

Wood River Land Trust

WRLT

The dirt

Protecting the heart of the valley...now and for the future

Water & the West

**Preserve Spotlight:
Rock Creek Ranch**

RiverFest 2017

**Species Profile:
Benefits of Beavers**

SUMMER 2017

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



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208-788-3947

www.WoodRiverLandTrust.org

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Contributions to WRLT are tax deductible as allowed by law. Public financial information is available on our website or by contacting our office.

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ON THE COVER

Photo of Rock Creek Ranch barn
by John Finnell

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A Message *from* Scott Boettger

Photo by John Finnell

Now is the time.

In the years to come, my hope is that we remember the flood of 2017 not for its destruction, but as the moment when we came together as a community and gave back to the river that has given us so much. When we faced the hard truths and found the fortitude to make tough decisions that led to lasting positive change.

For the past 100 years we have altered the Big Wood River by channeling, rip-rapping, straightening and dredging to the point that it is now much straighter, shorter and faster than natural processes can contain. So in times of even mild flooding, we will continue to see increased flood damage—unless we start dealing with the causes and not just the effects of flooding.

A recent study showed that 52% of the river is altered to a point that it cannot be returned to resettlement conditions. We have reached our tipping point. It has taken us a century to get where we are. We need to stop making the same mistakes. We need to not only protect what remains, but we need to also start undoing those old wrongs, before it is too late for our beloved river.

We need to continue our efforts to protect the remaining undeveloped and natural places along our river, places that not only serve as wildlife habitat and recreational enjoyment, but actually slow flood flows and reduce damage.

The answers may not be the easiest or the cheapest in the short run, like dredging and diking. We need the resolve to not just take the quickest actions that will work for the short run, but to take the right ones, so we don't wind up in this same position year after year.

The Big Wood River is a treasure for everyone, not just for those fortunate enough to have it in their backyards. We need to protect it as a community treasure and resolve to make the needed changes to keep it from becoming just a channel for conveying floodwaters to what it once was and can be again.





Water & the West

By Mike McKenna

Photos by Bob Knoebel (top) and Cody Haskell (lower)

While gold and silver sparkle more brightly in our minds, water has always been the most precious and important resource in the West. It's the lifeblood of our region and that's why the Land Trust is harnessing your support to make a positive impact for our most important natural resource.

In one way or another water is part of everything we do through the Land Trust: from your yards and our Trout Friendly program to the preserves and easements we have along the Big Wood and Salmon rivers and their tributaries; from the tops of the snow-peaked Pioneer Mountains to traditional farming and ranching lands in Idaho's rangelands to protecting water underground in the Wood River Aquifer. You're helping us make a difference—one drop at a time.

It's the type of work that legendary explorer John Wesley Powell would undoubtedly approve of.

Powell is best known for his daring expedition down the Grand Canyon in 1869, but a decade later he published a "Report on the Arid Region of the United States." In it, Powell argued that water is the biggest challenge



and most important ingredient for life in the West. He believed that if settlements weren't created to share and conserve water properly, everyone would be hurt and battles would ensue.

Powell's advice was never followed and nearly 140 years later, he has proven to be prophetic. Droughts, costly legal battles over water calls, flood issues, deteriorating dams and bridges, the loss of healthy habitat for fish, fowl and mammals are now the ways of the West.

"Not a spring of a creek can be touched without affecting the interests of every man who cultivates the soil in the region," Powell wrote.

The good news is that we have a unique opportunity here in the Wood River Valley. We can make a difference, we can lead the way, we are becoming a harbinger of how best to handle water in the West. We're trying to find ways that work, even if there isn't a clear map on how to get there.

That's why we can relate to Powell when he wrote, "We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore." We're glad you're here to help us set a course.

Making the News

Working on the Health of the Big Wood River

Photos by John Finnell

In our high desert climate, having too much water should never be a problem. It should be a blessing. But after this spring's record run-off and all the damage flooding created up and down the valley, it's now more obvious than ever that the beloved Big Wood River needs our help. With the impacts of climate change and the changes we've made to the natural flow of the Big Wood, issues with flooding will not only continue to increase, but will have more negative impacts, unless we can be proactive about making positive changes. To help us move in a more positive direction, here's a rundown of how we got here and what we hope to do about it.

How Did We Get Here?

Over the last couple of decades, our land-use practices and attempts to alter the Big Wood River in constructive ways, while often well intentioned, have actually hurt the health of our river. In the last 11 years, the Wood River Valley has experienced "100 year floods" twice. Flooding and high water run-offs in the 1970s and '80s were not nearly as extensive as what we currently face. The alterations we've made to the river since then—putting in dikes, channelizing the river, building and landscaping to the river's banks and installing rip rap—have created much of the current challenges. The Big Wood River can no longer naturally handle big water years or properly move sediment and debris through the system. The water has been sped up, causing more erosion, and now has nowhere to properly



overflow in most parts of the valley except into homes and residential areas. The impacts of run-off from fires only exacerbate the problems the river already faces. The Big Wood Assessment study, which was released in 2016 and can be seen on our website, documented the negative impacts and changes and identifies the problems we are currently dealing with. And unless we make some changes, these problems will only get worse.

What Can We do About it?

The big question is: How can we re-establish a healthy river system that can tolerate flooding, redistribute sediment appropriately, and encourage floodplain creation throughout the system? The answer is multi-fold, but the good news is there is hope. We can make a positive difference in the following ways:

- Protect the undeveloped areas along the course of the river. Preserving space for the river to expand when it needs to is crucial, which is why it's so important to take advantage of the opportunities to preserve places like the 150 acres at Colorado Gulch.



- Implement restoration projects using techniques that promote natural function in order to dissipate the energy in the river and reduce excessive bank erosion while protecting infrastructure and development where necessary.
- Reconnect floodplains. In addition to protecting the Colorado Gulch property the Land Trust will implement a project allowing the river to expand and release sediment in an expanded floodplain area during spring run-off. This will not only result in positive local impacts in the southern part of Hailey, but will also help relieve issues up and down the river.
- Re-imagining conventional engineered flood protection measures such as dikes and levees. By moving dikes away from the river, where possible, we can create deposition areas for sediment and encourage new cottonwood forests to grow.

By protecting open spaces and restoring proper river function we can create physical spaces where water can flow and settle, thus helping to replenish local aquifers as well as protect the health and safety of the river and our community. We are on the front lines of the battle to protect our river and we're thankful to have your support and that you have our backs.



WRLT lessens flooding issues at Draper Wood River Preserve

In an attempt to help flooded neighborhoods in Hailey, the Land Trust tried some emergency alterations to the Draper Wood River Preserve.

After the initial peak flows in early May, the Big Wood River returned to below normal flood stage, but the Preserve and the Della View neighborhoods were still seeing what is called “sheet flooding.” Historically, the river had not over-topped the banks in these areas at anywhere close to such levels—4.5 feet on the river stream gauge. It is believed that the high spring flows caused bed load (the larger gravel on the stream bottom) to build up in the river by Heagle Park. This backed up the river and forced it to rise up and to find new routes throughout the Preserve and the adjoining neighborhoods.

After touring the preserve and the flooded neighborhoods with staff members from the City and Blaine County, as well as Ryan Colyer, who led the Big Wood Assessment Study, the Land Trust requested an emergency permit and contracted Alpine Tree Service to selectively fall several large cottonwood trees at key locations within the preserve. This well-established practice helped slow down the flow of water in the preserve and reduce conveyance of materials through the system. Within days of taking this action, the Land Trust began receiving thank you calls from neighbors who saw a reduction in flooding to their homes.

While these actions didn't eliminate flooding issues, they did help mitigate them some and gave us an opportunity to explore ways to help our community, and our river.

RiverFest 2017

More Fourth of July fun along the Big Wood

Photos by Josie Brownell

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes an entire community to put on a great event. Thanks to the tremendous support of our community, the 3rd Annual Wood River Land Trust RiverFest was a fun-filled success!

Thousands of folks of all ages, from longtime locals to first-time visitors, flocked down to the Draper Wood River Preserve and Lions Park in Hailey following the Days of the Old West Parade. Despite soaring summer temperatures and a river still flowing near flood levels, a steady flow of happy faces spent their Fourth of July celebrating with the Land Trust.

Thanks to your support, hundreds of ice cream cones, dozens of cases of beer, numerous plates of food were enjoyed and countless smiles and memories were created.

It's an honor for the Land Trust to put on an event like RiverFest that gets everyone from toddlers to seniors to come out and enjoy this special place. We spend so much time working to save and protect land along the Big Wood River and throughout the region that it's really special to be able to take time to make sure everyone can get out there and enjoy it, too.

We were also thankful that several of our local non-profit partners could participate, add to the event and help connect their messages to the public. Spirit N' Motion put on a Kids Carnival. Trout Unlimited gave free fly rod casting clinics—which all the young Hailey Rodeo Queens gave a try. The Toy Run delighted and splashed the crowd with water from the Bellevue Fire Department's Dunk Tank. The Friends of the Hailey Public Library decorated the preserve by having kids paint rocks. Idaho Rivers United inspired us to think about healthy rivers as Lonesome Larry the salmon played with kids. The Chamber of the Wood River Valley and Mahoney's Bar and Grill helped us market RiverFest and manage the Beer



Garden. Members of the Wood River Women's Foundation volunteered—and recently awarded us a grant to do some great work further down river at Colorado Gulch.

Over a dozen vendors, including JAM Designs, KB's, Hailey Coffee Company, the Wood River Sustainability Center and the Sawtooth Brewery all donated part of their sales back to the Land Trust.

All-in-all, RiverFest was another wonderful success thanks to the support of our community. We would especially like to thank you and our generous sponsors, Idaho Lumber, Rocky Mountain Hardware and Twin Falls Subaru for making this special day happen. We look forward to celebrating Independence Day and our river again at next year's RiverFest!

Clockwise from adjoining page: Bikes were the most popular mode of transportation to RiverFest; The slip-and-slide was a big hit on a very hot day; The Land Trust's Fourth of July tradition of handing out free Toni's Ice Cream created lots of smiles; Jack and Sam McKenna were happy to help out; Patti Lousen took folks on Guided Nature Walks of Draper Wood River Preserve; Bellevue Mayor Chris Koch got dunked for the cause; Our float ended the Days of the Old West Parade by inviting everyone to RiverFest!



Preserve Spotlight

Rock Creek Ranch

By Mike McKenna

Photo by John Finnell

“There’s so much positive enthusiasm about what’s happening here. It’s really great to see,” said Wyatt Prescott, during an early-summer morning at Rock Creek Ranch.

Wyatt is the Cattle Manager at the 10,400-acre ranch. After beginning his career in the legal realm of cattle ranching, he’s happy to be back in the wide-open spaces of the “Sagebrush Sea,” trying to make a positive impact on the rangelands he loves.

“This was a great opportunity to get back on the ground,” Wyatt said, about taking the rather unique reins at Rock Creek Ranch last summer. “It was also a great opportunity because the idea here is to have a facility where people can come from all over the world and apply their theories and see what works.”

Rock Creek Ranch is located just to the west of Hailey and Bellevue. It’s owned and managed as an education facility and working ranch by the University of Idaho, The Nature Conservancy and the Wood River Land Trust. In just its second season, the ranch has already seen a lot of improvements. Water quality restoration work has been done on Rock Creek, weed abatement is underway, Greater Sage-Grouse habitat has been preserved, and several hundred head of cattle have fattened up at the ranch while their grazing impacts have been studied.

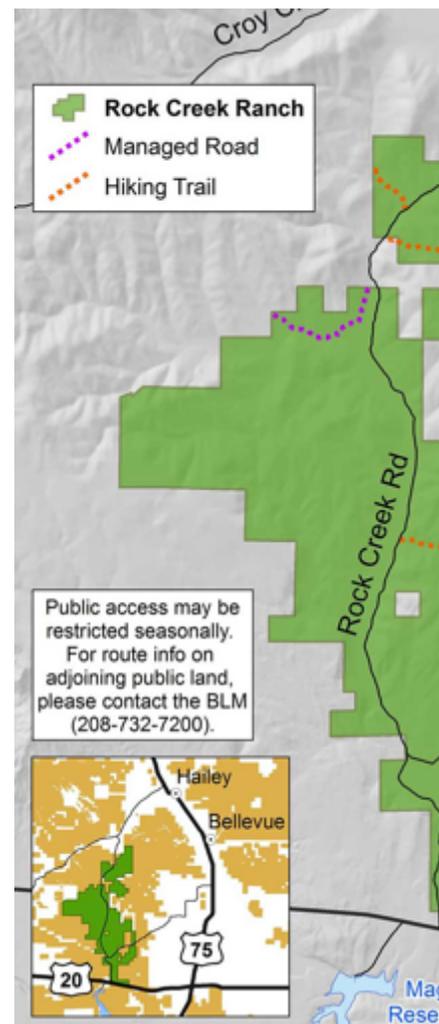
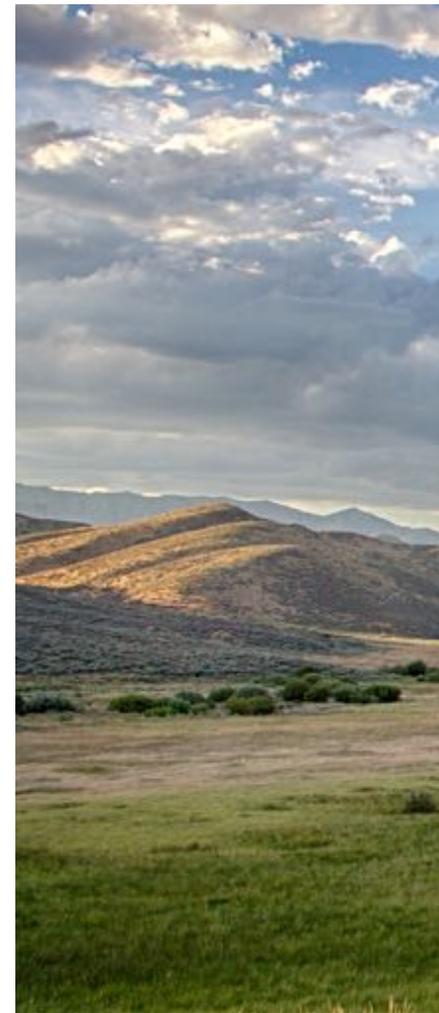
“There is so much going on out here. It’s a different puzzle and a different project every day for us,” Wyatt said, as the lush hills around Rock Creek blossomed with larkspur, lupine and penstemon. “There’s a lot happening, so many voices involved. But there’s no conflict or animosity. Everyone’s working really well together. It’s been really great. We can apply so many disciplines from across the University, from environmental to rangeland to financial to social and cultural. It’s really impressive.”

Another bonus for Rock Creek Ranch is that it’s conducting cattle-based research so close to a community that hasn’t always been very supportive of such impactful, Old West-style endeavors.

“The huge benefit of the facility here is that it shows both sides of what’s happening—cattle grazing and its impacts,” Wyatt said, about the working ranch that also allows recreation like hiking, horseback riding, hunting, biking and bird watching in selected and well-marked areas.

That’s why Rock Creek Ranch is one of the most unique, ambitious and important projects the Land Trust has ever been involved in, but it wouldn’t happen without your support.

Thanks to your help, there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful about the work being done at Rock Creek Ranch. As Wyatt said about the studies being done for Idaho’s iconic rangelands, “We’ve got to find a better way forward, the best way forward.”





SAGEBRUSH SATURDAYS

Head out to Rock Creek Ranch this summer for our free, family-friendly Sagebrush Saturdays! Held once a month all season long, the education series is led by the University of Idaho's Rangeland Center and focuses on the animals, plants and historic ranching on Idaho's iconic rangelands like Rock Creek.

Earth, Fire and Wildlife will take place on Saturday, August 19th from 9 to 11:30am. Learn about the relationships between wildfire, soil, fish and wildlife. Please meet at the Rock Creek Ranch Barn.

Cowboy Days on the Range takes place on Saturday, September 16th. Enjoy cowboy coffee and learn about wild horses and cattle management. The last event in this year's series will also include a **Community Appreciation Wrap-Up Party**. Please meet at Rock Creek Ranch Barn.

All events in the Sagebrush Saturday series are free and open to the public. Closed-toe shoes, long pants and hats are recommended. For questions, please contact Mike McKenna at mmckenna@woodriverlandtrust.org or call 208.788.3947

The Benefits of Beavers

Species Profile

By Mike McKenna



Beavers being released at Rock Creek, Photo by Cameron Packer

Did You Know... Beavers:

1 *It is estimated that only 5% of North America's original beaver population still exists.*

2 *Ancestors of the modern beavers were huge, growing up to 8 feet tall and weighing 200 pounds.*

3 *Beavers secrete a fluid from beneath their tails that smells like vanilla and is used as natural flavoring and for perfumes.*

4 *Beavers slap their tails to warn others of danger.*

5 *Beavers mate for life.*

6 *Beavers live with their parents for 2 years before going off on their own.*

It's about time we gave beavers a break—and maybe a pat on the back while we're at it. North America's largest rodents are often ridiculed for their big teeth and bad eyesight, for making a mess out of streams and for always being so darn busy. But instead of making fun of our furry aquatic neighbors, we should actually be singing their praises. Beavers are so important to mountain valleys like the Big Wood that the state of Idaho even used to parachute them into the backcountry.

Castor Canadensis once covered the Mountain West by the millions, but they were heavily hunted for their pelts. Saved from extinction when their fur finally fell out of fashion, beavers continue to claw and chew their way to survival, which is a good sign for just about every other species, including us.

Most of us know that beavers build dams, but we don't realize just how important the soggy habitats they create are, especially in high desert and mountainous places like our home valley. Considered an "umbrella species," since the habitat they create protects so many other species, it's estimated that nearly half of North America's endangered and threatened species rely on beaver dams. That's because no one conserves water better than beavers. Birds, fish, mammals, aquatic insects, reptiles and riparian areas all thrive on the habitat beaver ponds create.

Weighing about as much as the average dog—between 35-60 pounds—beavers live for more than 20 years and mate for life. Family is also very important to beavers. That's why a family of beavers that had been washed out of Deer Creek after the Roundhouse Fires was relocated to Rock Creek last year.



"They were put out there to help," said Cameron Packer, who serves as the Rock Creek Ranch Stewardship Coordinator and helped introduce the family of beavers. "They were great. They helped raise water levels, reconnect the flood plain and slow down the rate at which the water leaves the property. They have helped the fish, the birds, the aquatic insects and the riparian habitat."

Since beavers do so much to help others, we're glad we can help them. The beavers seem to appreciate it, even if we usually don't appreciate them as much as we should. The Land Trust may not parachute them into mountain streams, but we do try to protect as much of their habitat as we can. And we appreciate your help to make it happen.

A Big Year

The Student Conservation Council

By Josie Brownell

Photos by Larry Barnes

Our Student Conservation Council (SCC), which consists of 15 students from schools throughout the Wood River Valley, had a big year!

Reeling with Inspiration

For their annual project, the students decided to organize a **Student Film Festival**. The goal was to engage students from across Idaho to explain why our home, specifically the land and the outdoors, are so important. After months of planning, their goal was accomplished with a fun, family-friendly event at the Limelight Hotel last May. We had wonderful student film submissions, including activities like skiing, kayaking and dirt biking—all in our beautiful backyard.

The winners were:

1st Place – Brock Olson, “*The Idahoan*”

2nd Place – Alvaro Jiraldo, “*My Idaho*”

3rd Place – Caleb Morgan, “*Bigwood Canyon Runs*”

Honorable Mention – Cree Johanningmeier, “*Freestyle Idaho*”

The SCC would like to thank the Film Fest’s sponsors: WOW-Students, Power Engineers, KSKI & STAR Radio, Lost River Outfitters, Johnny G’s Subshack, Smith Optics, Elephant’s Perch.



SCC students and Film Fest participants accept the generous support of WOW-Students.



SCC students enjoy some free time during Wild Idaho.

Wild Idaho

Following the Student Film Festival, Josie Brownell, our Development Coordinator, and Larry Barnes, WRHS teacher and SCC advisory council member, accompanied four students to Idaho Conservation League’s annual conference at Redfish Lake Lodge – Wild Idaho. It was a fun weekend of exploring and interacting with conservation professionals and supporters from across Idaho and beyond. A big thank you to The Papoose Club for providing us with the funds to attend this conference!



The Land Trust's Patti Lousen congratulates Aspen Vincent (left) and Makinna Arial (right) for their inspired artwork.

WOW! Let's go Green

Thanks to **WOW-Students, Mountain Rides and Wood River High School** art classes, local students were asked to create artwork that represent their favorite local nonprofits. A couple of gifted students, Aspen Vincent and Makinna Arial, selected the Land Trust and in the coming months, their art will be installed at bus stops throughout the county.



SCC's spring meeting at Colorado Gulch.

Colorado Gulch Kiosk

With help from a grant from the Idaho Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the SCC is building a kiosk at our new **Colorado Gulch Preserve** to provide helpful information on this 150-acre property. The design work and construction will be led by the Wood River Architecture and Construction Academy at Wood River High School and the SCC will help curate information for the kiosk and will spearhead restoration projects in the preserve. We're excited to have students driving a project that will enhance the recreational and educational aspects of Colorado Gulch.

We are the Land Trust

Get to Know Jack Kueneman, Board of Directors



PHOTO BY THIA KONIG

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH WRLT?

I joined the Board in 2005. After reflecting on my 12 years on the Board, I hope my participation and support have made a positive difference for future generations who will visit and live in the Wood River Valley.

WHY DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH WRLT?

Considering my real estate investment background and strong attraction to the Valley's natural beauty it was an easy step to developing an interest in the mission of the Land Trust. I know, as we all do, that the Wood River Valley has and will continue to change. However, I believe the Land Trust has an excellent chance to protect and preserve the unique and special places of our Valley, both directly through conservation efforts and indirectly through education and advocacy of smart planning.

HOW DID YOU END UP IN THE WOOD RIVER VALLEY?

My wife, Marie, and I moved to the Wood River Valley in 1999. Our road here began with a ski vacation in 1970, followed by more ski trips and in 1982 our first summer vacation in the valley. The magnificent mountains framing the Wood River Valley were the main attraction for us. Coming from the Bay Area in California, we continue to appreciate the quieter, informal, and relaxed pace of uncrowded rural Idaho.

YOUR FAVORITE PART OF BEING INVOLVED WITH WRLT?

One of my favorite aspects of the Land Trust and conservation in general is the long term view of our work. It involves vision and long term efforts to achieve our purpose and goals.

FAVORITE PROJECTS YOU'VE HELPED WRLT WITH?

Acquiring the Square Lake and Sheep Bridge properties, and continuing their protection while recycling funds for further conservation efforts. This was a classic "long term" effort. Of course, everyone's favorite, Rock Creek Ranch, an example of expeditious action in a complex, collaborative effort. That our previous groundwork had provided the financial resources to make the acquisition possible was very satisfying. We have come a long ways in the past 12 years.

YOUR FAVORITE WRLT PRESERVE OR EASEMENT?

My newest favorite is Colorado Gulch, particularly the success of the fundraising appeal. I think it even surprised us that there was such an incredible response to the "Colorado Gulch is a once in a lifetime chance that we (the community) can't pass up."

FUTURE GOALS FOR WRLT?

I think it's been important that in the last few years we've elevated our commitment to the protection and restoration of the Big Wood River. Being collaborative and being known for it will be critical for our future. We cannot succeed without connecting people with the land and water and this should always be part of our strategy.

Water-Wise Tips By Matt Nelson, Trout Friendly partner from Magic Valley Turfgrass

What About Fertilizing My Lawn? Maintaining healthy turf through appropriate fertilization helps reduce your watering requirements because it fosters strong root systems and minimizes weed encroachment. Most established lawns in the Wood River Valley only require 1-2 fertilizations per year. A typical recommendation for lawn fertilizer is a 3:1:2 ratio of nitrogen – phosphorous - potassium.

Organic fertilizers are most effective when applied in the spring and are driven by warm soil temperatures (above 65°). Thus the organic fertilizer will be slowly and gradually released during the summer months. OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) approved herbicides control weeds, but need to be used multiple times during the season to control/

eliminate vegetation. Products we have used and like: A.D.I.O.S., a selective herbicide for dandelions and broad leaf weeds in the lawn, and Burn Out and Avenger, non-selective herbicides for eliminating any weed or grass.

Synthetic fertilizers are most effective during the early spring and fall when soil temperatures are cooler. If you're only fertilizing once a season, late summer application is the most valuable as grasses will build a strong root system during fall that will sustain turf health over the next season. Avoid applying fertilizer to wet grass and water the product thoroughly following application. Clean any fertilizer off of concrete, asphalt or paver surfaces prior to watering to prevent staining and off-site runoff.

Magic Dam Spillway

Photo by John Finnell

A month before flooding from last winter's record snowfall started impacting the Wood River Valley, it crested the dam at Magic Reservoir. No one can remember the last time so much water rushed over the spillway, as it did during this photo from April. County Commissioner Larry Schoen even said the Big Wood's temporary waterfall looked like Shoshone Falls, the Snake River's "Niagara of the West."



Heart *of the* Valley

UPDATE. We recently teamed up with The Chamber of the Wood River Valley for a new and improved version of our 13 year old Heart of the Valley Photo Contest! The contest will remain monthly, but every month now has a theme. With help from The Chamber, we're partnering with local businesses to provide a variety of excellent prizes. For contest rules and entry guidelines, check out our new website: www.hovwoodriver.org.

THE THEMES FOR THE COMING MONTHS ARE:

July – America's Birthday, Red, White & Blue We Celebrate You!

August – Fun in the Sun, Enjoying the Eclipse

September – Dog Days of Summer

October – Harvest/Fall Colors



Events

For more information about any of these events, please call 208.788.3947 or visit woodriverlandtrust.org/events.

SAGEBRUSH SATURDAY: EARTH, FIRE & WILDLIFE

August 19

Learn about the relationship between wildfire, soils and fish and wildlife in Idaho. Meet at Rock Creek Ranch (on Rock Creek Road just north of the intersection with Route 20) at 9:00 am.

GREAT AMERICAN SOLAR ECLIPSE

August 21

The Chamber will be hosting an eclipse-themed event at our Draper Wood River Preserve. Enjoy a family-friendly movie under the stars. The free showing will be held at Lions Park and Draper Wood River Preserve and will include acclaimed astronomer, Dr. Jeffery Silverman giving a short presentation about the celestial magic of Idaho's summer sky.

SAGEBRUSH SATURDAY: COWBOY DAYS ON THE RANGE

September 16

Enjoy cowboy coffee and learn about wild horses and cattle movement during the last event of this series! Meet at Rock Creek Ranch Corrals at 9:00 am.

BAH AT DRAPER WOOD RIVER PRESERVE

September 21

The Land Trust will be hosting the monthly Business After Hours event in late September. Swing by to mix and mingle with fellow professionals while enjoying food and drinks on our most popular preserve!

Wood River Land Trust protects and restores land, water, and wildlife habitat in the Wood River Valley and its surrounding areas. We work cooperatively with private landowners and local communities to ensure these areas are protected now and for future generations.



The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



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