

A Planted Trout Stream Revisited

The year was 2014, and I hadn't returned to my beloved little friend that gave me so much pleasure as a younger teenager. It had gone into ruin over the years, but now it had returned, with signs of full recovery along the stream banks, where it counts.

Even though a little wider buffer on the fencing program would have been much better, you learn to take what you can, when the opportunity presents itself, because it has paid off, big time!



Now, the willows that I planted along the water's edge, in my very first riparian planting program, back in the late 1980's, are showing their stuff, and the trout are happy too!

This beautiful little spring creek will remain nameless for now, it resides on an old friend's property, and over the years, I have always respected his desire to keep it our own little secret, so I did!

Now, you can see the exceptional cover habitat that these types of plantings can fix, on a recovering trout stream. Beneath all of those clumps of submerged willow trunks are large trout, maintaining the populations in the stream. The only reproducing pod of trout on the entire stream system, depend on this reach of their home waters, for survival and reproduction.



This photograph shows what the stream looked like, a year before the fencing program. You can see the heavy silt laden stream bed in the photograph. This would clean out, years later!

In the years before the fencing and willow planting was completed, I did do some enhancement work, mainly by adding some cover habitats, all cleared by Bill Griffiths, the fish habitat research biologist that I worked with at that time.

Both Bill and river engineer Sheldon Lowe, who later published his book on the topic, were both a big help to me, when I was starting out in the field. Bill was the guy to get things done, and I learned a lot from him, over a few years of working together!



This is what the spring creek looked like, just after the fence went up. Many of the old existing willows were dying off, so the timing was just right, for this trout stream!



The cover habitats in the photograph you just looked at, are for juvenile brook trout, to find refuge and a safe home until they are ready for the free-swimming world of a trout stream. The cover habitats were all added to locations just downstream and upstream of spawning habitats.

These cover habitats would work good until the willows that were to be planted after the fencing, would provide the necessary habitat for juvenile trout later-on.



The photograph above shows the long, slender new growth cuttings that I used for the first plantings. They did the job, as-long-as they were stiff enough for pushing into the soft dam soil along the water's edge of the spring creek.



The photo above shows what the cuttings looked like, a few years later!



The outside of stream bends or meanders were eroding at the time of the plantings, so they were also my very first stream bank stabilization projects!

This methodology was and still is the most rewarding as far as results are concerned! The amount of silt that you can prevent from entering spawning habitats and the main-stem of a beautiful spring creek, is just incredible!

This spring fed trout stream provided me with the first results, which later would be put-to-use in the “Bow Valley Riparian Recovery and Enhancement Program,” which just happens to be providing the same long-term results as the first trout stream did. The Bighill Creek is the show case that is close to home, and I do watch it very closely.



This 2014 photograph, shows how the first plantings are coming along in some areas good and others, it has been a long slow grind. The stream bank bend is the same featured in the photograph of the black plastic tub full of cuttings, above. Please note the heavily grazed pasture just beyond the fence!

When I took this photo, the fence is behind my back, so both sides are protected. The inside bend didn't grow as well, but that is just normal, you always get a few survivors here and there in difficult planting terrain.



So, I guess for some of you, you would like to know about the trout. Well, let me fill you in, the trout are doing great, both the large and the small!



This is a photograph of one of the juvenile trout that hatch and grow on this very short length of trout stream. Below is one of the bigger trout.

