



BOISE VALLEY FLY FISHERS

Date: March 8th, 2024

From: Boise Valley Fly Fishers

To: Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Tim Murphy,

SW Regional Fishery Manager Art Butts and SW Regional Fisheries Biologist Tim D'Amico

Subject: Proposed Changes to Fisheries Management Plan and Regulations For the Boise River

Proposal:

After careful consideration and feedback from the local angling public and the Barber Pool Action Committee, Boise Valley Fly Fishers proposes that Idaho Fish and Game manage the approximately 2.3-mile section of river upstream of Barber Dam to the New York Canal Diversion Dam for wild trout, including changing regulations to close this section during rainbow trout spawning season and/or reducing the bag limit from 6 trout a day to 2 trout a day. Managing this section of river for wild trout should preclude stocking it with triploid trout that cannot reproduce but still allow IDF&G to work on establishing a wild population of other species such as brown trout by using diploid brood stock or egg boxes.

Rationale:

1. This section is already primarily wild trout

Reviewing IDF&G historical stocking records, this section of the river is not stocked regularly with trout like the rest of the Lower Boise River. Over the last 34 years this section has only been stocked with rainbow trout 4 times and yet there is a healthy population of wild rainbow trout and whitefish. Club members who fish in this section regularly report good fish catch rates and a wide variety of sizes including some rainbow trout and whitefish that are 20 inches. During the spring we have seen rainbow trout spawning and last summer the club conducted a snorkel fry survey in the restored side channel at the Diane Moore Nature Center and counted approximately 2,500 trout fry, which is an excellent indicator that wild trout are reproducing in the area. We have included a few photos of fish caught in this reach to help show what we are seeing.

2. This section has good spawning and rearing habitat

This section of river has excellent water quality because of its proximity to Lucky Peak and being upstream of the influences of Treasure Valley cities and agriculture. Most of this section is inside the Barber Pool Conservation Area which is a wildlife preserve that has limited public access and is managed to improve fish and wildlife habitat. The recent side channel restoration at the Diane Moore Nature Center has improved trout spawning and rearing habitat which should improve the wild trout population even more.

3. Increased fishing pressure


The fishing pressure on the entire Lower Boise River has increased significantly in the last few years. In other sections of the river, this increased pressure is spread out and IDF&G annually stocks approximately 30,000 trout a year for angler harvest. However, in this upper section most of the fishing access is located close to the Highway 21 bridge which is amplifying the fishing pressure in this area. The area around the Highway 21 bridge also has good spawning gravels which attracts rainbow trout during the spring spawning season, and over the last several years club members have reported fishermen keeping larger fish in the spring when rainbows move up to spawn. We would like to protect the wild rainbow trout broodstock, especially during the spawning season.

Proposal Background and Support:

We have put significant thought and effort into crafting this proposal. It started as a proposal to manage this section of river for both trophy-sized trout and wild trout. However, after talking with Art Butts and Tim D'Amico we understand that they do not think that changing size and bag limits would increase the average size to meet those goals. In addition, we understand that IDF&G does not have good data on the adult trout population in this stretch which makes monitoring the trout population against the trophy-trout goals very difficult. Because of this we have decided to limit our proposal to focus on wild trout with no size limits.

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We have gathered feedback from the local angling public through an online Angler Survey that was posted on fly and gear fishing social media sites, at fly and gear fishing stores and at the Diane Moore Nature Center. The angler response has been overwhelmingly in support of our proposal with 94 percent in favor. We asked respondents how they fish and 222 reported fly fishing, 51 reported fishing with lures and 32 reported fishing with bait. Those who were opposed to the proposal primarily want to keep the regulations the way they are with some being concerned about the potential increase in fishing pressure. We share the concern about the increase in fishing pressure, but that has already started, and we expect it will continue regardless of this proposal. We also have the support of the Barber Pool Action Committee that manages the land that surrounds most of this section of river and they agree that managing this section for wild trout fits in well with their goals and this area being a wildlife preserve. We have attached an export of the Angler Survey data from Survey Monkey for your reference.

Summary:

The Boise River is one of the finest urban trout streams in America, and this section is especially precious. Having a wildlife preserve on the outskirts of town is part of what makes the Boise River special, but being so close to town also means it needs protection from the growing population. IDF&G has been informally or unintentionally managing this section for wild trout for many years. During that time, wild rainbow trout have become well established, and we think it is time to formalize managing it for wild trout.

BVFF has been actively involved in helping protect and improve the lower Boise River. Over the last 10 years we have added 2 angler accesses, done 2 spawning gravel augmentations, developed a program to help protect brown trout redds from flood control equipment and installed three trout habitat educational signs. We do yearly spring and fall river cleanups and partnered with IDF&G the first anti-litter signs on the Boise River which are installed on this section of river. We are actively involved in improving side channel habitat including partnering with IDF&G to restore winter flows to side channels behind Expo Idaho and volunteering for side channel habitat improvements at the Diane Moore Nature Center.

In closing we want to thank IDF&G for their ongoing partnership, and we appreciate their efforts to balance what is good for the river and what is good for the angling public. Thank you for your consideration and your ongoing efforts to gather and review public input on fishing regulations.

Boise Valley Fly Fishers Board of Directors and Officers

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