

# Ross Point Recreation Site Bank Stabilization

## Environmental Assessment

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### U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Coeur d'Alene Field Office

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Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

208-769-5000

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# Ross Point Stream Bank Stabilization Project

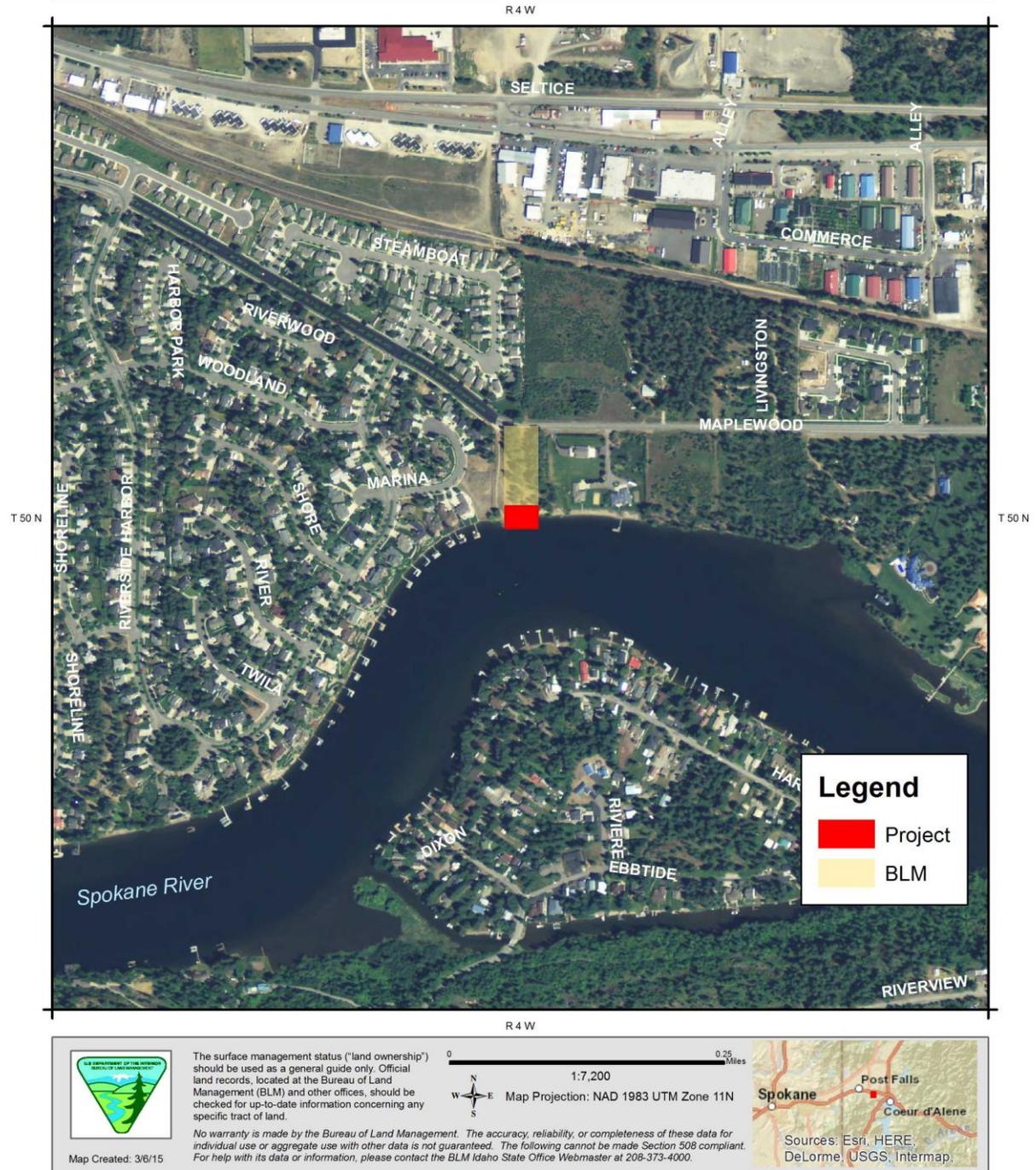


Figure 1: Map of Ross Point Stream Bank Stabilization Project

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Background: The federal land at Ross Point in Post Falls, ID, was formerly an irrigation pumping station run by the Bureau of Reclamation, which later became an undeveloped recreation site (primarily for swimming). In 1994, the BLM removed the concrete pump house building and much of the associated piping and electrical lines. In February of 2000, the BLM hauled off additional debris (primarily broken concrete and rebar) and placed three truckloads of boulders along the shoreline to help reduce bank erosion from boat wake and flood flows impacting the site. Since then, however, portions of the shoreline have continued to erode.

1.2 Proposed Action Summary: The BLM proposes to place boulders, logs and riparian plants to reduce bank erosion along approximately 150 feet of shoreline. The area of disturbance would be less than ¼ acre.

1.3 Location: The project area is located along the Spokane River in Post Falls, ID, at 50N., R4W, Section 8 , Boise Meridian (see Figure 1).

## **2.0 Purpose and Need**

### 2.1 Need:

There is a need for additional bank stabilization to protect water quality by reducing sediment input from the site. Boat traffic and wakes have increased substantially along this part of the Spokane River since the previous stabilization work by BLM in 2000. Currently, parts of the Ross Point BLM site are chronic sources of sediment entering directly into the Spokane River, particularly from the toe of an eroding steep, sandy slope. Consequently, upland trees are being undermined and lost as the slope retreats from wave action and river flows.

The site has a steep sandy bank, approximately 25 foot -high, that is actively eroding directly into the Spokane River. Other eroding areas of the site range from gently sloping to near vertical along the water's edge. The undeveloped site is used by the public for recreation, which can be very concentrated, primarily during the summer months.

Though initially effective in reducing scour and bank erosion, some of the previously placed boulders have settled since 2000, allowing waves to constantly overtop them. In contrast, other boulders that were placed with supporting logs or rocks (footers) underneath them have remained at the design elevation, effectively limiting erosion. Action is required at this site to comply with the 2007 Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP). Goal WA-1 of the RMP states: "Maintain, improve or restore water quality to sustain designated beneficial uses on public lands." Objective WA-1.4 states: "Protect all designated beneficial uses by preventing or limiting nonpoint source pollution; maintain or improve water quality through implementation of BMPs."

## 2.2 Purpose:

The purposes of the proposed action are to reduce excessive soil erosion and loading into the Spokane River from the recreation site to comply with the above mentioned goal and objective from the Coeur d'Alene RMP.

### **3.0 BLM Decision to be made**

The field office manager for the Coeur d'Alene field office will decide whether to implement the proposed action.

### **4.0 Land Use Plan Conformance**

The proposed action as described in Section 6 of this EA is in conformance with the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan, approved June, 2007 (BLM, 2007). The following objectives and actions support the proposed action.

**Goal FW-1** – Manage Aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitats to provide for a natural abundance and diversity of fish and wildlife with self-sustaining populations in northern Idaho.

**Objective FW-1.1** - Promote recovery of aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitats, including maintaining/improving watersheds.

**Action FW-1.1.1**- Establish Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) consistent with Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) and Standards & Guidelines (S&Gs) in the Coeur d'Alene Native Fish Strategy (CNFISH).

**TM-1** – Vegetation management practices may be used in RCAs only to restore or enhance physical and biological characteristics of the RCA including RMOs.

**Goal FW-2**- Provide terrestrial habitats for a natural abundance and diversity of native and desirable nonnative wildlife species with self-sustaining populations in northern Idaho.

**Objective FW-2.2**- Maintain adequate habitat for snag- and cavity-dependent animals, with emphasis on migratory birds, waterfowl, and bats.

**Goal SS-2** – Ensure that BLM-authorized actions are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species and do not contribute to the need to list any special status species under provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

**Objective SS-2.5** – Ensure that rare plant populations/associated habitats and rare plant communities are stable or continue to improve in vigor and distribution.

**Action SS-2.5.3** – Appropriate mitigation/guidelines (e.g., avoidance of occupied areas, distances from occupied habitat) will be designed when a project occurs near special status plant population(s).

**Action SS-2.5.6** – Prioritize weed control at special status plant populations threatened by weed infestation. Methods of weed spraying

within or near habitat will be formulated on site-specific and species-specific basis.

**Action SS-2.5.7** Seeding within occupied habitat will be avoided unless clearly beneficial for special status plants.

**Goal SE-3** - Provide opportunities for economic benefits while protecting cultural and natural resources.

**Objective SE-3.1-** Balance resource protection with opportunities for commercial activities and other noncommercial human uses (65).

## 5.0 Scoping and Issues

### 5.1 Public Involvement:

Local residents who live within the project area and interested parties received written notification about the proposed action. A public comment period extended from 11/21/2014 to 1/09/2015. During the comment period the BLM received no comments.

### 5.2 Issues:

The table below describes the issues identified through internal scoping which will be analyzed in detail in this EA:

*Table 5.2: Issues Analyzed*

<b>ELEMENT/RESOURCE/USE</b>	<b>Issue Statement(s)</b>
Native Plants, and Invasive Nonnative Species	Disturbance to soil could provide opportunities for invasive plants and noxious weeds to spread.
Recreation/Visuals	Recreational use of the site could be restricted during stabilization actions. Construction could have an aesthetic effect on the site.
Soil & Water Resources	Water quality could be affected by short-term increase in erosion during installation and long-term reduction after stabilization is completed.
Aquatic Resources/ Special status species	Habitat for fish and other aquatic species, to include special status species, could be affected by the stabilization actions.

### 5.3 Issues Eliminated from Further Analysis:

Cultural resources. The BLM initially considered potential impacts to cultural resources for analysis. However, an inventory found none present. Therefore, this issue will not be analyzed in detail.

Special Status Plants. The BLM initially considered potential impacts to special status plant species for analysis. However, no special status plant individuals, populations, or potential habitat occur in the action area. Therefore, this issue will not be analyzed in detail.

Wildlife. The BLM considered potential impacts to wildlife. However, the work would last for only two to three days, would be very limited in area and confined to the shoreline. As a result the proposed action would not affect wildlife and analysis of this issue would not assist in making a reasoned choice between alternatives. Therefore, this issue will not be analyzed in detail.

## **6.0 Alternatives**

### 6.1 Alternative A (Proposed Action):

#### *6.1.1. General Description:*

*The BLM would install additional boulders with vegetation and supporting rocks and logs at the most actively eroding areas (see Figures 2 and 3). A tracked excavator working from dry land would be used to place materials.*

#### *6.1.2. Environmental Design/Resource Protection:*

- All work will be supervised by a qualified BLM hydrologist.
- A temporary silt fence will be used to reduce sediment during construction.
- All work would be conducted at low flow and with weather permitting. Work would last two to three days and would be suspended if the river elevation rose or for unfavorable rain or snow conditions.
- Work on the project area would be accomplished with care to ensure that no oil, diesel, gas or other harmful materials foul the soil or enter any stream.
- Total area of disturbance would be less than ¼ acre



Figure 2: Proposed Bank Stabilization Areas

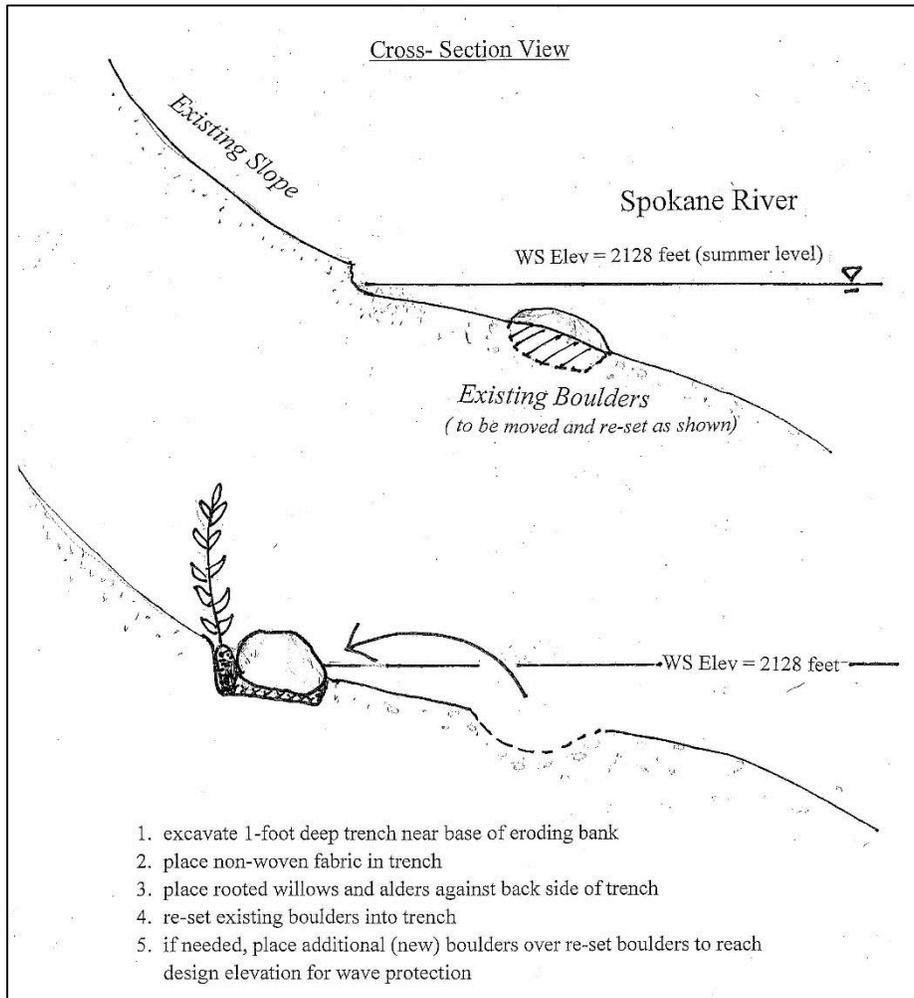


Figure 3: Boulder and Vegetation Installation

## 6.2 Alternative B (No Action):

No bank stabilization and erosion prevention work would occur.

## **7.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

### 7.1 Scope of Analysis

#### *7.1.1 General Setting*

The site is located on a relatively small rectangular 2.5 acre block of BLM-administered land along the Spokane River. The area immediately surrounding the site is residential.

#### *7.1.2 Related Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions*

An old, decommissioned, Bureau of Reclamation pump house was demolished and removed from the site in 1994. There is still some residual broken concrete visible in the shallow water and parts of the bank. Following the pump house removal, there was substantial bank erosion during the major flood events of 1995-1996. In 2000, the BLM removed concrete debris and placed boulders at the site to address the most active erosion. Since then, some of the boulders have settled to a lower elevation and are regularly overtopped by boat wake.

The site is subject to annual water level fluctuation caused by the dam. Recreational boater use and associated wake is substantial and is expected to increase along with the general population growth of the area. Similarly, recreational use of the site will likely increase as well. There is a transmission line running through the site, though it will not be affected by the proposed work.

### 7.2 Aquatic Resources/ Special Status Species:

#### *7.2.1 Affected Environment:*

The proposed project site is located adjacent to the Spokane River in the Riparian Conservation Area (RCA), 4.5 miles downstream of Coeur d'Alene Lake. Coeur d'Alene Lake has two major tributaries, the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe Rivers, numerous smaller tributaries, and one outflow, the Spokane River.

The Coeur d'Alene Native Fish Strategy (CNFISH), contained within the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan, provides direction for protecting native fish populations within the planning area. The CNFISH defines RCAs as lands that are likely to affect the condition and/or function of aquatic habitat, and are usually adjacent to streams, ponds, lakes and wetlands. In RCAs, riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis, and management activities are subject to specific guidelines in order to meet the CNFISH strategy goals and riparian management objectives. Standards and guidelines from CNFISH include:

RCA1: Activities in RCAs will be designed to enhance, restore or maintain the physical and biological characteristics of the RCA by implementing the following:

- a. Activities in RCAs that are intact and functioning in a desired condition as indicated by RMOs or other measures must be designed to at least maintain that desired condition.
- b. Activities in RCAs that are not at or moving towards desired condition as indicated by RMOs or other measures must include a restoration component as part of the project if determined to be necessary/beneficial by a fisheries biologist, hydrologist or other aquatic specialist.
- c. Activities in RCAs must not result in long-term degradation to aquatic conditions. Limited short-term adverse/negative effects from activities in the RCA may be acceptable when outweighed by the long-term benefits to the RCA and aquatic resources.

Thirteen native fishes inhabit the Coeur d'Alene Lake basin: northern pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis*), redbside shiner (*Richardsonius balteatus*), cedar sculpin, *Cottus schitsuumsh*, torrent sculpin (*C. rhotheus*), shorthead sculpin (*C. confusus*)<sup>1</sup>, speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*), longnose dace (*R. cataractae*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*), largescale sucker (*Ca. macrocheilus*), bridgelip sucker (*Ca. columbianus*), mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). There are a variety of nonnative fish species found within the watershed as well, including smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), largemouth bass (*M. salmoides*), crappie (*Pomoxis* sp.), sunfish (*Lepomis* sp.), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosa*), channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), brook trout (*S. fontinalis*), rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*), chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), and kokanee (*O. nerka*). Many of these species have the potential to be present in the Spokane River adjacent to the proposed project site, some transitory as they migrate up or down the river, and some likely use the river as rearing habitat.

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** Bull trout were federally listed as threatened on June 10, 1998 by the USFWS (63 FR 31647). The USFWS issued a final rule for bull trout critical habitat on September 26, 2005, and on October 18, 2010 issued a revised designation of bull trout critical habitat, which includes Coeur d'Alene Lake, but not the Spokane River. Subadult and adult bull trout occupy Coeur d'Alene Lake, which provides foraging, migration and overwintering habitat (USFWS 2010). Bull trout may use the Spokane River in conjunction with the rest of Coeur d'Alene Lake for foraging and over wintering habitat. Bull trout spawn in the fall. No potential bull trout spawning habitat exists adjacent to or downstream of the proposed project site.

**BLM Sensitive Species:** Two BLM sensitive fish inhabit the Coeur d'Alene Lake basin, westslope cutthroat trout and the newly described cedar sculpin (Lemoine, et al. 2014).

Westslope cutthroat trout are found in Coeur d'Alene Lake and many of its tributaries. Westslope cutthroat trout are found in the Spokane River as well, though there is little

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<sup>1</sup> The shorthead sculpin has been historically confused with the newly described cedar sculpin; though the shorthead sculpin is currently listed as an inhabitant of the Coeur d'Alene watershed it may not be present.

population information available (<http://www.streamnet.org/>). They spawn mainly in small tributaries from March through July, when water temperatures warm to about 50°F. No potential westslope cutthroat trout spawning habitat exists adjacent to or downstream of the proposed project site.

Cedar sculpin were recently described in 2014 as a new species using genetic and morphological methods. They have been found at sample sites throughout the Coeur d'Alene basin. Because of morphological similarities among sculpin species, cedar sculpin have been historically confused with the shorthead sculpin. The species is common to abundant in cool to cold tributaries with cobble and gravel bottoms (Lemoine, et al. 2014) and are likely to be spring spawners like other sculpin species (Hendricks 1997). It is not known if they inhabit Coeur d'Alene Lake or the Spokane River. The torrent sculpin, a sympatric species, is known to inhabit rocky shoals and beaches of lakes (Hendricks 1997).

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game manages this section of the Spokane River (Coeur d'Alene Lake to Post Falls Dam) for a quality westslope cutthroat fishery. They also manage for a nonnative sport fishery for largemouth bass, northern pike, black crappie, yellow perch, pumpkinseed and bullhead (IDFG 2014).

#### *7.2.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action):*

The proposed action would have a beneficial impact on the RCA, and on fisheries and aquatic resources by stabilizing less than ¼ acre of shoreline and reducing a source of sediment input to Spokane River. In the short term, there is a chance of sediment getting into the Spokane River during project implementation or after the water level is raised to summer pool. Currently the banks are eroding, leading to sediment input to the Spokane River. Since the project is meant to reduce erosion it is highly unlikely that the sediment input will increase. The work would be conducted at low water elevation and sediment control measures would be employed during project implementation as necessary. In the long term, the amount of erosion and sediment entering the river is expected to decrease.

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** The proposed project would have “No Effect” on bull trout or their designated critical habitat. Bull trout may use the Spokane River adjacent to the project area for adult rearing and migration. There is no bull trout spawning habitat or designated critical habitat adjacent to or downstream of the project site. Little to no increase in sediment input to the river is expected, therefore any negative impacts would be negligible and the long term effect would be beneficial.

**BLM Sensitive Species:** Westslope cutthroat trout likely use the Spokane River adjacent to the project area for adult rearing and migration; there is no spawning habitat adjacent to or downstream of the project site. Little to no increase in sediment input to the river is expected, therefore any negative impacts would be negligible and the long term reduction in sediment would be beneficial. Cedar sculpin may be found in the area; effects would be similar to those described for cutthroat trout.

### *7.2.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B (No Action):*

Under the no action alternative, the site would remain as is. There would be continuing erosion into the Spokane River. The sediment input would have the potential to negatively impact a variety of aquatic species, including westslope cutthroat trout, cedar sculpin and bull trout that might use the area.

### *7.2.4 Cumulative Effects:*

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Spokane River adjacent to the proposed project area downstream to Post Falls Dam. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout stocks in the Coeur d'Alene Basin exist at a fraction of historic levels due to habitat degradation from activities such as mining, logging, development, recreation, highway construction and the construction and continued operation of Post Falls Dam. Fishing pressure and introduction of non-native fish species has also contributed to reducing native trout numbers (DuPont and Horner 2003). These activities have also impacted other native fish species, including the cedar sculpin, to some extent. Development and recreational activities, especially boating, are prevalent in and adjacent to the Spokane River. All these activities are expected to continue in the future. Mining, which probably has had the greatest past impact on westslope cutthroat trout and other native fish species, will likely have less of an impact in the future due to stronger regulations and increased restoration occurring in the basin. Fishing pressure on westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout has been reduced due to catch and release regulations set by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, so effects from fishing also should decrease in the future. In the analysis area recreation and development will likely increase in the future, which will likely increase erosion and sediment movement into the river. The operation of Post Falls Dam, especially the yearly raising and lowering of the water elevation in the Spokane River, will continue to impact the riverbanks and increase erosion.

Very little if any increase in sediment input to the Spokane River is anticipated during implementation of the proposed project due to less than ¼ acre of disturbance and preventative measures. Since the project would reduce soil erosion and subsequent loading into the Spokane River, long term beneficial effects to aquatic species are anticipated which would be a reduction in cumulative effects.

## 7.3 Soil and Water Resources:

### *7.3.1 Affected Environment:*

The site is located on the outside of a meander bend of the Spokane River, approximately 4.5 miles downstream of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The parcel is the former site of a Bureau of Recreation pumping station, which was removed years ago. River frontage is about 300 linear feet, and the project encompasses about 150 feet.

Originating as rainfall and snowmelt on the western flank of the Rocky Mountains, the headwaters of the Spokane River flow into Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho. Contributing drainage area to the river adjacent to the site is approximately 3800 square miles. The outlet to Lake Coeur d'Alene is partially controlled by a dam in Post Falls operated by Avista Utilities and water is stored in the lake on a seasonal basis. On average, water levels fluctuate approximately 7 feet between summer pool (elevation 2128) and winter pool (elevation 2121) in Lake Coeur d'Alene and the portion of the Spokane River upstream from the dam.

Soils on the site are dominantly classified as gravelly coarse sand and sandy loam located on outwash terraces (USDA-NRCS, 2014). Soils on steep, poorly vegetated banks are easily eroded by high flows and by wave action from boat wakes.

### *7.3.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action):*

Implementation of Alternative A would reduce an existing chronic sediment source from actively eroding stream banks at the site. Estimated total area of disturbance is less than ¼ acre. Excavation associated with placement of boulders and riparian plants would result in a short-term and minor increase in soil sediment. Sediment loading into the river would be minimized by use of best management practices (BMPs), including: supervision by a hydrologist; working at low water; use of a temporary silt fence; and requiring the excavator to work from dry land. The estimated construction time is two to three days. Beginning in the first post-construction boating season (generally following Memorial Day) an overall decrease in sediment loading would result from the stabilization of the banks. As riparian vegetation becomes established over several years this reduction in sediment loading would increase.

The proposed action would have a beneficial impact on water by stabilizing the shoreline and reducing a source of sediment input to Spokane River. In the short term, there is a chance of sediment getting into the Spokane River during project implementation or after the water level is raised to summer pool.

### *7.3.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B (No Action):*

Under the no action alternative, the site would remain as is. There would be continuing sediment delivery into the Spokane River as the banks continue to retreat from high flows and increasing boat wake impacts.

### *7.3.4 Cumulative Effects:*

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Spokane River adjacent to the proposed project area. Home development and recreational activities, especially boating, are prevalent in and adjacent to the Spokane River. All these activities are expected to continue in the future. In the analysis area recreation and development will likely increase in the future, which will likely increase erosion and sediment movement into the river. Very little if any increase in sediment input to the Spokane River is anticipated

during implementation of the proposed project due to less than ¼ acre of disturbance and preventative measures. Since the project would reduce soil erosion and subsequent loading into the Spokane River, long term beneficial effects to quality are anticipated which would be a reduction in cumulative effects.

#### 7.4 Native Plants, and Invasive/Nonnative Species:

##### *7.4.1 Affected Environment:*

The plants that grow along the vegetated portions of the shoreline are mostly non-native (e.g., reed canarygrass). Where vegetation has been scoured away on portions of the shoreline, it has been unable to re-establish, except where previous bank stabilization has been successful. In addition, lack of vegetative cover at the toe of the slope has contributed to loss of soil and native vegetation, including mature ponderosa pine trees, on slopes above the river's edge. The instability of the soil and native plant communities at the site also creates conditions which favor weed invasion and spread.

Reed Canary grass and spotted knapweed, both invasive species, are present in the project area. Another invasive, Yellow flag iris, is a perennial noxious weed that is present in the surrounding area. It has colonized areas along the shoreline of the Spokane River spreading both by rhizome and water-dispersed seed.

##### *7.4.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action):*

While the less than ¼ acre of disturbance could provide opportunity for spread of invasive species, stabilization of the raw banks in the project area would also help native plant communities re-establish. Native riparian shrub species planted among the boulders would eventually develop deep root systems to protect the riverbank and help restore the site's proper functioning condition.

Bank stabilization and establishment of native or desirable plant communities would limit the invasion and spread of non-native plants and noxious weeds. Boulders and native shrubs on the water's edge would reduce available sites for yellow flag iris and reed canarygrass. Reduction of slope erosion would reduce available sites for spotted knapweed and other upland weeds.

**Mitigation:** To discourage invasion and spread of weedy plant species such as spotted knapweed, the project area should be monitored. If monitoring data indicate further action is needed, treatment will be conducted in accordance with the Field Office Weed Management Program as described in the 2008 Coeur d'Alene Field Office Programmatic EA for Vegetation Treatments.

The residual effect, with implementation of mitigation, would be a reduction in spread of

invasive and weedy plant species to native plant communities on less than ¼ acre of BLM land.

#### *7.4.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B (No Action):*

Soil and vegetation would continue to be lost due to bank instability and erosion. Planting of native riparian vegetation that could compete with reed canary grass and other invasive plants would not occur.

#### *7.4.4 Cumulative Effects:*

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Spokane River from Blackwell Island downstream to the Post Falls Dam. Vegetation along this stretch of the river has been impacted by dam construction, subsequent water impoundment, and altered water flows; waterfront development; recreation (e.g., boat wakes); mining; and logging. Reed canarygrass has successfully out-competed native riparian species and become established along portions of the river. Impacts due to dam operation; altered water flows; development; recreation; and non-native plant species are presently occurring and likely will continue to occur in the future.

The proposed action is unlikely to contribute to cumulative effects on vegetation within the analysis area due to the relatively small level of disturbance (less than ¼ acre) and its projected timing of implementation, when compared to the overall analysis area. The project would actually be beneficial to the analysis area because it directly treats a source of sediment and proposes to re-establish native riparian vegetation.

### 7.5 Recreation:

#### *7.5.1 Affected Environment:*

The majority of the public that would potentially use the 2.5 acre Ross Point site during the stabilization period of late fall or winter are the local residents of Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene desiring a brief visit to the property for leisure walking and site seeing views of the river. Being local residents to the area, they would have adequate knowledge of additional options to access the Spokane River Corridor at other municipal parks and facilities within Post Falls City limits if displacement occurred. These other parks include Black Bay Park, Q'emiln Park, and Corbin Park to the west of the BLM site, with Johnson Mill River Park to the east. All of these municipal parks are generally more frequented by the local public already and even more accessible to them because of their popularity and existing facilities in comparison to BLM's Ross Point.

### *7.5.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A(Proposed Action):*

The proposed action will have no long term adverse effects to the recreating public. The project is planned to be implemented during the late fall or winter months when high volumes of day use is not occurring at the site. Also, the project implementation period is projected to last no more than two to three consecutive days, which will not displace any long term recreational uses of the site. During the two to three days, construction activities may displace day-users and site visitors to the entire 2.5 acre parcel. Because the proposed action's site closure and construction period will occur in the winter, considered the off-season for public use at the site, short term displacement will be very low and non-significant.

Currently, during the summer swimming months the public does not utilize the shore line to access the river adjacent to the proposed project area because the steep embankment and the erosion of the sediment poses a hazard of slipping and falling down the embankment.

The proposed action will enhance the existing shoreline by providing the public with a larger area and more sustainable river access for non-motorized water based activities. This may encourage for more public visits and use of the site. In return, BLM and its managing partners may have to provide more management at Ross Point, and change the current existing public desired recreational outcomes to fit future demands, needs, and management strategies.

### *7.5.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B (No Action):*

If no action is taken, the public health and safety hazard of slipping and falling down the embankment, will continue to exist at its current state, while limiting public access to the river. The no action alternative does not meet the desired recreational outcomes for positive experiences enjoyed by the public for non-motorized water based activities.

### *7.5.4 Cumulative Effects:*

If visitor displacement occurs during the implementation period, other municipal parks in the area should adequately absorb visitor needs such as Black Bay Park, Q'emiln Park, and Corbin Park to the west of Ross Point, and Johnson Mill River Park to the east. All of these municipal parks are generally more frequented by the local recreating public already and even more accessible to them because of their popularity and existing facilities in comparison to BLM's Ross Point. There are no other past, present, or future activities that would affect local recreational users during the period of the proposed action.

## 7.6 Visual Resources:

### *7.6.1 Affected Environment:*

The Coeur d'Alene RMP designates the 2.5 acre area where the project site is located as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II. This means that the objective for management of the visual resources is to retain the existing character of the landscape. Level of change to the landscape should be low. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the natural features of the landscape (form, line, color, and texture). Management activities in Class II areas may be seen, but should not attract attention of the observer.

Most people who would see the project area would do so from the immediate shoreline within the area or from watercraft on the Spokane River immediately adjacent to the site. From these locations approximately 500-600 feet of shoreline on either side (total of 1,200 feet) is visible to a depth of 100-150 feet. This visible area totals approximately 4 acres.

The site is located along the shoreline where the Spokane River meets a sandy and rocky shore mostly covered by shrubs, grasses, and ponderosa pine trees. As viewed from the shoreline or on the river, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of the BLM parcel along the shoreline is visible. There is about 240 feet of shoreline along the BLM parcel which presents an irregular horizontal line. Much of the immediate shoreline has exposed gray-tan sandy soil, especially where erosion is occurring, broken up by similar colored boulders and green reed canary grass. The backdrop of the shoreline transitions to rounded shrubs and willows then to vertical pines with dark trunks and dark green branches and crowns.

The remainder of the visible landscape consists of houses on either side of the site with docks protruding into the river. There is also a dark brown brick wall along the west side of the site. A transmission line, with wood vertical poles and horizontal lines, crosses the river on the east side of the site, then runs north across the site.

### *7.6.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A(Proposed Action):*

As viewed from the shoreline or on the river, the Installation of boulders and planting of vegetation (less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of disturbance) may temporarily present a slight visual contrast with the surrounding  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of visible natural landscape on the BLM parcel. This contrast would be primarily due to installment of sediment fencing, additional exposed soil, and potential variation in color of new boulders. This will fade with time (likely about one year) after the sediment fencing is removed, the newly planted vegetation grows, and the color of the boulders darkens. As a result, in the long term

the effects of the project will become unnoticeable against the visual landscape. This would be in compliance with the RMP VRM Class II objective.

#### *7.6.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B (No Action):*

There would be no immediate change to visual resources under the No Action Alternative. However, continued erosion of the shoreline and loss of shrubs and trees would create a visual contrast with the surrounding natural landscape on the federal land behind the project site.

#### *7.6.4 Cumulative Effects:*

As previously mentioned, there are houses on either side of the site which have changed the natural landscape. These adjacent developments already present a contrast with the naturally vegetated BLM parcel. The proposed action is the only anticipated action that will affect the natural visual landscape of this BLM site.

### **8.0 Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted**

The BLM consulted with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe through a letter sent on January 15, 2015 that described the proposed action and requested comments by February 17, 2015. The BLM received no comments. The BLM has also consulted with the Army Corps of Engineers and Idaho Department of Lands regarding applicable permits.

### **9.0 List of Preparers**

Mike Stevenson	Hydrologist/Project Lead
Cindy Weston	Fisheries Biologist
LeAnn Abell	Botanist
Doug Evans	Natural Resource Specialist, Weeds Specialist
Jake Bachtel	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Scott Pavey	Planning and Environmental Coordinator

### **10.0 References**

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