



# Currently

*The publication of Idaho's only conservation group dedicated exclusively to protecting Idaho's rivers*

**Vol. 19 No. 1**

## Wood River bill introduced Legislation marks big change in water law



A fisherman works the Wood River.

Photo by Randy Ashton

### *IRU Staff Report*

Idaho State Senators Clint Stennett (D-Ketchum) and Dean Cameron (R-Rupert) have introduced a bill in the Idaho Legislature that will allow — for the first time in state history — privately held water rights to be donated to the state for the purpose of enhancing stream flows.

The legislative effort is an outgrowth of IRU's Wood River Legacy Project, which seeks to re-water a dried up section of the Big Wood River, while protecting existing flows in Silver Creek and spurring changes in Idaho water law that make it possible for willing water right holders to leave water in our precious rivers and streams.

"Any time you change Idaho water law with an eye toward protecting rivers you've done something special," IRU Conservation Director Kevin Lewis said. "If this bill passes and is signed by the

governor, we'll have accomplished something special indeed."

What made this legislation possible, Lewis said, was the fact that all parties in the Wood Basin should benefit from the change in law.

"The region will get a restored river and downriver farmers and communities will get more water," Lewis said. "We were committed to building a win-win solution for everyone through this process, and I believe we've done it."

Local organizers, including IRU members, volunteers and project consultant Richard McIntyre, have built an amazing coalition of sportsmen, conservationists, ranchers, irrigators and local government officials who are standing up in support of the project.

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## Anti-salmon rider defeated; Fish agency reinstated

*by Amanda Peacher,  
Outreach Coordinator*

Thanks to the efforts of campaign lawyers, tribes, salmon advocates and volunteers across the nation, this winter saw two major victories for Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead. Salmon advocates are celebrating both the defeat of an anti-salmon rider and a recent court victory that brought the Fish Passage Center back to life.

Our first salmon victory is due in part to the hard work of IRU salmon volunteers and members.

Our partners in Washington D.C. learned last fall that Senator Larry Craig was floating the idea of attaching a rider to an appropriations bill during the "lameduck" session of Congress that would have rendered meaningless recent federal court decisions requiring the federal government to come up with legal and effective salmon recovery plans. Such a rider would have hurt not only Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead, but also the hundreds of Idaho families and businesses that rely on salmon.

continued on page 4

# Agency staff are unsung heroes of modern conservation movement

by Bill Sedivy, Executive Director

The modern conservation movement has produced many heroes.

Some are well known — Theodore Roosevelt, the father of our national park system; John Muir, the Sierra Club's patriarch; and Rachel Carson, the author of *Silent Spring*.

Here in Idaho we've been inspired by people like Ted Trueblood, Bruce Bowler, Ernie Day, Nelle Tobias, Frank Church and Cecil Andrus.

There have been unsung heroes, too — the volunteers and board members who donate time and energy to local and statewide conservation groups; corporate executives who work to make their companies greener; and philanthropists who contribute mightily to making our planet a better place for generations to come.

Perhaps our most under-appreciated conservationists are the men and women who work for government agencies. These public servants have dedicated careers to protecting the water we drink, the rivers we play in, landscapes we love and the air we breathe.

This year, Idaho river lovers will say goodbye to six public employees who are retiring after long and distinguished careers, and who have each — in their own ways — contributed much to the cause of protecting rivers in Idaho.

**LuVerne Grussing**, a former IRU board member and long time employee of the Bureau of Land Management, is retiring after 28 years as recreation planner at the Cottonwood BLM office. During his career at Cottonwood, LuVerne and his office mates, Manager **Greg Yuncevich** and Real Estate Specialist **Ron Grant** (who also both retired in January) protected riparian corridors from development and improved access and recreation opportunities along the Salmon River, from Riggins to the Snake.

When Grussing started at Cottonwood in 1978, just 70 percent of the river corridor was owned by the public or protected by easements. Today, 98 percent of the land around the river is either owned by the government or protected.

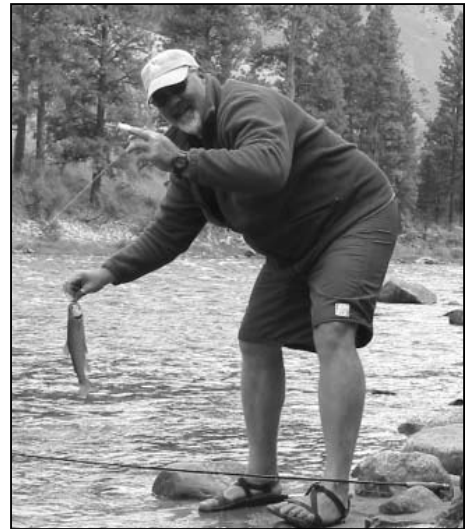
**Bill Graham** started working for the Idaho Department of Water Resources in May 1974. He retired in January. In 1989 Bill joined the department's new planning bureau, and he took the helm of that department in 1995. During his tenure as planning chief, Bill helped put together the state's protected rivers program and oversaw protection of more than 2,000 miles of Idaho's streams.

And in working with IRU over the years, Bill has always been quick to provide information, answer questions and offer guidance on complicated management issues and the nuances of complicated laws and state planning processes.

Finally, **Brayton Willis**, Senior Manager and Planner with the U.S. Army Corps' Boise Office, retired in early February after 28 years of federal service. Brayton, and his wife, Deb (also a Corps project manager), established the Boise office in 1999. Since then, he has helped the city of Caldwell work to restore Indian Creek and has worked with Treasure Valley governments on a number of Boise River issues.

For the past two years Brayton has been an inspiring advisor and partner in IRU's efforts to help local governments build a more coherent Boise River management vision for the future.

So hats off to these retiring public employees! The people of IRU appreciate your fine work over the years, and we hope that your retirements will keep you in touch with our rivers. Your experiences, vision and wisdom will always be in demand.



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*Our mission is to protect and restore the rivers of Idaho.*

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A LETTER FROM SENATOR MIKE CRAPO

## Owyhee bill to be re-introduced in new Congress

Now that the 110th Congress is underway, it is a good time to offer an update about the Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act, better known to many of you as simply the Owyhee Initiative.



I greatly appreciate the long hours and dedication put in by members of the Owyhee Initiative's work group, including the representation by Idaho Rivers United, and others interested in seeing this collaborative succeed in Congress. We are continuing the effort here in Washington, DC to inform Members of Congress and their staffs about the on-the-ground, consensus-driven process that has brought us to this point in preserving the cultures, economies and environmental treasures in the Owyhee Canyonlands.

While many people in Idaho know about the Owyhee Initiative, it is news to many here in Washington. We continue to hold meetings in Idaho and Washington to strategize the introduction of the Owyhee Initiative in the 110th Congress.

I expect to be able to announce soon when we will reintroduce the Initiative.

Simply put, the introduction and hearing we received last year before Senator Craig's subcommittee generated momentum and excitement that we are building on by getting out the word to an ever-expanding audience here in Washington.

I look forward to continuing the partnership with Idaho Rivers United and all of the other work group members to make the Owyhee Initiative a reality this Congressional session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Crapo".

Mike Crapo  
U.S. Senator

## Revised Salmon Planning Act set for introduction

by Bert Bowler, Native Fisheries Director

Salmon advocates are working with members of the Northwest Congressional delegation and conservative budget hawks from around the nation on a new bill designed to force critical review of salmon science and the economic impacts of lower Snake River dam removal.

The bill, a revised version of the Salmon Planning Act, would order the Government Accountability Office to undertake economic and engineering studies related to the removal of the four lower Snake River dams. The GAO is an investigative arm of Congress charged with reviewing and analyzing federal expenditures. Under the bill, GAO would analyze effects of removing the Eastern Washington dams on employment, energy production replacement, transportation infrastructure, irrigation and other issues.

In addition, the revised Salmon Plan Act would seek from the National Academy of Sciences an examination of the biological efficacy of dam removal on fish recovery.

Debate over science and economics has slowed forward movement on the revision of failed and illegal salmon recovery plans put in place by the federal government over the last decade. The government's 2004 plan for recovering Columbia and Snake River wild salmon was challenged in federal court and determined to be illegal under the Endangered Species Act. Federal agencies are currently rewriting the plan, which must include measures to ensure protection and recovery of salmon and steelhead.

A final, revised plan is expected by June 2007.

The current version of the Salmon Planning Act has been circulating in the US House of Representatives for several years with over 100 co-sponsors. The new bill calls for the same studies outlined in the former bill, but would not authorize the US Army Corps of Engineers to remove the dams if deemed necessary by the federal government.

"Timely completion of economic and engineering studies is crucial to understanding the true costs, benefits, and feasibility of dam removal," IRU Executive Director Bill Sedivy said. "The new SPA should get us on that track."

Scientists have long agreed that removing the high-cost, low value dams in Eastern Washington offers the best, and perhaps only chance, of saving Idaho's imperiled wild salmon and steelhead runs. In 2006, just three sockeye salmon returned to Idaho's Redfish Lake from the Pacific.

## 119 Idaho businesses sign letter of support for lower Snake River dam removal

Idaho business leaders delivered 119 letters from businesses around the state last December asking Idaho's congressional delegation to consider removing four obsolete federal dams on the lower Snake River in Eastern Washington to restore Idaho salmon.

The letter, signed by business owners from insurance agents to fishing outfitters, calls for an examination of the costs and benefits of dam removal and urges Idaho's delegation to consider the restored fishery and economic benefits that would result.

"The four lower Snake dams are costing Idaho businesses and killing our salmon," said Marty Smith, owner of Three Rivers Resort in Kooskia, Idaho and former chairman of the Idaho Travel Council. "Idaho's leaders need to consider dam removal as part of a scientifically sound and economically beneficial salmon recovery plan."

Smith was among three business owners who delivered copies of the letter to U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson's office in Boise.

The letter references the findings of a recent report called Revenue Stream, which demonstrates that taxpayers and electric ratepayers will save over \$5 billion over the next twenty years if the dams are removed.

"We now know that it is possible to remove the lower Snake dams, compensate affected stakeholders, and restore Idaho's salmon—bringing millions of dollars to Idaho's economy," said Tim Burke, owner of the RiverKeeper fly shop in Boise. "Lower Snake Dam removal will be good for business, good for salmon and good for Idaho."

Idaho Rivers United is continuing to collect signatures from businesses that support salmon recovery and lower Snake dam removal. To help gather signatures or to add your business to the list, please contact Amanda Peacher at (800) 574-7481 or [amanda@idahorivers.org](mailto:amanda@idahorivers.org).

## Anti-salmon rider defeated; Fish agency reinstated ————— from page 1

Fortunately, because of pending changes in Congressional leadership and in the face of intense opposition from salmon advocates, Craig abandoned his plans.

After IRU sent out an email call to action, he received over 150 letters asking him not to move forward with the anti-salmon rider. IRU's outreach efforts were paralleled by partner groups in the Northwest, D.C., and across the nation. Washington Senator Patty Murray agreed to block the rider at all costs following contacts from constituents and a Washington D.C. meeting with IRU Conservation Director Kevin Lewis and Northwest employees of American Rivers and American Whitewater.

January brought more good news for wild salmon when the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated the Fish Passage Center (FPC), an independent research center that monitors endangered salmon.

IRU members may recall a previous anti-salmon rider from Senator Craig, targeting the center. In the summer of 2005 Senator Craig attempted to shut down the Center by attaching a legislative rider to an appropriations bill. He called the FPC's \$1.3 million budget a waste of money and claimed the agency's science — which was used in a court case that overturned the federal government's inadequate salmon recovery plan — biased.

Despite tremendous efforts to stop the rider, and protests from tribal and state fishery scientists who rely on FPC data, Sen. Craig was successful in pushing the FPC rider through Congress. However, several Northwest tribes and fishing groups sued to overturn the action in 2006, won a temporary order keeping the FPC open and were successful in getting the courts to reinstate the FPC in a January 2007 decision.

These two victories are good examples of how important dedicated activists and a trustworthy court system are to wild salmon recovery efforts. Without the voices and financial support of IRU members, the latest anti-salmon rider may not have been stopped.

## Water management bill expected this session

*IRU Staff Report*

Aside from bills addressing flows in the Big Wood River and the Atlanta Mine (see articles on page 1 and page 5), the 2007 legislative session has started quietly for river advocates. However, an expected ruling by the Idaho Supreme Court may produce a flurry of activity late in the session.

Last June, an Idaho District Court ruled that Idaho's "conjunctive management" of water rights is unconstitutional. The state of Idaho has appealed this ruling to the Idaho Supreme Court with a decision expected in late February or early March.

For many years, Idaho refused to manage surface water and ground water as an interconnected system. The result: fully-appropriated surface water, declining aquifer levels and litigation. In an attempt to solve the problem, Idaho developed conjunctive management rules — now deemed unconstitutional.

Idaho Rivers United will want to make sure that any conjunctive management legislation does not weaken protection for rivers, streams and lakes.

# Citizens lobby for Boise River, against Atlanta gold mine

by Liz Paul, IRU Campaign Coordinator

On Jan. 24 determined volunteers — including retirees, students, a professor, a pilot and a soccer mom — braved the halls of the Statehouse to lobby for a place they love, the Boise River.

And in early February, Senator John Andreason (R-Boise) introduced legislation designed to keep the Atlanta project from moving forward. The Senate Resources Committee voted to print the bills, and a hearing is expected at the end of the month.

Andreason's bills address the need for water treatment long after mines are closed. The first bill would prohibit Idaho Department of Environmental Quality from issuing permits for mining operations requiring water treatment into perpetuity (fifteen years or longer).

The second bill would require financial assurance (bonding) for mining activity that would require water quality treatment into perpetuity.



Campaign volunteers meet with Idaho State Representative Les Bock (D-Dist.16) to discuss protecting the Boise River.

Idaho Rivers United and our partners in Idaho Families for Clean Water sponsored the citizen lobby day as part of our continuing campaign to stop the proposed Atlanta Gold Mine.

A Canadian company wants to build the cyanide heap leach mine in the headwaters of the Boise River, near the town of Atlanta.

The mine would require several water treatment facilities to control toxic waste pollution of surface and ground water. Those facilities would be required long after the mine closes — Atlanta Gold has said they will be required in perpetuity.

The lobby effort followed a Boise town hall meeting, organized at the request of IRU and its partners by Boise Mayor Dave Beiter and members of City Council. Over 400 citizens turned out for the November 15th hearing, with speaker after speaker talking about dangers posed by the mine. The nearly unanimous opposition to the mine impressed the mayor

and council, and city action is expected soon.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Liz at (208) 343-7481.

## Big Wood River bill introduced

from page 1

Many people know the Big Wood River for its native trout fishery and cottonwoods that turn bright yellow in the fall. But many Idahoans don't know that nearly one-third of the river — from below Bellevue to Magic Reservoir — goes dry for a good portion of each year because Idaho water law stops willing water right holders from leaving water in-stream without the possibility of losing that water to junior users downstream.

Throughout 2006, McIntyre and members of project's local advisory board have picked up endorsements for the Legacy Project from the Lincoln, Jerome, Gooding, Minidoka and Blaine County commissions, as well as the cities of Gooding, Jerome, Shoshone, Bellevue, Ketchum and Hailey.

Big Wood Canal Company and Northside Canal Company also support the project and assisted in securing Idaho Water Users

Association support of the legislation. Association representatives also contributed to the legislative drafting process.

The bill, which authorizes water donations only in the Wood River Basin, would for the first time in state history allow willing water right holders to donate all or portions of consumptive water rights without having those rights lose their priority dates. That will protect flows from junior water right holders downstream, and allow water to be left in the river.

"It's been very gratifying working with all the diverse interest groups to help create this win-win proposal," McIntyre said. "This bill and this project should help irrigators and drastically improve the health of the Big Wood River."

To get involved call Andy Munter in Ketchum at (208) 726-8818, or project director Rich McIntyre at (208) 309-8149.

## Support IRU while paddling in beautiful, tropical Costa Rica



IRU members paddling on the Pacuare River, Costa Rica during last year's IRU fundraising trip.

IRU members can get an early jump on their paddling season by joining IRU Executive Director Bill Sedivy for a week of river running in beautiful, tropical Costa Rica, April 21 through April 28.

Thanks to the generosity of our friends at Costa Rica Rios, Idaho Rivers United will be your host for this very special fundraising trip on the great rivers of Costa Rica.

Your price for this custom whitewater vacation, \$1,500, includes six days of paddling, access to the largest fleet of kayaks, whitewater canoes and rafts in Central America, river gear, great food, shuttles, comfortable transportation, guides and lodging while you're in Costa Rica.

And while you're paddling the warm tropical rivers you'll also be supporting the important work of Idaho Rivers United back home. A third of your trip price, \$500 per person, will be donated to IRU.

Boaters of all skill levels are welcome. If you're not up to paddling your own kayak, canoe or inflatable kayak, join one of the company's skilled guides for a paddle raft trip, or float in a two person Shredder.

**Make your reservations today by contacting Vicki at Costa Rica Rios at (888) 434-0776. Or, for more information call Bill Sedivy or Jessica Hixson at (208) 343-7481.**

## Boise River Community Lecture Series

Idaho Rivers United and Garden City Library are partnering to educate citizens about the Boise River with free lectures and field trips throughout 2007. Please join us to learn more about water quality and native fish this spring.

Please contact Liz at 343-7481 for more information.

### **FEBRUARY 27 @ 6:00 PM** **Gutter Talk – Monitoring & Managing Stormwater**

Presenters: Brian Murphy and Kate Harris  
Garden City Hall  
6015 Glenwood Street

### **MARCH 20 @ 6:00 PM** **Fishes of the Boise River – Then and Now**

Presenters: Idaho Fish and Game and Trout Unlimited  
Garden City Hall  
6015 Glenwood Street



Boise River photo by Steve Bly

### **APRIL 25** **A special after-hours family tour of the West Boise Wastewater Treatment Plant**

Details to be announced

*If you love a river*

## Thank You Auction for the Rivers Donors

IRU's 12th Annual Auction for the Rivers, held this year in mid November, was our most successful ever — with over 200 people attending and record revenues topping \$30,000.

The generous support from the businesses and individuals who contributed trips, gear, books, services and other items made the success of this year's event possible.

Please check out the list of donors below; if you didn't find what you were looking for at the auction, please contact one of the *Auction for the Rivers* donors to find what you need.

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Boise Weekly	ECHO River Trips	Lost River Outfitters	Rapid River Outfitters	The Wilderness Society
Bozo and Ben Cardozo	Exodus Wilderness Adventures	Mackay Wilderness River Trips	Rapid Sports	Tim Palmer
Broadway Vet	Eyes of the World Imports	Maravia Raft Corp	REI	Treeworks
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	Gravity Sports	Massage Works	ROW Adventures	White Water Pizza & Pasta

Remember, all good river advocates should support those businesses that support river conservation!

We'd also like to thank all the volunteers who helped put this event together. Take a minute to look at the list of volunteers on the back page, and thank them the next time you see them. If you'd like to help with one of our events please call Jessica at 343-8153 or (800) 574-7481.



## Business Partners support IRU

Through our Business Partners Program, companies support our work via Outfitter Pass-Through, with in-kind gifts and direct donations. Please contact

Jessica at (800) 574-7481 or [jessica@idahorivers.org](mailto:jessica@idahorivers.org) if you would like information on the benefits of participating in this program.

*Our thanks to these generous business supporters:*

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