

EXHIBIT

8

DATE

Jan 21, 2013

HB

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LONG RANGE PLANNING APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM  
Barker-Hughesville Reclamation Fish Barrier Project  
Gayla Wortman, Cascade Conservation District

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for the record, I am Gayla Wortman. I am the chairman of the Cascade Conservation District. I rise in support of the Resource Development Grant for the Barker-Hughesville Reclamation Area Fish Barrier Project on the Dry Fork of Belt Creek which is part of the Missouri River drainage located in the Little Belt Mountains in Cascade County.

The Barker-Hughesville area is a historic mining and milling district near Monarch. The resultant waste deposits typical of mining activities of past decades created stream reaches that effectively function as barriers to fish migration, making it possible for a population of nearly genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout to thrive. EPA is now reclaiming the Barker-Hughesville mining district near Monarch, removing the waste deposits from the stream that were protecting the cutthroat trout from other fish species.



This project consists of the placement of a cast-in-place concrete fish barrier on the Dry Fork of Belt Creek to prevent non-native fish from passing through newly reclaimed areas upstream to the native westslope cutthroat trout habitat. In the absence of barriers to upstream movement of non-native fishes, the westslope cutthroat trout would be hybridized with rainbow trout or displaced by brook trout. The project is predicted to provide nearly 26 miles of habitat for westslope cutthroat trout with improved water quality conditions. Currently, genetically unaltered westslope cutthroat trout occupy only about 8% of their historic habitat across their entire range, and only 4% of their historic habitat in north central Montana. Concerted efforts to restore westslope cutthroat trout to historical habitats are necessary to prevent potential species extinction and loss of an important historical legacy of the state of Montana.

It is the position of the Cascade Conservation District that the desired result of increasing westslope cutthroat trout populations in the Dry Fork of Belt will be attainable with the completion of this project. This method has been used on similar streams in Montana with a good success rate; however, the project is unique in that its focus is maintaining a large historical connected population of westslope, something that is currently nearly non-existent in the Missouri River Drainage. It is even possible to increase population densities enough to allow limited harvest by the public.

Cooperating partners for the project currently include PPL Montana, Future Fisheries Program of Montana, the EPA, and the Forest Service. In addition, at least one local sporting group has also expressed support and may contribute funding for the project. Preliminary designs have been completed for the proposed project and if approved, implementation of the plan could occur as soon as this summer. RDGP funds will be used for the construction of the fish barrier, while other costs associated with the project will be funded through matching funds from EPA, Trout Unlimited, the Forest Service, FWP, and others.

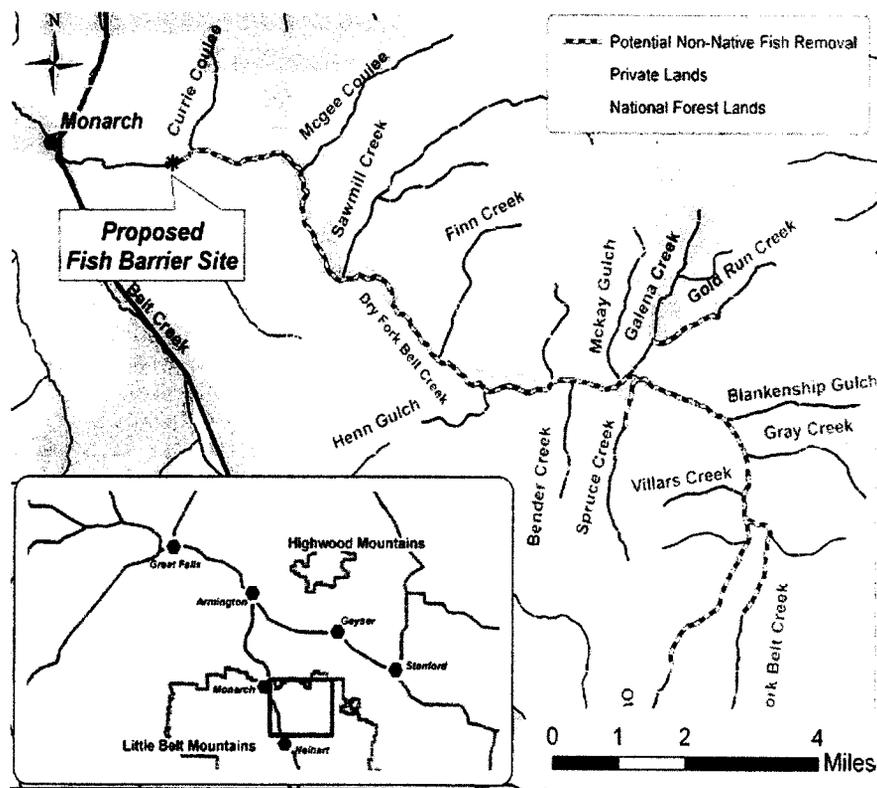


Figure 1. Site location of proposed fish barrier.

We think this is a worthwhile and important project that will secure a pure population of our State Fish, the Westslope Cutthroat Trout, but also provide quality outdoor recreation for many generations to come. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for this grant proposal.

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Conservation  
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