

BREN History

2011

On February 1, 2011, Liz Paul, Idaho Rivers United, convened a meeting to discuss organizing a one-day conference on Boise River restoration and enhancement projects. Eight people attended. The group decided to move forward. Monthly meetings were held for the next 7 months to organize the **From Vision to Reality - Enhancing the Lower Boise River** workshop. Sixteen people were on the Organizing Committee.

To overcome knowledge gaps identified by the Organizing Committee, they hosted 8 lunch programs in August and September. More than 40 people attended most of the programs. Records were kept of the attendees and an email listserve was created that's still in use.

Seventeen sponsors contributed to sponsor the workshop making it free to attend. The workshop was held October 18, 2011, and was attended by 106 people representing at least 78 organizations. Part of the morning and afternoon were spent in small groups, and significant feedback was collected and organized. A follow-up survey was sent to all participants.

2011 Pre-BREN Accomplishments

- Volunteers meet for 7 months to organize From Vision to Reality Workshop that was held Oct. 18, 2011.
- Volunteers organize 8 educational lunch programs:
 - August 24: Enhancing Trout and Waterfowl Habitat on the Lower Boise River
 - August 31: Geomorphology and Hydrology
 - September 7: Local Case Studies
 - September 15: Enhancing Water Quality
 - September 22: Banking, Trading and Marketing
 - September 29: Boise River Ordinance and Ray Neef Whitewater Park
 - October 5: Regional Case Studies
 - October 12: Water Rights
- Creates an email distribution list that has 192 entries at the end of the year.



2012

Because workshop participants showed significant interest in continued cooperation, some members of the Organizing Committee and others continued to meet. A *Next Steps* gathering was held on May 11 to identify short-term next steps to help build a sustainable effort to increase opportunities for ecosystem enhancement of the Lower Boise River. Many ideas were generated and a Coordinating Group was created.

The Coordinating Group was open to all to attend and vote. It met monthly in 2012 and 2013; members networked with each other, organized many programs and field trips, maintained an email list, wrote support letters for stakeholder grants, and created a website.

On May 30 everyone was invited to a meeting to develop the name and mission. More feedback was requested via a survey sent to the email list. Forty-three people participated. On June 25 another meeting was held; the survey results were reviewed and the name and mission were adopted by consensus. The Boise River Enhancement Network was created.

BREN Delivers in 2012

- Selects a name
- Adopts a mission statement
- Creates a logo
- Hosts *Next Steps* work session
- Holds 2 field trips in Canyon County and 2 in Ada County
 - March 21: Marianne Williams Park and Walling Creek
 - August 29: Boise River Float Trip - Notus to Hwy 95
 - September 28: Indian Creek Restoration Project
 - November 1: Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve
- Hosts four educational lunch programs
 - October 23: Cleaning up Agricultural Pollution
 - Oct. 30: Rebuilding the Broadway Bridge
 - Nov. 13: Boise City Streambank Stabilization
 - Dec. 19: Wildlife Linkages to the Boise River
- Launches our On Line Networking web site and offers a user training
- Raises over \$500
- Holds monthly Coordinating Group meetings
- Maintains email list that has 231 entries by the end of the year.



2013

The Vision Committee worked for months to draft a BREN Vision statement. Feedback on the draft Vision was gathered via a survey sent to everyone on the email lists in early January, and the Coordinating Group adopted the Vision on February 6, 2013.

In January 2013, the Coordinating Group decided to prepare an application to the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for a Water Smart grant. \$100,000 was requested to establish a watershed network that serves the stakeholders and increases opportunities for public and private enhancement project collaboration. The goal was not to establish an organization that does enhancement work. That grant was submitted in June 2013. BOR awarded the grant and the following work began on October 1, 2013:

- Develop a structure and operating process for BREN
- Plan and conduct outreach to increase effectiveness of BREN
- Improve and expand BREN's communication services, and
- Work with stakeholders to write a comprehensive enhancement plan

The Grant Team organized a Kickoff gathering on October 30, 2013. More than 275 people were invited and approximately 40 attended. A structure committee and an outreach committee were convened.

BREN Delivers in 2013

- Adopts a Vision Statement after surveying BREN members
- Works as a group to apply for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart Grant
- Receives a \$100,000 2-year grant from BOR
- Kicks off the Grant with an all-BREN gathering
- Surveys members to identify volunteers
- Had a representative appointed to the Boise City Parks and Recreation Boise River Plan citizen committee and hosted 3 group discussions to gather BREN input.
- Forms an Outreach Committee and a Structure Committee
- Hosts five educational lunch programs
 - March 6: Timberline High Students Get Wet
 - June 12: A Miracle Makeover - The Restoration of Grimes Creek
 - July 9: Partnership for Salmon Rehabilitation of the Yankee Fork
 - July 16: Proposed Boise River/Eagle Island Restoration Project
 - August 21: Boise River Plan Discussion - Wildlife, Fisheries and Riparian Habitat
- Hosts field 2 trips in Canyon County and 4 field trips in Ada County
 - May 1: Hwy 16 Bridge Construction
 - May 20: Warm Springs Demonstration Wetlands
 - July 10: CB River Springs Ranch
 - July 17: Float Trip From Star to Middleton
 - July 23: Float trip From Linder to Star
 - Dec. 18: Streambank Stabilization
- Holds monthly Coordinating Group meetings
- Maintains an email list that has 255 entries by the end of the year.



2014

The Structure Committee met December 6, 2013, February 10, April 14, and July 7, 2014. Liz Paul, Gary Howard, Rob Richardson, Tamsen Binggeli, Gary Grimm, Ellen Berggren, Tim Breuer and Mike Somerville participated. The group drafted a BREN Structure document and invited feedback from all BREN members and people on the email list via a survey. Ten people replied. The final Structure was adopted by consensus on July 7, 2014.

The Structure Committee took on the task of recruiting a full slate of candidates and conducting the first Coordinating Team election online September 9 through 19. The first Coordinating Team meeting was held October 1, the second on November 10.

The first edition of the monthly BREN online Newsletter was released on June 1. The Newsletter comes out each month and draws attention to past, current and upcoming events and opportunities. It's emailed to each member and posted online.

The Outreach Committee planned many events included participating in the Canyon Soil Conservation District Water Quality Field Trip and making an enhancement presentation to the Idaho Environmental Forum at their annual Boise River Conference.

Work accelerated on the Boise River Enhancement Plan including hosting workshops to get group feedback, forming expert review teams and developing first drafts of the issue papers.

BREN Delivers in 2014

- Adopts Structure after surveying members
- Elects the first Coordinating Team
- Holds two Coordinating Team meetings
- Hosts the Boise River Bash
- Outreach Committee meets regularly
- Host 2 field trips in Canyon County
 - July 23: Greenleaf WWTP
 - August 26: Annual Boise River Float Trip, Middleton to Caldwell
- Hosts 4 educational lunch programs
 - Jan. 15: Stormwater: What's New?
 - March 19: The Boise River and its People – BSU Research
 - Nov. 6: Protecting and Enhancing the Barber Pool
 - Dec. 3: Boise River Geomorphic Assessment
- Hosts 4 lunch workshops to gather feedback for the Boise River Enhancement Plan
 - April 16: Boise River Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat: Issues and Solutions
 - May 12: Boise River Water Quality: Issues and Solutions
 - Oct. 22: Boise River Wetland, Riparian and Terrestrial Habitat: Issues and Solutions
 - Nov. 12: Boise River Geomorphology: Issues and Solutions



2015

The Coordinating Team assumed full leadership of BREN in 2015. An ambitious Action Plan was adopted in March and a number of committees were formed to get the work done. The Coordinating Team met six times. A special guest was invited to each meeting and a field trip to the Star River Walk and a float trip through Barber Pool reach were held in conjunction with the March and July meetings respectively.

The Governance and Operations subcommittee finished writing the procedures and they were adopted by the Coordinating Team on March 10.

Work continued on the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart grant through September including development and adoption of a BREN Organizational Sustainability Plan by the Coordinating Team on September 8, publication of a monthly online newsletter, maintenance of the website and email list and a wide range of outreach activities. The capstone project was the release of the draft Boise River Enhancement Plan, a 2-month schedule of workshops and listening sessions to gather feedback and final adoption by the Coordinating Team in September.



The Coordinating Team nominating committee recruited a slate of six candidates, and the election was held in September. Six newly elected, six returning and one appointed Coordinating Team members took their seats in November.

BREN played a larger role in community affairs including hosting enhancement volunteer work days and accepting invitations to serve on the Ada County Environmental Advisory Board and the Ada County Hazard Mitigation Plan update committee.

BREN Delivers in 2015

- Releases draft Boise River Enhancement Plan and makes 22 presentations to solicit feedback, including to elected officials, tribal leaders, irrigators, sportsmen, educators and the public.
- Finalizes and publishes the 41-page Plan, distributing dozens of copies.
- Adopts Governance and Operations procedures, Action Plan, and Sustainability Plan.
- Elects new Coordinating Team
- Holds six Coordinating Team meetings
- Hosts the 2nd Annual Boise River Bash with 19 sponsors.
- Outreach Committee meets regularly, creates a display, and plans events.
- Hosts 4 field trips
 - Meridian Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Star River Walk
 - Float Trip Barber Pool reach
 - Float Trip Caldwell to Notus
- Hosts 7 educational lunch programs

2016

BREN got down to business by establishing a business sponsor program, building a new website, starting on Facebook, connecting to new members, and implementing the Boise River Enhancement Plan. BREN initiated projects, secured endorsements from local governments, and leveraged funding and partnerships to accelerate on-the-ground enhancement.

BREN Coordinating Team members talked about BREN and the Boise River Enhancement Plan at the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Water Monitoring workshop, the Ada County 2025 Open Space Policy Summit, the Barber Valley Placemaking workshop, Flood Control District 10 workshop, and the River Management Symposium.

Protecting existing healthy floodplain is a high priority in the Boise River Enhancement Plan, and BREN hosted four field trips to increase knowledge about the importance of floodplains and to share methods of protecting or enhancing floodplains.

BREN served on the Ada County Environmental Advisory Board and played an instrumental role in developing a unique instream habitat project at Eckert Road. The partnership project included installation of three engineered log jams and placement of several boulders in the stream to enhance channel complexity and improve aquatic habitat. BREN helped the Riverside Hotel implement a green stormwater infrastructure and riparian vegetation enhancement project. BREN provided comments on design of Whitewater Park Phase 2.

BREN established the Volunteer of the Year awards and presented them to John Heimer, Karlin Dennis, Roger Rosentreter, Rob Tiedemann, Ken Miracle, Kathy Peter, Idaho River Sports, and Lynda Johnson at the Boise River Bash.

BREN Delivers in 2016

- Partners on enhancement projects
 - Eckert Bridge Instream Habitat Project
 - The Riverside Hotel water quality and riparian habitat projects
 - Shakespeare Festival riparian habitat enhancement
- Distributes >200 digital copies of the Boise River Enhancement Plan and makes presentations to 7 organizations
- Organizes 6 field trips and 2 float trips
- Organizes 5 educational lunch program
 - College of Idaho Capstone Presentations
 - IDFG Fish Survey Results
 - Boise River Noxious Weeds Prioritization
 - BOR WaterSmart Grant Phase II – partner and project ideas workshop
 - Willamette Partnership LBR Phosphorus Trading
- Hosts Boise River BASH and raises \$2,675 through sponsorships
- Creates a new website and posts 9 BREN Blogs



2017

This was a huge year for the Boise River and for BREN. The river experienced flows greater than 7,000 cfs for 101 days and peaked at a record-setting 9,614 cfs. BREN published several blogs explaining the ecological benefit of high water and encouraging landowners to make river health and resilience a priority when they rebuild infrastructure. While the river was making headlines, BREN built partnerships and received two large grants, one from the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to daylight the lower 440 feet of Cottonwood Creek in Julia Davis Park to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, the other from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to enhance upland habitat at the Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve.

The [Hyatt project](#) was launched with two stewardship events and an open house. Volunteers watered willows all summer and planted native plants in the fall for the Eckert instream habitat project. BREN helped City of Boise launch a new volunteer program called Weed Warriors to train and deploy volunteers to pull weeds. BREN and the Riverside Hotel showed off the new river-friendly riparian landscaping planted in 2016.

The Coordinating Team formed a Board of Directors that incorporated BREN and applied for non-profit status. Liz Paul was hired as a part-time Coordinator.

Eighty people raced in the first BREN Boise River Boogie, a paddle/run duathlon in Esther Simplot Park. Kati Carberry directed, and dozens of people volunteered for this family-friendly event sponsored by local businesses. The BREN Member Appreciation Party was held at the Sapphire Room, and the Boogie Team, Roger Rosentreter, Alan Crockett, Ken Miracle, Darcy Sharp, Maria Minicucci, Austin Gunning, Kristin Gnojewski, Mike Stephenson, and Steve Folkner were recognized as Volunteers of the Year.



BREN Delivers in 2017

- Partners on enhancement projects
 - Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve Habitat Project
 - Weed Warriors
 - Removal of wild cucumber in Eagle
 - Eckert Bridge Instream Habitat Project
 - The Riverside Hotel riparian habitat projects
- Organizes 2 field trips and no float trips due to the high water
- Organizes 3 educational programs
 - Environmental Impacts of River Park Phase 2
 - Invasive Aquatic Species
 - What's Happening at the Boise Watershed
- Publishes 21 BREN Blogs
- Establishes Friend of BREN and Founders giving programs

2018

More than 120 volunteers worked on the Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve Habitat Project throughout the year. They grew plants from seeds they collected, planted, weeded, and helped with field trips for new Americans. Thousands of native plants were planted transforming the upland habitat. The relicensing process for the Barber Dam Hydropower Project began and BREN helped stakeholders learn about the project and how to engage effectively.

BREN offered many opportunities for the public to learn about the river including two nature walks at Idaho Shakespeare Festival, field trips to Mill Slough, Intermountain Bird Observatory, Riverside Hotel, Eckert Aquatic Project, and Cottonwood Creek and eight lunch programs. BREN organized a panel presentation on enhancement projects at the Idaho Environmental Forum.

Income grew thanks to local generosity and hard work by BREN volunteers. Xylem was our Corporate Stewardship Partner and many new businesses became sponsors. BREN threw an Idaho Gives party at Idaho River Sports. Author Andy Weiner gave a reading from “Down by the River” for Founding Friends of BREN. By the end of the year, there were 90 Founders.

The 2nd BREN Boise River Boogie was held in September and a kid’s course was added that attracted dozens of young participants. BREN was excited to return to the Sapphire Room for the Member Appreciation Party. Julia Page, Conner Jackson, Roger Rosentreter, Michael Stauffer, Ken Miracle, Rachelle Hesseltine, Vicki McGrane, Pat McGrane, Klaudia Schaller and the Boogie Team were recognized as Volunteers of the Year.

BREN Delivers in 2018

- Partners or advises on enhancement opportunities
 - Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve Habitat Project
 - Riparian stewardship in Greenleaf
 - Weed Warriors
 - Esther Simplot Park pond habitat project
 - Kathryn Albertson Park improvements
 - Barber Dam Hydropower relicensing
- Organizes 8 educational lunch programs
 - The Big Boise River Channel Makeover of 2017
 - The State of the Fish
 - Diggie Creek Enhancement Project
 - Hillside birds of the Hyatt Reserve
 - Boise River Plan
 - Fundamentals of Fluvial Geomorphology
 - Fundamentals of River Restoration
 - Barber Dam Relicensing 101
- Organizes 11 field trips and 3 float trips
- Publishes 20 BREN Blogs and opens Instagram



2019

BREN continued to work on the Cottonwood Creek Daylighting project but had to push back the completion date to 2021 and reduce the scope of the project due to budget constraints. Cooperative habitat enhancement continued at Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve and began at Wood's Park in Eagle. BREN gave workshops on growing cottonwood trees from seed, harvesting and planting willows, and monitoring success at habitat enhancement sites. BREN presented programs and hosted three float trips on Barber Pool to educate stakeholders about the relicensing of the hydropower plant at Barber Dam. BREN submitted official relicensing comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

BREN teamed up with corporate sponsors to complete five stewardship projects and teamed up with Idaho Business for the Outdoors to host Christopher Swain on his swim from the Boise River headwaters to the Snake River.

BREN membership grew to more than 1,000 and donations from businesses and individuals increased through Idaho Gives, event sponsorship and solicitations. Three events were held for Founding Friends of BREN. A new website was created. BREN data was migrated to a new donor, member and volunteer management platform. The BREN Coordinator worked part time on projects and administrative tasks.



BREN Delivers in 2019

- Partners/advises on enhancement opportunities
 - Upland habitat enhancement at Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve
 - Pond riparian habitat enhancement at Charlie Woods Park in Eagle
 - Cottonwood Creek daylighting in Julia Davis Park
 - Barber Dam Relicensing
- Organizes 4 field trips and 6 float trips
- Organizes 6 educational lunch programs
 - History of the Boise River
 - Barber Dam Relicensing
 - Enhancement Through Geomorphology
 - Exploring Barber Pool
 - Boating the Boise River
 - 2019 Enhancement Success Stories
- Hosts a highly successful 3rd Annual Boise River Boogie duathlon
- Hosts a Membership Appreciation Party, named eight people as 2019 Volunteers of the Year and inducted seven people into the newly-created BREN Volunteer Eddy of Fame
- Designs and prints the first BREN t-shirt

2020

BREN flourished in 2020 despite the changes necessitated by Covid-19. Three in-person educational programs were conducted before Covid-19, two in partnership with City of Star. Two stewardship projects were also completed, one was a trash pick-up with Eagle High School students and the other was the removal of 600 invasive trees at Barber Park. BREN provided technical support and communications to Golden Eagle Audubon Society and Ada County Parks and Waterways for the bold habitat enhancement project.

BREN went virtual in April and presented eight more educational programs online that are available on BREN's YouTube channel. BREN resumed outdoor activities in May with the Make It Pretty Boise River Cleanup sponsored by Odell Brewing. Ninety five people picked up trash at four river sites. BREN held three cleanup Flotillas, three bird counts at Expo Idaho, four stewardship events and helped volunteers grow dozens of black cottonwood trees.

BREN started a false indigo control pilot project in Garden City at the ["Notch"](#) and continued to improve habitat at Charlie Woods Park in Eagle. BREN was an active participant in Ada County's public process to consider a new future for Expo Idaho.

The BREN [Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#) was written and adopted. In a well-planned and facilitated process, BREN leaders conducted a member survey and interviews, a mission assessment, and a planning retreat. The Plan establishes goals and objectives and lists actions that will be taken. The Idaho Army National Guard underwrote the reprinting of 100 copies of the Boise River Enhancement Plan after the original 100 were distributed.

Ben Rippey, Laurie Whittaker, Dave Kordiyak, Shawn Edwards, Kim Ingraham, Kim Chmura, Julio Frias and Lisa Reed were Volunteers of the Year and Kathy Peter, Mary McGown, Dale Reynolds and Heidi Ware Carlisle were inducted in the Volunteer Eddy of Fame.

BREN Delivers in 2020

- BREN Strategic Plan 2021-2025 adopted
- Partners/advises on enhancement opportunities
 - Notch False Indigo Removal project
 - Invasive tree removal at Barber Park
 - Pond riparian habitat enhancement at Charlie Woods Park in Eagle
 - Ada County Expo Idaho Future
- Organizes 10 educational programs
 - Birds of the Boise River
 - Fish of the Boise River
 - Periphyton 1010
 - Hope for Boise River Waterfowl
 - Decisions Ahead for Expo Idaho
 - Crayfish Methylmercury Research Project
 - No-Till Farming
- Hosts a virtual Membership Appreciation Party, named seven people as 2019 Volunteers of the Year and inducted four people into the BREN Volunteer Eddy of Fame
- Publishes 21 BREN Blogs

