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THE UPPER SNAKE RIVER HEADWATERS: PHOTO, VIDEO AND AUDIO DOCUMENTATION

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✦ BACKGROUND

On March 30, 2009, passage of the Craig Thomas Snake Headwaters Legacy Act added the Snake River Headwaters to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Snake River Headwaters is unique in that it encompasses a connected watershed, rather than just one river or isolated rivers across a region. It includes 14 rivers and 25 separate river segments totaling 414 river miles (Figure 1).

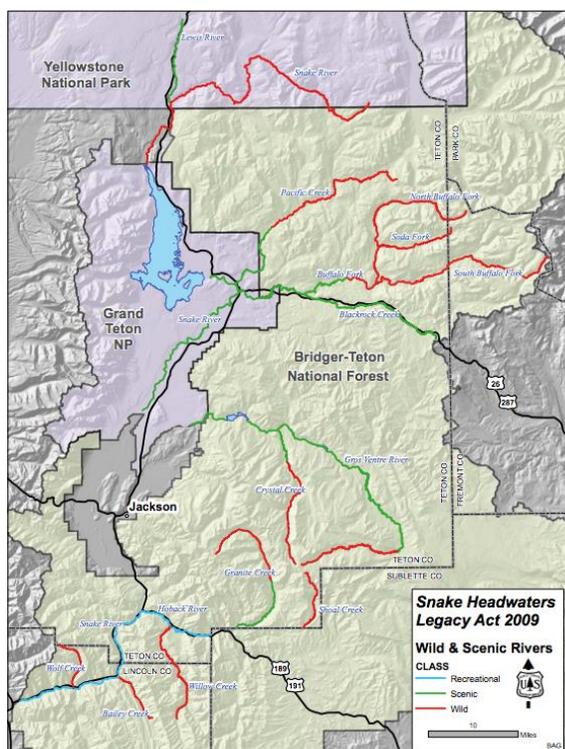


Figure 1. Snake River headwaters protected under the Craig Thomas Snake Headwaters Legacy Act

✦ UPPER SNAKE RIVER WATERSHED EXPLORATION

In early August 2014, I spent 10 days attempting to visit all 14 rivers and creeks in the recently protected Upper Snake River Watershed. My father, John Sherwin, joined me as an assistant on the expedition. My goal was to make photographs of each river/creek, while also documenting the journey and the surroundings. I also made video and audio recordings of each of the waterways. I will be sharing my observations in an immersive installation as part of a three-person exhibition titled, *The Upper Snake River; Three Photographic Approaches to the Snake River Watershed*, at The Art Museum of Eastern Idaho, May 21-August 15, 2015.

The first leg of the trip, August 3-9, was spent in the central and southern sections of the watershed using Jackson, WY as our home base. During this portion of the expedition we visited the Snake River, Gros Ventre River, Crystal Creek, Hoback River, Granite Creek, Bailey Creek, Wolf Creek and Willow Creek. We also attempted to find Shoal Creek, but were deterred by heavy thunderstorms and miles of difficult bushwhacking. We accessed each of the waterways at multiple locations and acquired a total of 20 gigabytes worth of data. During this initial phase, I also visited The Art Museum of Eastern Idaho in Idaho Falls, ID and met with the director of the museum and the other two artists participating in the exhibition to discuss the details of the gallery and installation plans.

The second leg of the trip, August 10-13, was spent in the northern portion of the watershed using the University of Wyoming National Park Research Station, or AMK ranch, as our home base. During this portion of the expedition we visited Pacific Creek,

Blackrock Creek, the Buffalo Forks, Lewis River and the Snake River. Once again, each waterway was accessed in multiple locations and I gathered an additional 20 gigabytes of data for the project. My good friend, George Leys, who has been a resident of the valley for close to 50 years, led our Buffalo Forks trek. We covered 12 miles, or more, with heavy gear bags in order to visit the confluence of the North and South Buffalo Forks.

The UW NPS Research Station, ideally located in the northern portion of the Upper Snake River Watershed along the banks of Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park, was the perfect home base for this second segment of the project. It enabled us to spend more time in the field, rather than on the road. I also did quite a bit of photographing and recording, both video and audio, right on the grounds of the Research Station. With the exception of an occasional airplane, the sounds collected around the Research Station, including approaching thunderstorms, rain, wind, squirrel banter, etc., were some of the cleanest recordings made throughout our journey. The library at the Research Station was also an inspiring resource. I collected numerous new titles to read and browsed a few of the many excellent guidebooks. I also enjoyed meeting the other residents conducting research at the Station and sharing our respective projects. Although my project was more artistic than scientific, I felt tremendous support from the other researchers and staff of the Station. It is truly an inspiring location for anyone looking for a quiet retreat to focus and renew.

In total, our travels took us throughout the Bridger Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park and Teton, Sublette, Lincoln and Park counties, an estimated 800 miles of driving (many of which were dirt, or gravel). We also hiked roughly 30 miles, most of which consisted of unmarked trails, overgrown access roads, or game trails. In addition to the usual critters, we spotted numerous elk, pronghorn, and black-tailed deer, a beaver, moose, sandhill cranes and evidence of a large grizzly bear along the Buffalo Fork.



ART MUSEUM OF EASTERN IDAHO UPPER SNAKE RIVER EXHIBIT

I am currently editing the imagery and recordings and working on several pieces for the *Upper Snake River* exhibit at The Art Museum of Eastern Idaho. My portion of the show will consist of a large circular video projection of moving water captured at each of the waterways. The video will be projected on the ground and a corresponding audio component will surround the viewer. There will also be two large still image pieces hung on the walls. One piece consists of a photographic typology of rocks collected over the 10 days, while the other is a large “map” created from video stills placed in the relative geographical location they were captured. Several additional monitors will be scattered throughout the gallery showing various wind study footage and time-lapse sequences. Finally, a photo book titled, “Journey Water” that compiles my photographs in a loose visual narrative chronicling our adventures, will also be on display.

