

Rocky Run
DNR/Brule River Sportsmen's Club trout habitat restoration project

Project Description

Project to restore fish habitat on Rocky Run, Douglas County

The project is in an area of Rocky Run extending through the Robert Clark property all within the town of Brule, located in the southern one half of the Northeast quarter of Section 12 in Township 47N and Range 10W. The section of stream chosen for this project flows for approximately fifteen hundred feet through a beaver damaged area of the stream (see attached location map).

This section historically contained an area of rocky gravelly bottom with many large logs that provided excellent trout spawning and living habitat. Today, the trout habitat of this reach of stream is fully to lightly buried in sand that had accumulated over the last century, exacerbated by beaver activity in the last three or four decades. The accumulation of bed load sand/silt has caused the water surface to rise and increased stream bank wetness creating a perfect condition for speckled alder to over grow the site (see attached photos). The combination of alder growth, beaver impoundment and the high-water table has limited the rehabilitation of a healthy stream side forest. Bank side alder tend to grow toward the sun or generally out and over the stream channel where they load with heavy winter snow and tip into the channel plugging with debris and then catching sand. Alder are a clump species and as stems of the clump tip into the stream the shrub simply replaces the dying stems with vertical shoots. The project objective is to hand remove the small woody debris (mostly dead alder stems) holding the bed load sand in place and cutting the stream side alder at the bank and within thirty feet of the bank (the distance that a mature alder can tip into the channel). Old beaver dam footprints will also be removed from the bed of the stream. Once the sand/silt binding material and beaver dams are hand removed by Brule River Sportsmen's Club volunteers the materials will gradually move downstream re-exposing the natural stream bed and any buried logs that remain. Brule River Sportsmen's Club volunteers will visit the site multiple times over the next couple of seasons continuing the hand removal process. Trained DNR staff will cut the bank side alder as needed along with the in-stream project work and suppress individual alder clump re-growth with an aquatic herbicide. Once the bank wetness subsides as the water surface falls, the Sport Club could return in following years to plant evergreens (likely white spruce) in areas too far away from natural seed sources to jumpstart the riparian forest succession which will eventually limit future alder re-growth (alder are an early successional stage tree specie that does not do well in a shaded condition of a healthy evergreen forest). Logs may be added to improve channel structure and provide trout overhead cover in future years. The Brule River Sportsmen's Club/DNR has gained landowner permission to do this work. Once the project is completed over the next couple of years, DNR fisheries staff will annually monitor and maintain the restored condition.

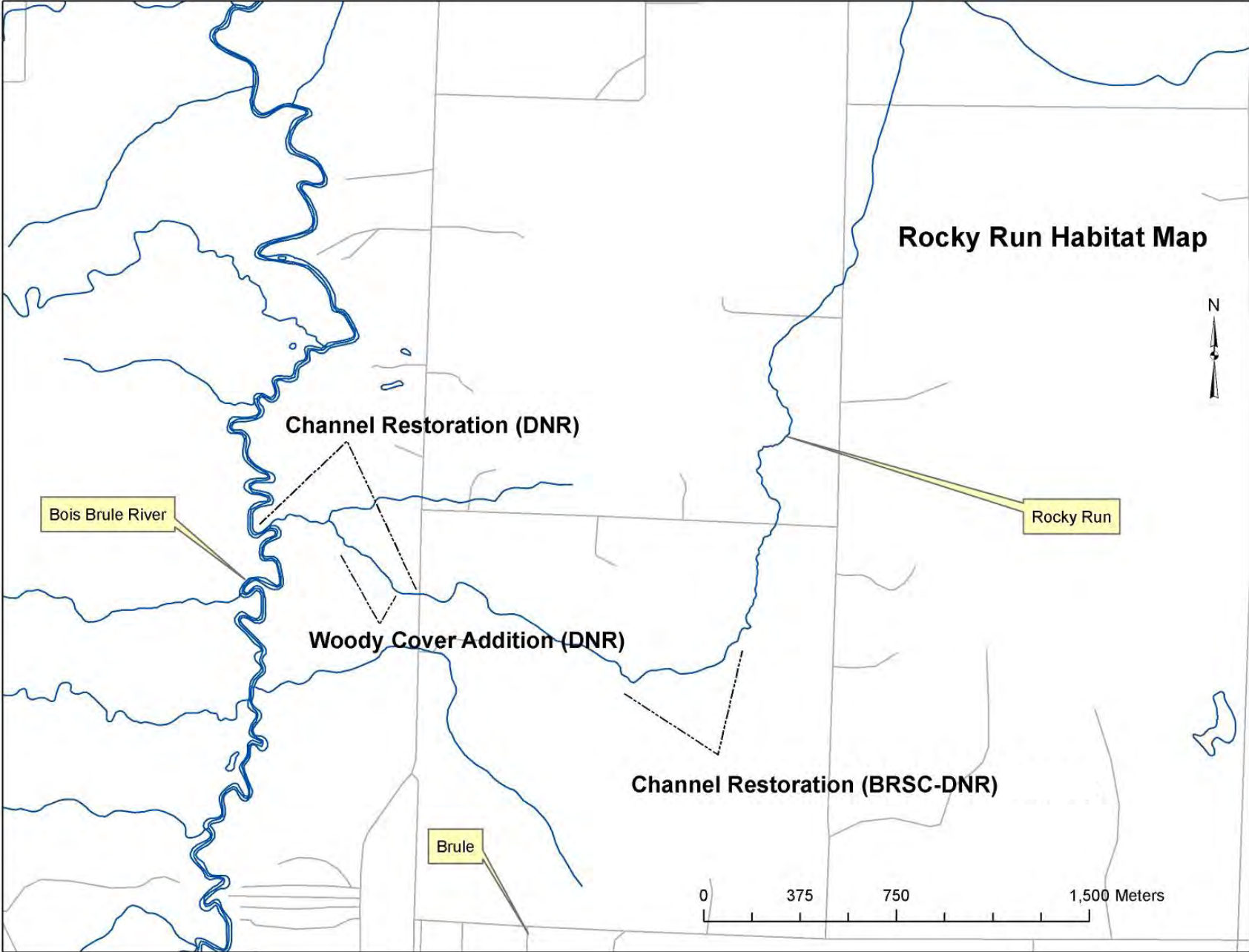




Figure 1 Map of Rocky Run Habitat Improvement Project



Figure 2 Rocky Run sand buried reach with old beaver dam footprint



Figure 3 Rocky Run showing alder tipping problem



Figure 4 Downstream most beaver dam