

Provo River Restoration Project

Q&A

2000 Construction Season

Q: What is the purpose of the Provo River Restoration Project?

A: The overriding objective is to restore the river pattern and ecological function of the middle Provo River to a more natural condition in order to mitigate for fish, wildlife and recreational losses caused by federal water reclamation projects in the Bonneville Basin. Our analyses and studies confirm the natural pattern for the middle Provo River is a multiple-channel system. This is verified by aerial photographs from 1938. The pattern is evident today in a short reach of the Provo River that was never diked or channelized, which starts above Midway Lane and extends upstream about 1 ½ miles.

Q: What part of the river will be restored this year?

A: About 1.3 miles of the river will be worked on starting beneath the bridge over Highway 40 and ending at River Road. Last year's Pilot Project restored the river from about 1.6 miles downstream of Jordanelle Dam to .9 miles south and west of Highway 40.

Q: When will construction begin?

A: Channel reconstruction begins August 14, 2000. Some work remaining from the pilot project was completed the Spring of 2000. These activities included resurfacing the access road and constructing a restroom, additional parking and fencing at the Cottonwood Canyon access point.

Q: What will be done to restore the river this year?

A: (See map on the reverse side). Moving from a drop structure 0.5 miles downstream of Highway 40, we'll excavate a new channel into the flood plain, which is now a cleared agricultural field. Several new meanders will be constructed as the new main river channel. Two new side channels will be created to contain flow year round. Side channels provide diversity of fish habitat, important for spawning and native fish. A series of cut-off channels will be created to carry varying amounts of flow at different times in the year. The side-channel developed in last year's pilot project will be extended downstream to connect to this year's newly constructed main river channel. Material excavated from the new channel will be used to partially fill in the old channel and to build necessary set-back berms. We'll remove dikes on either side of the current river to allow a broader flood plain. Set-back berms will be constructed only to protect adjacent private property from flooding. Emergent wetlands and small ponds will be created to enhance existing wetland habitat. Some water will remain in the old channel to maintain wetland features.

Q: How will the fishery be affected?

A: Increases in turbidity (cloudy water) during construction are expected, but will be short term - a few hours. Otherwise, the fishery will not be affected outside the construction area. Within a newly constructed river reach, we expect it to take six months to a year for the fishery in that reach to recover (for the food base to rebuild). After this period, the fishery will be vastly improved.

Q: Will you close public access to the river?

A: Similar to last year, temporary public access closures to portions of the river corridor are required. The overriding concern is for public safety in and around construction zones. Channel reconstruction begins August 14. At that time, access to the river will be closed from River Road upstream to the end of the construction zone, where Highway 40 crosses the river. Anglers can fish the middle Provo outside the construction zone. Closed areas will be marked in the field. The unofficial parking area off Highway 40 is not an approved access point under the PRRP. When access to this reach of the Provo River reopens this winter, an alternate access site will be available north of River Road.

Q: Who is doing the work?

A: The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources construction crews are doing the work in cooperation with the Mitigation Commission.

Q: Where will restoration continue after this year?

A: In 2001, we plan to continue restoration immediately downstream of this year's constructed reach.

The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission is responsible for implementing the Provo River Restoration Project. For more information, please contact Diane Simmons at 801-524-3146.

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