

## Pack River Streambank Restoration Project

By Sarah Garcia, Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District

### Featuring:

Pack River  
Streambank  
Restoration Project

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Contact us at:  
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[www.bonnernswcd.org](http://www.bonnernswcd.org)

In 2023, a local landowner noticed streambank erosion along upper Pack River Road and alerted authorities. By spring 2024, the Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District (BSWCD) and the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) began planning to restore 350 feet of

Utilizing the resources available to BSWCD, including engineering, grant writing, and permitting; the landowner also arranged for private restoration of about 150 feet of streambank along their house frontage, timed to happen alongside the grant-funded 350 feet.



Upper Pack River bank failure (BSWCD).

eroding streambank, which included fixing a failing gabion wall. This project became the top funding priority for the DEQ Panhandle Basin Area Advisor group. Unfortunately, a major weather event in September 2024 caused even more erosion, stripping away an additional 18 inches of streambank in just one event and leaving only 18 inches of unstable bank next to the guardrail.

Because the Pack River is home to protected Bull Trout and located in a FEMA floodway, the project required several permits and repairs which could only be made between July 15 and August 15 to minimize impacts on Bull Trout.

Permitting and grant funding were delayed until just days before construction was scheduled to begin. During spring, BSWCD continued monitoring the site, and Bonner County Road and Bridge made temporary repairs to protect the roadbed from further erosion.

Community support played a key role in the project's success. An adjacent landowner provided crucial site access by allowing the team to cross their property—without this, the restoration couldn't have happened. Bonner County Road and Bridge also contributed matching funds and extra rock material to address additional erosion that occurred between the grant award and construction start.

With all preparations complete, construction began. The first step was rerouting the Pack River through an old channel that was cut

across the sandbar and lined. The river levels were higher than expected and the team had to add large wood rounds to the temporary diversion dam to effectively divert the river. The river continued to pose challenges, so large feed tote bags were used as 1,000-pound sandbags to help redirect the flow. Downstream, straw bales were installed and regularly replaced to filter the water and keep heavy sediment from leaving the site.

The restoration design involved placing large, angular riprap—between 1,000 and 3,000 pounds each—to stabilize the steep streambank, protect a sharp river bend, and reinforce the roadbed, especially where the gabion wall had failed. However, the crew ran into a major problem at a critical scour point: a more than 200-foot-deep vein of clay. The clay muddied the water, made the ground under the excavator unstable, and began to absorb the large rock base. Thanks to Sandy Schlepp with Forest Farming LLC, native materials

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"A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure."

~ Justice Oliver Wendall Holmes

## Pack River Project *continued...*



**Completed bank stabilization project.**

were used to "cap" the clay, allowing work to continue and creating a stable base.

To stabilize the scour hole at the western end of the gabion wall—which was threatening the county road, Bonner County Road & Bridge provided an additional 14 dump truck loads of material. This work was essential for protecting Upper Pack River Road, the main route for over 100 homes and a vital access point for year-round recreation and logging.

By August 14th, approximately 500 feet of streambank stabilization had been completed, and the heavy equipment was removed from the site. Throughout the process, native willows were planted within the riprap to help reinforce the bank.

In October, volunteers from BSWCD, ISWCC, and the PRWC planted an additional 900 willows in the riprap and along trenches at the base of the roadbed. These willows are expected to take two to three years to fully establish, further contributing to the long-term stability and ecological health of the restored streambank.

This streambank restoration project will not only protect the Upper Pack River Road from further encroachment and failure, but will protect critical fish habitat and reduce excess sediment delivery to the Pack River.

BSWCD is proud to be a non-regulatory, boots on the ground entity here in Bonner County to help you preserve and improve your natural resources. If you have a project that we can assist you with through resource guidance, technical support, or grant administration, please reach out. Contact [Info.bswcd@gmail.com](mailto:Info.bswcd@gmail.com) or 208.255.9911.

## Grouse Creek Stream Restoration Update

On May 25, 2020, heavy precipitation caused significant flooding on Grouse Creek and washed out approximately 1200 feet of FSR#280. The USFS recently rerouted the road out of the floodplain in order to protect fish habitat and reduce road maintenance costs.

The next phase of restoration includes reconnecting Grouse Creek with its historical floodplain. The USFS and the PRWC obtained funding from Avista to improve habitat for native salmonids, especially the threatened Bull Trout.

Channel reconstruction and floodplain restoration were originally scheduled for 2025, but have been delayed due to contractor constraints. The project is currently scheduled for the summer of 2026.

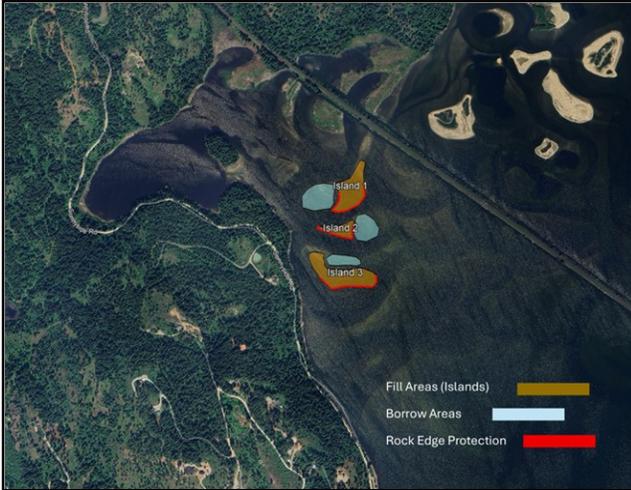


**Grouse Creek with temporary berm.**

The PRWC will be recruiting volunteers for the floodplain revegetation efforts. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Jessica Erickson, PRWC Coordinator, at 208-255-5545.

## Pack River Delta - Phase III

Phase III of the Pack River Delta Restoration Project is scheduled to begin the fall of 2025. The project is funded by Bonneville Power Administration and is intended to mitigate the loss of wildlife habitat due to the operation of Albeni Falls Dam.



Pack River Delta– Phase III Restoration locations (IDFG).

The construction and subsequent operation of Albeni Falls Dam on the Pend Oreille River has significantly altered the hydrological function of the Pack River Delta. Albeni Falls Dam, completed in 1955, seasonally increases the level of Lake Pend Oreille to an elevation of 2,062 feet between June and September. Lake Pend Oreille is then lowered to either 2,051 feet or 2,055 feet during the winter months.

During the summer, the delta is seasonally inundated with several feet of water which has changed the riparian habitat significantly. Without abundant terrestrial vegetation and its supportive root structure, the delta has undergone significant streambank and overland flow erosion.

IDFG plans to build three new islands above summer lake levels south of the Burlington Northern Railroad trestle near the Sunnyside peninsula. The project will excavate borrow areas within the mudflats of the delta to build new raised islands, totally approximately 8.4 acres. The excavated borrow areas will increase habitat complexity by creating 5 new acres of deep-water pool habitat.

The islands will be revegetated with native plantings, providing new wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. The project is scheduled to be completed by February 2026.

## Upcoming Workshops...

**Master Gardener Certificate Training**  
**Jan. 27 | U of I Organic Agricultural Center**  
 Contact U of I Extension Office 208-263-8511  
[www.uidaho.edu/idaho-ag-experiment-station/sandpoint-organic-agriculture](http://www.uidaho.edu/idaho-ag-experiment-station/sandpoint-organic-agriculture).

**Advanced SEEP Training - Storm Water Erosion Education Program**  
**Jan. 23 & 30 | U of I office in Coeur 'd Alene**  
 Contact Woody at 208-292-2572 or 208-661-2776.

**Idaho Master Forest Stewards**  
 Training includes 70+ hours of indoor and outdoor learning activities.  
 Contact Chris Schnepf@uidaho.edu or 208-292-1288 for more information.

**IDAHO Master Water Stewards**  
 Training includes online self-paced study followed by a half-day field session.  
 Contact Jim Ekins at idaho2o@uidaho.edu or 208-292-1287 for more information.

## **BSWCD has MOVED!**

The Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District has moved to a new location. The office is located at 130 McGhee Road, Suite 220, Sandpoint, ID 83864.

BSWCD provides many resources to the public including conservation assistance, administering the aquatic invasive boat inspection station, and tree seedling sales. The

district also supports the educational programs as well as administers the Pack River Watershed Council program.

For more information, contact Sarah Garcia at 208-255-9911. Information about the PRWC as well as archived newsletters can be found at [www.bonnierswcd.org](http://www.bonnierswcd.org).



# Pack River Watershed Council

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c/o Bonner SWCD  
130 McGhee., Suite 220  
Sandpoint, ID 83864



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## Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District & NRCS

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*“The mission of the Pack River Watershed Council is to improve water quality and riparian habitat in the Pack River Watershed for people, fish, and wildlife through education, collaboration, and cooperative projects.”*

*Thanks to Avista Watershed Council Funding, we are able to print and distribute this newsletter.*