



Ririe Reservoir
Resource Management Plan:
Finding of
No Significant Impact
and Environmental
Assessment



U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Pacific Northwest Region
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BCDPR	Bonneville County Department of Parks & Recreation
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practice
B.P.	Before present
BYU	Brigham Young University
Cartier Slough	Cartier Slough Wildlife Management Area
cfs	cubic feet per second
COE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
CRMP	Cultural Resources Management Plan
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IDEQ	Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
IDPR	Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
INEEL	Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory
ITAs	Indian Trust Assets
ITD	Idaho Transportation Department
msl	Mean sea level
National Register	National Register of Historic Places
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOI	Notice of Intent
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
ORV	Offroad Vehicle
Reclamation	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
RMEF	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RV	Recreational Vehicle
SH	State Highway
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TCPs	Traditional Cultural Properties
Tex Creek	Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area

TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
UFAS	Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WAG	Watershed Advisory Group
WMAs	Wildlife Management Areas

1.0 Introduction and Background

Ririe Reservoir Resource Management Plan: Environmental Assessment

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluates the proposed Ririe Reservoir Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP was developed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to manage natural resources, facilities, and access on their lands. The study area, which includes Reclamation's lands at Ririe Reservoir, the Ririe Outlet Channel, Ririe and Teton mitigation lands within the Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA; Tex Creek), and Ririe and Teton mitigation lands within the Cartier Slough WMA (Cartier Slough) is shown on Map 1-1, *Location Map*.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires Reclamation to explore a range of possible alternative management approaches and the environmental effects of these actions. Three alternatives are evaluated and compared in this document, including a No Action Alternative and a Preferred Alternative. The impacts of each alternative were evaluated for the affected resource areas: water quality and contaminants; soils; vegetation; wildlife; threatened and endangered species; aquatic biology; recreation; land use; facilities, public utilities, and services; environmental justice; cultural resources; sacred sites; Indian Trust Assets (ITAs); and transportation and access. Air quality, water resources and hydrology, topography, geology, and visual resources were also evaluated, but are not included in this document because no impacts occur on these resources.

1.2 Authority

Title 28 of Public Law 102-575, Section 2805 (106 Stat. 4690; Reclamation Recreation Management Act of October 30, 1992) provides Reclamation with authority to prepare resource management plans.

1.3 Proposed Federal Action

For this EA, the proposed Federal action is implementation of the RMP. The intent of the RMP is to serve as a blueprint for the future use, management, and site development of Reclamation lands at the reservoir and the associated WMAs for the next 10 years. The RMP identifies goals and objectives for resource management, specifies desired land and resource use patterns, and explains the policies and actions that would be implemented during the 10-year life of the plan to achieve these goals and objectives. A draft of these goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

1.4 Purpose and Need

1.4.1 Purpose of the Environmental Assessment

The purpose of this EA is to assist Reclamation in finalizing a decision on a preferred RMP and to determine whether to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Historical Overview

Lands under Reclamation jurisdiction include Ririe Reservoir and adjacent lands; the Ririe Outlet Channel, located north of Idaho Falls; portions of the Tex Creek WMA (Tex Creek), located generally to the southeast of Ririe Reservoir; and the Cartier Slough WMA (Cartier Slough), located on the floodplain of the Henrys Fork of the Snake River about 23 miles north of Ririe Dam. Collectively, these lands and waters associated with Ririe Reservoir under Reclamation jurisdiction will be called **Reclamation lands** throughout this EA.

Construction of Ririe Reservoir, located in southeast Idaho, was completed in 1977 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) for use as a Federal flood control, irrigation, and recreation facility. The reservoir was filled to capacity for the first time in 1978. The project includes a floodway outlet bypass channel that extends directly west 7.8 miles to the Snake River upstream of Idaho Falls.

Reclamation's portion of Tex Creek was purchased by Reclamation and the COE in 1976 as mitigation for habitat losses associated with construction of the Ririe and Teton Projects. Other portions of Tex Creek are owned by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) (Table 1.4-1). Some of the acreage figures shown in Table 1.4-1 vary from numbers generated for previous documents and reports. The figures shown herein are based on survey data entered into a computer-based Geographic Information System (GIS) as of July 2000 and are considered the most current and accurate data available. Tex Creek is managed by IDFG primarily as big game winter range and for other wildlife under agreement with Reclamation and the other landowners. Cartier Slough was purchased by the COE and Reclamation in 1976 and 1977, respectively, as mitigation for wetland and waterfowl losses resulting from construction of Ririe and Teton Projects. Cartier Slough is managed by IDFG primarily as habitat for waterfowl.

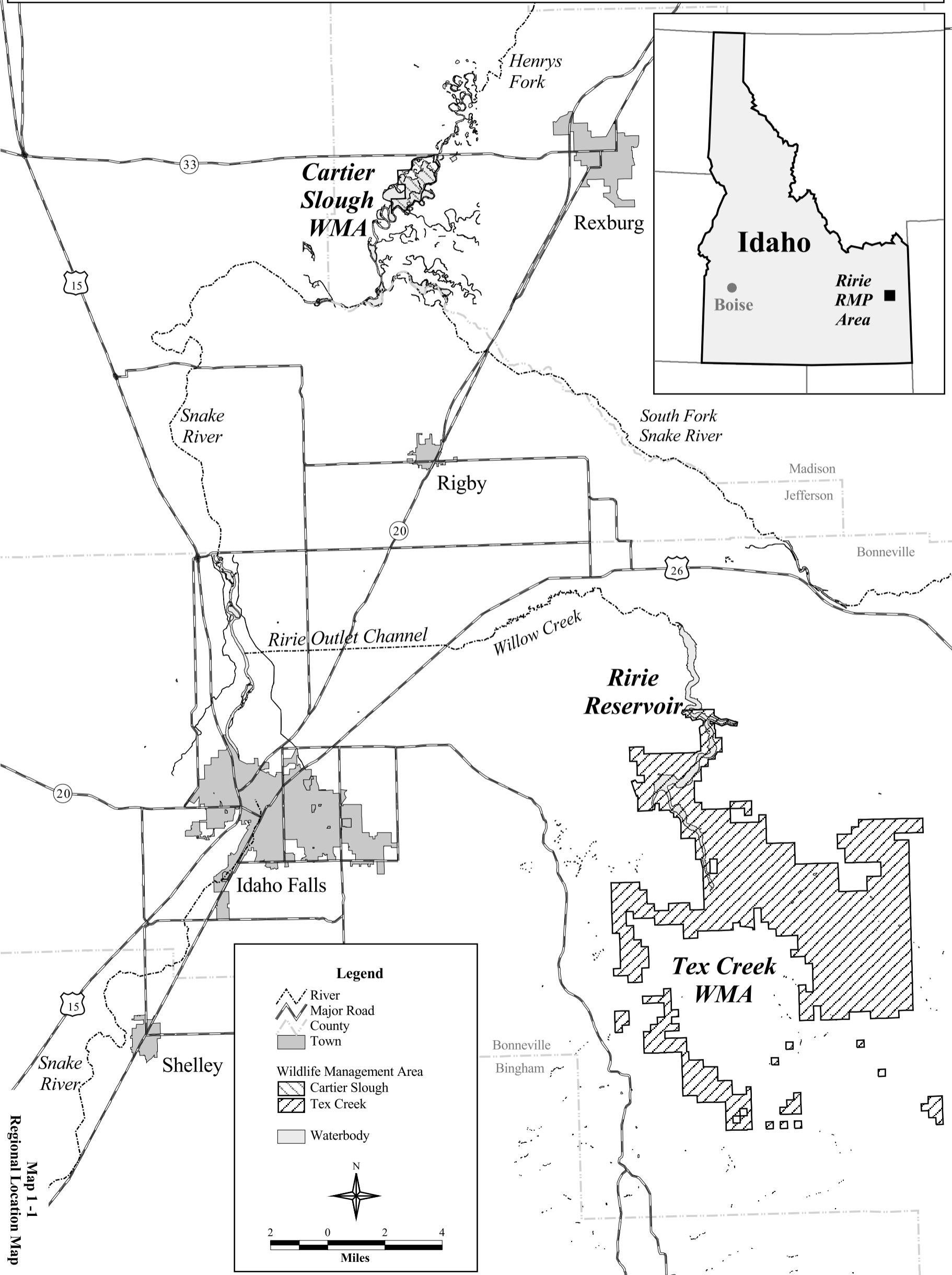
Map 1-1

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Ririe Reservoir Resource Management Plan

Regional Location Map

The information displayed here is based on the best available data at the time of publication. Neither the authors, Reclamation, or any other party here warrant or represent that the information is in every respect complete and accurate, and are not held responsible for errors or omissions.



Regional Location Map
Map 1-1

Table 1.4-1. Tex Creek WMA Land Ownership

Land Ownership	Acres
Bureau of Land Management	9,600 ¹
Idaho Department of Lands	648 ²
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	9,215 ¹
Bureau of Reclamation – Teton Mitigation Lands	9,104
Bureau of Reclamation – Ririe Mitigation Lands	2,502
Bureau of Reclamation – Non-Mitigation Lands	2,480 ³
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	720
Total	34,269

Source: IDFG 1999; Reclamation 2000.

¹Estimate, plus/minus 20 acres.

²Idaho Department of Lands owns one full section of land, however, it is an oversized section containing 648 acres.

³Estimate, plus/minus 5 acres.

The reservoir and Tex Creek, and to a lesser extent Cartier Slough, have become increasingly important for recreation use. The area serves southeast Idaho as well as out-of-state visitors, primarily from northern Utah. Reclamation lands provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Approximately 75,000 people visited the reservoir in 1998 for boating, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

1.4.2 Need for Action

Reclamation does not have an RMP for its lands around Ririe Reservoir. A plan is needed to address current and potential future issues to permit the orderly and coordinated use and management of lands and facilities under Reclamation jurisdiction at Ririe Reservoir. The plan would be used as the basis for directing activities on Reclamation lands and the reservoir in a way that maximizes overall public and resource benefits consistent with the purposes of the areas and would provide guidance for managing the area during the next 10 years.

The RMP will be reviewed, reevaluated, and revised to reflect changing conditions and management objectives on an as-needed basis. Opportunities for public involvement would be provided on significant changes that affect the resource or public use. A draft of these goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

1.5 Related Activities

The following activities and plans are related to the Ririe Reservoir RMP:

- IDFG manages and operates Tex Creek and Cartier Slough under an existing management plan.
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Targhee National Forest; and BLM, Medicine Lodge Resource Area has jurisdiction of Federal lands near Ririe Reservoir. Some BLM lands are located within the Tex Creek WMA and are managed by IDFG.

1.6 Location and Background

The Ririe Project consists of Ririe Dam and Reservoir, which provides flood control, irrigation, recreation, and habitat for fish and wildlife. Construction on the project began in January 1970. At that time, it was owned by the COE. On October 14, 1976, a Memorandum of Agreement transferred the project to Reclamation. Construction was completed a year later in November 1977. The 12-mile-long reservoir contains about 100,500 acre-feet of water, covering 1,560 acres of surface area.

Tex Creek is a 34,269-acre reserve on the southern part of the reservoir, established to compensate for wildlife habitat lost when Ririe and Teton Reservoirs were constructed. Tex Creek includes lands owned by Reclamation, IDFG, BLM, and private entities. Tex Creek provides important winter range habitat for elk and mule deer, as well as habitat for upland game birds and is managed by IDFG.

Cartier Slough consists of approximately 1,026 acres of Reclamation's Ririe and Teton mitigation lands adjacent to the Henrys Fork of the Snake River west of Rexburg. The area is managed by IDFG and is adjacent to Beaver Dick County Park in Madison County. The Ririe Outlet Channel is located downstream of the dam and north of Idaho Falls. It extends west from Willow Creek to the Snake River for the purpose of controlling flood flows above Idaho Falls.

Only two roads provide direct vehicular access to the reservoir—Meadow Creek Road (at the north end of the reservoir on the east bank near the dam) to Juniper, and Lincoln Road (on the west side of the reservoir just north of Blacktail Creek) to Blacktail. The project is an important recreation resource in the region, especially for residents near Idaho Falls and Rexburg. As the region continues to grow, Reclamation expects that more people will visit the area. This increasing use, along with the potential conflicts with wildlife habitat and use, is an important reason for preparing a management plan for the area's resources. Reclamation currently has an agreement with Bonneville County to manage the three recreation areas at the reservoir.

1.7 Scoping

Two public scoping meetings were held prior to the development of this Draft EA. An initial scoping meeting was held February 9, 1999. The meeting was advertised through media announcements sent to local outlets and a public information newsbrief that was sent to 600 people. The purpose of the initial meeting and the newsbrief was to collect public input on the issues that should be addressed in the alternatives for the RMP and EA. Following this meeting, an Ad Hoc Work Group was formed to assist with alternatives development and participate throughout the process. This group consisted of Tribal, agency, and interest group representatives, and is described in Chapter 4, *Consultation and Coordination*. The second public scoping meeting was held February 15, 2000, and was also announced through local media and an expanded newsbrief mailing list. The purpose of this meeting was to gather comments on the draft alternatives and RMP Draft Goals and Objectives. The public involvement process is described fully in Chapter 4, *Consultation and Coordination*.

1.8 Summary of Issues

The RMP addresses all activities occurring on Reclamation lands surrounding the reservoir, Tex Creek, Cartier Slough, and the Ririe Outlet Channel. Reclamation water operations are based on contractual and flood control requirements. Because of these operational constraints, water operations are not part of the RMP. Reclamation identified several issues that need to be addressed by the RMP. These issues were presented to the public, and the list was expanded through this process. A summary list of issues follows:

- How much recreation use the reservoir, Tex Creek, and Cartier Slough can accommodate as demand increases in the region
- Development on land surrounding the reservoir, Tex Creek, and Cartier Slough
- Conflicts between recreation use and wildlife habitat
- Conflicts among recreation users, especially motorized versus non-motorized
- Agricultural use and leases
- Protection and conservation of important or sensitive resources, such as wildlife, fisheries, wetlands, riparian vegetation, and cultural resources
- Vegetation management and weed control
- Coordination with IDFG regarding management of Tex Creek and Cartier Slough
- Protect winter range for elk management

- Avoid recreation conflicts with wintering elk and deer
- General expansion of opportunities to meet recreation demands
- Additional or expanded boat ramps, docks and associated facilities
- Improve access to reservoir/recreation sites
- Address overcrowding
- Erosion within and downstream of reservoir
- Creation of a dive park
- Protect or enhance Yellowstone cutthroat trout
- Bald eagle use and habitat
- Impacts of motorized vehicles, such as off road vehicles
- Maintain fishing opportunities, including downstream of reservoir
- Maintain hunting opportunities
- Predator control
- Educate public on reservoir management
- Responsibility for outlet channel management