

Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District

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Five Year Resource Conservation Plan

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2025

Annual Plan of Work

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

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Forward

The Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is one of fifty conservation districts in the state of Idaho and encompasses most of Lemhi County. As subdivisions of state government, conservation districts are charged with carrying out programs and projects promoting the conservation 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 and channeling expertise, whatever the source, into on the ground action. At the local level, conservation districts focus on non-regulatory programs, science based technical assistance, incentive based financial programs and information and education programs.

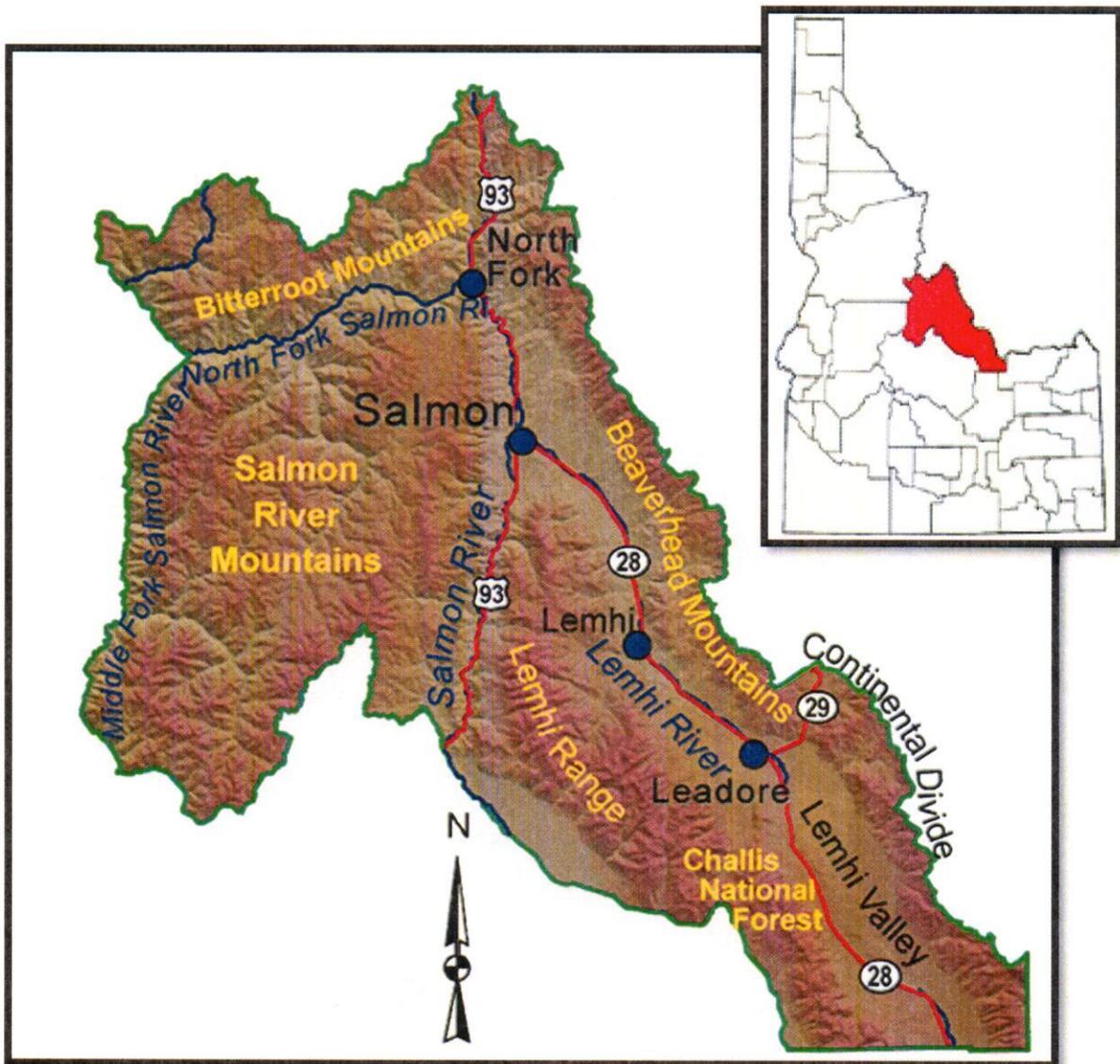
Through legislation and agreement, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance to landowners and land users through conservation districts. Each conservation district in Idaho has signed a mutual agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture and Governor of Idaho that establishes this cooperative framework.

This Five-Year Resource Conservation Plan and Annual Plan of Work was developed to not only guide the Lemhi SWCD, but to encourage cooperation among landowners, government agencies, private organizations and elected officials. This document specifically identifies those needs in the Lemhi SWCD and presents a plan for meeting those needs. Through knowledge and cooperation, all concerned can ensure a sustainable natural resource base for present and future generations.

Section 1: Physical Characteristics

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.01)

Following the physical boundaries of Lemhi County, Idaho, the Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District encompasses 2,921,126 acres, only approximately 7% of which is privately owned. This isolated county in eastern Idaho is bordered by the state of Montana to the north and east and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness area to the west. With the surrounding mountains rising to over 10,000 feet, Lemhi County has a mild climate with an average growing season ranging from 145 days at Shoup to 90 days at Leadore (Hoffman and Williams). Additionally, there are 189,644 acres in farms and 53,574 total acres of cropland ("Agricultural Statistics" 63).



Section 2: Economic Conditions and Outlook

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.02)

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, with an increase of 1.7% in the last decade, Lemhi County currently has a population of 7,967. From its peak in 1997 of 8,064, Lemhi County has experience many swings in population. These swings can be mainly attributed to activities in the mining and lumber industries ("Relocation Guide"3). With 400 ranches and farms in 2009 and ranking 6th for employment, agriculture has long been a cornerstone industry. Livestock production makes up a significant portion of the local industry, particularly beef production, with 24,400 head of mother beef cows. Additionally, 1,100 sheep and 1,200+ head of goats contribute to local livestock production. Forage crops are also grown locally, with most utilized on the ranches or sold locally. Fifty-seven percent of land in agriculture is harvested cropland, principally grass and alfalfa hay, while the remainder is utilized as pasture (Hoffman and Williams 2).

Additionally, recreation and tourism play a significant role in the local economy. Known as the "Whitewater Capital of the World", Salmon and Lemhi County are popular destinations for outdoor recreation, with approximately eighty percent of outfitted recreational sales in Central Idaho coming from whitewater rafting and the remaining twenty percent coming from hunting and fishing ("Relocation Guide" 4).

Section 3: Assessment

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.03)

Trends Impacting Conservation

- Urban impact of agriculture production
- Poorly planned growth in agricultural areas
- Increasing small acreage farms of five acres or less
- Limited availability of state funds for conservation
- Focus on water quality compared to other conservation and environmental issues
- Increased paperwork to accomplish goals
- Trends to regulate agriculture and ranching

Staffing Needs

- Benefit and retirement package for employees

Key Decision Makers

- Citizens within the Lemhi SWCD
- Lemhi County Commissioners
- State Legislators and State Department Officers (Office of Species Conservation)
- U.S. Senators, Representatives and Staffers
- Lemhi SWCD Supervisors
- Special Interest Groups

Section 4: Natural Resource Priorities

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.04)

- District operations
- Fish and wildlife*
- Information and education*
- Irrigated cropland
- Rangeland*
- Water quality*

*Meets *Anti-Degradation Plan for Agriculture* criteria

Section 5: Water Quality

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.05)

Lemhi River Sub basin

The Lemhi River sub basin is located in east-central Idaho with its terminus at the Salmon River in Salmon, Idaho. The sub basin falls entirely within Lemhi County, Idaho. The Lemhi River has been identified as providing critical spawning and rearing habitat for two federally protected anadromous fish species: steelhead trout and spring/summer Chinook Salmon. The Lemhi River and its tributaries also provide important historic and/or current habitat for federally protected resident and migratory Bull Trout as well as Westslope Cutthroat Trout, which have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. TMDLs have been developed to address sediment in Bohannon Creek, Eighteenmile Creek, Geertson Creek, Kirtley Creek, Sandy Creek, McDevitt Creek, and Wimpey Creek and to address fecal coliform bacteria in the Lemhi River. Though Bohannon, Eighteenmile, Geertson, Hawley, Mill, Sandy, and Wimpey Creeks are listed for nutrients as well, no conditions within the streams have been observed that necessitate TMDLs for nutrients based on narrative state water quality standards. The primary anthropogenic source of sediment having a deleterious effect on beneficial use support status within the seven streams listed for sediment was identified as sediment from streambank erosion. Excessive sedimentation is reducing the quality of spawning and rearing habitat for resident trout species and exceeds the same habitat parameters for anadromous species. Fecal coliform bacteria loading threatens primary and secondary contact recreation in the Lemhi River. Altered flow conditions resulting from diversion of surface waters for irrigation have eliminated migratory components of resident fish species and have elevated risks to isolated fish populations.

Panther Creek Sub basin
(Middle Salmon River)

The Middle Salmon River-Panther Creek sub basin is located in east-central Idaho on the Idaho-Montana border. The northern part of the sub basin is bounded by the continental divide. The southern boundary of the sub basin ends at the town of Ellis located north of the city of Challis. A small portion of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness is in the northwest corner of the sub basin. Metals and pH contamination in four streams associated with Blackbird Mine are well documented, and clean-up activities are underway to restore the water quality and beneficial uses of Panther Creek and Big Deer Creek. These activities will also likely reduce metals contamination in Bucktail and Blackbird Creeks. Since restoration activities have already been planned and implemented for the mine, developing TMDLs for these waters would be a duplication of effort, so TMDLs were not developed for these four creeks. The US Forest Service has implemented best management practices on Dump Creek. Significant water quality improvements have been noted, and sediment has already been greatly reduced. Since best management practices have already been fully implemented, a TMDL was not developed for Dump Creek. The Salmon River was identified as an impaired water body on the 1998 §303(d) list, but no pollutants were identified. Information regarding pollution in the Salmon River is very sparse and no water quality problems were identified in this assessment; therefore, a TMDL was not completed for the Salmon River. A TMDL was developed for Williams Lake for phosphorus. Most of the phosphorus is from nonpoint sources in the Lake Creek watershed, from septic systems associated with recreational residences around the lake, and from a campground on Williams Lake.

Section 6: Projects
(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.06)

- Fish and wildlife
- District operations
- Information and education
- Irrigated cropland
- Water quality
- Rangeland

Section 7: Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Plan of Work

(IDAPA 60.05.02.025.07)

Priority #1: Fish and Wildlife		
Goals:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance fish and wildlife habitat. 		
Objective:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restore fishable populations of salmon and steelhead to the Lemhi River. ▪ Restore and maintain sage grouse habitat. 		
Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist NRCS with 20 cost share program contracts. 	6/30/2020	Lemhi SWCD staff; NRCS staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist 5 landowners in implementing conservation projects with Bonneville Power Administration funding or Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. 	6/30/2020	Lemhi SWCD staff
Priority #2: District Operations		
Goal:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote conservation and manage LSWCD resources responsibly. 		
Objective:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involve supervisors, county commissioners and ISWCC to ensure responsible use of funding. ▪ Active supervisor participation in LSWCD activities. 		
Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare annual budget and five year/annual plan. 	3/30/2020	LSWCD staff; LSWCD supervisors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request annual county appropriation from the Lemhi County Commissioners. 	6/1/2020	LSWCD staff; Minimum of 1 LSWCD supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct an annual financial audit. 	3/1/2020	Searle Hart & Associates; LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One supervisor and all staff members to attend the fall (if held) and spring Division VI meetings. 	10/2019 3/2020	LSWCD supervisor(s); LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two supervisors and administrative assistant to attend the annual IASCD conference. 	11/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a subcommittee to review current policies and procedures and recommend new policies and/or procedures as necessary. 	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors

Priority #3: Information and Education

Goal:

- Inform and educate producers and the public about conservation programs and practices.

Objective:

- Conduct conservation education activities.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Host a booth at the Lemhi County Fair in conjunction with the NRCS and USBWP. 	8/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff; NRCS; USBWP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and participate in National Agriculture Week activities in Lemhi County. 	4/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize and conduct a 4th-6th grade poster contest in conjunction with the NACD Poster Contest. 	9/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote & provide scholarship(s) for students to attend Natural Resources Camp. 	5/2020	LSWCD staff; Lemhi County Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to work to establish an Envirothon team. 	9/15/2020	LSWCD Administrative Assistant; NRCS

Priority #4: Irrigated Cropland

Goal:

- Improve irrigation water management and soil health.

Objective:

- Assist irrigators and irrigation districts in optimizing water use. Educate irrigators on Soil health.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist with the installation of improved irrigation systems through the EQIP program. 	4/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff; NRCS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote irrigation water management and soil health through tours and workshops. 	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use existing information on the hydrology of the river systems to better understand and use water for irrigation systems. 	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff

Priority #5: Water Quality

Goal:

- Maintain a high level of water quality and improve waters of lesser quality.

Objective:

- Maintain water quality study on the Lemhi River to create baseline data for past and future comparison and address water quality issues in TMDL and lead the community in the TMDL efforts.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
▪ Educate the public on the TMDL process	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
▪ Implement TMDL using NRCS and state water quality programs.	6/2020	LSWCD staff
▪ Emphasize water quality for fish habitat with producers.	6/30/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff

Priority #6: Rangeland

Goal:

- Promote holistic range management between private landowners, public land managers, USFWS and NOAA fisheries.

Objective:

- Promote and implement grazing management plans with landowners and users.

Actions	Target Date	Individual(s) Responsible
▪ Provide input into public agency range management plans.	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
▪ Support and assist Lemhi County with weed control efforts and workshops.	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
▪ Implement range management practices for the benefit of fish and fish habitat with two producers	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff
▪ Support and provide scholarship(s) for the Lost Rivers Grazing Academy.	6/2020	LSWCD supervisors; LSWCD staff

Works Cited

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United States Department of Agriculture National Statistics Service Idaho Field Office. *2011 Idaho Agricultural Statistics*. Boise, Idaho: Idaho State Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2011. 63. Print.

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"Salmon River (Middle) - Panther Creek Subbasin." *Table of Subbasin Assessments, TMDLS, Implementation Plans and Five-Year Reviews*. Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/tmdls/table-of-sbas-tmdls/salmon-river-middle-panther-creek-subbasin.aspx>>.

**IDAHO SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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

DISTRICT: Lemhi

FOR FISCAL YEAR:

2020-2025

DUE : 2020
March 31,

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.

Mike Kossler

Board Supervisor Signature

Mike Kossler

Printed Name

3/26/20

Date

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District Telephone

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District Email Address

FOR SWC USE ONLY:

DATE OF CONFIRMATION:
