

# Central Mountains of Idaho Case Study

## Research Inquiry

In 2016, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) hired SHRA to write a history of travel between New Meadows, Idaho and Riggins, Idaho along the Little Salmon River. ITD asked SHRA to research travel in this corridor from pre-settlement through the development of U.S. 95 and write an engaging public history on the research results. This project was part of the mitigation plan for ITD's removal of an historic bridge over the Little Salmon River on U.S. 95.

## Methodology

Following a literature review, SHRA began primary source research on the development of the North and South Highway. The Little Salmon River stretch of the highway historically presented unique challenges for travelers, which SHRA was able to understand through research in a variety of primary sources, including General Land Office maps, plats, U.S. Post Office sketches, and early newspaper reports. Research in ITD, Idaho Department of Public Works, and U.S. Bureau of Public Roads records helped SHRA flesh out the later years of the road's development. Throughout the process of writing, SHRA used topographic maps and Google Earth to bridge the gap between written records and the physical landscape.

## Research Conclusion

Through meticulous research, SHRA discovered that the Little Salmon River stretch of U.S. 95 was one of the most difficult pieces of that road to construct. Engineers and politicians struggled for decades to find a way of connecting north and south Idaho. Although the canyon of the Little Salmon seemed a logical way to cut through mountains, it also presented enormous physical obstacles. The region's geography helped elevate SHRA's road story into a story of engineering triumph over enormous difficulties.

## Repositories and Collections Consulted

- U.S. National Archives:
  - U.S. Post Office
  - U.S. Bureau of Public Roads
  - U.S. General Land Office
- Idaho State Archives:
  - Idaho Department of Public Works
  - Idaho Transportation Department
  - Historic Photographs
- Historic Maps
- Historic Newspapers

## Deliverables

- Narrative Report
- Project Database



Contact Jennifer Stevens, Ph.D., for references  
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