

Marsh Creek restored with help from coalition

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

Several restoration projects have been undertaken in the past 10 years to restore and improve streambanks along the Portneuf River and its tributaries. These projects have been cooperative efforts involving diverse groups of people with a common goal.

The coalition working on these projects calls itself the Portneuf River Project.

Chris Banks, water quality resource consultant for Caribou Conservation District and a conservationist with the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts, has been part of the group. One of the success stories he likes to tell about is Marsh Creek, which flows into the Portneuf River on land owned by ranchers Jim and Carol Guthrie.

"Jim and Carol have done a lot, and the initial project Jim



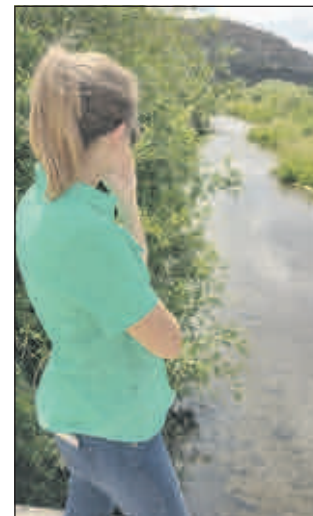
Jim Guthrie Sr. talks about the accomplishments along Marsh Creek over the years. His ranchland has been turned into an example of how to do it correctly.

started was before my time. I then had the opportunity to work with them on two streambank restoration projects on the main stem of the Portneuf River where we fenced off the bank from cattle access," he said.

"We were able to put in some toe rock, along with a softer approach for streambank stabilization by planting willows and shaping the bank so the soil would catch and hold there. During high water

when some of the bank caves away, it now falls into willows that catch the silt, to rebuild the bank. This is very effective," Banks said.

The Guthries did an earlier project that started things in



Heather Thomas/For the Capital Press
Erika Larson looks at the riparian restoration work that was accomplished on the Guthrie property.

the right direction.

"The stream was widening and threatening his barn, and now it's a narrow stream again, with vegetative shade and cover on each side of it. The transformation on their property has been amazing," Banks said.

The Guthries also participated in one of the Marsh Creek grants. They wanted to fence off Marsh Creek all the way through their property, along with the confluence where Marsh Creek meets the Portneuf River. Now 2,800 feet of fence goes all the way up through their property along Marsh Creek, and more willows have come back in along the creek, without any outside help.

"Jim has taken a lot of care

to monitor and watch for weeds in those riparian areas and in some places he's been able to let cattle come in to graze those down," Banks said.

The Guthries also put in a stockwater system, run off a pump by their house. It provides water for their livestock, eliminating the need to access the creek.

Teri Murrison, administrator of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission — the state agency providing engineering support and field assistance to the project — said the Guthries are exemplary managers of land and resources.

"Whenever we're showcasing voluntary conservation, we try to visit their Marsh Creek Project. Improvement in that waterway has been significant and the Guthries enjoy showing it off," she said.

Murrison said that they set a good example for their neighbors, as well.

"They are role models for other landowners. Their story is one of sustained dedication to doing the right thing for the land and for their farm. This kind of stewardship is catching on in the Inkom area," she said.

"Jim and Carol have been amazing people to work with," Banks said. "They don't just do a job; they go far above and beyond what they are asked to do. They care about the land, and the people involved, and do everything they can to make everyone happy. They have proven to be tremendous advocates for conservation and land stewardship."



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