has been less participation in conservation programs on the district's cropland. This may be due to lease conditions.

Needs: The district needs to improve public outreach to inform landowners of programs available to assist them, and try to include the smaller acreage landowners as well as the larger ones.

6. Pasture and Hay land:

Status: There are approximately 25,000 acres of pasture and hay land within the district. In the St. Joe River valley area, it is common practice to remove one or two cuttings of hay and then graze livestock in the re-growth until late fall. In the drier upland areas, operators with livestock and cropland use the cropland as pasture much of the time. Conversely, where an operator is not diversified and raises strictly cereal grains, the poorer land classes are farmed on a regular basis. Many poorly managed pastures are weed infested and unproductive. Consequently, ground cover is usually poor in these situations and soil erosion accelerated.

Trends: Cumulative effects of grazing, logging, mining, recreation and other land uses on environmental health are of growing concern to the district. Timing of land use practices and extent of activities were poorly coordinated between landowners in the past, except when the district and the NRCS promoted Coordinated Resource Management plans (called CRM's or CRMP's), such as those now in place on John Creek and Emerald Creek. There is good potential for improving livestock grazing practices throughout the district, in utilization of existing forage and in reducing the impacts of livestock in sensitive areas.

Needs: The district and NRCS need to assist landowners/users with existing CRMP's as needed to insure that plans are applicable with needed modifications. Continue to educate landowners of programs that can assist them.

7. Cooperating Agencies and Organizations

The following governmental agencies, organizations, public and private groups and businesses have supported and assisted with the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District's successful conservation program.

AVISTA Corporation	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
City of St. Maries	University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
City of Plummer	Service Clearwater-Potlatch Timber
City of Tensed	Protective Assoc.
Public and Private Schools	Idaho State Legislators representing the
Churches within the District	District St. Maries Gazette Record
Civic Organizations and Clubs	Capital Press
St. Maries Chamber of Commerce	KREM TV
Coeur d' Alene Tribal Council	Idaho Department of Employment – Job
Coeur d' Alene Tribal Natural Resources &	Service
Conservation Representatives	KOFE Radio Station
Inland Empire Chapter of Soil & Water	
Conservation Society	
Society for Range Management	
Benewah County Board of Commissioners	
Shoshone County Board of Commissioners	
Idaho Department of Agriculture	
Idaho Department of Employment	
Idaho Department of Environmental	
Quality	
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	
Idaho Dept. of Health & Welfare	
Idaho Department of Highways	
Idaho Department of Lands	
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation	
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	
Idaho Department of Transportation	
Idaho Department of Water Resources	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	
U.S. Farm Home Administration	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
U.S. General Services Administration	
U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division	
USDA Farm Service Agency	
USDA Forest Service	
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs	

APPENDIX OF ATTACHMENTS

Benewah District location within the State of Idaho – Attachment 1

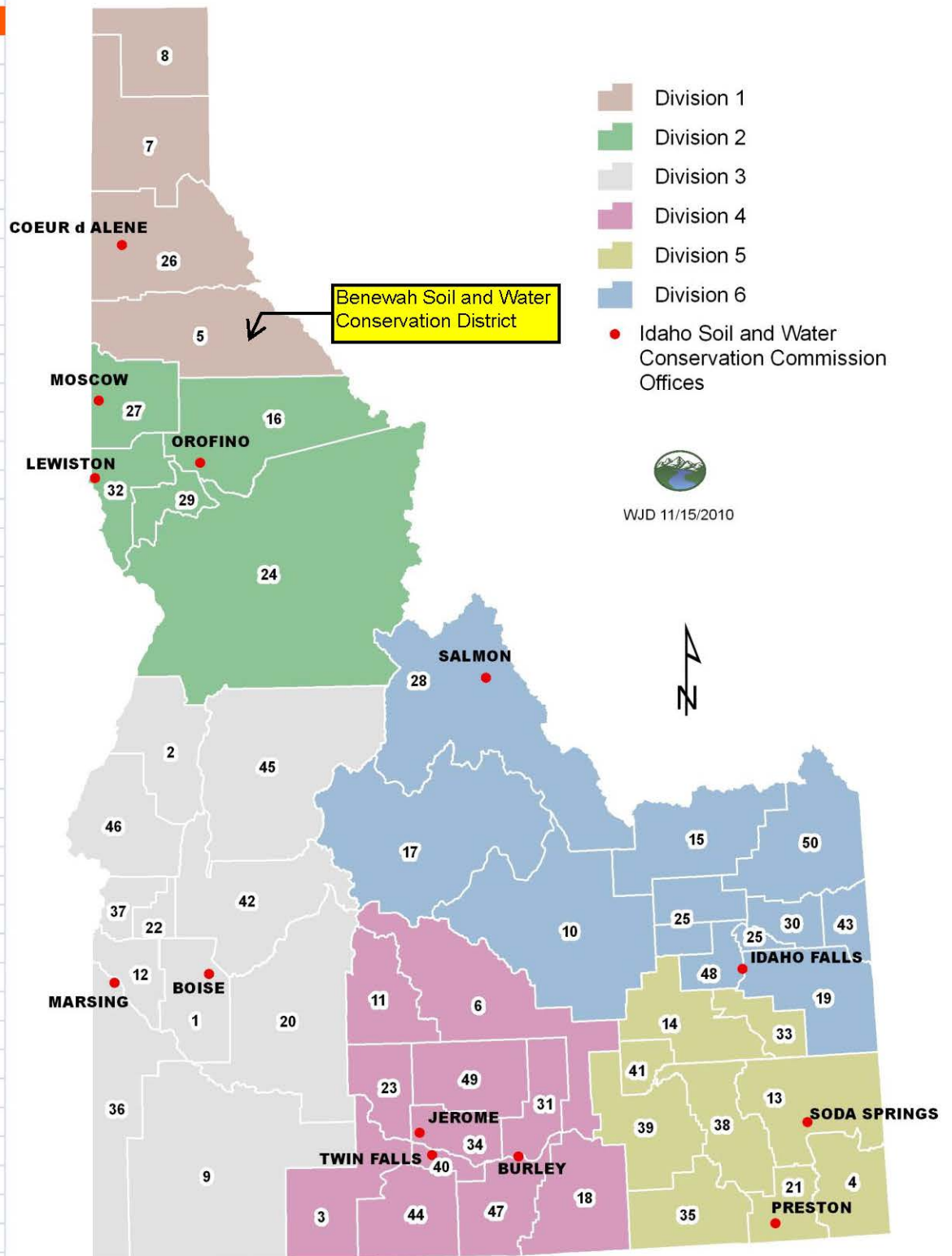
Benewah Conservation District Land Status Map – Attachment 2

Benewah Conservation District Land Cover Map – Attachment 3

Benewah Annual Plan of Work – FY2025 – Attachment 4

Districts by IASCD Divisions 2010

1	Ada
2	Adams
3	Balanced Rock
4	Bear Lake
5	Benewah
6	Blaine
7	Bonner
8	Boundary
9	Bruneau River
10	Butte
11	Camas
12	Canyon
13	Caribou
14	Central Bingham
15	Clark
16	Clearwater
17	Custer
18	East Cassia
19	East Side
20	Elmore
21	Franklin
22	Gem
23	Gooding
24	Idaho
25	Jefferson
26	Kootenai-Shoshone
27	Latah
28	Lemhi
29	Lewis
30	Madison
31	Minidoka
32	Nez Perce
33	North Bingham
34	North Side
35	Oneida
36	Owyhee
37	Payette
38	Portneuf
39	Power
40	Snake River
41	South Bingham
42	Squaw Creek
43	Teton
44	Twin Falls
45	Valley
46	Weiser River
47	West Cassia
48	West Side
49	Wood River
50	Yellowstone

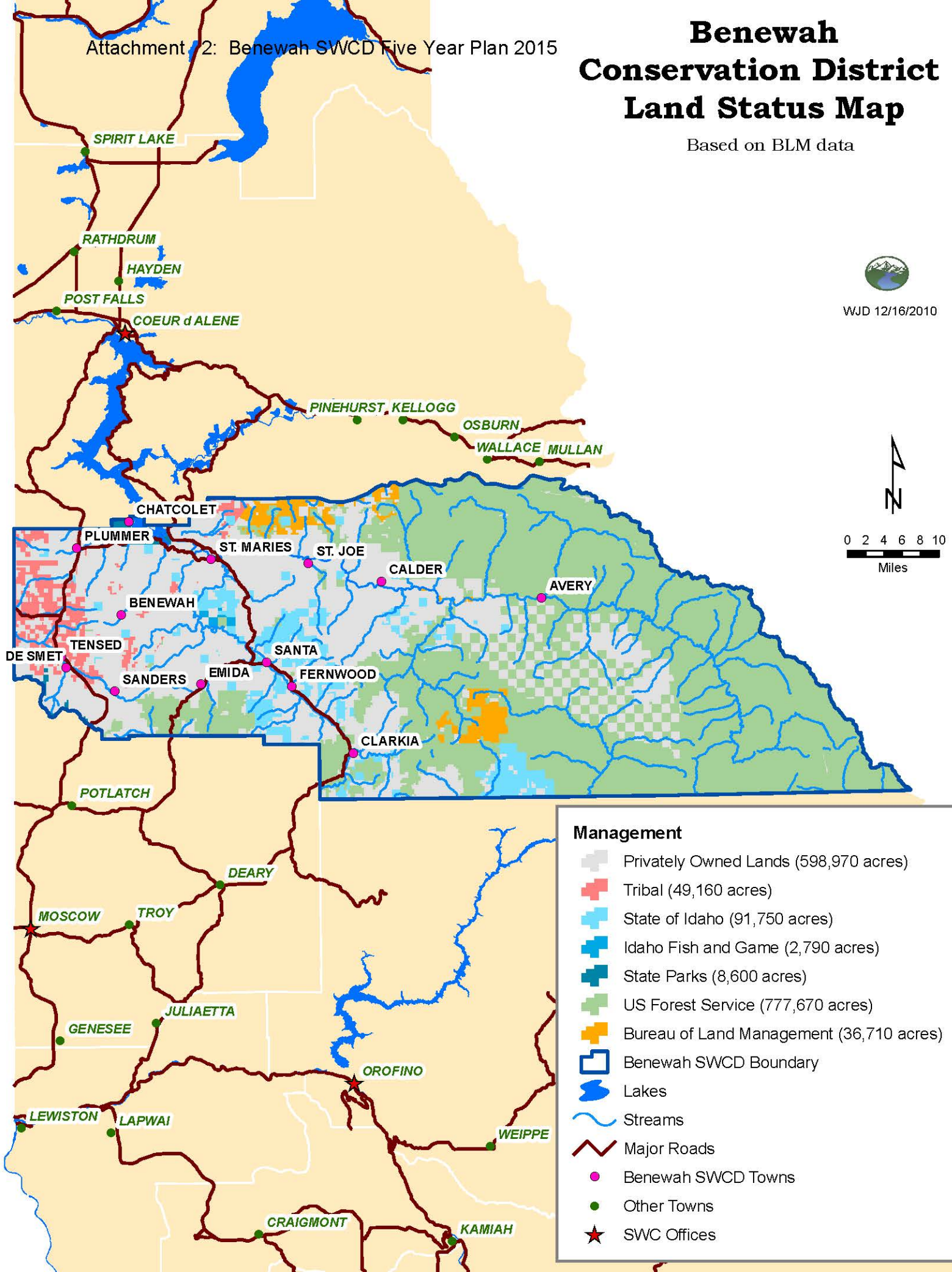


Benewah Conservation District Land Status Map

Based on BLM data



WJD 12/16/2010



Benewah Conservation District Land Cover Map

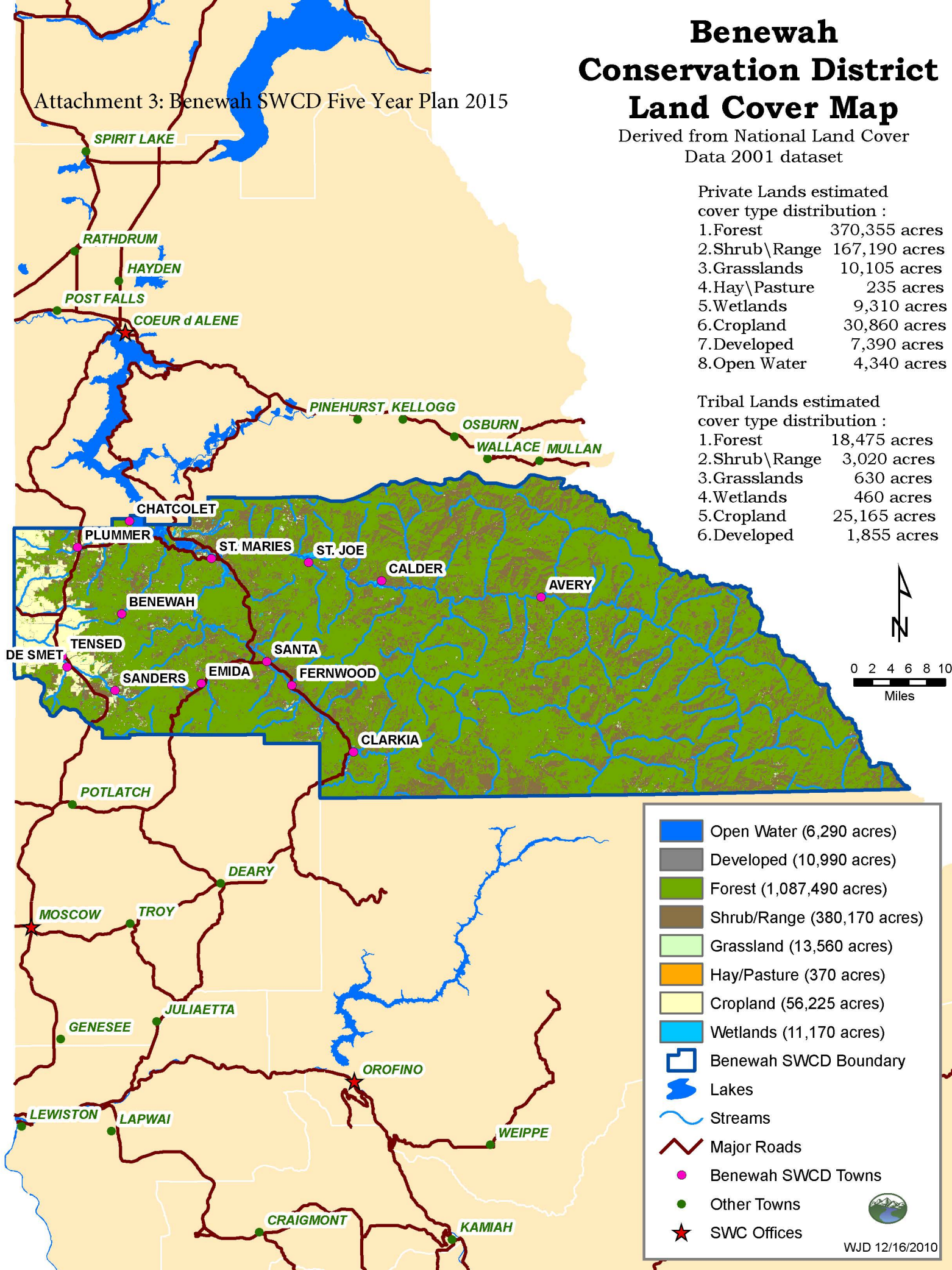
Derived from National Land Cover
Data 2001 dataset

Private Lands estimated
cover type distribution :

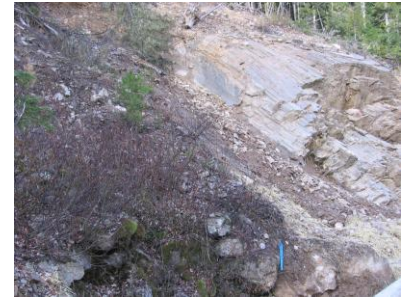
1.Forest	370,355 acres
2.Shrub\Range	167,190 acres
3.Grasslands	10,105 acres
4.Hay\Pasture	235 acres
5.Wetlands	9,310 acres
6.Cropland	30,860 acres
7.Developed	7,390 acres
8.Open Water	4,340 acres

Tribal Lands estimated
cover type distribution :

1.Forest	18,475 acres
2.Shrub\Range	3,020 acres
3.Grasslands	630 acres
4.Wetlands	460 acres
5.Cropland	25,165 acres
6.Developed	1,855 acres



FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 1: District Operations, Outreach & Education

Goal(s): Assist conservation partners with the promotion of conservation programs to maximize area participation.

Objective: Identify needed work throughout the district and increase public awareness of the District's conservation work in the area.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Create, communicate, and maintain current and accurate records of all Benewah SWCD meetings as required by law, including agenda, approved minutes, other supporting documents, and other meeting preparation tasks. Make said records available to the public and conservation partners to promote conservation throughout the district.	Monthly	District Manager
Manage and track District finances, including payroll, bill payments, budgets, and quarterly and annual tax reports using a comprehensive financial management system. Reported fiscal activities will include but are not limited to annual financial review/audit, submission of financial reports to appropriate entities.	On-going	District Manager & Board
Create, update, & submit annual reports to Idaho Soil Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) to include: Financial & Match Reports (Aug), Performance Report (Dec), Five Year & Annual Plan of Work (Mar), request for Technical Assistance (TA) (Mar), Project/Program Needs (Apr), Local Funds Received (Jun)	On-going Annual Reports	District Manager with Board approval
Funding request presentation for Benewah & Shoshone Commissioners.	Annually	District Manager & Board
Submit articles and information about District activities and conservation efforts to local news media sources as well as conservation partners (i.e.; Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC)	On-going	Board and District Manager

Conservation District Priority 1: District Operations, Outreach & Education

Actions (<i>Continued</i>)	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Develop a District wide natural resource inventory.	On-going	Board, District Manager & ISWCC
Review and update District Policy and Procedures Manual.	On-going	Board & District Manager
Recruitment and sustainment of a full five-member Benewah SWCD Board of Supervisors, including outreach, election documents, supervisor handbook, communication with the Benewah and Shoshone County election offices, and filing and storage of official documents.	On-going	District Manager & Board
Conduct regular and special meetings to identify and address resource needs throughout the district. Provide oversight and develop District projects.	Monthly	Board & District Manager
Reach out to traditionally unconventional resource partners (i.e. USDA-FS, IDFG, USFWS, IDPR, ITD) to promote and implement conservation; coordinate and hold local meetings to assess local conservation needs. Host Local Working Group meetings to assess conservation needs.	On-going	Board & District Manager
Continue to educate local youth on soil education and conservation during the 6 th Grade Resource Tour in July. Assist with Idaho State Forestry Contest in May. Work with FFA instructor to have students assist in crop sign placement.	On-going	District Manager & Board
Register, set-up, attend, tear-down Benewah SWCD booth at the Benewah County Fair in August.	Annual	District Manager & Board
Participate in semi-annual District 1 Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD) meetings and annual IASCD multi-day conference in November.	Semi-annual/ Annual	District Manager & Board
Expand outreach capacities to address natural resource concerns in urban and community conservation. Apply for the National Association of Conservation Districts Urban and Community Conservation grant.	On-going	District Manager

FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 2: Water Quality

Goal(s): Provide leadership and technical assistance to maintain or improve water quality within the District by encouraging landowner and operator participation in programs and application of practices that will result in significant reduction of soil erosion.

Objective: Continue to support and encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Resource Management Systems (RMS's) within the District to help control erosion problems and to improve water quality.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Work with landowners/operators to identify ways to voluntarily apply needed conservation practices.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Hold informational meetings for landowners, operators, and interested parties providing information on conservation programs available. Provide brochures, handouts, newsletters, etc. to provide information about available programs.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Inventory and assess area culverts for any contribution to impaired water quality.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Participate in and support local Watershed Advisory Groups (WAG) and Basin Area Group (BAG).	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Provide administrative support for St. Joe-Riverside Streambank Stabilization and Revegetation and Moses Mtn. §319 Projects. Communicate with landowners, engineer and match fund providers.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Expand grant partnering opportunities with all available funding sources with the goal of water quality. Apply for DEQ Source Water Protection grant.	On-going	District Manager
Partner with NRCS using NRCS Soil Health Trailer as training opportunity for landowners and youth. Coordinating with local agencies, Coeur d'Alene Tribe and local public schools.	On-going	District Manager, NRCS

FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 3: Fish and Wildlife

Goal(s): Restore, improve and enhance fish and wildlife habitat on TMDL water bodies within the district and improve required habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species.

Objective: Encourage landowners/operators to utilize BMP's on riparian areas within District boundaries on TMDL identified water bodies to reduce negative effects on fish and wildlife habitat.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Encourage landowners to install tree and shrub plants, riparian buffers, bioengineered streambank stabilization and livestock exclusion fencing.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Promote landowner educational outreach through brochures and news articles.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Assist St. Joe Streambank landowners and landowners adjacent to protect waterway, riverbank and aged culverts with funding made available through the §319, Benewah SWCD, AVISTA, DEQ.	7/1/2024	Benewah SWCD, ISWCC
Inform landowners regarding the identification and effective control of invasive plants, including noxious weeds.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Provide information, assistance and incentives for voluntary protection efforts on private lands, such as conservation easements.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Identify and map wetland communities of high value to wildlife.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, ISWCC

FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 4: Forestlands

Goal(s): Forests are diverse and resilient to fire, insects, disease, and noxious weeds

Objective: Work with landowners to increase productivity of private forests, while promoting sustainable forest practices and increase outreach and education opportunities

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Provide education leading to understanding and support of forest health goals and strategies. Partner with UI Extension to provide successful tree planting and insects and disease identification/control classes.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Participate in and promote the Panhandle Seedling Program. Promote use of genetically improved stock by selling blister-rust resistant white pine seedlings. Sell 19,000 seedlings.	4/7/2025	District Manager & Board
Continue to assist with Idaho State Forestry Contest and support participation from local high schools.	5/8/2025	District Manager & Board
Work with the Board to coordinate forest management and fuels reduction activities in Benewah and Shoshone Counties. Apply for Western State Fire Managers and Community Wildfire Defense grants.	On-going	District Manager & Board
Engage in collaborative groups and partnerships for landscape scale forest health improvement, restoration and stewardship. Attend Shoshone-Benewah Forest Collaborative meetings.	On-going	Benewah SWCD
Assess and monitor forest conditions for sustainability and resilience.	On-going	Benewah SWCD



FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 5: Non-Irrigated Cropland

Goal(s): Maintain and improve long-term soil productivity on non-irrigated agricultural lands through development, adoption, promotion, and demonstration of practices that benefit inherent and dynamic soil properties associated with productivity potential, within the framework of economic and social needs.

Objective: Maintain productive agricultural lands through voluntary incentives and programs.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Work with NRCS to promote implementation of FSA plans on HEL (Highly Erodible Land) cropland used by farm program participants to produce agricultural commodity crops.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Provide information to schools relating to conservation matters as requested such as Career Counseling and cropland and woodland tours. Provide a booth at Lakeside High School Career Fair annually. Conduct soils workshop at annual 6 th Grade Resource Tour.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC
Coordinate the placement of 40 field signs to label our local agriculture crops with FSA and the local school district FFA students and instructor.	On-going	District Manager & Board
Support farmland protection programs, which focus on maintaining agricultural viability.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, ISWCC
Promote agricultural practices that minimize soil erosion, such as no-till or low-till cultivation and direct seeding.	On-going	Benewah SWCD, NRCS & ISWCC



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Conservation District Priority Number 6: Air Quality

Goal(s): Reduce and minimize emissions of particulate matter and smoke in accordance with the Atmospheric Resource Quality Management Standard

Objective: Increase awareness and application of Best Management Practices for air quality resource concerns.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Establish conservation practices to help in the reduction of airborne particulates.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Share information with landowners and operators about acquiring necessary local, tribal, state and federal permits.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Establish conservation practices to balance air quality and water quality concerns.	On-going	Benewah SWCD & NRCS
Maintain Board presence at air quality meetings to give input and gather current and relevant information.	On-going	Benewah SWCD
Share information with landowners on how to build and burn slash piles.	On-going	Benewah SWCD



FY2025 (7/1/2025 – 6/30/2026) Annual Plan of Work Benewah Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation District Priority Number 7: Recreation

Goal(s): Create opportunities for expanding recreational uses for the public and finding new recreational opportunities

Objective: Assist other agencies with developing recreation opportunities

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
Offer assistance to Heyburn State Park with development of various recreational uses within the park.	At any time	Benewah SWCD
Offer assistance to Friends of McCroskey State Park to develop various recreational uses within the park.	At any time	Benewah SWCD
Research partnering with the Coeur d' Alene Tribe using the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene's for conservation awareness projects/programs.	On-going	District Manager

**IDAHO SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**FIVE-YEAR (5) PLAN and
ANNUAL WORK PLAN
CERTIFICATION**

DISTRICT: Benewah Soil & Water
Conservation District

FOR FISCAL YEAR:

FY2025

DUE :

March 31, 2025

CERTIFICATION

On behalf of my local Board of Supervisors, I hereby certify that the attached Five-Year (5) Plan and Annual Work Plan is true and accurate, and further submit said Plan for the above named District and fiscal year.

A copy of this Five-Year (5) Plan and Annual Work Plan shall be kept at the District office and is available for public inspection.

Board Supervisor Signature

Tim Schaffer

Printed Name

 3-25-25
Date

208-987-4011

District Telephone

benewahswcd@gmail.com

District Email Address

FOR SWC USE ONLY:

DATE OF CONFIRMATION:
