

**Land, Water, and Wildlife Program
Guy Canyon Restoration Project
Report on LAB's Recommendation to the BCC for Funding
In Preparation for July 20, 2021 BCC hearing**

To: Commissioners Fosbury, McCleary, and Greenberg (BCC)
From: Wendy Pabich, Program Coordinator
cc: Levy Advisory Board; Tom Bergin

Date: June 22, 2021

LAB'S RECOMMENDATION FOR FUNDING:

On May 19, 2021, the Levy Advisory Board (LAB) conducted its Final Review of the Project and voted 7 - 0 to recommend it to the BCC for Funding with the following conditions:

- 1) All required permissions, permits, and transfers must be obtained as a requirement of LWWP funding.
- 2) Formal acknowledgement that the Project has been funded by Blaine County taxpayers through the LWWP is required in signage on the property, and, where appropriate, in relevant press releases, project descriptions, and other communications.

The University of Idaho ("Applicant" or UI) requests \$21,525 (or ~23%) of a total estimated project cost of \$92,000 from the LWWP for tributary restoration work in Guy Canyon. The project aims to improve wildlife habitat and water quality by increasing the amount of stabilizing vegetation along the stream and the extent of riparian area, while decreasing the extent of eroded and unstable streambank. The project would restore approximately 1,500 yards of an approximately four mile-long creek, and an associated 20 acres of riparian vegetation. It also seeks to balance the needs of livestock and wildlife by decommissioning and restoring dilapidated ponds and replacing them with two off-channel stockwater ponds to improve dispersal of foraging livestock and relieve grazing pressure on the stream and associated vegetation in the hot season. The project will occur on a length of stream that is classified as intermittent-seasonal.

The Project is part of larger efforts at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch (RRCR). RRCR is a unique research, education and outreach facility offering a hands-on approach to rangeland management and conservation. The working ranch doubles as a living laboratory where science-based practices for land managers are developed. The University of Idaho delivers programming at RRCR to the central Idaho community on rangeland, plants, wildlife, stream restoration and cattle management.

In May 2017, the BCC accepted the LAB's recommendation to fund Phase I of this effort up to \$113,793 (or 64%) of a total project cost of \$176,410 to restore the upper diversion, upper connections and middle diversion, and treat noxious

weeds to improve water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat and other conservation values of Rock Creek and nearby areas. This Application constitutes Phase II in these restoration efforts.

Additional funds will come from USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), with programmatic support from US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Wood River Land Trust.

The Project meets the six minimum requirements for LWWP Funding:

1. The Project is located in Blaine County.
2. The Project will protect land, water, and wildlife by restoring habitat and enhancing water quality.
3. The landowners are willing participants. [In 2019, UI signed a 99-year lease and an option to purchase with The Nature Conservancy and the Wood River Land Trust (collectively, the landowners). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UI and the RRCR Advisory Board was also signed in 2019 to govern management responsibilities.]
4. UI is a qualified entity willing to take responsibility for the completion of the Project.
5. Matching funds will be provided by USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).
6. The Project will have lasting conservation outcomes by restoring habitat and enhancing water quality.

Alignment with LWWP Goals

Of the eight Primary Conservation Goals set out in BCC Resolution 2008-71 and the LWWP Program Guide, the Project appears to address the following four goals:

- Preserve working farms and ranches, agricultural lands, natural areas and important open spaces. By addressing pressing rangeland management issues, the project helps preserve working lands and natural areas.
- Protect water quality, rivers and streams, riparian corridors, flood plains, wetlands and water rights.
- Conserve, restore, or maintain and otherwise provide for proper stewardship of lands and waters.
- Protect and preserve wildlife, habitat, and transit and migration corridors.

Financial Comparison to Other LWWP Projects:

To date, LWWP has provided funding to ten other non-acquisition projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$496,300*, with LWWP contributions ranging from 20.0% to 64.7%:

	LWWP Funds (\$)	Project Total (\$)	LWWP (%)	Year
Loving Creek Fish Passage	13,900	27,800	50.0%	2013
USFS Aerial Seeding	48,500	75,000	64.7%	2013
Haystack Depredation	40,000	80,000	50.0%	2016
Deer Creek	319,163 ¹	1,446,600	22.1%	2016
Rock Creek Ranch	113,793	176,410	64.5%	2017
IDFG Pronghorn Study	90,075	360,300	25.0%	2019
Pollinator Project	7,521	33,429	22.5%	2020
SVI Itty Bitty Farms	5,000	10,000	50.0%	2021
SVI Lookout Farm	15,000	35,000	43.0%	2021
Wood River Wolf Project	23,805	119,089 ²	20.0% ²	2021

1. This project was funded to a total of \$496,300; \$319,163 was actually disbursed.
2. Final project cost may be more, in which case, % contribution would be less.