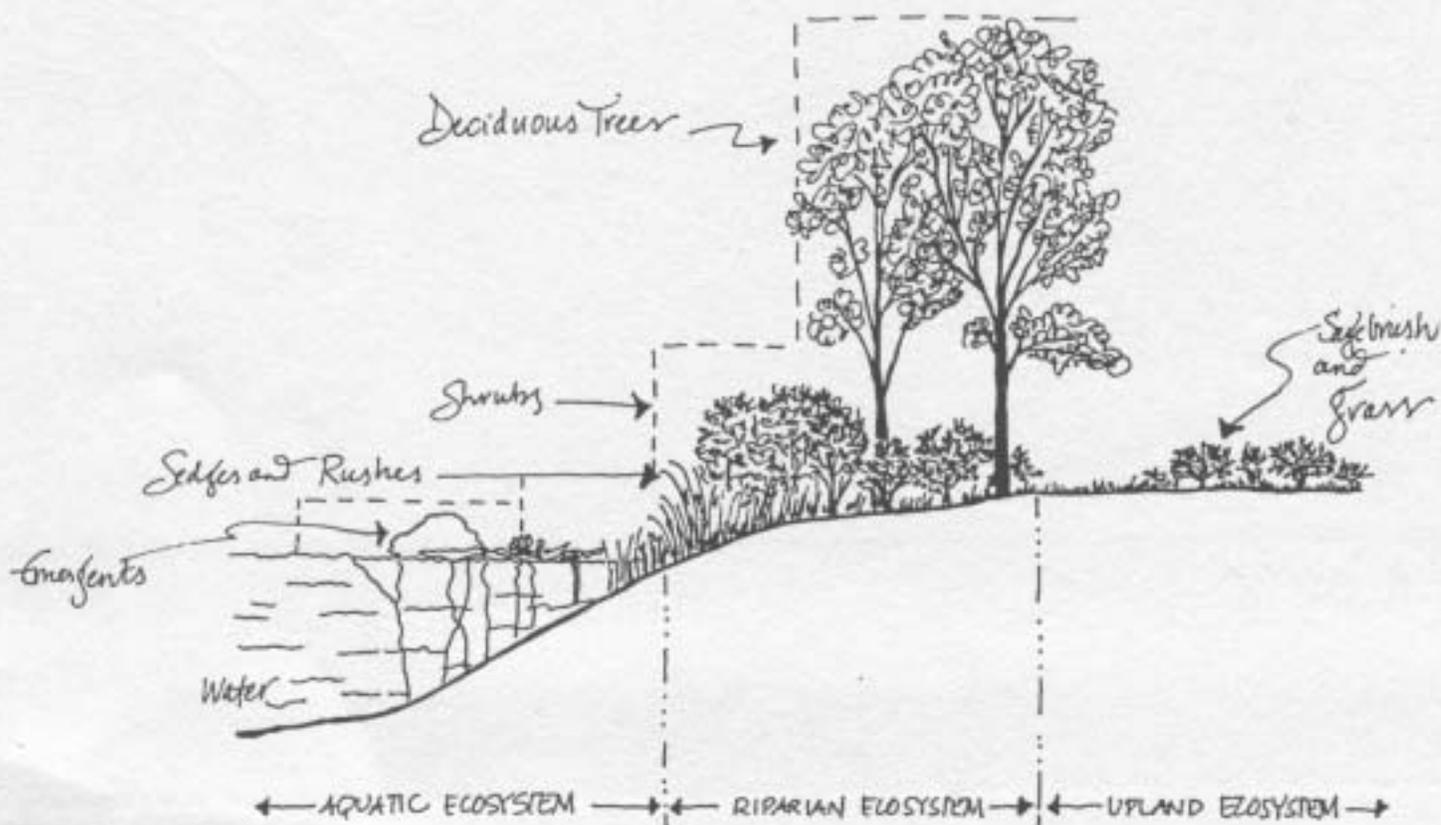


# Riparian and Wetland Community Inventory of 14 Reference Areas in Southwestern Idaho

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**RIPARIAN AND WETLAND COMMUNITY INVENTORY OF  
14 REFERENCE AREAS IN SOUTHWESTERN IDAHO**

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**January 1998**

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**Prepared for:  
Lower Snake River District  
Bureau of Land Management  
Order No. 1422-D010-P97-0116**

## SUMMARY

The low-elevation riparian and wetland communities of southwestern Idaho are the least known of anywhere in the state, in terms of classification of plant associations for management and biodiversity conservation purposes. While many community types described from adjacent, mostly higher elevation portions of Idaho and surrounding states may be applicable, unique environmental and physical conditions contribute to the formation of undescribed types that may be endemic to southwestern Idaho. This modest project is a preliminary step in filling this significant gap in our knowledge of riparian ecosystems in Idaho. It is not a community classification project, but an effort to inventory the community diversity of wetlands and riparian areas considered to be in high ecological condition in southwestern Idaho, focusing on the Lower Snake River District (LSRD) of the BLM.

The purpose of this project is to assess the diversity of wetland and riparian communities of the LSRD through field inventory and sampling, using high quality reference areas, such as BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Research Natural Areas, and private conservation lands of The Nature Conservancy. From this inventory, I prepared a preliminary guide to the riparian types of southwestern Idaho, including a key to their identification and supporting descriptive material for each community.

The 14 study sites lie in four counties in southwestern Idaho and span the latitudinal gradient of BLM land on the LSRD, from southern Hells Canyon to the Nevada border. One of the main outcomes of the inventory was that existing riparian and wetland classifications from surrounding areas do not work well at low elevations in southwestern Idaho. I encountered what I have tentatively identified as 34 riparian and wetland community types. Community Characterization Abstracts were prepared for the 15 community types I believe have high classification certainty. The 19 types for which there is low classification certainty at this time are called the "Tentative Community Types" and shorter descriptions were prepared. More inventory and sampling are needed to determine their repeatability and more fully characterize compositional and structural variation. We received funding to continue this project in 1998, which should shed more light on these types. So, stay tuned.

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