THE PACK RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL PRESENTS...

# THE RIVER RANGER

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## What's with the Lake Levels?

The Albeni Falls Dam, located in Oldtown, Idaho, controls the top 11 feet of Lake Pend Oreille. Albeni Falls Dam is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and power generated from the dam is marketed by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The top eleven feet of the lake is used as a reservoir and can be manipulated according to certain restrictions for power generation and flood control. There are numerous pressures on the waters of Pend Oreille and balancing all of the desired uses of the water is a complicated matter. Changes in the management of late summer and winter lake levels are currently underway.

*Albeni Falls Dam on the Pend Oreille River*

The summer lake level is generally held within six inches of 2062' above sea level. Albeni Falls cannot allow the level to go above 2056' before April 30 and most years the spring runoff controls the lake levels through May and June and then the dam can manage the summer level after the high flows slow. The summer lake level is typically reached by the fourth of July and it has generally been held there until Mid-September when it begins to lower to the winter level. There are a number of requests and proposals currently being evaluated that may impact late summer lake levels. Throughout the western United States river flows can get very low towards the end of summer impacting fish habitat, power production, and irrigation capabilities. The relatively abundant water of Pend Oreille is increasingly eyed as offering possible solutions to some of these issues.

Traditionally each fall the winter lake level is decided to be either 2056' or 2051' above sea level. As of 2011, the lake level can fluctuate between 2051' to 2056' from the end of December

*Continued on page 2...*

## AIS Boat Inspection Stations

Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District had two boat inspection stations this year to monitor for aquatic invasive species (AIS). One change this summer was the Idaho/Washington border station moved from Oldtown to the Albeni Falls Dam Visitor's Center – which worked out well. The other station was at the Samuels Service Station.

The Albeni station and the Samuels station combined for a total of 11,670 inspections this year. That was 1200 over last summer's total.

AIS sticker sales went well this year. A total of 4008 stickers were sold, with over $52,000 being sent to Idaho Parks and Recreation to help fund the program next year. No mussels were found at our stations.

The boat inspection stations have been an important first line of defense in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species and protecting our streams and lakes. Aquatic invasive species seriously impact waterbodies and are difficult to remove. Prevention is the best option.

FEATURING:

**Lake Pend Oreille ~ Lake Levels**

**AIS Boat Inspection Stations**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| Grouse Creek Bank Stabilization Project | 2 |
| Lake Levels continued... | 2 |
| Tree Seedlings | 2 |
| IDAH2O Snapshot Sampling | 3 |
| Pend Oreille Water Festival | 3 |
| Natural Resources Camp Scholarship | 3 |

**Contact us at:**
(208) 263-5310

## Grouse Creek ~ Another Successful Bank Stabilization Project

Grouse Creek is an important tributary in the Pack River Watershed. In 2009, a comprehensive Watershed Assessment of Grouse Creek identified a reach which produces significant amounts of sediment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helped to design another bank stabilization project within the impaired reach to reduce sediment and improve fish habitat. The project is a cooperative effort between the USFWS, NRCS, BSWCD, Avista, and a local landowner.

*Recountoured Banks on Grouse Creek*

The project site is along the cutbanks of two meandering bends along Grouse Creek on private land. This project installed vegetated soil lifts and engineered log jams to stabilize the banks long enough for riparian vegetation to reestablish. Within the vegetated soil lifts are alternating layers of fabric-wrapped soil and dormant willow cuttings. The engineered log jams add roughness to the channel which reduces erosion along the banks. The log jams also create pool habitat and provide cover for fish. Together these structures reduce sediment, improve fish habitat, and promote the establishment of woody riparian vegetation.

This is another successful project where the cooperative efforts of landowners and various agencies work together to protect and restore our water resources.

## *Lake Levels continued...*

through March to allow for increased downstream power generation. This fluctuation however, can only occur on low water years (2051'). The winter lake level depends primarily on endangered species concerns (bull trout locally and chum salmon downstream) and on power generation. Over the last 15 years the higher lake level was seen as advantageous for shoreline spawning kokanee which are the primary food source for bull trout in Pend Oreille. Earlier this month however, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) released results that the higher winter pool cannot be directly connected to more successful kokanee spawning. Without this limitation it is likely that Pend Oreille will be drawn down to 2051' each winter allowing for the five foot fluctuation. Numerous concerns exist concerning winter fluctuation of lake levels including: unsafe ice skating and ice-fishing, increased erosion, warm water fishery impacts, destruction of shoreline infrastructure, and the spread of the aquatic invasive species flowering rush.

If you are interested in learning more about lake level issues please visit the Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River, Pries Lake and Priest River Commission ("Lakes Commission") website at www.lakes-commission.com.

~Erin Mader, Program Coordinator
Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River, Priest Lake and Priest River Commission

## Tree Seedlings ~ Order Soon!

Every year the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors an annual tree seedling sale. The sale began in September and many species are already sold out for 2014. Species currently available are (2675) 5" Ponderosa Pine and (1095) 8" Western Douglas Fir.

The trees are usually ready to be picked up in April at the Delay Farm near Careywood. The specific dates and times will be announced this spring. If you are interested in purchasing seedlings, please call Linda O'Hare at 263-5310 x100.

# *IDAH$_2$O Snapshot Sampling*

Twice each year, all IDAH2O Master Water Stewards across the state of Idaho have the opportunity to sample their registered stream sites on the same day. This provides a state-wide "snapshot" of our water quality. Each site is tested for Nitrate, total Phosphorus, total Coliform, and E. coli bacteria.

This is the second year the Pack River Watershed Council has participated in both "snapshot" sampling events on the Pack River. The Pack River Watershed Management Plan and TMDL lists the Pack River as being impaired for beneficial use by excess sediment, temperature, and nutrients (nitrogen & phosphorous). Therefore, it is important that we monitor the nutrient levels to determine if restoration efforts are effective.

Nitrate and Total Phosphorous in the Pack River were below the detection limits in both sampling events. Also waters designated for primary or secondary contact recreation, such as the Pack River, are not to contain *E. coli* bacteria in concentrations exceeding a geometric mean of 126 *E. coli* organisms per 100 mL. The Pack River did not exceed these criteria.

| Date | Nitrate (mg/L) | Total Phosphorus (mg/L) | Total Coliform (MPN/100 mL) | E. coli (MPN/100 mL) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10/24/13 | 0.066 | < 0.018 | 108.1 | 8.6 |
| 5/29/13 | < 0.23 | < 0.05 | 82.0 | 37.9 |

***"There is too little recognition of how much we all depend upon farmers as stewards of our soil, water, and wildlife resources." ~John F. Kennedy***

# *Pend Oreille Water Festival*

The 18th Pend Oreille Water Festival was another success. The Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District was very pleased with the donations and volunteer efforts by all involved in the Pend Oreille Water Festival in May 2013. This is the first year the district has been the sole administrator for the Festival, and the support from the community was great, and the Festival evaluations from both teachers and students were very positive.

# Natural Resources Camp

Bonner SWCD will be giving a scholarship for a Bonner County student to attend the Natural Resources Camp in Ketchum, Idaho on June 23-28, 2014. The Camp is open to Idaho youth 12-14 years old. The District will pay for the $235 camp registration, and the student/parents will need to provide for the transportation to Ketchum.

The Camp has been a summer program since 1960. Areas explored at the camp include Wildlife, Rangeland, Forests, Water, and Soil, as well as outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, archery, survival, and fireside sing-alongs. Contact Bonner SWCD, 208-263-5310, if you are interested in applying for their scholarship. More information regarding the Camp is on the NRC website at http://extension.uidaho.edu/nrc.

# *Opportunities...*

**December 13th** **Pend Oreille Basin Commission meeting from 9 to 12.** The meeting is being held at the Bonner County Administration Building at the corner of HWY 2 and Division St. in Sandpoint.

**December** **Water Quality Monitoring,** contact Jessica Erickson @ 255-5545

# Pack River Watershed Council

**The Pack River Watershed Council**
**c/o Bonner SWCD**
1224 Washington Ave., Suite 101
Sandpoint, ID 83864
**208-263-5310**

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**Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District**
**& NRCS**
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***"The mission of the Pack River Watershed Council is to improve water quality and riparian habitat in the Pack River watershed for people, fish , and wildlife through education, collaboration, and cooperative projects."***

***Thanks to Avista Watershed Council Funding and the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission, we are able to print and distribute this newsletter.***