

# Improving Utah's Water Quality

## Upper Bear River Watershed



**Utah State University**  
WATER QUALITY EXTENSION

Revised November 2012

### MAJOR WATERBODIES

Bear River  
Woodruff Narrows Reservoir  
Woodruff Reservoir  
Birch Creek Reservoir  
Big Creek  
Otter Creek

### MAJOR CITIES

Randolph  
Woodruff  
Evanston, WY

### MAJOR LAND USES

Agriculture  
Urban

### LOCAL WATER QUALITY ISSUES

Dissolved Oxygen  
Sedimentation  
Habitat

### LOCAL CONTACT

Rich County  
Conservation District  
Brady Thornock  
Watershed Coordinator  
P.O. Box 304  
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### Watershed Description:

The Upper Watershed of the Bear River Basin extends from the river's headwaters to Pixley Dam in Wyoming. This is the largest watershed in the Bear River Basin, with

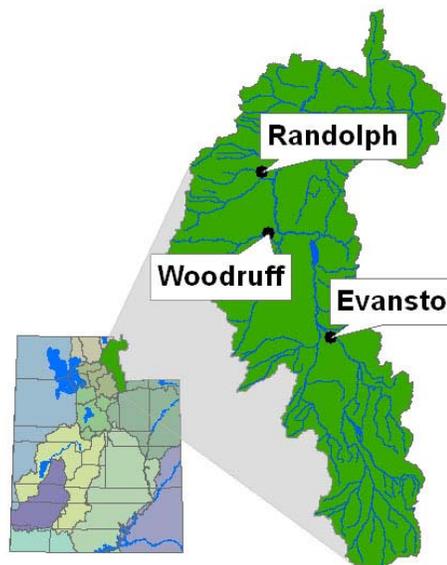


an area of about 2,000 square miles. The river travels almost 150 miles through this watershed. It begins in the High Uintas Wilderness Area in Utah, and travels north through narrow valleys in Utah to Woodruff Narrows Reservoir in Wyoming. Below the reservoir, the river continues through an open valley, crossing

the Utah-Wyoming border two more times before it reaches the Pixley Dam in Wyoming, a diversion structure located on the Bear River midway between Cokeville and Sage Creek Junction in Wyoming. The highest point in the watershed is at Yard Peak in the Uinta Mountains at about 12,800 feet and the lowest point is at Pixley Dam, at an elevation of 6,200 feet.

Two-thirds of land cover within the watershed is shrubland with smaller areas of grassland and evergreen forests. About half of the land is privately owned, and half is

publicly owned and managed by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the states of Utah and Wyoming. Three-quarters of the land is used for grazing with small areas of irrigated hay and small grain production in the valleys. The watershed also includes sites of oil and gas production and areas of historic phosphate and coal mining.



# Upper Bear River Water Quality Improvement

## Project Description:

Water quality improvements in the Upper Bear River watershed have been taking place for more than ten years. Through cooperation with land owners and funding from several national, state, and local agencies, many stream restoration projects have improved water quality throughout the watershed. These projects include removing livestock from the river corridors by building fences along the riparian zone, installing structures that help stabilize the stream banks, and replanting riparian vegetation. These practices help decrease the amount of sediment entering the streams, provide valuable habitat for fish and wildlife, and improve water quality in general. Specifically, these stream restoration projects have provided habitat for critical species in the watershed including sage grouse and Bonneville cutthroat trout, both candidate species for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act.



## Partners

Local landowners  
Local irrigation companies  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Bear Lake Regional Commission  
Rich County Conservation District  
Uinta County Conservation District  
Utah Division of Water Quality  
Utah State University Extension  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Utah Association of Conservation Districts  
Trout Unlimited  
Environmental Protection Agency

## Related Projects

Irrigation systems  
Range and pasture planting  
Soil testing and training  
The Bear River Greenway  
BEARiverFest  
Animal feeding operation improvements  
Grazing allotments  
Wildlife habitat improvement

**For funding opportunities in the Upper Bear River Watershed, contact the Rich County Conservation District.**

*To learn how you can participate or lend your support to Utah community water quality projects, please contact your local conservation district or county agent.*

Produced by USU Water Quality Extension, Utah Watershed Coordinating Council, Utah Association of Conservation Districts, and Utah Division of Water Quality.

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