



ISU Research and Outreach Improve Stewardship of the Portneuf River Basin



Dr. Colden Baxter, assistant professor of ecology at Idaho State University (ISU), along with many other concerned citizen groups and community members in the Portneuf River Basin area, are working together in a coordinated effort to improve the stewardship of local water resources.

Portneuf Watershed Partnership

A consortium called the “Portneuf Watershed Partnership” was formed to address these issues. This group has both a monitoring and outreach-education component, and is a cooperative effort of private industry, educational institutions, scientists, and government agencies at numerous levels (City, County, State, Tribal, and Federal).

The partnership serves to coordinate research and monitoring of water resources and translate that science to management agencies on a regular basis.



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The long list of cooperators includes:

- ISU
- City of Pocatello
- State of Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Forest Service
- Three Rivers RC&D Council, Inc.
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- J.R. Simplot Company

Citizen groups that are regularly involved include :

- Portneuf Greenway Foundation
- Valley Pride
- Sagebrush Steppe Regional Land Trust





Many outreach activities have already been completed, with many more on the horizon. Every year hundreds of students are reached at **field days** and **classroom presentations**. Hundreds of citizens are also engaged through annual events in which ISU is strongly involved such as the **Portneuf Riverfest**, the **Portneuf Valley Environmental Fair** and the **Portneuf River Clean-up**. Smaller groups are reached, and trained for participation in citizen science efforts by Idaho Fish and Game's "**Master Naturalist**" program.



Portneuf Basin Pulse

www.portneufriver.org

- This web site provides a gateway to access data and information about the Portneuf River Basin, its monitoring program, and related activities.
- An integral part of the monitoring program is a system of sensors with data logging/telemetry equipment that provides a continuous picture of the health or "**pulse**" of the Portneuf River Basin.
- These data include critical conditions for aquatic organisms --such as river flow, temperature, dissolved oxygen—that are provided here in near real-time.

Community Outreach/Citizen Involvement

With support from Idaho ESPCoR, Dr. Colden Baxter and his team from ISU are completing a new web page to facilitate community outreach and citizen involvement in watershed science. This will complement, but also make better use of, the existing site which is geared toward making the water monitoring data for the basin publically available.



Other coordinated efforts include:

- 1) a new community plan for restoration and management of City Creek
- 2) an urban fringe watershed principally managed for recreation
- 3) establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding for collaboration with the Shoshone Bannock tribes and involvement of tribal students in water resource science to address issues of concern to the Native community.

****Idaho EPSCoR also provides funding to support Native interns at ISU who participate in this endeavor.**

There have been many positive outcomes as a result of outreach efforts...

- increased citizen involvement in stewardship activities and public buy-in for new policies and programs
- numerous fencing projects to reduce agricultural impacts
- new storm water runoff regulations in Pocatello
- improvements in planning and zoning that will decrease impacts of septic systems on water quality
- They have also found City and County government, as well as major local industries, more willing participants in planning.



According to Dr. Baxter...

“These positive outcomes are the result of more than our outreach alone—they are the product of a grassroots and multi-faceted effort that permeates our community. Scientist-driven outreach has been effective here because it is part of a much larger, well coordinated effort.”