

**SECTION 319 NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION CONTROL PROGRAM
ASSESSMENT PROJECT FINAL REPORT**

**2nd Annual Cody Wild West River Fest
PROJECT NO. NPSSEP03**

by

**The Nature Conservancy
NW Wyoming Program
Cody, Wyoming**

February 2017

This project was conducted in cooperation with the State of Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 8, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the LU Ranch.

Grant No.: NPS SEP Funds

1.0 Executive Summary

PROJECT TITLE: 2nd Annual Cody Wild West River Fest

PROJECT START DATE: March 24, 2014 PROJECT COMPLETION DATE: Dec. 31, 2016

Table 1: Project Budget Summary	
Total NPS SEP Funds Awarded	\$48,223.00
Total NPS SEP Funds Expended	\$48,223.00
Total Nonfederal Match Commitment	\$34,370.00
Total Nonfederal Match Expended	\$52,896.06
Total Project Budget	\$82,593.00
Total Project Expenditures	\$101,119.06

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

With primary support and inspiration from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Reduction program, the Conservancy and partners created the Cody Wild West River Fest in 2013 to build a diverse constituency in support of river conservation in northwest Wyoming, and to strengthen partnerships between groups and agencies working on river conservation. We also wanted to educate the community about opportunities to engage in river conservation and/or restoration. In 2017, we will host the 5th annual Cody Wild West River Fest and we are proud of the body of work that we have accomplished together.

In spite of challenging weather conditions in August, the festival has been well-attended most years. The whitewater activities, in particular, grow in popularity each year. But the accomplishment we are most proud of are the strength of the relationships that have formed directly as a result of the river festival. Regional coordination and communication about river conservation activities has improved significantly since 2013, and the quality of the resulting projects and participation has also improved.

Proof of this increased collaboration is evidenced in what we were able to achieve under Task 3 of this project. We planned to remove invasive Russian olive from 20 acres of Shoshone River riparian area to demonstrate to river front communities the benefits of a diverse native vegetation. To date we have cleared almost 420 acres of river front, including both sides of the 10 river miles that flow between the Buffalo Bill dam and the town of Cody, and a major river access site for the towns of Ralston and Powell.

We are also excited by several other collaborations either complete or underway. In 2015, The Conservancy helped with the creation of a new nonprofit in Cody, the Wild West Paddle Club, an entity formed to provide instruction on whitewater recreation for youth and which has formally taken over coordination of the Cody Wild West River Fest. In 2015, several river fest partners worked together to create a new walk-in fishing access in Cody, the Sulphur Creek Access, complete with a new trail system and boardwalks (Map in Appendix A). The Conservancy and partners are also working on a major river restoration project called the River Way Park project (Fact sheet in Appendix A). The project goals include water quality, wildlife habitat, and public access improvement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
BACKGROUND	1
GOALS AND OUTCOMES	3
PROJECT PRODUCT SUMMARY	5
TASK ACTIVITIES	5
BMP IMPLEMENTATION	6
MONITORING RESULTS	12
PARTNERS	12
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS; INDUSTRY, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND OTHER GROUPS; PUBLIC AT LARGE	12
STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES	13
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION	14
COMPLICATIONS	14
RECOMMENDATIONS	15
FINANCIAL SUMMARY	16
LIST OF APPENDICES	16

2.0 Background

The Shoshone River, a major tributary to the Big Horn River, is the lifeblood of northwest Wyoming providing irrigation water for farms, drinking water for several communities, and numerous recreational opportunities. The Shoshone watershed contains important migratory routes and crucial winter range for mule deer, bighorn sheep, elk, moose, and pronghorn. The lower watershed contains a waterfowl migratory corridor, as well as a rich diversity of other types of birds. Portions of the lower Shoshone are also impaired by high levels of *E. coli*, which pose a threat to human health.

Segments of the Shoshone River Watershed are listed in the 2010 Wyoming 303(d) list as being impaired due to bacteria levels that indicated risk to human health during some types of recreation activities. To address this impairment, a TMDL process was completed to allocate *E. coli* loads to sources and to a margin of safety. The Shoshone TMDL area extends from the Buffalo Bill Reservoir on the Shoshone River to the inlet of Big Horn Lake along the Big Horn River. The project area is primarily characterized by irrigated hay production and livestock grazing with some small towns and housing developments. Communities in the project area include Cody, Powell, Garland and Lovell. Conservation Districts in the project area include Cody, Powell-Clarks Fork, and Shoshone Conservation Districts. One promising strategy indicated through the TMDL process involves stabilizing and revegetating eroding stream banks. Our work was intended to catalyze and publicize this work in communities along the Shoshone River.

Russian olive is a noxious weed that had formed dense monocultures along much of the Shoshone River where it presents a serious threat to native species. Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) stands can be so dense that they displace all other vegetation. This severely reduces habitat and grazing/browsing value for both wildlife and livestock. In the Big Horn Basin, Russian olive is abundant along perennial and seasonal streams below 7,000 feet and continues to expand and choke out native species such as cottonwood and willow. In recent years, Russian olive have become so dense that minimal regeneration of native woody plants is taking place along portions of mid- to lower reaches of the Shoshone River. Healthy populations of native woody plants increase bank stability and reduce erosion, thereby improving water quality from reduced sediment loading.

In 2008, the Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District initiated a process to encourage landowners within the Shoshone River and Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone Watersheds to form a Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) group to address noxious weed infestation. Since that time, the Shoshone-Clarks Fork CRM has been promoting control of invasive Russian olive and tamarisk/salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.) within both the Shoshone and Clarks Fork River drainages. In 2010, the CRM, with the support of Park County Weed & Pest and other agencies, launched a large, multi-phase, long-term project in the Shoshone and Clarks Fork River watersheds in Park County, Wyoming to suppress and replace non-native Russian olive and tamarisk with native grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs. The Park County Weed and Pest completed river-based Russian olive and tamarisk inventories along much of the watershed within Park County and the extent of the infestations is well understood.

River conservation and restoration efforts in the Big Horn Basin are numerous and diverse, but many of these efforts do not gain the public support and/or participation that they need to be sustained over longer periods. Conducting outreach is especially important due to the voluntary nature of conservation and watershed restoration programs. Encouraging public awareness and participation helps pave the way for implementation of watershed planning efforts. The development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and associated watershed implementation plans for water quality impairments in the Big Horn Basin made this an ideal time to do public outreach on river conservation and restoration. Approval of TMDLs provides increased opportunities for local groups to obtain funding for voluntary restoration projects.

Monocultures of noxious weeds along riparian areas are detrimental to both water quality and public access. These species are poor stream bank stabilizers, and notoriously difficult to navigate through. Mature infestations of Russian olive can make it difficult or impossible for recreational users to access the river. Agencies and organizations supporting efforts to control these noxious weeds must continue to communicate the importance of this work for conserving Wyoming's natural heritage. The Information and Education component of this project focused on demonstrating the value of a diverse, native riparian area.

2.2 Water Body Information:

The state of Wyoming classifies streams into four categories with each category being protected for specific designated uses. The main stem of the Shoshone River is classified as 2AB and is known to support a permanent, cold-water fishery, drinking water supplies, nongame fisheries, fish consumption, aquatic life other than fish, recreation, wildlife, industry, agriculture, and scenic values (WY DEQ 2007). The Shoshone River is an important resource for several Wyoming communities, including Cody, Powell, Garland, Byron, and Lovell. Dozens of agricultural operations are supported by irrigation water from the Shoshone, and the South Fork of the Shoshone River provides municipal drinking water for the Cody community.

Water quality impairments can make contact recreation undesirable or unsafe, limit the economics of recreation, and adversely affect the quality of life in a watershed. Recreational uses in the Shoshone watershed are significant. Rafting, fishing, camping, hunting, swimming, boating, and many other activities draw recreation enthusiasts to the area. Cody, Wyoming is a gateway to Yellowstone Park and attracts a large portion of the 3 million plus visitors to the greater Yellowstone area each year. The river is also an exceptional "blue ribbon" fishery creating significant revenue for the community. Angler expenditures in Park County in 2002 totaled nearly \$30 M (Wyoming Game and Fish Department Annual Report). The perceived "pristine" nature of the environment in this watershed has significant value both socially and economically. Maintaining the health of the watershed and stream system is critical to maintaining the quality of life and the economy of the area. In addition to the obvious positive effects of maintaining water quality, proactive care of water quality eliminates the possibility of the negative regulatory impacts and stigma associated with the presence of an impaired stream.

Watersheds are dynamic systems, and as such there is a certain level of natural soil erosion. However, infestations of invasive species can lead to unstable stream banks and excessive levels of bank erosion. Eroding soils can carry high levels of bacteria, thereby exacerbating water quality impairments. Properly vegetated riparian zones can serve as buffers that trap pollution

that would otherwise be carried into the river. In addition, healthy riparian areas increase a watershed's capacity to store and regulate water. Healthy riparian areas typically have diverse flora and fauna, and are aesthetically pleasing. Good riparian habitat requires careful management to ensure that invasive species are controlled and that desirable plant species are preserved and enhanced. Management of these factors typically results in a general increase in stream bank stability, a decrease in erosion, an increase in available forage for domestic animals and wildlife, and an increase in recreational use and enjoyment (Shoshone River watershed water quality management plan, 2012).

3.0 Goals and Outcomes

This project had two goals. The first was to produce the 2nd annual Cody Wild West River Fest and the second was to replace invasive Russian olive and tamarisk with native woody species on 20 acres of riparian area on the Shoshone River.

The 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest was held August 22nd – 24th. We had 500-600 people at the 2014 festival, including competitors, spectators, and volunteers. Festival participants came from Cody, Jackson, Powell, Casper, Worland, Lander, Sheridan, Buffalo, Red Lodge, Billings and Bozeman. Festival attendance and participation were strong despite cold and rainy weather. Feedback from participants was very positive. Families who engaged in educational activities were excited about the breadth of what they'd learned and several signed up to be informed about future volunteer activities on the river. The steering committee felt positive about the event overall. We discuss a few specific challenges to the festival success and potential solutions in the Complications and Recommendations sections of this report.

We intended to use the annual river festival to increase regional awareness of agricultural best management practices that address erosion, high water temperatures, *E. coli*, and water use efficiency. In Wyoming, private landowners control large stretches of rivers and streams and many of them are unaware of the many opportunities available for partnering on conservation of these waterways. In each of the first 4 years of the festival, the Cody Wild West River Fest has promoted agricultural best management practices and the funding opportunities available to landowners for implementation. Landowners attending the festival and related events may own property along water bodies listed as impaired within the Big Horn Basin. Information obtained from this event may help facilitate voluntary participation in restoration projects to address those impairments. In addition, we worked with the Buffalo Bill Center of the West to sponsor a rain barrel art project. Rain barrels decorated during the festival were displayed at participating businesses in the Cody area before being auctioned to community members.

We had good participation in the family and public educational efforts centered on gaining appreciation and knowledge of watershed issues. Educational activities/events that were most popular at the river festival included:

- NRCS brought a rainfall simulator to the 2013 festival to demonstrate how various ground covers can impact infiltration and run-off. In 2014, the agency created a traveling display for events like river fest.

- The WGFD Stream Trailer – a hands-on demonstration that introduces kids to the impacts that different land uses have on watershed health.
- A fish migration obstacle course, an invasive plant scavenger hunt, tree planting, and aquatic insect station set up along the river allowed kids and their families to learn about invasive plants, get their feet wet, and learn about insects as important components of the aquatic food chain and indicators of water quality.
- A riparian plant identification activity, in which kids learned how to use a dichotomous key, was complemented by interpretive hikes along the river led by area naturalists.

An additional objective of the river festival steering committee was to facilitate better cooperation and communication between agencies and organizations working on river conservation. River festival planning meetings have provided an excellent vehicle for the discussion of ongoing river conservation activities and ideas for future collaboration. The following collaborations came directly out of river fest planning meetings:

1. TNC and the Park County Weed and Pest District (who designed and led several interpretive activities at each of the first 4 river festivals) are working more closely than ever on control of invasives. Both the partnership to remove Russian olive along the Shoshone and a collaboration on the PlayCleanGo Initiative were initiated during river fest planning meetings.
2. Informational materials on Russian olive were created after relationships were strengthened through planning the river fest. TNC worked with the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council, multiple Weed & Pest Districts, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) to create an informational brochure for landowners, an interpretive sign posted at Cody's primary river access, and a complementary trade show display.
3. The Nature Conservancy and both the local volunteer chapter and national staff of Trout Unlimited (TU) partnered to create a special edition of Stream Explorers (TU's national magazine for kids) that focuses on water quality and other conservation issues in the Shoshone River. The magazine was mailed to over 1,000 subscribers across the country, handed out to children at the festival and at the River Clean-Up, and will be available at appropriate events for years to come.
4. The City of Cody, WGFD, TU, and TNC also partnered this year to make improvements to Cody's primary river access, including directional and interpretive signs, picnic shelters, trail maintenance, and Russian olive control. This improved access has been the site of subsequent river fests and other activities.

The 2014 festival continued to receive strong support from community organizations and businesses. Joining TNC on the steering committee were representatives from The Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody Parks and Recreation Department, Cody Country Chamber of Commerce, Trout Unlimited, University of Wyoming Extension and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Cooperating partners like the Park County Weed and Pest District, Bureau of

Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and others led interpretive activities at the festival. Funding came from a variety of groups, including Tanager Beverages, NRS, Park County Travel Council, Shoshone Recreation District, and several others.

PROJECT PRODUCT SUMMARY

Product Outcome: The primary outcome for this project was to produce the second annual Cody Wild West River Fest, and to expand the festival’s hands-on river restoration activities by replacing Russian olive and tamarisk with native woody species on 10 acres of riparian area along the Shoshone River.

Target 1: Efficient Project Administration.

Target 2: Continue to build a constituency in support of river conservation in northwest Wyoming. Strengthen partnerships between groups and agencies working on river conservation. Educate the community about opportunities to engage in river conservation and/or restoration.

Target 3: Remove Russian olive and tamarisk and restore native vegetation on the Shoshone River between Cody and Byron, WY.

4.0 Task Activities

Planned and actual milestones for tasks are presented in Table 2. These are based on the amended grant agreement that allowed an extension on the grant through December 2016.

Table 2: Task Descriptions and Project Deliverables.

Task #	Task Title	Task Description	Actual Deliverables
1	Project Administration	1 Final Report, 8 Quarterly Reports	1 Final Report, 3 Annual Reports, 10 Quarterly Reports
2	Festival Planning and Implementation	The Nature Conservancy and partners produced the 2 nd annual Cody Wild West River Fest in 2014 following the successful model developed in 2013.	The 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest aimed to educate the agricultural community and the public about ways to get involved in river conservation efforts across northwest Wyoming. Event included demonstrations of various conservation practices, such as off-creek water development, water filtration models, tamarisk/Russian olive control, riparian revegetation using water jet stingers, and a rain barrel decorating contest and display.

3	Riparian Revegetation	The Nature Conservancy and partners worked to replace non-native Russian olive with native, woody species on 20 acres of riparian area along the Shoshone River.	The Conservancy and partners cleared over 400 acres of invasive Russian olive on the Lower Shoshone River between Cody and Byron, Wyoming. In most places, native plants rebounded without further human intervention.
---	-----------------------	--	--

Task 1: Administration

The Nature Conservancy’s Northwest Wyoming Program Director and Grants Specialist worked together to administer this grant project, including timely submission of reports and reimbursement requests, records retention, and completion of all tasks.

Task 2: Festival Planning and Implementation

The Nature Conservancy and partners committed to producing the second annual Cody Wild West River Fest in 2014 following the successful model of partnership developed in 2013. The event was to include whitewater races, a flyfishing tournament, a free concert, and numerous educational activities focused on water quality and river conservation. Booths were to be aimed at educating the agricultural community and the general public about ways to get involved in river conservation efforts across northwest Wyoming, and include demonstrations of off-creek water developments, relationships between aquatic macroinvertebrates and water quality, water filtration models, tamarisk/Russian olive control, riparian revegetation using water jet stingers, a rain barrel decorating contest and display, before and after photos from a number of restoration sites, and the distribution of educational materials such as those developed during the first festival (such as Stream Explorers magazine, BMP cost-share handout, and the Russian olive brochure and trade show display). Promotion for the event was to include radio and print advertising, postcards, flyers, banners, signs and posters.

Task 3: Riparian Revegetation

The Nature Conservancy and partners committed to working to replace non-native Russian olive and tamarisk with native, woody species on 20 acres of the Lower Shoshone River between Cody and Byron. We were to focus on places with high community demonstration potential. We also committed to working with volunteers and partners to plant approximately 3,000 pole plantings and/or seedlings of native trees and shrubs after control on invasives.

5.0 BMP Implementation: Implementation of Water Quality Improvement Practices

The primary objective of this project was to improve the water quality, wildlife habitat and accessibility of select public access sites on the Shoshone River in northwest Wyoming’s Big Horn Basin. We removed noxious weeds that had infested riparian habitat at the sites, degrading the quality of the wildlife habitat, and making it difficult or impossible to access the river’s edge.

All sites are multiple use areas popular with hunters, bird watchers, anglers and other users; all provide rare public access to the Shoshone River for the towns of Cody, Ralston and Powell. The Cody site is owned and maintained by the city of Cody, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, and a handful of private landowners; the site near Ralston is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The Garland site was owned by Marathon Oil Company (now Merit Energy) and one private landowner.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has identified the Shoshone River as a priority for restoration due to its degraded condition, residential development pressures and importance to wildlife. Our long-term objective is to replicate this work throughout the watershed by approaching it in ways that address community concerns about removing trees, and sharing our results with communities, landowners and conservation practitioners.

Over the course of the project, we have controlled Russian olive on almost 420 acres of riparian area along the Shoshone River. Initial mechanical removal of Russian olive trees was completed on 76 acres in the town of Cody (Figure 1), 22 acres at the Willwood Dam near Ralston (Figures 2-3), and on over 160 acres at the site near Byron (Figures 4-5). Trees were cut down with chainsaws, then the cut stumps were immediately sprayed with pesticides to prevent resprouting. We also sprayed resprouting Russian olive on an additional 160 acres that had been treated by partners previously.

We did not reach our goal to plant at least 3,000 bare root trees of native species. There are a few reasons for this. First and foremost, we are still spraying resprouting Russian olives at the treatment sites and it would be premature to begin planting at sites where herbicides are still being actively applied. Second, at many of the sites where we are working, native plants are becoming re-established without further human intervention, so planting may be unnecessary. That said, we still have over \$100,00 in private funding secured for the project that could be used to revegetate removal sites.

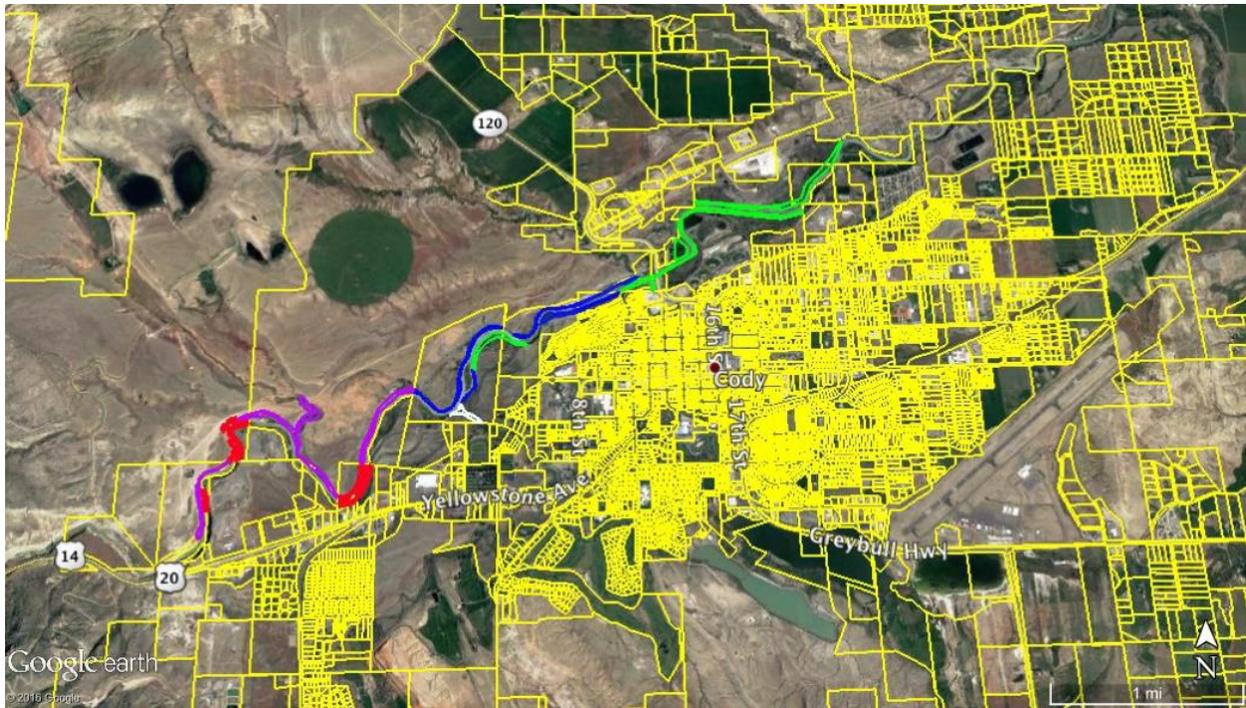


Figure 1. Russian olive treatment parcels near Cody, WY. Different colors indicate different years of initial treatment. Green = 2014; Blue = 2015; Red, Purple and White = 2016.



Figure 2. Russian olive treatment parcels at the Willwood Dam near Ralston, WY.



Figure 3. Before and After Russian olive treatment at the Willwood Dam near Ralston, WY.

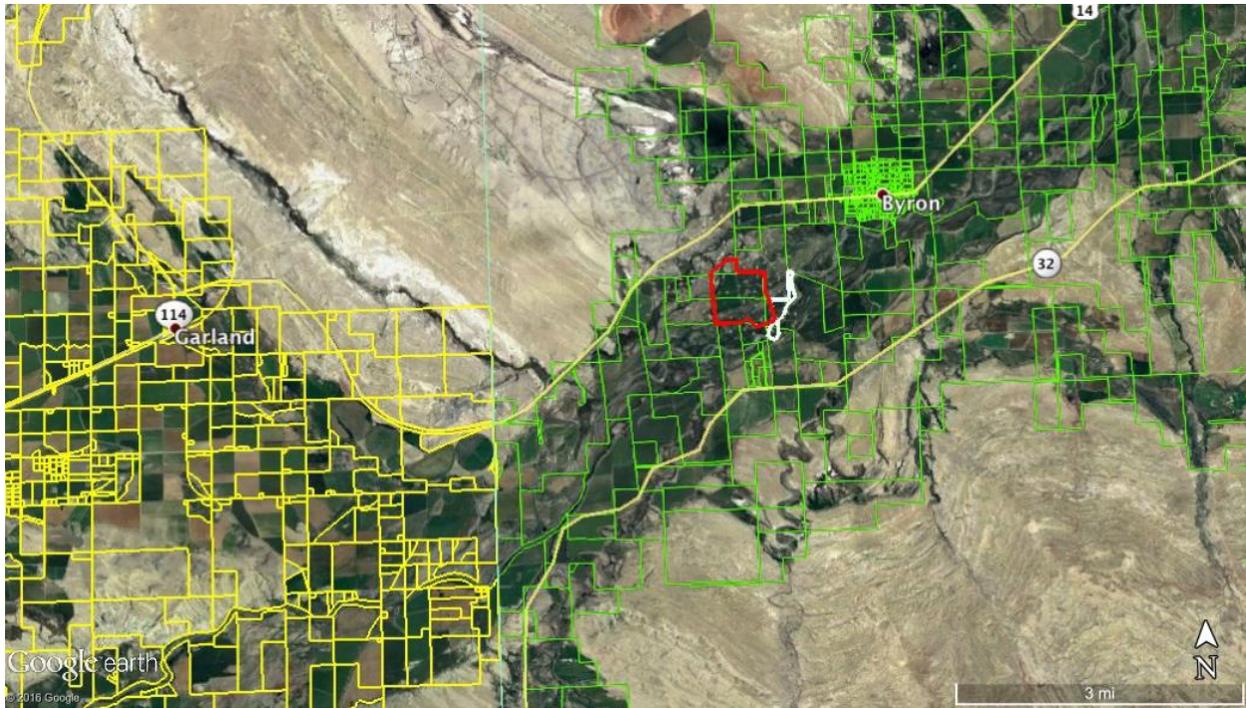


Figure 4. Russian olive treatment parcels at the Garland Oil Field near Byron, WY.



Figure 5. Before and after Russian olive treatment at the Garland Oil Field near Byron, WY.

6.0 Monitoring Results

River Festival

Although we did not establish a bona fide water quality monitoring program in association with this grant, we did demonstrate water quality monitoring techniques on the Shoshone River during the 2nd annual Cody Wild West River Fest. Event attendees worked with trained personnel to learn about various water quality monitoring parameters and their implications for watershed and human health.

We also judged the success of the 2014 event through the following metrics:

- number of attendees to various parts of the 2014 festival: 500
- number of BMP pamphlets distributed: over 100 distributed at events throughout 2014
- number of volunteers at river clean-up and revegetation days: 75
- the level of participation of project partners in organizing the river fest: significant and sustained

Revegetation

At this point, we are still respraying all our treatment parcels each summer. After a parcel has been treated for two years following initial treatment, we will partner with landowners and Park County Weed & Pest to conduct annual or biennial visual surveys of treated areas. Re-sprouting Russian olive and tamarisk will be treated by either TNC or PCWP crews.

SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS PLAN

Not applicable

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORTING

Not Applicable

7.0 Partners

Local Governments, Industry, Environmental and Other Groups, General Public	Involvement
Bargain Box of Cody	Provided event funding.
Buffalo Bill Center of the West	Served on the steering committee, led interpretive activities, and assisted with the development of outreach materials. They also assisted with the coordination of volunteer days for youth.
Cody Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities Department	Served on the steering committee and assisted with all aspects of festival implementation. They also assisted with the coordination of volunteer days for youth.

Cody Country Chamber of Commerce	Served on the steering committee, and assisted with visitor registration during the event.
Gradient Mountain Sports	Provided event funding.
Marathon Oil	Provided volunteer labor and participated in revegetation efforts at their Garland Oil Field; provided event funding.
Mountain Khakis	Donated raffle items and prizes.
Nielson and Associates	Provided event funding.
NRS	Donated raffle items and prizes.
Park County Travel Council	Provided event funding.
Park County Weed & Pest	Led interpretive activities, assisted with the development of outreach materials, and provided technical assistance with invasive control and revegetation work along the Shoshone River.
Public At Large	Donated volunteer hours.
Shoshone Recreation District	Provided event funding.
Tanager Beverages	Provided event funding.
TCTWest	Donated event coverage and promotion.
The Hatch	Provided event funding.
The Nature Conservancy - Wyoming Chapter	Coordinated completion of all project tasks.
Teva	Donated raffle items and prizes.
Trout Unlimited	Served on the steering committee and led interpretive activities.
Wells Fargo	Provided event funding.
Whole Foods Trading Company	Provided event funding.
Wyoming Arts Council / National Endowment for the Arts	Provided event funding.

State Agencies	Involvement
Wyoming DEQ	Provided funding and assisted with event planning.
Wyoming Game and Fish Department	Served on the steering committee, led interpretive activities assisted with the development of outreach materials and provided technical assistance on the revegetation work.
University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension	Serve on the steering committee, and assisted with all aspects of event implementation.
WY Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund	Provided match funding for the revegetation work.

Federal Agencies	Involvement
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Assisted with the development of agricultural BMP demonstrations, and outreach materials.
Bureau of Land Management	Assisted with the development of agricultural BMP demonstrations, and outreach materials.

8.0 Information and Education

The Cody Wild West River Fest was created with WDEQ support as a vehicle for educating river users about the importance of water quality and sharing information about best management practices that contribute to its improvement. We also hoped to strengthen key partnerships and coordination between groups and agencies working on river conservation in Park County in anticipation of partnering on nonpoint source reduction projects in the future.

During the first four years of the Cody Wild West River Fest, we worked hard to meet our objective to educate river users about water quality issues and BMPs. For example, we:

- Showcased the water quality improvement gains related to the Grass, Enos and Left Hand Creek Nonpoint Source Reduction project.
- Held a water quality improvement forum for landowners and relevant agencies.
- Arranged a presentation by a WGFD expert on instream flow expert who shared information and opportunities to engage to over 125 attendees.
- Hosted a short river film festival that included films focused on river conservation
- Planted trees in the riparian area.
- Shared information about Russian olive removal and the importance of healthy riparian areas.
- Taught about the relationship between aquatic macroinvertebrates and water quality (Photos in Appendix B).
- Offered hands-on water quality monitoring demonstrations.
- Demonstrated wind- and solar-powered off-creek water developments.
- Created informational materials about BMPs that can improve water quality and the availability of cost-share programs (Copy in Appendix C).
- Demonstrated the NRCS ground cover simulator for water infiltration.
- Used the WGFD stream trailer to teach kids about how land use impacts river health and stability (Photo in Appendix B).
- PCWP created an invasive plant scavenger hunt.
- WGFD created a riparian plant identification activity.
- BLM provided guided interpretive hikes along the river.
- WGFD hosted an Aquatic Invasive Species booth.
- WGFD hosted a boat washing station.
- WGFD hosted a fish migration obstacle course.
- Gathered feedback about the River Way Park project (partially aimed at water quality improvement).
- Hosted a Reception on the River where we shared information about our Russian olive removal and other water quality work (Invitations in Appendix D).

9.0 Complications

Cody Wild West River Fest

It continues to be a lot of work to secure adequate funding for some components of the festival, although for others it's gotten easier. It's also difficult to fit everything into a single weekend.

We have competed with ourselves at times. Weather can be challenging at that time of year but it's difficult to find a weekend in the summer where both the water levels and weather are good, and that isn't already too full of events. Finally, we need to re-evaluate how to be more successful at attracting agricultural producers if we continue with agriculture-related activities at future river fests.

Riparian Revegetation

The most complicated aspects of removing and replacing Russian olive along the Shoshone are related to access. First, although Russian olive is a Wyoming designated noxious weed, landowners are not compelled to treat it, or even compelled to allow for its treatment on their property. So, landowners must first be persuaded to participate in removal efforts. The messages that resonated were varied. Some landowners are interested in improving river access while others are motivated to maintain healthy wildlife habitat. Still others considered noxious weed treatment an economic or regulatory issue – participate now or the problem will only get more expensive, or you could risk future regulation. Physical access is another difficulty – streambanks on the Shoshone can be steep and erosive and it can be difficult to reach some trees. Further, the river contains numerous islands that can be impossible to reach except by boat.

10.0 Recommendations

Cody Wild West River Fest

Although our vision was to produce an event that had something for everyone, after 4 years of trying we have concluded that it isn't working as well as we had hoped. It's difficult to fit everything into a single weekend and the various interest groups haven't shown interest in those parts of the festival that aren't directly related to their interest. Despite outreach, attendance at the river fest by agricultural producers and related entities was not significant enough to warrant continued investment of resources in those activities. As an alternative, several members on the river fest steering committee have begun partnering with agricultural entities to promote those entities events and to ensure those events include information about river conservation and water quality.

In 2017, TNC is partnering with Science Kids to host two Science Saturdays over the summer. One in June would focus on teaching the kids about the plans and possibilities of the River Way Park project (which we hope to bring to 319 for funding at some point). Kids ages 9-11 would be registered in advance through Science Kids so we would have a better chance of reaching our target audience. In September, we would host a Water Festival that would feature some of the many cool river conservation activities we have done at past river festivals. Again, advance registration would be encouraged but not required. This event would be for all ages.

Trout Unlimited is looking at partnering with Science Kids on a few similar outreach events aimed at getting kids fishing with experienced fisherman and river conservationists.

Riparian Revegetation

We are proud of the progress we have made to remove Russian olive from riparian areas, especially along Cody's river front, but we are concerned about the longevity of this work. Maintaining what we have achieved will take a sustained effort and the agencies best suited to sustain that work, namely NRCS and Weed & Pest Districts, are typically underfunded and overwhelmed by new programs and priorities. Northwest Wyoming needs more support if the region is to have any hope of keeping on top of the many invasive species buffeting our boundaries.

11.0 Financial Summary

Task #	Task Title	NPS SEP Funds Expended	Nonfederal Match Expended	Total NPS Expenditures	Other Federal Funds Expended
1	Administration	\$580.12	\$0.00	\$580.12	\$0.00
2	Festival Planning	\$11,455.50	\$14,710.00	\$26,165.00	\$0.00
3	Riparian Restoration	\$36,187.87	\$38,186.06	\$74,373.93	\$0.00
	TOTALS	\$48,223.00	\$52,896.06	\$101,119.06	\$0.00

OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS

Contributor	Amount
Park County Travel Council	\$8,000.00
WWNRT	\$22,553.75
Partners (in-kind labor)	\$6,710.00
TNC	\$15,632.31
Total	\$52,896.06

12.0 LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Other Collaborative River Conservation Projects - Sulphur Creek Map, River Way Park fact sheet
- Appendix B: Photographs from the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest
- Appendix C: Informational handout on water quality BMPs and cost share programs
- Appendix D: Invitations to Reception on the River

Appendix A: Other Collaborative River Conservation Projects - Sulphur Creek Map, River Way Park Fact Sheet

Sulphur Creek Public Access
Park County, WY

Land Ownership
 Bureau of Land Management
 Bureau of Reclamation
 - - - - Existing Fence
 Trail
 - - - - Gravel road



The Nature Conservancy
Protecting what we're inheriting for you.

Imagery: NAIP 2009
1:5,319

0 250 500 1,000 Feet



Document Path: S:\ALL_PROJECT_FILES\A_CURRENT_PROJECTS\Bodini_Trail\CreekRanch\gis\mxd\TC_sulphur_creek_public_access.mxd

Date: 4/24/2015



WGFD fish biologist, Jason Burckhardt, teaches a young boy about aquatic invertebrates at the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest. Photo credit M. Vanata.



A young girl investigates a mayfly under a magnifying glass at the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest. Photo credit D. Vanderhoff.



A young woman concentrates as she paints a rain barrel at the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest. Photo credit D. Vanderhoff.



WGFD fish passage specialist, Erin Sobell, demonstrates watershed function using the WGFD Stream Trailer at the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest. Photo credit D. Vanderhoff.



Whitewater racers line up for the Stinking Water Sprint event at the 2014 Cody Wild West River Fest. Photo credit D. Vanderhoff.



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS COST SHARE PROGRAMS AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES

The best way to get started on any conservation project is to seek help from a local natural resource or agriculture professional. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), University of Wyoming Extension Service, or your local Conservation District can provide you with information about the types of projects that will have the most benefit for your operation and natural resources, and help you secure funding.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wy/home/>

Farm Service Agency

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA>

UW Cooperative Extension Service

<http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/county/>

Conservation Districts

<http://www.conservewy.com/index.html>

Conservation Districts fund many different kinds of water quality improvement projects, such as septic system upgrades, small acreage irrigation, spring protection fencing, and much more. Check with your local Conservation District to see what kinds of projects they are currently funding. Visit the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts website to find contact information for your local district.

Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ)

<http://deq.state.wy.us/wqd/watershed/nps/NPS.htm>

The WDEQ's Nonpoint Source Program provides funding for projects to address water pollution caused by contaminants that are picked up by water and carried into streams and waterways where they cause water quality impairments. Funds are available to cities, counties, or conservation districts for water quality assessment and planning (205(j) funds). Funds from the 319 program support projects to effectively and efficiently improve water quality, as determined by the Wyoming Nonpoint Source Management Plan. Contact the WDEQ Nonpoint Source Program before applying to one of these funding programs to ensure your eligibility.

Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT)

<http://wwnrt.wyo.gov/>



The Wyoming Legislature created the WWNRT in 2005 to enhance and conserve wildlife habitat and natural resource values throughout the state. WWNRT makes grants to non-profit organizations and governmental agencies for projects to improve wildlife habitat or natural resource values. Funds have been used for prescribed fires to maintain open space, conifer control for stream restoration, and riparian tree plantings to revegetate streams. Many management practices funded by this entity are also beneficial for water quality. Application information can be found at the WWNRT website.

Wyoming Water Development Commission Small Water Project

http://wwdc.state.wy.us/small_water_projects/small_water_project.html

The purpose of this program is to provide incentives for improving watershed condition and function. Funds can be used on projects to provide benefit for wildlife, livestock, and the environment and should provide improved water quality, riparian habitat, habitat for fish and wildlife, address environmental concerns by providing water supplies to support plant and animal species, or serve to improve natural resource conditions. The program requires grantees to produce a management and rehabilitation plan outlining site-specific remediation techniques that will improve the watershed.

The Nature Conservancy

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/wyoming/index.htm>

The Nature Conservancy works to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. The Wyoming Chapter of The Nature Conservancy works with willing landowners to secure public and private funding for resource improvement projects. The Conservancy works with landowners to secure and manage funds for water quality improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, and for improving livestock practices that impact water quality and wildlife habitat. Projects have included installing off-creek water that benefits cattle and wildlife, riparian fencing, spring protection fencing, conifer control in riparian areas, and native tree planting on stream banks. The Conservancy has also assisted ranchers to establish range monitoring programs.

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

<http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/nrp>

The Natural Resource and Policy Division of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture is responsible for supporting the agricultural industry in the wise management of natural resources to further the interests of the industry and to enhance Wyoming's natural resources. The WDA offers grants to local Conservation Districts for water quality and range monitoring programs, so check with your district to see what funding is available.

Appendix D: Invitations to Reception on the River



***You are Invited
to a Reception
on the River***

*Sunday, August 24th
11:00 A.M. @ Cody's primary river access
on 12th Street below the Belfry Bridge*

***The organizers of the Cody Wild West River Fest
invite you to join them for a discussion
about river conservation in the region
and to watch the conclusion of the
Stinking Water Sprint whitewater race.
Light lunch served. RSVP appreciated, 587-1655***

The Nature
Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming
258 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520
Tel (307) 332-2971
Nature.org/Wyoming

Dear Senator Enzi:

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy of Wyoming Board of Trustees and our 2,200 Members, we want to invite you to join us at the Cody Wild West River Fest on Sunday August 24th at an event with Wyoming conservation leaders.

Last year over 1,000 paddlers, anglers, and fun lovers came out to celebrate one of Cody's most exceptional natural resources, the Shoshone River. The Cody Wild West River Fest includes whitewater events and a fly fishing tournament, as well as a wide variety of engaging river-related educational activities for people of all ages. The River Fest kicks off Friday, August 22 and runs through Sunday, August 24. The Nature Conservancy of Wyoming is a founding member of the River Fest organizing committee.

As part of the celebration of one of our state's most beautiful rivers, we would like to extend an invitation to you to join conservation leaders from around Wyoming on Sunday, August 24. We will gather at 11:00 AM at the Cody's in-town public access at the northern terminus of 12th Street on the Shoshone River to see the exciting conclusion of the Stinking Water Sprint downriver race, and to learn about ongoing river conservation in the region, much of it supported by the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust. Light fare and refreshments will be available that morning. In the afternoon, we will take a tour of The Nature Conservancy's Heart Mountain Ranch to visit a work day with the Wyoming Disabled Hunters.

In addition, we hope you'll join us for a private flight on Sunday over Sheep Mountain to discuss the importance of the BLM's FY15 request to acquire Sheep Mountain using LWCF dollars, a purchase that is recognized by the Park County Commissioners as being a potential win for the community. If you are interested in flying with us, please let us know whether 9:00 am or 1:00 pm would better accommodate your schedule.

We would be honored to host you for any of these events on Sunday August 24th. If Sunday isn't convenient, we can make accommodations around your schedule to meet at the Cody Wild West River Fest August 22 or 23.

As a long-standing and respected leader in Wyoming, your visit to this Cody area celebration is particularly important to highlight the value of conservation to the people of Wyoming

As a reminder, The Nature Conservancy is a public charity under section 501(c) (3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code and the law strictly prohibits any candidate electioneering. We would very much appreciate it if you would please refrain from mentioning the election during this event.

Please feel free to follow up with Graham McGaffin (gmcgaffin@tnc.org and 307-222-8105) to coordinate on availability and details of your schedule.

Sincerely,

Linda S. Murchison

Linda Murchison
TNC Wyoming Chapter Board Chair