

Building Beaver Dam Analogues Below Chief Joseph Dam

Article shared by Matt McHugh, Chief Joseph Dam

Last year several groups partnered together to construct Beaver Dam Analogues (BDAs) in the Foster Creek drainage, which empties into the Columbia River directly downstream of Chief Joseph Dam. The basic idea of a BDA is to install an artificial beaver dam (using wooden posts and native plant material/branches) in sections of the river channel that ideally collect sediment, pool water and eventually start to widen the river channel, creating more riparian habitat. A majority of the Foster Creek drainage is channelized/incised but shows evidence of previously having a wide floodplain. Returning to, or getting close to a wider floodplain, is the end goal of this effort.



The Foster Creek Conservation District organized a significant portion of work related to the project. USACE staff were able to provide a lot of the material needed and hosted several work groups and public seminars. The Utah State University Restoration Consortium also partnered in the project by providing experts with experience in this type of habitat construction. The Consortium has been studying and implementing BDA strategy and were present to help explain the process and lead focused workshops. Additional information on the Consortium is found online at <https://lowtechpbr.restoration.usu.edu/>.

One of the more interesting things learned by USACE staff during this effort is that in many instances, as the river channel spreads out and slows down, beavers in the area will take up residence in the BDAs and will add on to them on their own. Beavers present in the general area have actually learned to use sagebrush to construct their dams; therefore, that material was used in the BDAs installed in the Foster Creek drainage.

