

**Blaine County, Idaho**  
**Land, Water and Wildlife Program**  
**206 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South, Hailey, Idaho 83333**

**NEWS RELEASE**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: July 27, 2016

Contacts: Jacob Greenberg, Blaine County Commission Chair, 208-788-5500,  
jgreenberg@co.blaine.id.us  
Angenie McCleary, Blaine County Commissioner, 208-788-5500,  
amccleary@co.blaine.id.us  
Clare Swanger, Land, Water and Wildlife Program Coordinator 208-309-0960,  
c.swanger@me.com

The Blaine County Board of County Commissioners on July 26, 2016 approved \$496,300 in funding for the \$1.5 million Deer Creek Watershed Restoration Project. This marks the ninth project that the taxpayer-created Land, Water and Wildlife Program (LWWP) has partially funded.

The Deer Creek Watershed, located northwest of Hailey, was badly damaged during the 2013 Beaver Creek fire and subsequent heavy rains. The 5B Restoration Coalition, a diverse group of individuals and organizations that formed post-fire representing conservation, recreation and community interests, chose Deer Creek as their number one priority for restoration work.

Idaho Conservation League and Trout Unlimited, with partner U.S. Forest Service, applied to the LWWP for the grant. The project will restore stream, riparian and floodplain resources along Deer Creek; realign a portion of Deer Creek road out of the floodplain; aid in the restoration of upland vegetation; treat invasive plant species; support recreational improvements including trails and dispersed campgrounds; facilitate long-term access into the Deer Creek watershed; and plant whitebark pine seedlings, an Endangered Species Act candidate species, to accelerate regeneration of stands burned in the 2013 Beaver Creek wildfire.

The project occurs on publicly owned lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The area is well-known and highly used for diverse recreational activities including camping, hunting, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, ATV, motorcycle and horseback riding. Even before the Beaver Creek fire, the Sawtooth National Forest had identified the Deer Creek Watershed as a forest-wide priority for integrated watershed restoration.

The Idaho Conservation League, Trout Unlimited, 5B Restoration Coalition, U.S. Forest Service and National Forest Foundation have collectively raised more than \$1.0 million for

post-fire restoration in the Deer Creek drainage, including substantial funding from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

County Commissioner Angenie McCleary said, “I think restoring the Deer Creek Watershed is an outstanding project and excellent use of the Land, Water, and Wildlife levy funding. It is a project that all of Blaine County can be proud of and will serve as a model in all of the West. It demonstrates the power of collaboration and community in effective conservation and post-fire recovery.

Dani Mazzotta, Idaho Conservation League, noted, “The Deer Creek Watershed Restoration Project is an example of true community collaboration. If it weren't for the work of the 5B Restoration Coalition, this important project may have never come to fruition. Not only does the watershed itself benefit from this project but so do we as a community because this work is happening on our public lands.”

Kurt Nelson, Ketchum District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service added, “This project demonstrates how individuals and organizations with diverse backgrounds can come together and do something on the ground that couldn't be done by just one entity.”

Clare Swanger, LWWP Program Coordinator noted that, “Conservation projects these days are often accomplished through collaborations among multiple parties and funders. The Deer Creek Watershed Restoration Project provides a great example.”

The LWWP was made possible by Blaine County voters who supported a two-year levy that raised \$3.4 million. The ballot language requires the involvement of a voluntary citizens advisory group. That group, the Levy Advisory Board or “LAB,” was instrumental in designing the LWWP and recommends projects and policies to the County Commissioners.

In addition to the Deer Creek Watershed Restoration Project, the LWWP has provided partial funding for six conservation easements that conserve forever properties with important agricultural, wildlife and water resources; a fish ladder and bypass channel on a tributary of Silver Creek; and the addition of native wildlife seed to an existing seed mix that the U.S. Forest Service aerial dropped on critical areas after the Beaver Creek fire.

The LWWP is the only County level taxpayer supported program in the history of Idaho. In 2015, Blaine County's LWWP won the Idaho Chapter of the American Planning Association award for Best Planning Tool or Implementation. The Award emphasizes innovation, transferability and results that can be measured over the long-term.

Information about the program, including conservation and project criteria and application materials is available on the County's web site or by contacting Program Coordinator Clare Swanger at 309-0960 or [c.swanger@me.com](mailto:c.swanger@me.com). Individual landowners as well as conservation organizations are encouraged to apply.

~ END ~