

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTIONS
PRIVATE POND APPLICATION

Name and address of applicant Will Day
P.O. Box 356
Conner, MT 59827

Has the pond been approved for a private pond permit? No

Location:

County Ravalli Township 1S Range 19W Section 16

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located Camp Creek

Name(s) of fish species proposed for introduction
Rainbow & Brook Trout, and Perch

Is this species legally present in the drainage? Rainbow Trout
have not been found in the upper reaches of Camp Creek in FWP or
USFS surveys, although they do exist in the East Fork Bitterroot
River, into which Camp Creek drains. Brook trout are present
throughout much of the Camp Creek drainage. Perch are not found in
the Bitterroot River drainage (except for a pond or two perhaps on
the Lee Metcalf NWR)

Species of special concern present in the drainage yes

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish
populations? None___ Minor___ Major X

Comments:

Escapement from pond looks to be highly likely. The upper forks of
Camp Creek near the pond site have cutthroat, brook, and bull trout
present. The predominant trout species is cutthroat, with brook
trout being uncommon and bull trout rare. Westslope Cutthroat in
upper Camp Creek not far below the pond site have been found to be
genetically pure, despite the presence of rainbow trout in the East
Fork near the mouth of Camp Creek several miles downstream.

Escapement of rainbows and brook trout stocked in this pond could have a direct impact on the genetic structure of both the pure cutthroat and the bull trout populations.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation? None___ Minor__x___ Major

Comments:

Fish numbers in upper Camp Creek are currently healthy. If escapement occurs competition between the introduced trout and the existing trout is likely be a factor.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction? None___ Minor__x___ Major

Comments:

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location? None___ Minor__x___ Major

Comments:

Unknown. Substrate not visible. Water source is from underground springs, which could create potential spawning sites within pond itself.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Difficult. Pond looks like it would be difficult to dry up, and its close proximity to the upper forks of Camp Creek would make it difficult to poison. Fish that did escape into one of the upper forks of Camp Creek would be impossible to remove.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?

Possible. There are, however, numerous such ponds in the Bitterroot Valley, and the cumulative effects are unknown.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

The proposal to grant this private fish pond license includes the stocking of fish. The application is for several (3) species. One of the most desirable alternatives would be to transfer fish from the adjacent creek, but no legal mechanism exists at this time to do that. Other alternatives would include limited stocking, rather than stocking all four species listed:

1. Stock just Rainbow trout - Present in East Fork near the mouth of Camp Creek, but not found in Camp Creek itself nor any of its upper tributaries. If rainbow escaped from this pond, they could inter-breed with the native cutthroat and thus pose a threat to existing cutthroat genetic structure. They might also compete for food and habitat with cutthroat already present in the creek.

2. Stock just Brook Trout—they are currently not allowed to be stocked according to FWP policy.

3. Stock just Westslope cutthroat trout—the westslope cutthroat that are commercially available do not originate from the Bitterroot and have a different genetic makeup than bitterroot fish, so they could pose a threat to the purity of the existing cutthroat genetic structure.

5. No action (no stocking). The close proximity of this pond to the upper forks of Camp Creek, and the inefficiency of screening make escapement a very probable outcome of stocking in this pond. A NO ACTION alternative would prevent the potential impacts of stocking to the adjacent waters and the fish therein.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any.

The outlet to the pond must be screened. But even with a screen, escapement is likely. Current laws regarding the transfer of live fish from one water body to another govern the legality of movement of fish planted in this pond to other waters. This movement of fish to other waters would be enforceable under this regulation.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:

Bitterroot National Forest

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction:

Bitterroot National Forest

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? Yes/No If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

No. The proposed action occurs on private lands. This issue can be handled at the EA level.

EA prepared by Larry Javorsky—acting Fisheries Biologist 05/16/00

Comments will be accepted until June 16, 2000

Comments should be sent to: Larry Javorsky
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