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# Conservation Needs Assessment

Catholic Creek Watershed  
Nez Perce and Latah Counties, Idaho

2007



Nez Perce  
Soil and Water  
Conservation  
District

NEZ PERCE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Conservation Needs Assessment – Catholic Creek Watershed

### 2007 Survey Results

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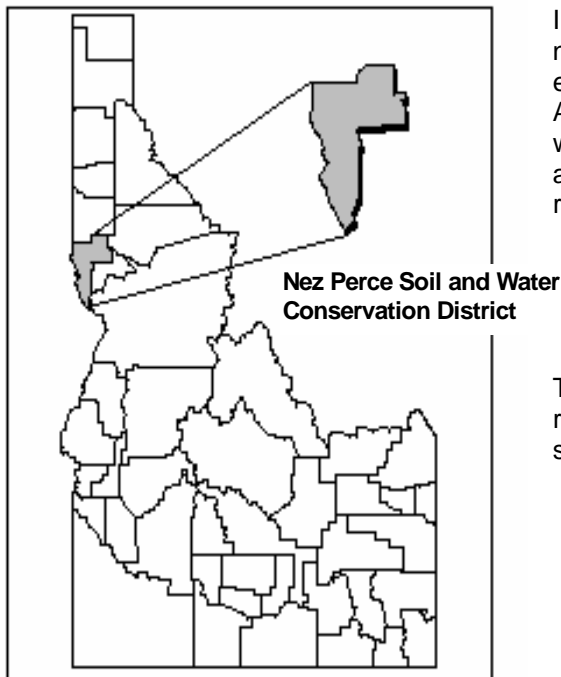
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## Introduction

The Conservation Needs Assessment is a component of the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District's (District) 2004 strategic plan. The project's goal is to identify stakeholder perceptions regarding natural resources within the Catholic Creek watershed. This survey will be used as the foundation for the development of a watershed plan.

The Catholic Creek watershed is located within the District boundaries (Figure 1). The Catholic Creek watershed encompasses 175,000 acres in Nez Perce and Latah counties, Idaho. Land elevations range from 1,100 to 4,500 feet with precipitation ranging from 18-20 inches per year.

Figure 1. Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District Location Map



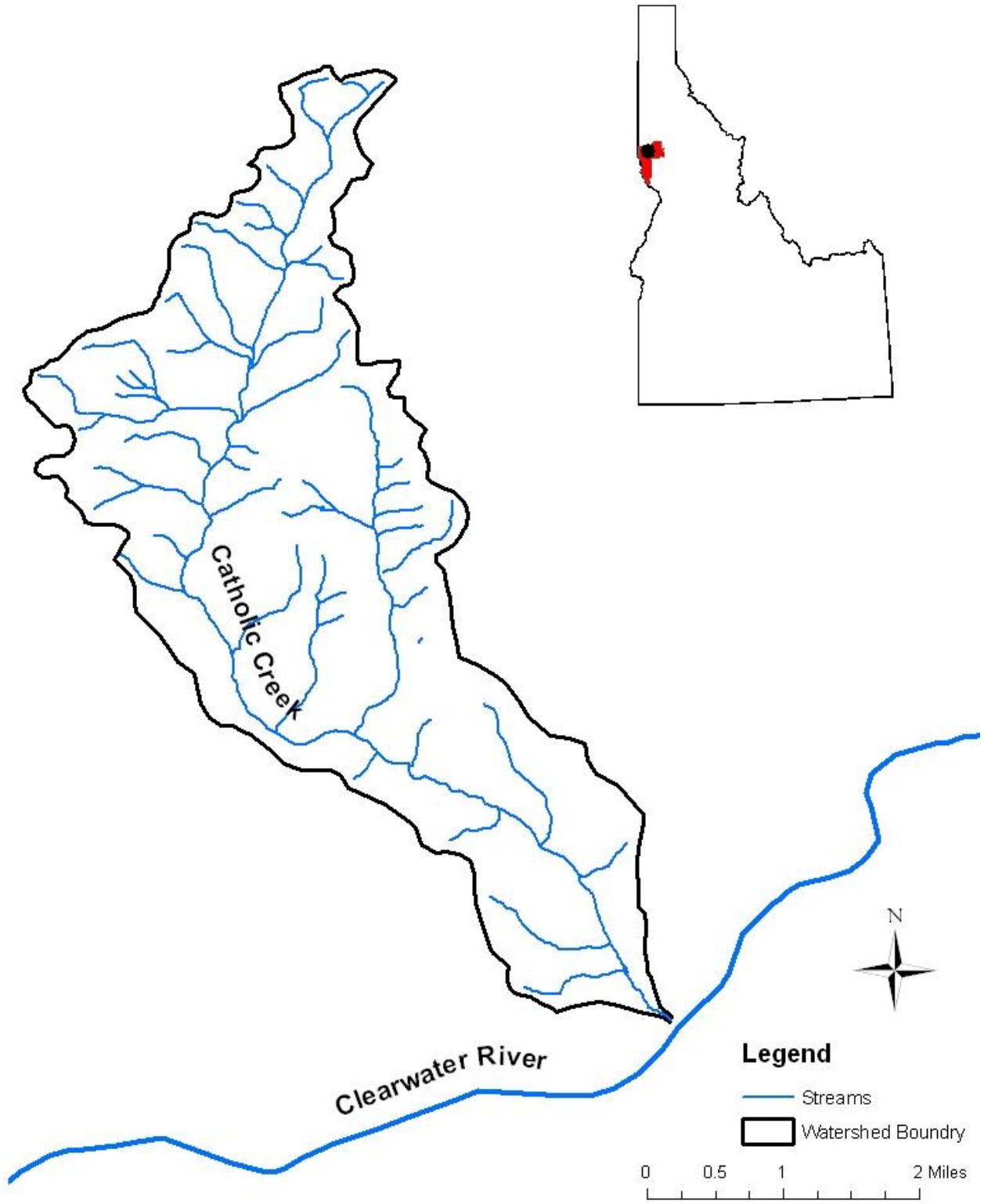
In order to develop a watershed plan, the District needs to identify resource concerns. As part of this effort, the District completed a Conservation Needs Assessment (CNA) in April 2007. This assessment will assist the District in identifying education needs and determining stakeholder's perceptions of resource concerns.

The information contained in this document represents landowners, units of government, and special interest groups within the watershed.

## Objectives

Identify stakeholder perception of natural resource issues, conservation needs, and priorities within the Catholic Creek watershed.

Figure 2. Catholic Creek Watershed Location Map



## Methods

The survey was distributed by direct mail to 58 stakeholders in March 2007. Appendix A includes example surveys and introduction letters. Stakeholders include landowners, units of government, businesses, and special interest groups. Stakeholders asked to participate in the survey were selected from the Nez Perce County assessor ownership maps and the District's watershed mailing list. The mailing list was developed through county assessor records, chamber of commerce records, and telephone directory records.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) developed a similar survey format for use in the Locally Led Conservation media campaign. The NACD survey was revised to include appropriate resource categories.

Seventeen information areas were identified on the survey including respondent type, customer groups, natural resource issues, products/services and general comments.

## Survey Results

The survey return rate was 21%. The summarized information for each of these areas is described in this document.

### A. Demographic Information

Several of the survey questions were designed to obtain information regarding the demographics of the respondents. Respondent type data determines the customer base represented by the survey. Nine categories were included in the survey: urban/suburban resident, rural resident (non-farm/ranch), special interest group, government agency, business owner/manager, farm/ranch owner, farm/ranch manager/operator, educational institution, and other. Table 1 summarizes the percent of surveys returned for each category.

The majority of responses were from the Farm/Ranch Owner Category.

Table 1. Respondent Type

Category	Percentage of respondents selecting this category
Farm / Ranch Owner	34%
Government Agency	25%
Business Owner/ Manager	17%
Urban / Suburban Resident	8%
Farm / Ranch Operator/ Manager	8%
Educational Institution	8%
Special Interest Group	0%
Rural Resident (non farm / ranch)	0%
Other	0%

Respondents were asked to identify their primary income source as either derived from the property or not.

#### **Primary Income from Property**

Yes 54%  
No 46%

Of those who responded yes, all listed their primary income as agriculture.

## **Gender**

Eighty-three percent of respondents were male and 17% were female.

## **Age Group**

The majority of respondents were at least 66 years old. Table 2 provides data for all age groups.

Table 2. Age Group Representation

Group	%
18-24	0
25-35	0
36-45	17
46-55	25
56-66	25
66 and over	33

## **B. Customer Groups**

Survey respondents were asked to select four customer groups the District should make the most intensive effort to reach utilizing information, products, and/or services to help solve natural resource issues. Twenty categories were available for selection. Table 3 summarizes the data for all groups.

Table 3. Customer Group Data

Category	Percentage of respondents who selected category as a top-four issue
Full-time Farmers/ Ranchers	91%
Federal, State, City Agencies	45%
State and Local Politicians	45%
Agribusiness	36%
Part-time Farmers/ Ranchers	36%
Hobby Farmers/ Ranchers	36%
Environmental Groups	27%
Tribal Land Owners	27%
Minority Farmers/ Ranchers	18%
Urban/Suburban Citizens	9%
Recreational Users	9%
Business Community	9%
Planners	9%
Commodity Groups	0%
Schools	0%
National Politicians	0%
Timber Producers	0%
Foresters	0%
Developers	0%
Other (please specify)	0%

### C. Natural Resource Issues

Those surveyed were asked to select the 10 most important natural resource issues facing the Catholic Creek watershed in the next decade. Thirty-five categories were presented on the survey. Table 4 summarizes the percentage of responses for each category.

Table 4. Natural Resource Issue Summary

Category	Percentage of respondents who selected category as a top ten issue
Weeds	92%
Cropland Erosion	75%
Soil Erosion	75%
Disease, Weed, and Insect Management	58%
Water Quality	50%
Soil Quality/ Soil Health	50%
Agriculture Sustainability	42%
Loss of Agriculture Land	42%
Agricultural Productivity	42%
Rural Land Development/ Urban Sprawl	33%
Land Slides/ Soil Mass Movement	33%
Storm Water Management	25%
Septic Systems	25%
Lack of Riparian Vegetation	25%
Pesticide Management	25%
Recreational Vehicle Use	17%
Water Availability/ Quantity	17%
Road Associated Erosion	17%
Nutrient Management	17%
Herbicide Resistance	17%
Floodplain Development	8%
Flooding	8%
Wetlands	8%
Grazing Lands	8%
Air Quality	8%
Road Development	8%
Fisheries	8%
Wildlife	8%
Groundwater	0%
Animal Waste	0%
Threatened/ Endangered Species	0%
Irrigation/ Water Management	0%
Drinking Water Quality	0%
Hazardous Material	0%
Other (please specify)	0%

## D. Products

Survey respondents were asked to select the five most important products, services, and programs the District could provide to solve resource issues in the watershed. There were 22 categories for selection. Table 5 summarizes the data.

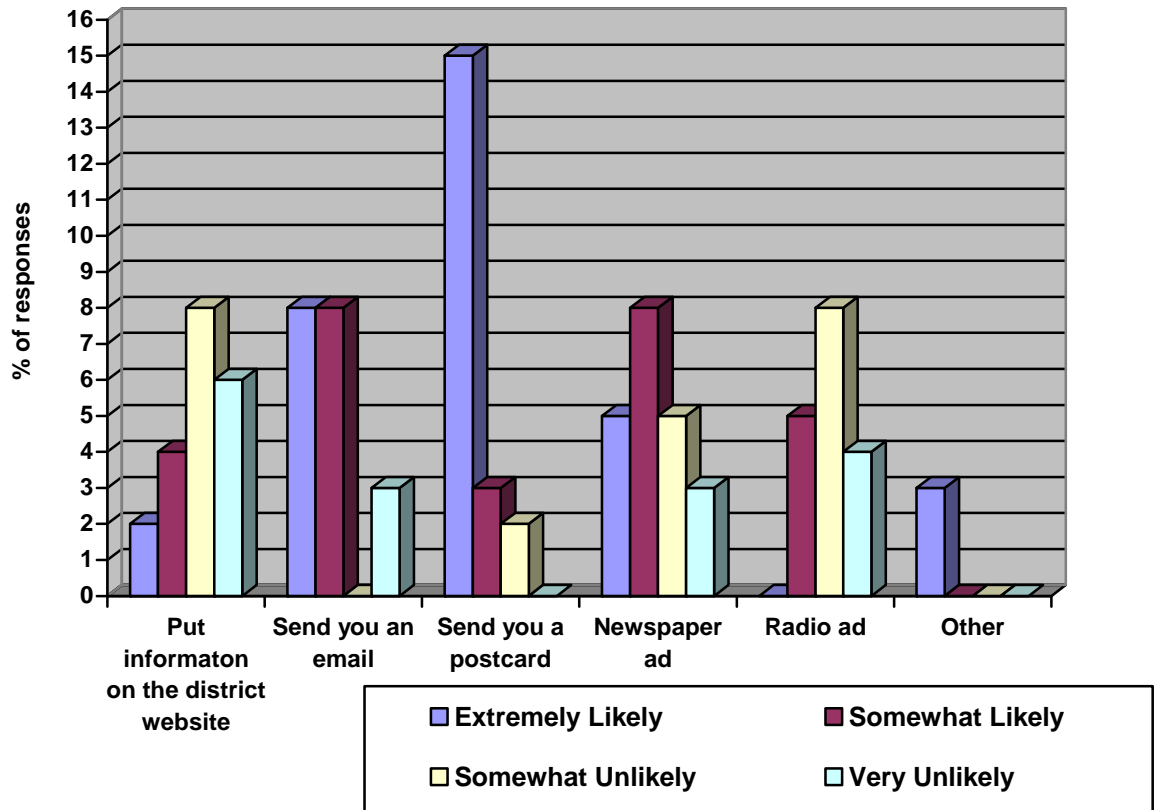
Table 5. Products, Services and Programs Summary

Category	Percentage of respondents who selected category as a top-five issue
Erosion and Sediment Control	100%
Conservation Planning	90%
Weed Control Strategies	70%
Cost-share	50%
Soil Survey and Soil Information	40%
Wildlife Habitat Planning and Management	40%
Riparian Management Planning	30%
Engineering Design	20%
Resource Inventories	10%
Develop/Maintain Standards	10%
Floodplain Planning	10%
Water Quality Planning	10%
Outdoor Recreation Assistance	10%
Educational Programs	10%
Urban Forestry Programs	0%
Agriculture Water Management	0%
Information (e.g. databases)	0%
Home Assessments	0%
Irrigation Water Management	0%
Rural Development Assistance	0%
Recreational Opportunities	0%
Other (please specify)	0%

## F. Information Sources and Methods

Survey respondents were asked to identify the best method for obtaining information. There were six categories and four choices per category. Figure 3 illustrates the responses.

Figure 3. Information Methods



Stakeholders were asked to identify the four best information sources for learning about local conservation issues. Twenty-two choices were listed and results are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Information Sources

Source	% of stakeholders selecting source
Direct Mailings	67%
Conservation District Newsletter	58%
Newspapers	50%
Friends, Relatives, or Neighbors	33%
E-mail, Electronic Newsletters	33%
Community Meetings	25%
Brochures, Pamphlets, or Guides	25%
Local Conservation District	25%
Federal, State, City, or Tribal Agencies	17%
Workshops/ Classes	17%
Associations and Organizations	8%
County Extension	8%
Billboards	8%
Trade Magazines	0%
Books	0%
Internet/Web sites	0%
Radio	0%
TV	0%
Videos	0%
College and Universities	0%
Public Bulletin Boards	0%
Other	0%

**G. Fish Habitat Information**

Stakeholders were asked a variety of questions relating to fish habitat and awareness levels of fish habitat issues.

**Fish Habitat Awareness**

Stakeholders were asked to indicate their level of awareness regarding fish habitat issues. The four categories are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Stakeholder Awareness of Fish Habitat Issues

Issue	% Responding
Very aware	23%
Somewhat aware	15%
Minimally aware	31%
Not aware	31%

**Fish Habitat Education Needs**

Stakeholders were asked their education needs regarding fish habitat. Their needs are summarized below.

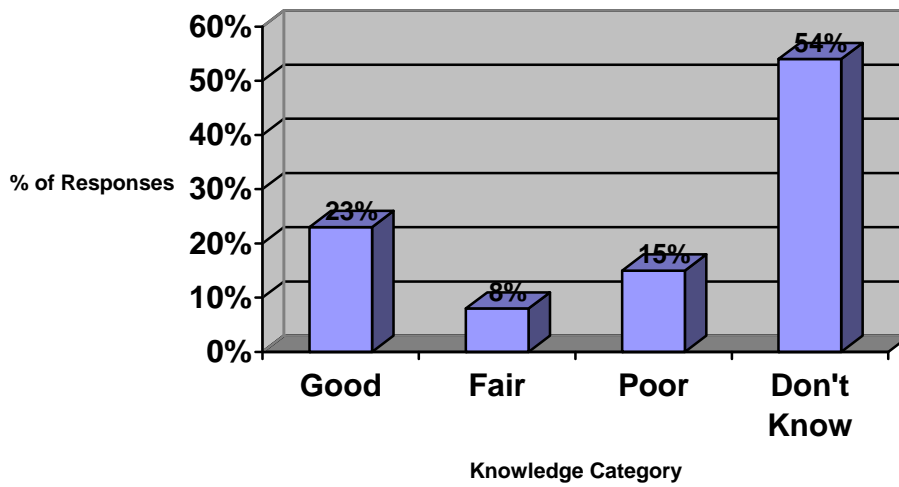
- Would appreciate a bulletin on fish habitat for awareness of problems and other obvious erosion concerns.
- How is Catholic Creek having the most impact on fisheries?
- Completely unaware
- College level and professional experience in fish management
- Information by species: habitat, food sources, reproduction, relative to survival and well being.

- “Enough to stay out of trouble”
- Resource inventory

### **Landowner Perception of Fish Habitat Condition**

Respondents were asked their perception of the fish habitat condition in the watershed. Four choices ranging from good to poor were provided. The majority of respondents selected the “Do not know” category. Figure 4 illustrates responses.

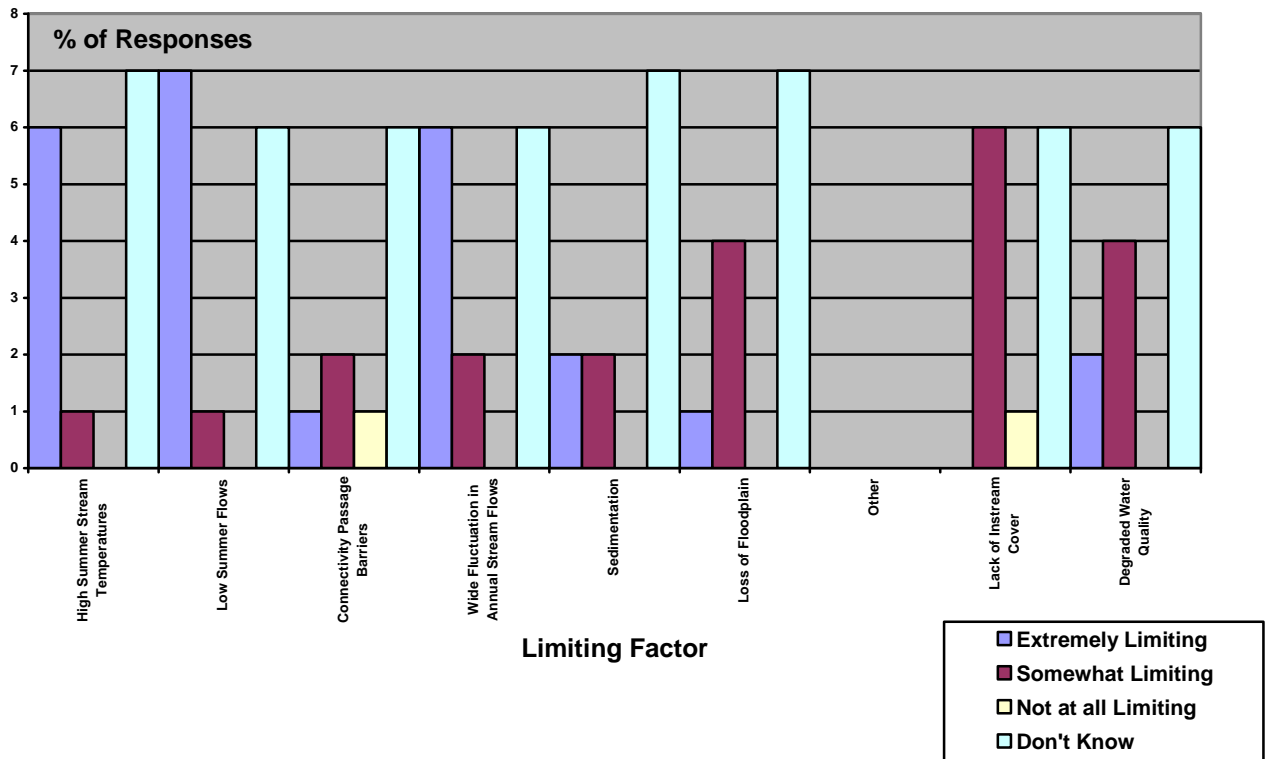
Figure 4. Landowner Perception of Fish Habitat Condition in Catholic Creek



## Fish Limiting Factors

Seven limiting factors were listed for selection. Survey respondents were asked to select a range of how likely they thought the limiting factors were impacting fish habitat. Figure 5 illustrates the responses received.

Figure 5. Catholic Creek Fish Habitat Limiting Factors



## Fish Habitat Improvement Practices

Survey respondents were asked to identify practices or procedures that would improve fish habitat in Catholic Creek. Comments include:

- Range rehabilitation
- Weed control
- Buffer riparian areas and streams
- Riparian plantings
- Encourage minimal tillage
- Maintain low sediment in creeks through basins and waterways
- Smolt release
- Direct seeding
- No moldboard plowing
- No field residue burning
- Erosion control
- Watershed planning and management
- Cost-share for IPM practices
- Improve stream bank habitat
- Cost-share for IPM practices and holistic management regimes that protect rural biosphere

## **Interest in Fish Habitat Improvement**

Survey respondents were asked how interested they were in improving Catholic Creek fish habitat resting on their property.

- **60%** of respondents were **Not Interested** in improving fish habitat on their property. Reasons included: Do not know there is a problem; Can't get to creek on my property; I do not have any water on my property; Do not own property with fish habitat; I live near the headwaters and there is very little water most of the year.
- **30%** of the respondents were **Somewhat Interested** in improving fish habitat on their property. Responses included: I haven't seen any in our area at the northern most part of Catholic Creek; more concerned about dust control and storm water control; every farmer is interested in improving the environment.
- **10%** of respondents were **Extremely Interested** in improving fish habitat on their property.

## **H. Water Quality Information**

### **Water Quality Practices**

Survey respondents were asked to list practices or procedures they thought would improve water quality in Catholic Creek. Responses are listed below.

- Sediment erosion control
- No till farming
- No field burning
- No moldboard plowing
- Direct seeding
- Riparian restoration
- Filter strips
- Erosion control structures
- Sediment basins
- Minimum tillage
- Waterways
- Have Genesee and Nez Perce highway districts gravel and improve roads and slope banks on Shirrod and Conner roads.
- Stop conversion from commercial agriculture to small farm/ranches.
- Precise use and treatment of fertilizer and pesticides
- Use IPM BMPs for water quality

### **Interest in Water Quality Improvement**

Survey respondents were asked how interested they were in improving water quality on their property. Twenty-five percent responded "Not Applicable" as they were not land owners; 8% responded that they were "Not Interested" as they were not an agriculture land owner; 25% were "Extremely Interested," and 42% were "Somewhat Interested." Reasons for responses are summarized below.

- Extremely Interested (25%): Water quality is of very high importance for everyone.
- Somewhat Interested (42%): More interested in dust and storm-water control.
- Not interested (8%): Not an agricultural landowner
- Not Applicable (25%): Not a landowner

Reasons:

- “Don’t know what is wrong with water.”
- “It would be good for the environment, but not high on my list of priorities.”
- “I have very little spring runoff.”
- “No farmer wants erosion.”

### **Water Quality Awareness**

Survey respondents were asked to select one of four responses in regards to their awareness level of water quality in Catholic Creek. Responses are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Water Quality Awareness Level

<b>Awareness Category</b>	<b>% of Respondents Selecting the Category</b>
Very aware	17%
Somewhat aware	8%
Minimally aware	33%
Not aware	42%

### **Water Quality Education Needs**

Survey respondents were asked what their education needs are regarding water quality. Their responses were:

- None – common sense should prevail and be obvious.
- Enough to stay out of trouble
- Education efforts educating as to employing IPM, conservation farming, and holistic-environmentally sound practices to the sustainability of commercial farms while adequately protecting the environment and public safety.
- Baseline information on water quality and BMP potential.

### **Water Quality Limiting Factors**

Survey respondents were asked to identify how limiting six categories of pollutants are to Catholic Creek. Table 9 lists the results.

Table 9. Limiting Pollutants

	<b>Extremely Limiting</b>	<b>Somewhat Limiting</b>	<b>Not at all Limiting</b>	<b>Do Not Know</b>
Sediment	25%	17%	0%	50%
Nutrients	25%	8%	8%	50%
Water Temperature	17%	17%	8%	50%
Dissolved Oxygen	8%	8%	8%	67%
Petroleum Products	0%	8%	8%	75%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%

## **I. Existing Conservation Practices**

Survey respondents chose from 18 types of conservation practices they have applied on their property. Table 10 lists the results.

Table 10. Existing Conservation Practices Applied in the Catholic Creek Watershed

Practice	Percentage Applying the Practice
Tree Planting	67%
Crop Rotation – three years or greater	67%
Conservation Tillage	67%
Direct Seeding	67%
Noxious Weed Control	50%
Sediment Basins	25%
Gully Plugs	25%
Waterways	25%
Livestock Water Developments	17%
Nutrient Management	17%
Other	17%
Filter Strips	8%
BioControl Agents	8%
Road Erosion Control	8%
Grade Control Structure	0%
Livestock Waste Systems	0%

**Survey respondents were asked to identify specific areas of the Catholic Creek watershed in need of resource conservation assistance. Comments are summarized below.**

- Urban sprawl
- Road and stream interface areas
- Loss of agricultural lands
- Weed control in canyon lands
- Shirrod and Conner Road with extreme ditch bank and road erosion
- Noxious weeds in lower dry end of watershed
- Areas with continuous farming in agricultural lands including wetlands and streams
- Small farm/ranches are developing and need management plants to ensure environmental quality sustainability
- To maintain waterways and sediment ponds to assure clean water in creeks to remove residue before it is into creeks and stream.
- Disease, insect management

**Survey respondents were provided and opportunity to provide general comments  
Comments provided are summarized below.**

## Conclusions

### **The top 10 resource issues include:**

1. Weeds
2. Cropland Erosion
3. Soil Erosion
4. Disease, Weed, and Insect Management
5. Water Quality
6. Soil Quality/Soil Health
7. Loss of Agricultural Land
8. Agricultural Sustainability
9. Agricultural Productivity
10. Rural Land Development/Urban Sprawl (tied)
10. Land Slides/Soil Mass Movement (tied)

### **Top four consumer groups to target:**

1. Full-time Farmers/Ranchers
2. State and Local Politicians
3. Federal, State, City Agencies
4. Agribusiness (tied)
4. Hobby Farmers/Ranchers (tied)
4. Part-time Farmers/Ranchers (tied)

### **Top five products, programs, and services the District could provide:**

1. Erosion and Sediment Control
2. Conservation Planning
3. Weed Control Strategies
4. Cost-share
5. Soil Survey and Soil Information (tied)
5. Wildlife Habitat Planning and Management (tied)

### **Demographic summary:**

Age: 48% of those surveyed were 66 years of age or older

Gender: 85% males, 15% females

### **Education Information:**

The best method to communicate with stakeholders is through direct mailing of letters or postcards.

### **The top four information sources are:**

District Newsletter  
Direct Mailings  
Newspaper  
Brochure pamphlets or guides

**Most stakeholders are somewhat aware of fish habitat issues.**

**Education needs identified by stakeholders include:**

Problem history  
Problem solutions  
Low stream flows and impacts on fish survival  
Project goals  
How to identify steelhead from rainbow trout.

**Most stakeholders do not know the status of the fish habitat in the watershed.**

**Fish Limiting Factors**

Most stakeholders identified the following limitations and their likelihood to impact fish habitat.

<u>Limitation</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Lack of multi-layered vegetation	Don't Know
Low Summer Flows	Extremely Limiting
Nutrients	Don't Know
Watershed Disturbances	Don't Know
Sedimentation	Somewhat Limiting
Habitat Degradation	Don't Know

**Practices Identified to Improve Fish Habitat:**

Stakeholders identified the following practices they thought would improve fish habitat.

Reduce agricultural chemicals in water  
Improve water quality  
Limit livestock access to the stream  
Limit All-Terrain Vehicle use

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