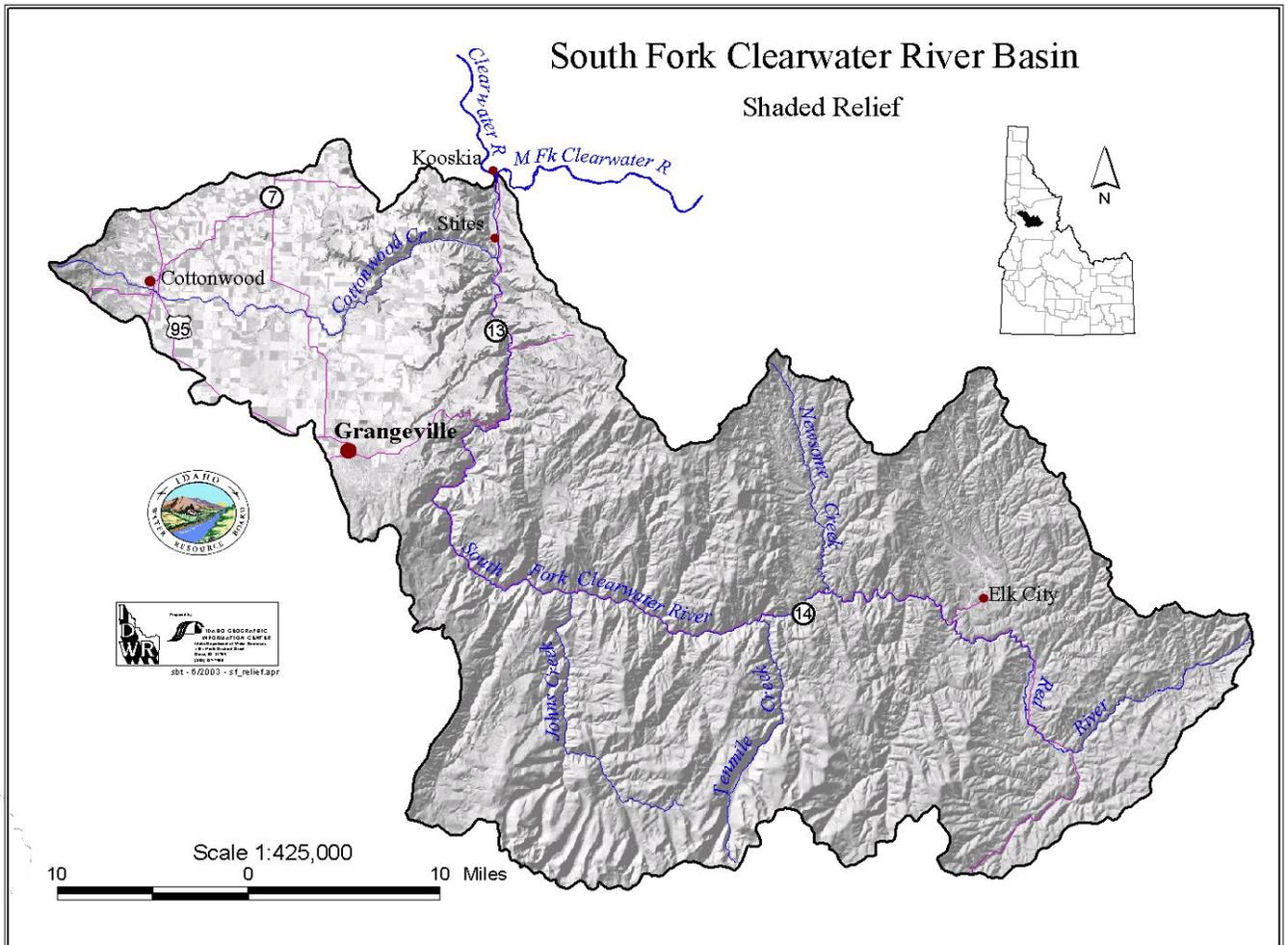


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Basin Overview

The South Fork Clearwater River subbasin (U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit 17060305) extends from the headwaters above Elk City and Red River to the confluence with the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River at Kooskia.

Annual runoff from the South Fork Clearwater River basin averages about 739,000 AF, as measured by the USGS stream gage at Stites. (NPFLA) The mean annual stream flow is 1,060 cfs. Stream flows are highest in May with an average of 3,370 cfs with lowest flows the September average of 258 cfs (TMDL).

Water use in the South Fork Clearwater River basin is mostly consumptive, although consumptive water use is low relative to the total amount of available water. Water claims for commercial and industrial uses, approximately 900 acre feet per year, comprise the largest potential water use in the basin. Appropriations for commercial and industrial uses are about 95% from ground water. Surface and spring water use is about

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one third the amount of the ground water use in the basin. The number of claims for spring, surface water, and ground water permits are each about 100.

Ownership and land use in the basin are summarized below.

Land ownership by area.

Land Type	Area
Public Land	
Federal Agency Management	532,691 acres
State of Idaho Management	4,832 acres
Private Land	217,703 acres
Nez Perce Tribe	565 acres

Publicly owned forested lands within the basin, excluding special management areas, are managed primarily for timber production. Predominant tree associations are Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir and Lodgepole Pine.

Some livestock grazing occurs on public lands. Though grazing is not a primary land use within the basin, it is important to permit and lease holders. About 220,000 acres of grazing allotments on public land are leased to provide animal unit months of grazing activity. However, of the land in those allotments, approximately 106,000 acres are suitable for grazing.

Land ownership on the Camas plateau area in the northwestern portion of the basin is mostly private. This area of the basin encompasses about 144,280 acres and the predominant land use is agricultural cropland and pasture.

Policy and Planning Context of the South Fork Clearwater River Basin

Several factors led the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) to complete a comprehensive state water plan for the South Fork Clearwater River basin. As part of the SRBA, the USFS agreed to withdraw certain federal reserved water rights if the State of Idaho would work cooperatively to identify and prioritize streams and rivers that could be given minimum instream flow and protection.

Another reason to undertake a plan was that the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's (IDEQ) water quality improvement process (a Total Maximum Daily Load) in the basin, affording a collaborative opportunity for the IWRB. Coordinating these two state processes was, in part, an attempt to take advantage of a citizen advisory committee established by the IDEQ for their TMDL process. The comprehensive state water plan, after an examination of local, state and federal water resource issues, includes recommendations covering recreational dredge mining, ground water in the Camas Prairie area, minimum flows, and protected river designations. The IWRB desires that this plan be a part of the various state and local processes that ultimately will lead to recovery of threatened and endangered fish species in the basin. Implementation of this plan may help the citizens of Idaho avoid the broad reach of the Endangered Species Act.

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A benefit of this collaboration is that state designation of protected river status or minimum stream flow may assist in the implementation of the TMDL through improved flows for recreation and fish, water quality and wildlife habitat.

Issues, Recommendations and Actions

ISSUE 1: Recreational Dredge Mining

Issue Statement: Recreational dredge mining permit/regulation process is adequate in the South Fork Clearwater River basin.

Recommendations:

Currently, numerous laws regulate or restrict dredge mining in the mainstem South Fork Clearwater River including the Clean Water Act, the Stream Channel Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act and others. It is unlikely, that a new recreational dredging operation could be conducted in the South Fork Clearwater River without adequate review and environmental safe guards. Therefore, the IWRB does not recommend changing the current recreational dredge mining permit/regulation process.

ISSUE 2: Declining ground water on the Camas Prairie

Issue Statement: Ground water levels near Grangeville and in the Camas Prairie area of the South Fork Clearwater River basin may be declining.

Recommendations:

- A study by IDWR to update Ralston's work in 1993 should be conducted.
- IDWR should evaluate ground water levels in the Grangeville area to monitor trends especially in the shallower aquifers wells.
- If ground water level declines are found to be a problem, IDWR should evaluate the feasibility of stabilizing groundwater levels in the Grangeville area.

ISSUE 3: Other projects in the basin

C. Issue Statement: The IWRB acknowledges the efforts of the Clearwater Subbasin Assessment and the Clearwater Focus Watershed Project.

Recommendation:

The IWRB acknowledges the usefulness of information from the work of the Clearwater Focus group in their efforts in development of the Subbasin Assessment (<http://www.nwppc.org/library/releases/2002/1113.htm>) and Subbasin Plan (<http://www.nwppc.org/library/isrp/isrp2003-3.htm>) to address the numerous factors impacting anadromous and resident fish within the Columbia Basin.

ISSUE 4: Instream flows on public land streams

D. Issue Statement: The South Fork Clearwater River basin has a large area of public land without protected instream flows for anadromous and resident fish, wildlife, recreational and other activities afforded by the Nez Perce NF.

Recommendation:

- Idaho's water resources are valuable. Water provides irrigation, domestic and industrial uses, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and aesthetics. To preserve these values and protect downstream water rights in this basin, the IWRB had committed to filing for minimum stream flow water rights on the following streams:
 - **Red River**
 - **American River**
 - **Crooked River**
 - **Newsome Creek**
 - **Tenmile Creek**
 - **South Fork Clearwater River**
 - **Johns Creek**
 - **Mill Creek**
 - **Meadow Creek**

These streams proposed for minimum stream flows had been selected based on cooperative efforts between the IWRB planning staff, USFS personnel, Idaho Fish and Game, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Soon after the IWRB had approved the final draft of this plan, the State of Idaho, the Department of the Interior, the Nez Perce Tribe and others announced the development of a framework for a proposed settlement agreement. One component of this agreement is the establishment of minimum stream flow water rights on streams in the Salmon and Clearwater basins. All of the streams recommended in this plan for IWRB consideration of minimum stream flow water rights were included in the settlement agreement as category A streams and will be considered for legislative enactment in 2005.

The proposed settlement agreement includes minimum stream flows that were not recommended in the plan. Cougar Creek, Peasley Creek, Silver Creek, South Fork Red River, and Big Elk Creek will be adjudicated as list A minimum stream flows at 40% (federal land) exceedence levels. In addition, Three Mile Creek, Sally Ann Creek, and Rabbit Creek will be adjudicated at 50% (state and private land) exceedence levels.

The proposed Nez Perce Tribe settlement agreement also included a stream, Cottonwood Creek, located in the South Fork Clearwater River basin, that is in category B. Category B streams are those where minimum stream flows and non-flow related actions will be developed, pursuant to state law, by the settlement parties in consultation with local stakeholders.

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State Protected River Designations

The IWRB has determined that the value of preserving the designated waterways of the South Fork Clearwater River basin is in the interest of and for the benefit of the state as a whole. All landowners – private, state, and federal – are encouraged to manage their lands consistent with the IWRB’s protection designations. The IWRB also encourages federal resource management agencies to work within the comprehensive state water planning process rather than pursuing federal protection of waters within Idaho.

To protect the public interest, current resource use, and the multiple-use character of the basin, the Idaho Water Resource Board designates the following streams and stream segments (approximately 54 miles) as **Natural Rivers** (see Map 3) based upon the analysis from Section IV, Resource Summary and Evaluation. All of the Natural designated rivers in the South Fork Clearwater River Basin are on federal land and most originate in Wilderness areas.

- 1) **Tenmile Creek** - (10 miles) from headwaters to Wilderness boundary and the following tributary:
 - **Williams Creek** - (5.2 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Tenmile Creek,
- 2) **Twentymile Creek** – (3 miles): Headwaters to Wilderness boundary,
- 3) **Johns Creek** - (8 miles): from headwaters to Wilderness boundary, and the following tributaries:
 - **Hagen Creek** - (4.4 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Johns Creek,
 - **Square Mountain Creek** - (5.0 miles) Headwaters to confluence with Moores Creek:
 - **Moores Creek** - (6.4 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Square Mountain Creek,
 - **Gospel Creek** - (6.6 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Johns Creek,
 - **West Fork Gospel Creek** - (5.2 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Gospel Creek,

To protect the public interest, current resource use, and the multiple-use character of the basin, the Idaho Water Resource Board designates the following streams and stream segments (approximately 324 miles) as **Recreational Rivers** (see Map3) based upon the analysis from Section IV, Resource Summary and Evaluation:

- 1) **Red River** (27.2 miles) Headwaters to confluence with American River, **and the following tributaries:**
 - **Otterson Creek** - (3.5 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Red River,
 - **South Fork Red River** - (11.7 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Red River,
 - **West Fork Red River** - (4.3 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Middle South Fork Red River,
 - **Moose Butte Creek** - (3.5 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Red River,
 - **Red Horse Creek** - (8.2 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Red River,
- 2) **American River** (21.6 miles) Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater, **and the following tributaries:**

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- **Limber Luke Creek** - (2.8 miles): Headwaters to confluence with American River,
 - **West Fork American River** - (5.0 miles): Headwaters to confluence with American River,
 - **East Fork American River** - (6.5 miles): Headwaters to confluence with American River,
 - **Kirks Fork** - (6.8 miles): Headwaters to confluence with American River,
- 3) **Crooked River** (11.6 miles) Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater, **and the following tributary:**
- **Relief Creek** - (6.3 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Crooked River,
 - **East Fork Crooked River** – (7.1 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Crooked River,
 - **West Fork Crooked River** - (5.3 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Crooked River,
- 4) **Newsome Creek** (15.7 miles) Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater, **and the following tributaries:**
- **Haysfork Creek** - (5.0 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
 - **Baldy Creek** - (6.1 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
 - **Pilot Creek** – (6.0 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
 - **Sawmill Creek** – (3.6 miles) Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
 - **Sing Lee Creek** - (3.0 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
 - **West Fork Newsome Creek** - (6.0 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Newsome Creek,
- 5) **Tenmile Creek** (7 miles)–Wilderness boundary to confluence with South Fork Clearwater **and the following tributary:**
- **Sixmile Creek** - (4.7 miles): Headwaters to confluence with Tenmile Creek,
- 6) **Twentymile Creek**- (8 miles): Wilderness boundary to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 7) **Wing Creek** - (5.1 miles): Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 8) **Silver Creek** - (15.9 miles): Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 9) **Johns Creek** – (12 miles): Wilderness boundary to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 10) **Meadow Creek** - (15.2 miles): Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 11) **Mill Creek** - (15.9 miles): Headwaters to confluence with South Fork Clearwater,
- 12) **South Fork Clearwater** (63.8 miles) Headwaters to confluence with Middle Fork Clearwater

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The following activities are prohibited on all streams designated as recreational rivers in the South Fork Clearwater River basin. Specific stream segments and water bodies that have exceptions to the general prohibitions are listed below.

Prohibited activities:

- Construction or expansion of dams or impoundments;
- Construction of hydropower projects;
- Construction of diversion works;
- Dredge or placer mining (including recreational dredging, except where allowed through application for permit, Form 3804-B);
- Mineral or sand and gravel extraction within the stream channel;
- Alterations of the stream channel, except as provided below.

Activities allowed with terms and conditions: The following activities are allowed if they do not impede fish passage, spawning, rearing and boat passage:

- Alterations of the stream channel for construction and maintenance of:
 - roads, bridges, and trails;
 - public recreation facilities;
 - fish and wildlife enhancement structures;
 - and channel reconstruction projects approved by the IWRB.

Recreational Designated Streams with Exceptions to Prohibited Activities: The following rivers or streams are adjacent to privately owned land which may require construction of diversion works for domestic, municipal or agricultural uses.

1. South Fork Clearwater River, from the Nez Perce National Forest boundary to confluence with Middle Fork Clearwater;
2. Red River and Moose Butte Creek
3. American River, mainstem only
4. Relief Creek
5. Crooked River, mainstem only
6. Newsome Creek mainstem and Pilot Creek
7. Meadow Creek
8. Mill Creek

Exceptions to Prohibited activities: Construction of water diversion works for domestic, municipal, and agricultural uses is allowed on the specified water bodies (1 – 8) if they do not impede fish passage, spawning, rearing or boat passage:

All activities must comply with all state stream channel alterations rules and standards. All works must be constructed or maintained to minimize erosion and sedimentation.

