

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
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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

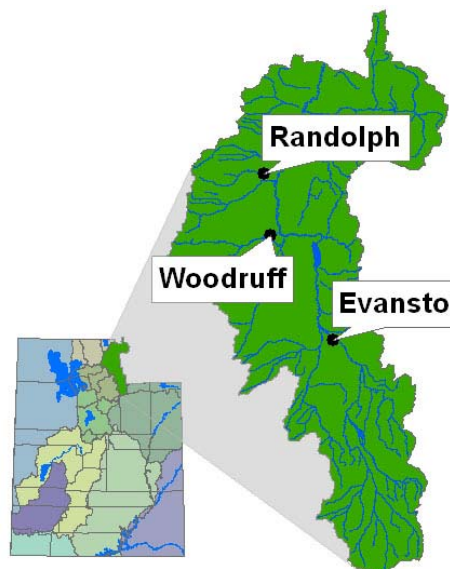


an area of about 2,000 square miles. The river travels almost 150 miles through this watershed. It begins in the High Uintas Wilderness Area in Utah, and travels north through narrow valleys in Utah to Woodruff Narrows Reservoir in Wyoming. Below the reservoir, the river continues through an open valley,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



Before



After



Fencing project

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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