

Executive Summary By The Nature Conservancy, February 2011

The Silver Creek Enhancement Plan was developed by Ecosystem Sciences Foundation (ESF), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and local Silver Creek citizens and landowners to provide comprehensive view of conservation opportunities at Silver Creek. It prioritizes projects and strategies in a three tiered approach and focuses on those methods and partnerships that can achieve the most effective conservation. This plan was developed primarily for landowners interested in embarking on restoration projects and includes recommendations and a comprehensive database of funding sources. By undertaking this voluntary, comprehensive effort, we can ensure the long-term protection and improvement of Silver Creek.

This plan was commissioned by The Nature Conservancy with a donation from MillerCoors. The Conservancy worked closely with Ecosystem Sciences on the development of the plan at every stage. It is meant to be a guide, not a blueprint. The Conservancy will be using it as a guide for future projects in conjunction with interested local landowners. We will also continue to seek input from agencies, experts, and conduct additional research to achieve our management goals for the Silver Creek watershed.

The plan recognizes that Silver Creek is currently home to one of the highest quality trout fisheries in the West and that the entire system is very productive and healthy. It also recognizes that any action taken on the creek must be thoroughly planned, at the watershed level, to ensure no harm is done to the robust fishery or the existing habitat.

The plan recognizes there are several ecological conditions that could reach their 'tipping points' and change the quality of habitat throughout Silver Creek permanently. It identifies sediment inputs via overland flow, land use changes and habitat conversion, and increasing water temperatures as the top stressors to the creek. Therefore, the top priority in the plan is further protection and enhancement of the tributary streams to address these stressors through increased shading and sediment filtering and improved habitat.

The three-tiered approach to enhancement projects prioritizes projects based on cost and required management actions. The plan demonstrates that, in many instances, several different restoration actions can be undertaken depending on funding and resources available. For instance, a landowner could increase the width of their riparian buffers with little or no financial investment; that action would result in positive benefits to the water quality through providing a sediment filter and wildlife habitat. Alternately, the same landowner could invest significant resources and improve the riparian buffer (with plantings) and build some islands (using equipment)--achieving similar results but much more rapidly.

This spring, the Conservancy will begin to implement some key projects identified in the first tier actions including:

- * Improving buffer width and quality on Stalker, Loving, and Patton creeks.
- * Stabilizing sediments and increasing shading and habitat through Kilpatrick pond through building islands and improving banks.
- * Addressing some of the data gaps such as nutrient and water quality monitoring, field verification of mapping, and spring source protection options.

The Nature Conservancy will compile a two-page overview of the plan recommendations and specific next steps to serve as a concise digest of projects described in the plan.

For those who want to read the complete document, it is currently available for download on the Save Silver Creek web site, www.savesilvercreek.com. It may also be checked out at the Conservancy's field office at 116 First Avenue North in Hailey or at the Silver Creek Office. Phone 208-788-7910 for more information.