The unique and regional significance of the Bear River Basin watershed and its value to the environmental health of the Great Salt Lake Basin cannot be understated. Recently conducted forums on water quality management practices have revealed the urgent need for educating and informing the public on the issues pertaining to water quality within the basin - especially with regards to nonpoint source water pollution.

In an effort to address these issues, the Bear River Resource Conservation and Development (Bear River RC&D) initiated the production of *A River Runs Through Us*, an internet web-site and resource center dedicated to the recognition and advancement of water quality improvement projects throughout the Bear River Basin watershed.

*A River Runs Through Us* was conceived as a means to provide information - in a meaningful format - pertaining to nonpoint source water pollution and related water quality issues for not only the citizens of the Bear River Basin, but the ever-increasing audience of the World Wide Web. Its purpose is to be a fun, interactive, educational tool to highlight water quality improvement sites that have been implemented through the cooperation of private and governmental groups, organizations and individuals. It is also intended to help create opportunities necessary to collaborate, network and share resources in developing sound and long lasting solutions towards the betterment of water quality. We invite you to visit *A River Runs Through Us* at http://www.bearrivercd.org.
What is a Best Management Practice?

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods, measures, and practices designed to reduce or prevent water pollution, usually applied as a system rather than a single practice. Each BMP is developed or identified to be an effective, practicable means of preventing or reducing pollutants generated from nonpoint sources to a level compatible with water quality goals. BMPs are intended to reduce contamination of surface and groundwater while still maintaining use and productivity within the resources.

The following BMPs were highlighted in the website for A River Runs Through Us:

Animal Waste Management

Many years ago, dairy farmers were encouraged to position their barns and milking operations near rivers and streams because it was believed to be an efficient and economical design for the disposal of animal waste. We’ve finally learned over the years that someone always lives downstream! Animal waste can have serious consequences on the quality of water in our rivers and our drinking supplies. It is estimated that one single cow can produce the same amount of waste in a day as 20 to 40 humans.

Stream Bank and Riparian Restoration

Eroded stream banks and lack of riparian corridors accelerate the degradation of water quality and loss of habitat for many species. Because of modern drainage practices, many streams receive all storm event water within a very short period of time. These heavy inflows can increase flooding and cause serious erosion in streams without vegetated banks. Stream banks and riparian restoration practices help reduce soil loss and improve water quality, as well as preserving and improving habitat.

In-Stream Reconstruction

Reconstruction within stream and river beds is needed when erosion has destroyed an area beyond simple repair. Replacing a riparian corridor is not immediately possible in this scenario because there is usually no place for plants to root. The channelized riverway is a real threat to the quality of water downstream, because it is constantly sloughing sediments from the vertical banks and sending them downstream.

Upland Management

A nationwide study conducted by the USDA reported that over 3 billion tons of cropland were being lost to erosion annually. This lost cropland is depositing sediments, nutrients, and chemicals into our waterways. In 1985, Congress established the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which is a voluntary program whose aim is to retire cropland acreage for at least ten years. The program looks for highly erodible or environmentally sensitive cropland and establishes permanent land cover of grass or trees. Participants of CRP are compensated with an annual per-acre rent plus reimbursement for half the cost of establishing the permanent land cover.

Wetland Restoration

Healthy wetlands act as the environment’s natural filtering system. They improve water quality by filtering sediment and nutrients, and help maintain groundwater levels through recharge. They also reduce soil erosion and function as flood control devices. Many different wildlife species use wetlands as their habitat, lending a recreational value to wetlands as well. Hunting, fishing, and bird watching are all popular recreational benefits.