
Chapter 3

Existing Land Use and Management





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3.1 Project Facilities and General Operations

Ririe Dam is located on Willow Creek, a minor tributary of the Snake River. The 253-foot earth and rockfill dam was constructed primarily for flood control, but also for irrigation and recreation purposes. Construction of the dam created the 1,560-surface-acre Ririe Reservoir, which has a total storage capacity of 100,541 acre-feet. The other primary facility of the Ririe Project is the 7.8-mile long Ririe Outlet Channel. This riprap-lined earthen structure controls the water flow in Willow Creek below the dam and is intended to reduce flooding on lower Willow Creek in Idaho Falls prior to its confluence with the Snake River.

Because the Project is operated with flood control as the primary objective, the reservoir is drawn down in the winter to provide storage space for the spring flows in Willow Creek, which peak in April and May. After this period, the reservoir is held as high as possible for recreation purposes, while still providing adequate outflow for downstream irrigation rights. Additional information on project facilities and general operations can be found in Section 1.4, Project History and Section 2.1.3, Hydrology.

3.2 Land Status and Management

3.2.1 Reclamation Lands

Reclamation's land holdings consist of approximately 1,564 acres of submerged lands beneath the reservoir itself, as well as most of the canyon, large portions of Tex Creek, most of Cartier Slough, and the Ririe Outlet Channel (see Table 3.2-1). Reclamation lands are composed of mitigation and non-mitigation lands. Mitigation lands at Tex Creek and Cartier Slough are those lands that were specifically set aside to compensate for the loss of wildlife habitat from the development of the Ririe and Teton dam and reservoir projects. Management of the Ririe and Teton mitigation lands at Tex Creek is first and foremost for the conservation and protection of habitat for big game species, particularly elk and deer. All other uses of the mitigation lands (for example, recreation) are considered secondary. Management of mitigation lands at Cartier Slough is focused on waterfowl. Non-mitigation lands comprise all other Reclamation-owned lands. Figures 3.2-1 and 3.2-2 show the extent of Reclamation's ownership and the specific areas covered by the Ririe and Teton mitigation lands, as well as the non-mitigation lands. Table 3.2-1 provides a breakdown of Reclamation's land ownership as it relates to mitigation and non-mitigation lands for all Reclamation lands.

Table 3.2-1. Bureau of Reclamation Land Ownership (in Acres)

Reclamation Lands	Tex Creek WMA	Cartier Slough WMA	Outside of WMAs	Total
Ririe Mitigation Lands	2,502 ¹	560	NA	3,062
Teton Mitigation Lands	9,104	468	NA	9,572
Non-Mitigation Lands within WMAs ²	1,407 ³	0	NA	1,407
Non-Mitigation Lands Outside of WMAs Adjacent to Ririe Reservoir ²	NA	NA	646 ⁴	646
Other Non-Mitigation Lands Outside of WMAs (Ririe Outlet Channel)	NA	NA	167	167
Total	13,013	1,028	813	14,854

Source: Reclamation 2000

¹Original mitigation lands minus the 567-acre reservoir buffer.

²Does not include submerged lands of about 1,073 acres for the reservoir in the WMA.

³Original non-mitigation lands plus the 567-acre reservoir buffer.

⁴Does not include the submerged lands of about 491 acres for the reservoir not in the WMA.

As shown on Figures 3.2-1 and 3.2-2, not all lands within the Tex Creek WMA are mitigation lands. Lands surrounding the Benchlands recreation site, Blacktail Park, and a drainage on the north side of the Willow Creek Arm are non-mitigation lands, as well as a 300-foot wide zone extending around the reservoir (within the WMA) from the reservoir's high pool level. These non-mitigation lands are not encumbered by any agreements or plans related to Tex Creek. However, since Tex Creek was established, they have been managed as part of the overall WMA.

Land surrounding the northern half of the reservoir is managed by Reclamation, while the IDFG manages Tex Creek and Cartier Slough. The Bonneville County Department of Parks and Recreation manages the three recreation sites at the reservoir. However, as the landowner, Reclamation has ultimate authority and responsibility over the management of all Reclamation lands.

Management of recreation has been contracted to the Bonneville County Department of Parks and Recreation since 1995. The County has managed the reservoir surface and three adjacent recreation areas since this time, maintaining recreational and administrative facilities and providing staffing and visitor services.

Most of Reclamation's lands (11,606 of 13,013 acres) within Tex Creek were acquired for the purpose of mitigation of fish and wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of the Ririe Reservoir Project and the Teton Project. Tex Creek is comprised of a patchwork of Reclamation, IDFG, BLM, and private lands. Reclamation owns approximately 11,606 acres of the 28,750-acre Tex Creek WMA (Reclamation 2000), including approximately 2,502 acres surrounding the southern portion of the reservoir (Ririe mitigation lands) and 9,104 acres located in a non-contiguous parcel southeast of the reservoir in the Indian Fork, Pipe Creek, and upper Tex Creek drainage (Teton mitigation lands).

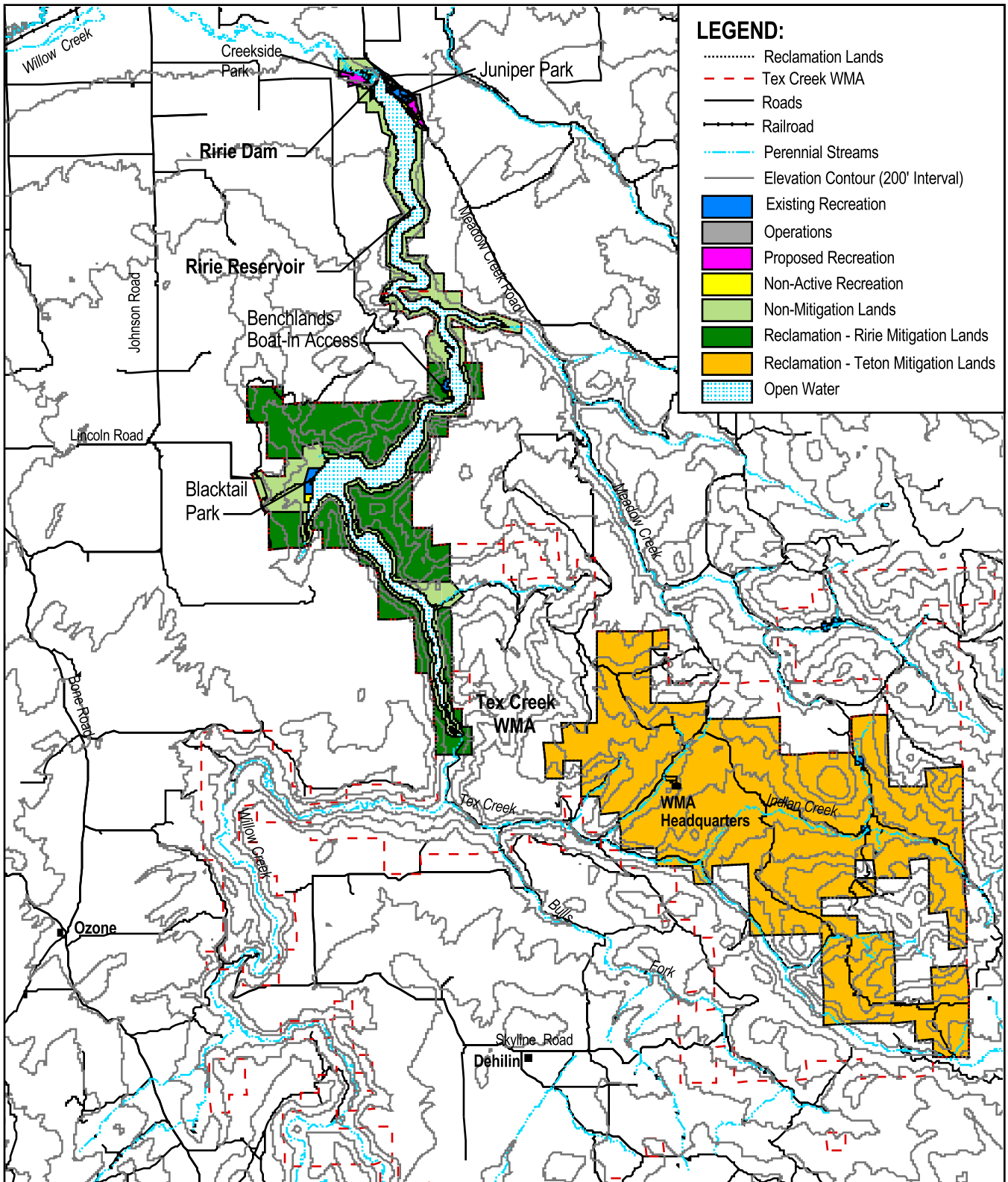


Figure 3.2-1
Land Status - Ririe Reservoir
and Tex Creek WMA

1 0 1 2 3 Miles

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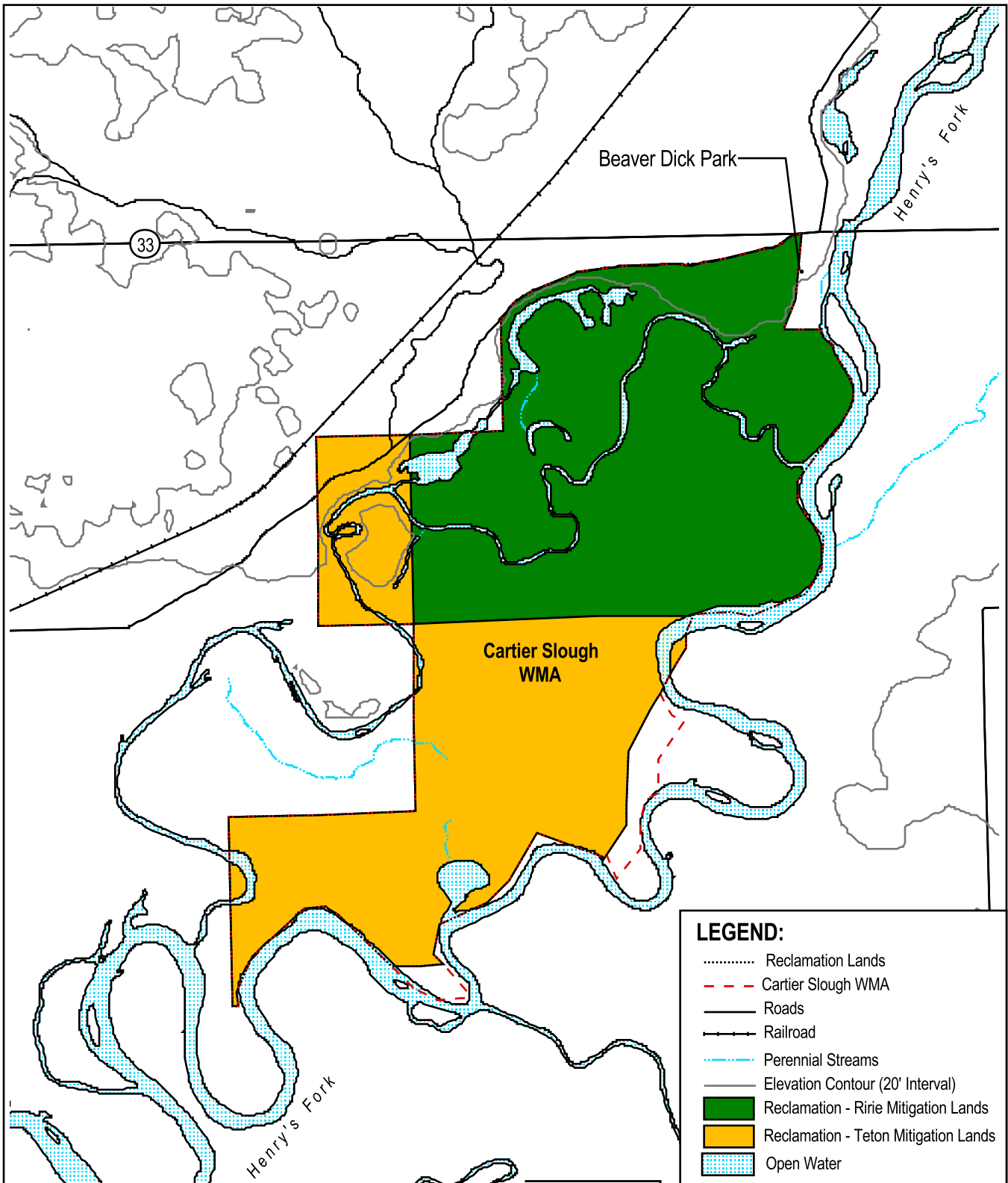
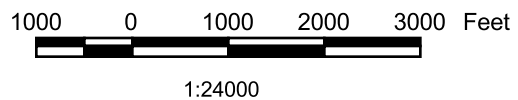


Figure 3.2-2
Land Status - Cartier Slough WMA



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Source: USBR, 2001; EDAW, 2001

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Reclamation's lands within Cartier Slough were also acquired for the purpose of mitigating fish and wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of the Ririe and Teton Projects. The WMA is composed of approximately 1,028 acres of Reclamation land, which are managed by IDFG. Primary management priorities for Cartier Slough are to provide habitat for waterfowl, threatened and endangered species, and other game and non-game wildlife. Secondary management priorities are to provide for wildlife-related recreation. Although Cartier Slough is entirely composed of the Reclamation Ririe and Teton mitigation lands, there are parcels of BLM-owned lands (located along the Henry's Fork of the Snake River) that IDFG includes in the management activities of the WMA. However, no agreement currently exists between the IDFG and BLM related to their management activities on these lands.

The 7.8-mile-long Ririe Outlet Channel provides overflow capability for Willow Creek, preventing flooding in Idaho Falls (Figure 3.2-3). The channel is about 50 feet wide at the surface and the right-of-way ranges in width from approximately 30 feet to 200 feet on either side of the channel. Below the dam, water is discharged from Ririe Reservoir into Willow Creek, which flows in its natural stream channel for approximately 6 miles through private property. The Outlet Channel begins where Sand Creek and Willow Creek branches and runs in a westerly direction to the Snake River.

3.2.2 Surrounding Lands

A variety of land uses occur near Reclamation's lands. These include traditional uses such as crop and pasture lands, as well as more recent uses such as urban development and lands managed for conservation purposes. In general, the intensity of surrounding land uses is determined by proximity to water, transportation, and other infrastructure.



Photo 3-1. Pasture land adjacent to the Ririe Outlet Channel.

Most of the property surrounding Reclamation lands near Ririe Reservoir is privately owned and used for agriculture. Farmland near the downstream end of the reservoir slopes gently to the north and is accessible from Highway 26. These lands are irrigated and planted in rotations of potatoes, wheat, and alfalfa. Agricultural structures such as pivot circles and potato sheds can be seen from Juniper Park. Scattered houses are associated with the adjacent farms.

Much of the land bordering Reclamation's property is flat or gently sloping. Lands west of the reservoir slope gently downward to the west, planted in dryland wheat. Grazing is common on other adjacent land, particularly in the more remote areas farther south.

With the exception of a large home overlooking the dam immediately south of the Juniper Campground, there is currently no residential use close to the reservoir. The only other noticeable private construction consists of a large shelter for potato crops on the canyon rim above the former Creekside Park area below the dam.

Most of Tex Creek is bordered by private ranches and farms, with cattle grazing the predominant use. Additional land is cultivated in wheat and other dryland crops, while some is planted in forage crops, under the NRCS

Conservation Reserve Program. In general, the lowland areas of Tex Creek border grazing or agriculture, while upland areas border pasture, Conservation Reserve Program land, and forested lands such as the Caribou National Forest along the eastern boundary. Residences near Tex Creek include ranches and several rural home sites.

Cartier Slough is bordered by wetland areas extending to the north and south, most of which are privately owned; however, some land is owned by the BLM. Surrounding uses generally consist of grazing and farming. In addition, Beaver Dick Park, a small public recreation area owned and operated by the Madison County Department of Parks and Recreation, is located at the northeast corner of Cartier Slough.

The Ririe Outlet Channel is almost entirely bounded on either side by privately owned pasture and irrigated farmland.

3.3 Agreements, Leases, and Easements

3.3.1 Agency Agreements

3.3.1.1 Ririe Reservoir

The Ririe Reservoir and Project-related lands were transferred to Reclamation from the COE by a Memorandum of Agreement (contract #DACW68-75-C-0124) on October 14, 1976.

3.3.1.2 Ririe Mitigation Lands

A tri-party agreement (contract #DACW68-75-C-0091) among Reclamation, the COE, and IDFG was signed by all three agencies on August 18, 1976, establishing the Ririe mitigation lands adjacent to Ririe Reservoir, at Tex Creek, and at Cartier Slough. The purpose of establishing the mitigation lands was to mitigate for the loss of fish and wildlife

habitat caused by the construction and operation of the Ririe Reservoir Project. This 100-year agreement designates the IDFG as the manager of these lands.

3.3.1.3 Teton Mitigation Lands

A 25-year agreement (contract #1-07-10-L0450) between Reclamation and IDFG established the Teton mitigation lands south of Ririe Reservoir and at Cartier Slough. The purpose of establishing the mitigation lands was to mitigate for the loss of fish and wildlife habitat caused by the construction and operation of the Teton Project. The agreement designated the IDFG as the manager of these lands and will expire on October 1, 2006 (that is, within the life of the 10-year RMP).

3.3.1.4 Ririe Reservoir Recreation Sites

Reclamation has an agreement with Bonneville County (MOA #1425-5-MA-10-01120) authorizing the County to provide management, operation, maintenance, development, and replacement of all recreation facilities. The agreement included financial cost sharing by Reclamation for the first 3 years of the agreement (1995 to 1997). The agreement was renewed in 1997, with the stipulation that it could be renewable up to 20 years; it was last renewed in 2001.

3.3.1.5 Related Agreements

The IDFG and Madison County Parks and Recreation have a cooperative agreement for the development and maintenance of a windbreak on Cartier Slough through their Habitat Improvement Program. The agreement requires the County to develop and maintain a 1.24-acre, five-row windbreak adjacent to the County's Beaver Dick Park on Cartier Slough. The 10-year agreement is effective from May 1, 1994 until May 1, 2004.

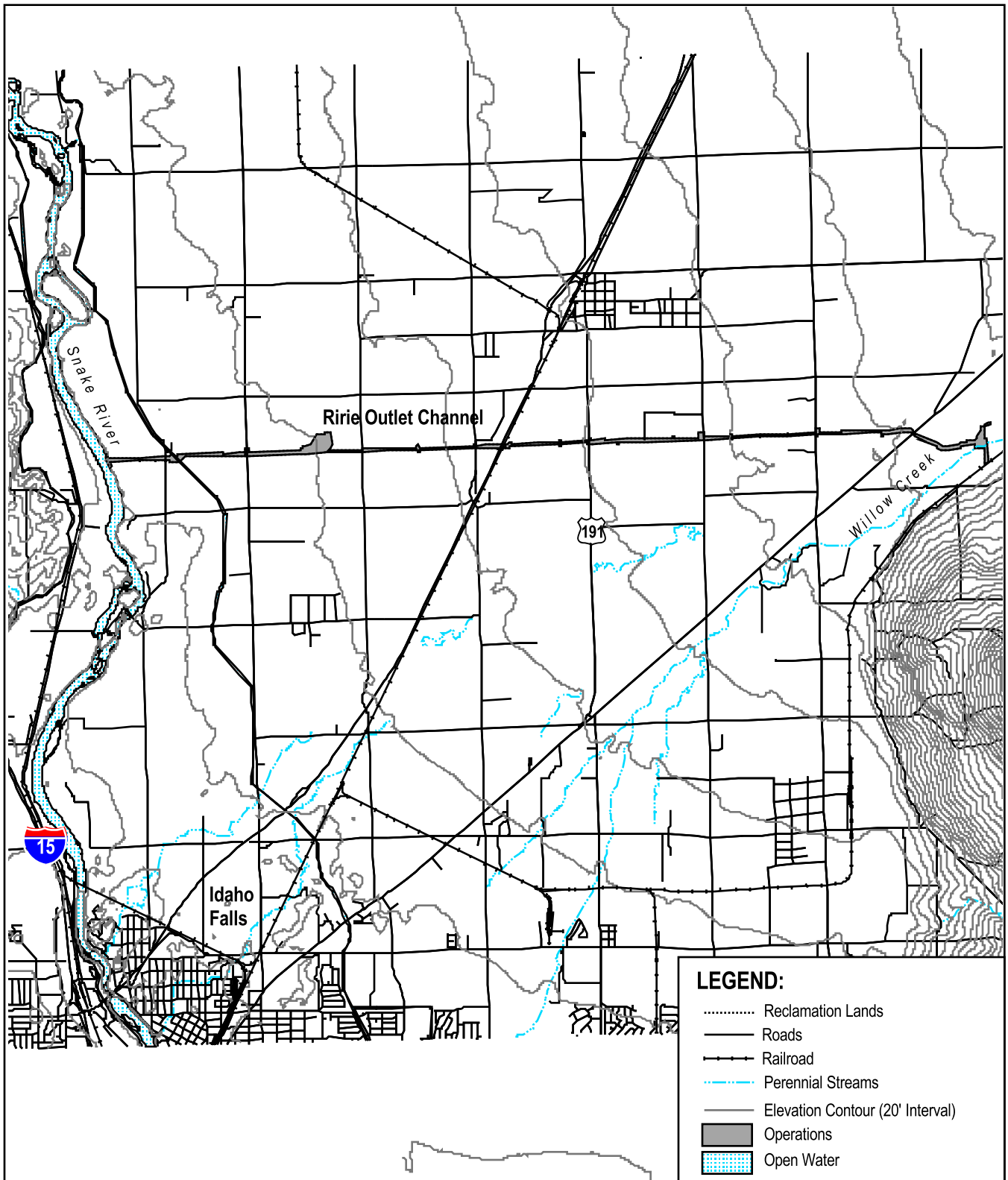


Figure 3.2-3
Land Status - Ririe Outlet Channel



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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.

3.3.2 Leases

There is one agricultural lease (contract #1-07-14-L0201) for 14 acres of land along the canyon rim near the northwest corner of the reservoir. The lease does not include water rights, nor can the lessee restrict hunting and fishing by the public on leased lands. This one-year renewable lease began in 1998 and would be extended at the lessee's discretion, if conditions of the lease are met, until 2003.

3.3.3 Crossing Agreements

Numerous utility crossings are authorized for utilities and public service agencies including Utah Power (also known as PacifiCorp), the City of Ucon, Mountain Bell Telephone, Idaho Irrigation District, Progressive Irrigation District, and Bonneville County. These arrangements allow pipes, roads, and power and communication lines to cross Reclamation lands.

3.4 Recreation

Recreation activities in the reservoir area include both land- and water-based activities, with some seasonal opportunities for snow-based winter recreation. Most of the recreational users of this area are Idaho residents, and most are on day trips from Idaho Falls and Bonneville County. Because of the different opportunities available at Ririe Reservoir, Tex Creek, Cartier Slough, and the Ririe Outlet Channel, as well as the distinctly different user groups at each site, these four use areas are discussed separately.

3.4.1 Ririe Reservoir

3.4.1.1 Recreation Activities and Use Levels

Ririe Reservoir provides recreation opportunities serving Idaho Falls, southeastern Idaho, and out-of-state visitors. Its proximity to Idaho Falls makes the reservoir a popular destination for local recreationists, especially day users. It is estimated that approximately 75,000 visitors typically visit the area during the summer season.

A limited questionnaire administered by the Bonneville County Department of Parks and Recreation (BCDPR) during three summer weekends in 1999 identified some of the most popular activities in the area (EDAW and BCDPR 1999). This questionnaire was only administered a few select times and was not intended to be statistically valid. Visitors indicated that the most important primary activities while on their trip were waterskiing (29 percent), fishing from a boat (19 percent), powerboating (16 percent), and fishing from shore (9 percent). While these reflect the activity that is most important to their trip, visitors also participate in many other activities while on the same trip. The activities engaged in most frequently include swimming (50 percent of visitors), waterskiing (47 percent), resting or relaxing (42 percent), picnicking (38 percent), powerboating (38 percent), and fishing from a boat (36 percent). Other activities in the area include hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, and camping.

Waterskiing was found to be the second most popular overall activity, as well as the number one primary activity at the reservoir. This response is likely due to a number of reasons: the nature of the reservoir's surface, the types of facilities provided, the proximity to an urban

area, the climate, and the relative lack of other comparable sites in the area for waterskiing.

Fishing continues to be one of Ririe Reservoir's main activities, and the area is known as one of the best salmon fisheries at any reservoir in Idaho. Shore anglers are somewhat restricted due to the steep banks along the reservoir. However, unlike many other reservoirs in Idaho, there is relatively little summer drawdown at Ririe Reservoir. Therefore, although summer drawdown does have an effect on recreation facilities in late July and August, there is a stable fishery throughout the fishing season. The fishing season starts at the end of May and concludes at the end of November to minimize potential impacts to several thousand elk that use the adjacent Tex Creek WMA as winter range. The most popular game fish is rainbow trout, followed by smallmouth bass, kokanee salmon, and yellow perch.

Almost all of the visitors to the area contacted during the summer of 1999 were from Idaho (98 percent), with 71 percent of these from Bonneville County. Over half (54 percent) of visitors had made their first visit to the reservoir in the last 10 years. This indicates that over half the visitors have only discovered this area recently, either as new residents to the area, or as current residents who have only recently discovered the reservoir's facilities. The average number of visits per year was around six, indicating that this is a devoted user group that prefers to come to this area multiple times, typical of anglers and waterskiing enthusiasts.

Visitors average 37 years of age and are more likely to be male (59 percent). The average group size at the reservoir is around six people, indicating that some groups likely consist of more than one family. Most visitors to the reservoir were on day trips (92 percent), with those trips averaging about 5.3 hours in length. Of those who were on overnight trips, the average length of stay was 2.9 days, or roughly

the equivalent of a long weekend trip. Of the total visitors to the reservoir, few visitors stay overnight near the reservoir due to a relative lack of camping facilities and the proximity of accommodations in Idaho Falls.

Overall, visitors to Ririe Reservoir feel slightly to moderately crowded, which is reflected in their perceived level of crowding of a 5.1 on a 9 point scale (1 representing not at all crowded, 9 representing extremely crowded) (Shelby and Heberlein 1986). Given this level of perceived crowding, it is a bit surprising that over half of all visitors surveyed (53 percent) have changed their use of the reservoir due to crowding. The most common change in use is to visit the area earlier in the morning or on a weekday. Thus, visitors are still coming to the reservoir; however, they are simply visiting at times that are perceived to be less crowded.

Over half of all visitors surveyed (54 percent) are engaged in recreation activities on the reservoir on any given day. With respect to conditions out on the reservoir itself, similar levels of crowding were perceived by users. Of the three reservoir segments (north, middle, and south) users were asked to rate, the segment where visitors felt most crowded was from Meadow Creek to Blacktail Park. This segment is closest to developed facilities such as boat launches. However, this segment, along with the other two reservoir segments considered, received similar crowding scores, reflecting slight to moderate levels of crowding. Over half of all visitors who were on the water had to wait to use a boat launch during their trip; however, the average wait time of 13 minutes was considered an acceptable length of time to wait by most (84 percent) visitors (EDAW and BCDPR 1999).

3.4.1.2 Recreation Facilities

Recreational facilities are currently provided at three developed sites on Ririe Reservoir by BCDPR, including Juniper Park, Blacktail Park, and Benchlands Park, as well as dispersed recreation sites at Tex Creek and Cartier Slough operated by IDFG (see Figures 3.2-1 and 3.2-2). Most of the recreation facilities were developed when the Project was built in 1975. An additional site—Creekside Park—is located downstream of the dam, but this facility was closed to recreational use in the late 1990s.

Data on visitor perceptions of the existing facilities shows that most visitors surveyed feel that the number of facilities (boat ramps, campgrounds) at the reservoir are about right, with only the slightest indication that the numbers of boat ramps, shoreline access points, docks, and available parking spaces are too low. Visitor support is limited for the construction of new facilities; however, there is visitor support for better maintenance of existing facilities (EDAW and BCDPR 1999).

Juniper Park, located at the northern end of the reservoir, contains a separate day use area with an overlook and interpretive facilities, an overnight campground with two loops containing 49 sites and one camp host site (all with full hook-ups [i.e., water, power, sewer]), and a boat launch. Access to the water at this location is somewhat limited because of the steeply sloping access road that terminates at a two-lane concrete boat ramp. The steep shore at Juniper Park inhibits other recreational access; however, a small floating dock close to the boat ramp is available for tie-ups. At Juniper Park, universal accessibility (i.e., access to visitors with physical disabilities, including wheelchairs) to existing recreation facilities is variable. At the day use area and overlook, accessible facilities include two flush restrooms, the visitor center/office, parking stalls, and a

paved pathway. At the campground, accessible facilities include a restroom and shower and three campsites out of 49 total sites including paved pathways to accommodate the accessible campsites. The restroom at the boat launch below Juniper Park is universally accessible.



Photo 3-2. Juniper Park is located upstream of Ririe Dam; Creekside Park is located immediately downstream.

Below Ririe Dam is Creekside Park. Bonneville County recently decommissioned this park because of maintenance problems and safety concerns. Access to this park was provided by a road across the top of the dam. Visitors at the top of the dam may also stop at a viewpoint area that includes a portable toilet and parking for approximately 10 vehicles. Park facilities formerly included two parking areas and a paved access road, landscaped areas, a group tent camping area, and a shelter and vista point. Restrooms at Creekside Park have been recently demolished. Visitors to the park were able to access the river below the dam for fishing, wildlife observation, and walking. No universally accessible facilities existed at this park.

Blacktail Park, a day use-only area at the southern end of the reservoir, contains a boat launch with two large parking areas, a large

grassy area, concession stand offering food and beverage items as well as fuel for boats, day use picnic area with covered tables, marina, swimming area, and restrooms. The boat launch here is much larger than that at Juniper Park and is closer to many visitors from Idaho Falls. This site is closed in the winter to reduce potential impacts on wintering elk and deer. Blacktail Park contains the only designated swimming beach on the reservoir, which is protected from boat traffic by a floating dock and several buoys demarcating a no-wake zone.



Photo 3-3. Blacktail Park has the only designated swimming area on the reservoir.

At Blacktail Park, universally accessible facilities include two (out of 13) picnic shelters, with asphalt and concrete paving, two accessible parking stalls, and one accessible vault toilet.



Photo 3-4. Picnic area at Benchlands Park.

Benchlands Park, a day use-only area along the western shore of the reservoir between Juniper and Blacktail, is only accessible from the water by boat, as there are neither road nor non-motorized trail connections to this dispersed site. The park consists of five covered picnic tables with barbecue grills; a new floating toilet will be installed at the dock for the 2002 recreation season. The first covered picnic area has a universally accessible picnic table with a gravel path leading up to it. The shoreline consists of a sandy beach, which is close to the picnic sites when the reservoir is at full pool. Vegetation is different from Blacktail because it is mostly sagebrush and other wild grasses, with a small irrigated lawn area. Only one picnic area at Benchlands Park is universally accessible.

Other developed facilities on Ririe Reservoir include scattered floating platforms that are moored close to shore along the length of the reservoir. They are needed because the steep grade of the reservoir shoreline limits the beaching of boats by visitors. These platforms are maintained by Bonneville County and serve as tie-ups for boaters during the day, as well as overnight moorage for people camping on their boats. At seasonal drawdown, most of these docks are beached along the exposed banks. None of these platforms are universally accessible.

3.4.2 Tex Creek WMA

IDFG manages Tex Creek as critical winter range for elk and mule deer, as well as habitat for upland game birds. It supports high numbers of elk, deer, moose, sharp-tailed grouse, and a variety of non-game species. Bald eagles do occur on the WMA, but nesting is problematic. Two of the most popular recreational opportunities at Tex Creek are wildlife viewing and hunting for deer, elk, and grouse (pers. comm., P. Faulkner, IDFG, Idaho Falls, ID, November 11, 1998). Opportunities for horseback riding, hiking, and mountain biking

are also available. No estimate of annual visitation is available for Tex Creek.

The IDFG operates six primitive campsites scattered in different areas of Tex Creek, three of which are on Reclamation land. These sites cater to groups of between 2 and 15 people and are used primarily in the fall for hunting, rather than in the summer when there is little shade and the area is hot and dusty. There is a 10-day limit for dispersed camping at these sites. These sites typically include poles for horse tie-ups, horse trailer pull-throughs, fire rings, and level tent areas. None of these sites are universally accessible. The most popular of these sites, in part because it has summer shade provided by large trees, is an area known locally as Smith Place. The second-most popular area includes two sites along Meadow Creek that are clustered together. This area has a horse corral and chute for group use. Another popular location is Indian Creek Pond. This site has been scheduled for improvement for wildlife viewing opportunities.

3.4.3 Cartier Slough WMA

Cartier Slough is a 1,026-acre area managed by IDFG as habitat for waterfowl and fur-bearing mammals. A small parking area and boat launch at this site are managed by IDFG. The primary recreational activities include walking, wildlife viewing, hunting (waterfowl, pheasants, deer, moose, and small game), fishing, trapping, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Cartier Slough is also used by Rexburg school and scout groups, and by Ricks College as an outdoor classroom. Access includes a small parking lot with a non-motorized trail into the area. None of the facilities are universally accessible. Adjacent to Cartier Slough is Beaver Dick Park, owned and operated by Madison County. This park provides a campground, picnic shelters, restrooms, boat ramp, and an accessible fishing pier. The

primary access to Cartier Slough is through Beaver Dick Park; however, visitors also walk in from the access road along the north boundary of Cartier Slough.

3.4.4 Ririe Outlet Channel

This man-made channel extends approximately 8 miles from its confluence with Sand Creek to the Snake River in Idaho Falls. A rough gravel road borders the channel on both sides. Local residents use these roads for jogging, bicycle riding, and off-road vehicle (ORV) use. No formal facilities are provided. Some public use of this corridor occurs in the last mile nearest the Snake River where visitors access the Snake River for fishing on an ad hoc basis. No estimate of annual visitation is available for the Ririe Outlet Channel.

3.5 Access and Transportation

Recreation use is focused on two main areas: Blacktail and Juniper Parks. Juniper Park is accessed from State Highway 26 (SH-26). SH-26 is the main arterial connecting Idaho Falls to the recreation areas in Wyoming. This two-lane highway is a popular travel route for visitors going to Palisades Reservoir and the Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. SH-26 is maintained by the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). In general, it is a typical rural, mountain highway with a speed limit of 65 mph and a standard paved width of approximately 24 to 28 feet with 2- to 6-foot gravel shoulders. Meadow Creek Road is paved to Juniper Park. During winter, the road is plowed to the visitor center.

Blacktail Park is a popular area for anglers, boaters, and picnickers on weekday afternoons, as well as on weekends. It is accessed by Lincoln Road, a paved County Road that connects the neighboring towns of Iona,

Ammon, and Lincoln and terminates approximately 10 miles from Idaho Falls at the Blacktail Park. Lincoln Road is not plowed during winter.

No roads completely circle the reservoir, although access is possible from the north and east by Meadow Creek Road and the west by Lincoln Road. A number of minor roads leave Meadow Creek Road and provide access to creeks, campsites, and other recreational areas in Tex Creek.

Parking facilities are provided only at Juniper Park and the Blacktail Access. Parking can be inadequate at both of these sites on busy weekends. Isolated occurrences of driving and parking off the designated roads throughout Tex Creek have been noted. An estimated 75,000 people visit the Ririe Reservoir and Tex Creek areas annually.

Cartier Slough is accessed by SH-33. This two-lane highway runs east-west between Interstate 15 and U.S. 20. Direct access to the slough is through the Beaver Dick County Park. No actual transportation system is provided in this mitigation area. Access to Cartier Slough from Beaver Dick Park is pedestrian-only. An informal parking lot at the edge of the mitigation land, in the park, provides parking for the slough. No other formal roads or trails pass through the slough. Rexburg, to the east on SH-33, is the nearest town of significant size. Cartier Slough is roughly 15 miles to the north and east of Ririe Reservoir.

The main access to Tex Creek is along the unpaved Meadow Creek Road. Numerous accesses are available from this road into Tex Creek. Only one access road—the Pipe Creek Road—bisects Tex Creek. Pipe Creek Road is a primitive, dirt road that becomes impassible during wet weather conditions in the spring and

fall. This road is graded periodically but no further maintenance is conducted.

The transportation and access system consists of two parts: the physical condition of the accesses and roads, and the operational ability of those roads and accesses. In general, the current transportation system in Tex Creek, Cartier Slough, and Ririe Reservoir is adequate for the traffic levels experienced. Peak traffic events occur during holiday weekends that stress the level of service of the transportation and access system.

The Bonneville County Parks Department estimates that 20,000 to 24,000 vehicles per year use the Juniper and Blacktail accesses. In addition, another 6,000 to 7,000 vehicles use the campgrounds at these locations. Therefore, the estimated total vehicles using Juniper and Blacktail accesses range from 26,000 to 31,000 vehicles per year.

No detailed traffic volumes are available at this time, so specific comments on level of service and average daily traffic cannot be prepared. Based on observations by County employees, the existing transportation system adequately handles the volume of traffic currently using the area. Additional observations suggest that weekend and holiday traffic is heavy at specific recreation sites and accesses. A more detailed evaluation of traffic in the area cannot be conducted without further study.

Chapter 4

The RMP Planning Process





Chapter 4

The RMP Planning Process

4.1 Overview

This chapter summarizes the RMP planning process (Figure 4.1-1) and the principal factors that most influenced development of the Ririe Reservoir RMP. These factors were identified through the following two fundamental processes:

1. Review and analysis of regional and study area resource inventory data, and current land use and management practices; and Federal laws and Reclamation policies and authorities (see Appendix F).

2. A public involvement program and agency and Tribal consultation focused on feedback and input from public meetings/workshops, newsbriefs, Ad Hoc Work Group meetings, and other meetings and communications.

A detailed Problem Statement defining the major opportunities, constraints, and planning issues was developed based on input from the processes listed above (see Appendix A).

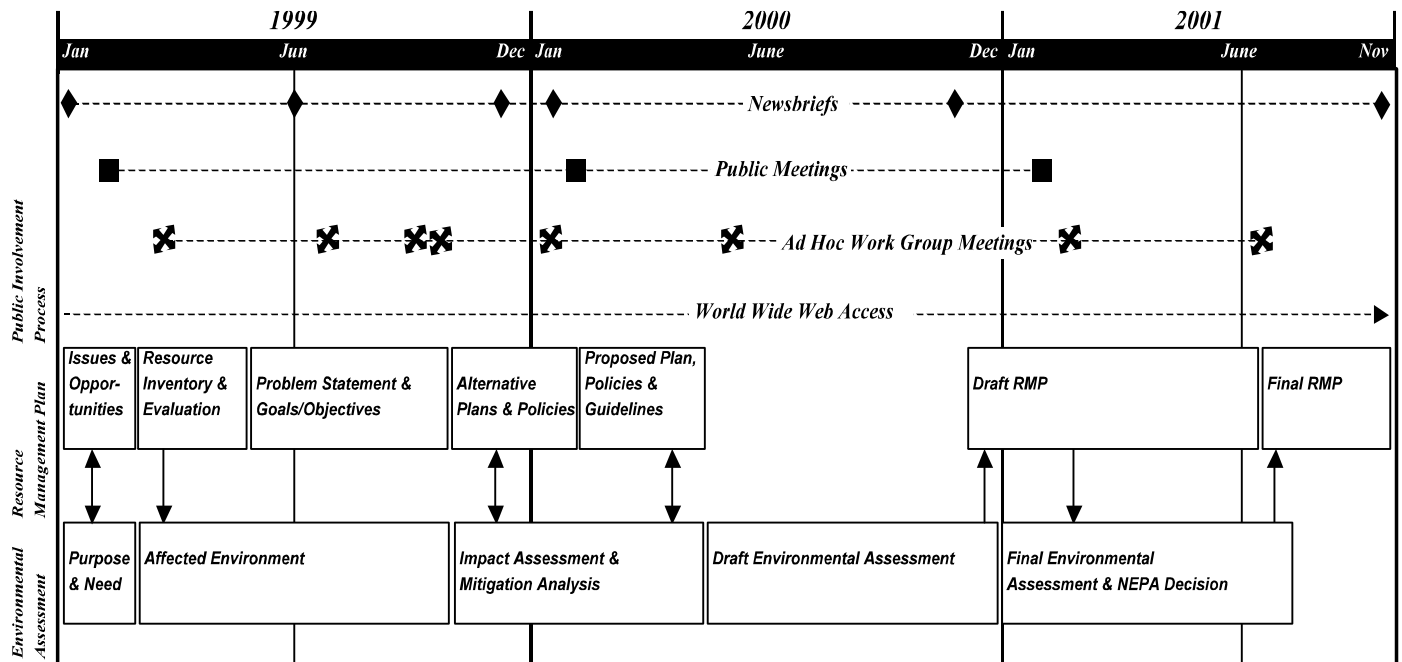


Figure 4.1-1. RMP Planning Process Schedule and Work Plan

The Problem Statement was then used to guide the development of the RMP Goals and Objectives, which are the foundation upon which alternative management actions were developed (described in detail in Chapter 5). The range of alternatives was reviewed by the public and the Ad Hoc Work Group. The alternatives were also identified and analyzed in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Ririe RMP to investigate potential environmental effects (Reclamation 2001). Letters of comment on the Draft EA were received from 27 individuals, organizations, and businesses; six agencies; and two Tribes. The preferred alternative was selected using these consultation and assessment processes.

The two most commonly mentioned themes by those providing input during development of the RMP were recreation and natural resources. Specific areas of concern included winter range management for elk and other big game, the control of noxious weeds, protection of wildlife habitat and natural resources, conflicts among recreation activities, and balancing the needs of recreationists and wildlife. Although not mentioned as frequently, issues related to access and general management were also raised by the public during this process. Table 4.1-1 lists the complete set of issues raised in the public meetings and through written comments, AHWG meetings, and agency and Tribal meetings. These issues are described in detail in the Problem Statement contained in Appendix A. The Problem Statement is a comprehensive review and understanding of the issues, needs, and opportunities (including all relevant perspectives) that are addressed by the RMP.

4.2 Public Involvement Program

Reclamation initiated a public involvement program in January 1999 and continued it throughout the planning process to support the

development of the RMP. The program included: (1) six newsbriefs; (2) three public meetings/workshops; (3) eight meetings with the Ad Hoc Work Group representing key agencies, Tribes, and stakeholders in the study area; and (4) a project website providing information to the public and a forum in which to comment on the process. Each of these program components is described in further detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Newsbriefs

The first newsbrief was mailed in February 1999 to over 600 individuals and organizations. It explained the RMP planning process, announced the first public meeting, and provided a form for submitting issues and initial comments on the management and facilities in the study area. This information was used to help form the goals and objectives for the RMP.

In June 1999, the results of the mail-in form and the issues raised at the first public meeting were summarized in a second newsbrief. These issues were listed in a table with the total numbers of responses for each issue indicated. Approximately 40 people attended and provided input at the public meeting, and another 20 people mailed in their response forms.

The third newsbrief was mailed in November 1999 and provided an update of the Ad Hoc Work Group process.

The fourth newsbrief was mailed in February 2000 and announced the second public meeting, summarized the draft Goals and Objectives of the RMP, and summarized the alternatives being considered.

In November 2000, a fifth newsbrief was mailed that described the alternatives in the

Table 4.1-1. Summary List of Issues

No.	Issue
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ISSUE CATEGORY - NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES***Wildlife and Vegetation Management***

1. Protection, Conservation, and Enhancement of Wildlife Habitat and Natural Resources; specific issues include:
 - Protected Species
 - Protecting Native Species
 - Priority on Native Plantings
 - Winter range/Elk management
 2. Balancing Recreation Development with Wildlife Needs; specific issues include:
 - Avoiding conflicts and the ability of resources to handle increased recreation use during the winter season
 - Avoiding conflicts and the ability of resources to handle increased recreation use during the other seasons.
 3. Tribal Hunting and Gathering Rights/Activities on Reclamation Lands
 4. Predator Control (impacts to wildlife)
 5. Noxious Weed Control/Vegetation Management
-

Fishery

6. Improve Fisheries Management (effects of operations, stocking program, etc.)
 7. Protect/Enhance Fish Habitat
 8. Protect/Enhance Native Species
 9. Protect/Enhance Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout
 10. Erosion and Water Quality
 11. Erosion within Watershed of Ririe Reservoir, Including Work with Surrounding Landowners to Protect Water Quality
 12. Erosion Along Ririe Reservoir Shoreline
 13. Erosion Downstream of Ririe Reservoir (Willow Creek)
 14. Bank Erosion at Cartier Slough
-

Cultural Resources

15. Addressing Cultural Resource Responsibilities, Enforcement, and Education (i.e., the need for proper attention to cultural resources in all Management Actions).
16. General (Natural and Cultural resources).
17. Inclusion of Tribes' Snake River Policy in the RMP (i.e., supporting a natural river ecosystem).

Table 4.1-1. Summary List of Issues (continued)

No.	Issue
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ISSUE CATEGORY - RECREATION

General

- 18. General Expansion of Opportunities/Meet Recreation Demand
- 19. Recreation Use Conflicts
- 20. Overcrowding (e.g., at boat ramps)

Boating and Other Water Uses

- 21. Water Use Conflicts (Ririe Reservoir)
- 22. Additional/Expanded Boat Ramps/Docks and Associated Facilities
 - Breakwater and/or additional boat ramp at Blacktail
- 23. Creation of Dive Park
- 24. Maintain Fishing Opportunities Including Downstream of Reservoir

Shoreline & Other Land-Based Activities

- 25. Need Additional Facilities at Recreation Sites (restrooms, parking, electric power at Blacktail, etc.)
- 26. Conflicting Uses
- 27. Provision for Tribal Use of Facilities
- 28. Creation/Enhancement/Continuity of Trails
- 29. Impacts of Motorized Vehicles (e.g., ORVs)
- 30. Designate Trails for ORVs
- 31. Management of Rock Climbing Near Juniper Park Visitor's Center
- 32. Safety Education for Users
- 33. Allow for Wildlife Viewing Opportunities
- 34. Maintain Hunting Opportunities
- 35. Winter Activities---Opportunities and Limitations

ISSUE CATEGORY - ACCESS, COORDINATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION**Access**

- 36. Maintain/Do Not Restrict Existing Access/Roads in the Tex Creek WMA
- 37. Maintain Existing Road Closures
- 38. Improve Access to Reservoir/Recreation Sites
- 39. No Additional Access Sites on the Reservoir

Table 4.1-1. Summary List of Issues (continued)**No. Issue**

-
- 40. Need Access for the Disabled
 - 41. Address Closure of Road Over the Dam
 - 42. Improve Cove Creek Road
 - 43. Resolve Legal Access Issue on Cartier Slough Road; Improve Road
-

Coordination

-
- 44. Coordination Among Management Plans (e.g., Reclamation/IDFG coordination of Tex Creek WMA and Cartier Slough WMA).
 - 45. Coordination Between Reclamation and Adjacent Private Land Owners
 - 46. Inclusion of Tribes in Management Plans and Processes
 - 47. Educate Public on Reservoir Management
 - 48. Agricultural Use/Leases
 - 49. Restrict Livestock Grazing
 - 50. Irrigation/Flood Control Management
 - 51. Fire Management Practices
 - 52. More Signage Needed
 - 53. Keep Regulation by Government Agencies to a Minimum
 - 54. Surrounding Land Use/Management
 - 55. Development on Surrounding Lands
 - 56. Responsibility for Outlet Channel Management
 - 57. Address Effects of Trespassing on Private Lands
 - 58. Impacts of Wildlife/WMA Big Game on Private Lands
 - 59. More Fencing Needed
-

Implementation

-
- 60. Ensure Plan Implementation
 - 61. Responsibility and Authority for Regulation of Uses
 - 62. Responsibility and Authority for Enforcement of Policies, Regulations, and Restrictions
 - 63. Funding for Management and Enforcement
 - 64. Entrance/User Fees (i.e., limitations and funding implications)
-

Draft EA, who to contact to receive a copy of the Draft EA, and announced an upcoming public meeting where the Draft EA would be discussed.

The sixth and final newsbrief was published in November 2001 and announced the Final EA and the RMP. It also summarized comments received on the Draft EA and provided an overview of the RMP, including implementation.

4.2.2 Public Meetings

The first public meeting was held in February 1999 in Idaho Falls. The purpose of this meeting was to conduct public scoping of the issues at Ririe Reservoir. Reclamation also provided information about the RMP planning process, and participants broke into small work groups to discuss important issues and opportunities that the RMP should address. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting.

The second public meeting was held in February 2000 in Idaho Falls and followed a similar format to the first. The preliminary alternatives and the RMP draft Goals and Objectives were presented, followed by small group discussion of this information. Approximately 80 people attended this meeting.

The third and final public meeting was held in Idaho Falls in January 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to present the Draft EA, particularly the Preferred Alternative, and take comments from the public. Approximately 45 people attended this meeting.

4.2.3 Ad Hoc Work Group

Following the first public meeting/workshop, an Ad Hoc Work Group (AHWG) was formed that consisted of 20 members from various interest groups, Tribes, and agencies. These

entities are listed in Table 4.2-1. Eight AHWG meetings were held in April, July, September, and October 1999; January and March 2000; and February and June 2001.

At the first meeting, the group was introduced to the planning process and was asked to identify their issues of concern. This information was recorded and used to help draft the Problem Statement and form the draft Goals and Objectives for the RMP.

At the second meeting, an overview of the resource inventory was presented, including potential opportunities and constraints. The Planning Team also presented and took initial comments on the draft Problem Statement, and preliminary Goals and Objectives. In conjunction with the second meeting, the AHWG also took part in an all-day tour of Ririe Reservoir and the Tex Creek WMA.



Photo 4-1. The AHWG looking out over Meadow Creek and beyond to Ririe Reservoir.

The primary purpose of the third meeting was to confirm that the Problem Statement was a complete and accurate representation of all perspectives on each issue. The group was able to complete about half of the Problem Statement and suggested an additional meeting to finish the exercise.

Table 4.2-1. Ad Hoc Work Group.

City of Idaho Falls, Parks and Recreation Department David Christiansen	Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Brian Miller
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Debbie Mignogno	Madison County Dave Payne
U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service Dennis Hadley	Idaho Department of Fish and Game Steve Schmidt
Trout Unlimited, Upper Snake River Chapter Ron Hover	Willow Creek Watershed Group Claude Storer
U.S. Bureau of Land Management Russ McFarling	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation David Torell
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Chad Colter	Adjacent Landowner, Conservation Interest Harold & Sharon Winther
South Fork Watershed Advisory Group Brent M. Ferguson	Eagle Rock Bass Masters Mike Renard
Jefferson County Pheasants Forever Randy Hix	Bonneville County Commissioners Bill K. Shurtleff/Lee Staker
Greater Yellowstone Coalition Marv Hoyt	Bonneville County Waterways Committee Dr. Roger Tall
	Idaho Alpine Club Donna Whitham

The intent of the fourth meeting was to finish reviewing and receiving comments on the draft Problem Statement and the complete set of Goals and Objectives.



Photo 4-2. The AHWG overlooking a sweeping vista of the Tex Creek WMA.

At the fifth meeting, the Planning Team presented the final Problem Statement and

another version of the draft Goals and Objectives for final comment by the AHWG. A second purpose of this meeting was to present and receive feedback on a preliminary set of alternatives, including a no action (i.e., status quo) alternative and two action alternatives.

The main purpose of the sixth meeting was to review the revised set of alternatives, focusing on the Preferred Alternative the primary goal being to finalize the Preferred Alternative, based on input received from the AHWG.

The seventh meeting started out with a presentation of the public’s comments on the Draft EA. However, the main purpose of the meeting was to receive the AHWG’s comments on the Draft EA and discuss any potential modifications to the Preferred Alternative. The meeting finished with a short presentation of

the framework for the implementation program component of the RMP.

The primary purposes of the eighth and final meeting were to present and receive feedback on the RMP management actions and Implementation Program.

4.2.4 World Wide Web

A Ririe Reservoir RMP web site was set up on Reclamation's Pacific Northwest (PN) Homepage and updated as a way to provide relevant information to the public. Newsbriefs, contact names/addresses, draft materials, the Draft EA, and meeting announcement were posted on this website. The site also provided a forum for individuals to provide comments on the RMP planning process and the Draft EA.

4.3 Tribal Consultation

4.3.1 Overview of Consultation with Tribes

Reclamation met with Council members and staff of both the Shoshone-Bannock and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to discuss the preparation of the RMP and to identify the potential of any ITAs, traditional cultural properties, and Indian Sacred Sites within the RMP study area.

A representative from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes participated in the AHWG, which facilitated close coordination and helped ensure that Tribal interests were integrated with the RMP.

Several meetings were held and correspondence was exchanged between Reclamation and the Tribes. The dates for the meetings and a summary of meeting content are provided in Appendix B.

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes requested that it be made clear in the RMP that their perspectives and definitions of cultural resources, ITAs, traditional cultural properties, and sacred sites are different than those conveyed by Reclamation. Reclamation hereby acknowledges the Tribes request and recognizes that the Tribes and Reclamation have differing meanings for these areas of concern.

4.3.2 National Historic Preservation Act Requirements

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) (as amended through 1992) requires agencies to consult with Indian Tribes if a proposed Federal action may affect properties to which the Tribes attach religious and cultural significance. The implementing regulations of the NHPA, 36 CFR 800, addresses procedures for consultation in more detail.

4.3.3 Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes or individuals. The Secretary of the Interior, acting as the trustee, holds many assets in trust for Indian Tribes or Indian individuals. Examples of trust assets include lands, minerals, hunting and fishing rights, and water rights. While most ITAs are on-reservation, they may also be found off-reservation.

The United States has trust responsibilities to protect and maintain rights reserved by or granted to Indian Tribes or Indian individuals by treaties, statutes, and executive orders. These are sometimes further interpreted through court decisions and regulations.

4.3.4 Sacred Sites

Sacred sites are defined in Executive Order 13007 as "any specific, discrete, narrowly delineated location on Federal land that is

identified by an Indian Tribe, or Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion, as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion....”

Reclamation met with the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to identify their interests, including ITAs and sacred sites. These are discussed in detail in Section 2.4 and 2.5, Sacred Sites and Indian Trust Assets, respectively.

4.3.5 Laws and Regulations

The relationship between Federal agencies and sovereign Tribes is defined by several laws and regulations addressing the requirement of Federal agencies to notify or consult with Native American groups or otherwise consider their interests when planning and implementing Federal undertakings. Among these are the following (see Appendix F, Legal Mandates):

- National Environmental Policy Act
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- Archeological Resources Protection Act
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- Executive Order 12875, Enhancing the Intergovernmental Partnership
- Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
- National Historic Preservation Act
- Presidential Memorandum of April 29, 1994: Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments
- Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites

- Executive Order 13175 of November 6, 2000, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (EO 13175 revokes EO 13084 issued May 14, 1998)

4.4 Agency Coordination

Reclamation consulted with several Federal and local agencies throughout the RMP process to gather valuable input and to meet regulatory requirements. This coordination was integrated with the public involvement process.

Coordination on fish and wildlife issues to meet the requirements of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) was accomplished by consulting with the FWS. Information about this consultation is provided in Appendix B.

The evaluation of endangered species contained in this RMP is Reclamation’s biological evaluation of effects to Ute ladies’-tresses orchids, bald eagles, Canada lynx, gray wolf, and whooping crane as required under the ESA. Reclamation and FWS correspondence on these species is located in Appendix B-1. On October 19, 2001, the FWS concurred with Reclamation’s determinations related to these species. Specifically, the FWS concurred with the following determinations:

1. The proposed project will *not affect* the Canada lynx and Ute ladies’-tresses.
2. The proposed project *is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence* of the gray wolf and whooping crane.
3. Based upon the mutual acceptance of a 3 year, bald eagle nest monitoring plan of the Willow Creek Arm nest, the FWS concurs with Reclamation’s determination of *may affect* but *is not likely to adversely affect* the bald eagle. The bald eagle monitoring plan is included in Appendix B-1.

Reclamation has completed Class I existing data inventories of cultural resources for the Ririe Reservoir/Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area. That information will facilitate subsequent compliance with the NHPA and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800). Coordination with the Idaho SHPO and the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes over cultural resources, ITAs, and sacred sites aspects of the RMP will occur when specific, future undertakings in response to RMP management actions require specific consultations with the SHPO and Tribes pursuant to the 36 CFR 800 regulations.