



One man's persistence means many benefit

Ideas come and go, but good ideas that eventually become reality are the result of dogged persistence and unshakable visions of good that can be achieved.

Such is the slow, but relentlessly developing plan of Hailey resident Rich McIntyre, who has refused to allow any obstacles, some politically formidable, to discourage or deter him and his Wood River Legacy Project.

McIntyre, who is an expert in waterway restoration, is gradually persuading powerful Idaho water interests that a 12-mile stretch of the Big Wood River south of Bellevue should and can be restored as a year-round flowing waterway without sacrificing needs of agriculture interests that have routinely been authorized over the years to divert water to farms.

Yes, McIntyre is a fisherman who wants to see that area of the Big Wood flourishing again with trout.

However, beyond that, his vision correctly sees a constantly flowing Big Wood as the lifeblood for so much more.

The Big Wood's water is a nutrient and life-giver for plant life and wildlife and water-based microbiological species, plus a source of tranquil, aesthetic beauty for those who merely want to take in nature's outdoors.

The Big Wood also is as emblematic of the Wood River Valley as Bald Mountain. Not an inch of it should be allowed to shrivel up and be reduced to little more than a trickle in spots.

McIntyre's most demanding hurdle has been state water law, the 800-pound gorilla of Idaho politics that rarely is subjected to tweaking.

But to his surprise, support has jumped to his side—from Lincoln, Gooding and Jerome counties, from canal companies and now from the legislative committee of the Idaho

Water Users Association, as powerful a water interest as one can find in Idaho government.

Could it be that before the 2007 session of the state Legislature is declared sine die, McIntyre's 11-month old plan will receive an official nod and the still waters of part of the Big Wood will ripple and burble again?

McIntyre's choice of a key word for his dream—"legacy"—indeed is what would result if the stretch targeted by the project were restored as he envisions.

It will be a personal legacy of McIntyre bequeathed to the Wood River Valley, of course. But the project's eventual realization and success would also be a legacy of political cooperation and regional vision so often lacking when an idea threatens to undo the status quo and forces special interests to accept change that produces benefits far beyond their bailiwicks.