

Provo River Restoration Project

Reconstructing Reach 9 – 2002  Q & A

What is the Provo River Restoration Project?

The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission, a federal agency, is responsible for implementing the Provo River Restoration Project. The project's purpose is to restore the river pattern and ecological function of the middle Provo River (between Jordanelle Dam and Deer Creek Reservoir) to make up for fish, wildlife and related recreational losses caused by federal water reclamation projects in Utah, particularly the Central Utah Project. Provo River restoration, which began construction in 1999, consists of creating a multiple-thread, meandering river channel, reconnecting the river to existing remnants of historic secondary channels and constructing small side channels to recreate aquatic features. Existing levees are being set back to create a flood plain. Streamside vegetation is being planted and fostered to provide necessary environments for healthy fisheries.

Where and when will work continue this year?

Starting August 12, 2002 construction will begin at the Cottonwood Canyon bridge and extend upstream about 0.9 miles towards Jordanelle Dam (see accompanying map). This reach, referred to as "Reach 9," is immediately upstream of where construction began in 1999 (Reach 8).

What about public access to the river?

Public access to Reach 9 will be closed during construction, from August 12 through December 20, 2002, unless otherwise posted.

How will construction affect water quality of the river?

In years past, heavy equipment crossing through the river unavoidably clouded up the river, so we had recommended anglers fish upstream of the construction site. Due to this year's project location, we are particularly sensitive to this issue and will primarily address it through limiting the amount of time heavy equipment is in the river. The first few weeks of construction, we will be moving the active river channel and harvesting cobble. Anglers should expect turbid conditions throughout these first weeks, except on weekends. Besides this, as shown in our accompanying map, there are three additional occasions when we will need to work in the river: 1) at the bottom of the reach, 2) during creation of a meander towards the top, and 3) at the top connection. The remainder of construction will take place out of the active river channel. This will limit the number of occasions when the river will appear murky. We will try to keep anglers informed of when this will happen, primarily through our web site expected to be online in August, 2002 (mitigationcommission.gov).

What about water temperature?

As more of the river is created in open fields, we are aware of concerns about potentially rising water temperatures, due to lack of shade over the river. We are monitoring the river's water temperature to address this. Jordanelle Dam contains a "selective level outlet," which gives Jordanelle Dam operators capability to select water from colder locations of Jordanelle Reservoir to be released into the river, if needed to maintain cooler temperatures for fish.

How will the trees be affected?

Because about half of the new channel will be constructed through open meadow, few trees will be impacted. Generally, the PRRP Environmental Impact Statement took into account the number of trees that would be impacted and identified measures to limit this effect. When a reconstruction design is "fitted" in the field, everything practicable is done to avoid losing trees. Trees that must be removed to make way for the new channel are still used as habitat features for small mammals and, instream for fish. Disturbed areas are also revegetated. We have installed about 200,000 seedlings, cuttings and poles. So far, plant survival is high. However, it may be 10-15 years before overall success may be measured against conditions in less impacted reaches of the Provo River.

How will bird watching in the area be affected?




Reach 9, a popular location for bird watching, will be closed to public access for safety reasons during construction (August 12 through December 20, 2002). While birders (and some birds), will be temporarily displaced, access to the portion of Reach 9 above the construction zone can be reached from the parking area near the base of Jordanelle Dam. Nesting should not be disrupted because construction will begin after the nesting season. For this reason, most birds should also return to nest next season.

How will construction in Reach 9 affect macroinvertebrates (e.g. stoneflies, midges, etc)?

We have monitored the river's macroinvertebrate population since the beginning of the project. These studies show most taxa (i.e. species) return to a reconstructed reach within about a year after reconstruction, and most taxa recover to pre-construction abundance levels or greater after about two years. The number of individuals of a given taxa may increase or decrease due to restoration, which will diversify the river's habitat. However, we expect an overall net macroinvertebrate population increase. Reach 9 is expected to recover similarly. Macroinvertebrates will be able to recolonize the reconstructed area by drifting down from the half-mile of river above that will not be disturbed.

For more information about the Provo River Restoration Project or Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission, contact Diane Simmons at (801) 524-3146, or visit our website, which will be available in August at: mitigationcommission.gov

Provo River Restoration Project Reach 9 Construction Features August 2002

-  Reclaimed River Channel
-  Created Wetlands
-  Restored River Channel

