

Henry's Fork Watershed Council Annual Tour Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2022

Introductions and Community Building

Aaron Dalling, co-facilitator from Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (FMID) welcomed everyone to the annual tour. The group went around with introductions.



Teton Dam Project Update

Various

While at the Teton Dam site overlook, various participants mentioned updates that had occurred at the site.

The Teton Dam Coalition formed 5 years ago to improve the Teton Dam site. The land is owned by the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). Brett High, Idaho Dept of Fish and Game (IDFG) mentioned that the USBR is invested in making improvements and have some funds to do so. The process began with the boat ramp improvements at Spring Hollow with IDFG. Last year, came to an agreement with Madison County to improve the road down to the dam and add amenities like rough campsites at the bottom. IDFG is also working to improve the boat ramp down there.

The history museum in Rexburg wants to improve the overlook with kiosks and expand parking, plus provide amenities for tour buses that come through (ability to turn around, restrooms, etc.)

Aaron Dalling, FMID added that irrigators request folks remember that Teton Dam is still an authorized, though not funded, dam structure.

Sarah Lien, Friends of the Teton River (FTR) pointed out Canyon Creek pumps down at the bottom of the site at river level as they will come up in discussion later on in the tour.



Linderman Dam Project

Arien Chavez, US Bureau of Reclamation

The Linderman Dam site is 7 miles upstream of Teton Dam. The Linderman family put in the structure to use for irrigation. Then, when USBR built Teton Dam, they bought the structure because it would be inundated when the dam was built. When the dam failed, the remains of Linderman Dam (concrete and rebar) were left. USBR added flags to show where the structure was just sticking out of or slightly below the water level. There is also a strong drop and hydraulic below the structure, all causing safety concerns for recreationists.

The project started last summer to remove remains of the dam and restore the river. The project brought down “clean” (seed management area) riprap and gravel, and placed boulders to create stability so the rocks wouldn’t move as water fluctuates throughout the seasons. Was designed to allow floodplain to absorb changes seasonally as well. The work was done last fall and USBR monitors the site to see how the river reacts. They use trail cameras that take photos once per hour and use stream gage data (St. Anthony – USGS) to monitor conditions. A 2-5 year flood event occurred in June and the floodplain did what it was supposed to do and filled.

In year 1 of the project, they added a riffle. In year 2 they will remove the remaining concrete and rebar of the structure (Fall 2023). The remaining riprap will be used to partially fill in the hole causing the hydraulic. Floaters may have to portage during that work next fall, but USBR will put out notice at least 30 days in advance and will be in contact with local outfitters and FTR ahead of time.



Canyon Creek Canal Projects

Sarah Lien, Friends of the Teton River

Canyon Creek has been a priority for Friends of the Teton River (FTR) since 2010 due to its importance to native fish. The Teton watershed is one of the remaining strongholds for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. FTR monitors flows and water temperatures in YCT habitat as well as conducts PIT tagging to track movement in and out of systems. FTR also conducts expansive electrofishing surveys every five years. All of this data is paired with IDFG fish data to get pictures of what YCT composition looks like in the watershed and how it changes over time.

Data shows that Canyon Creek is really important to YCT. Estimates indicate there are ~11,000 YCT in Canyon Creek. This is second only to Bitch Creek in the watershed. For comparison, the entire Teton River (mainstem) has 30,000-40,000 YCT. FTR is working with partners like the Green Canyon Hot Springs, landowners and water users to improve the health of the tributary as a whole. So far, they have conducted three physical fish passage projects and one big stream restoration project that opened up 45 additional miles of habitat upstream.

In the first project area, vegetation had been grazed down allowing sediment to get into the river. The project laid back the banks to be less steep and planted willows. Also, the unlined canal was entraining fish. Historically up to 70 cfs could be diverted through the canal. Canal damage and realizing that an investment would need to be made, about 4 years ago the 11 shareholders were willing to start discussions again of what could be done. FTR worked with them and landed on a 2-year pilot permit, where the shareholders agreed to shut down the canal and pick up their water rights at the other three points of diversion. This change fully addressed fish entrainment issues and put the entire flow of Canyon Creek in Canyon Creek all the way to the Highway 33 bridge.

However, the pilot program was never meant to be permanent solution. Irrigators would be in a deficit as the remaining infrastructure couldn't take the full amount of their water rights and the compensation program couldn't make them whole. The pilot was recently extended through 2025, which will give FTR and partners time to install infrastructure, which will be part

of a longer-term solution. Irrigators let them know they need all the water they can get. All 11 shareholders got the opportunity to pick up water at a different point of diversion on the Teton River mainstem.

Recently, an opportunity came up for FTR to put together a plan to move the point of diversion (POD). Phase 1 - will address the needs of 10 of 11 irrigators, with infrastructure to allow them to get all of their water. They will also install rotating fish screens. FTR was awarded a BOR grant that will fund \$2 million of this project. The project aims to restore 2,000 ac-ft of water to Canyon Creek. FTR will also develop a long term monitoring plan.