

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION

Description of water body:

Name: Rainbow Reservoir & Black Eagle Reservoir Tailwater
County: Cascade
Legal description: T21N R4E

Name of the drainage where the water located:

Rainbow Reservoir is an impoundment on the Missouri River at Great Falls. Rainbow Dam is the second in a series of five dams on the Missouri beginning at Black Eagle Dam in Great Falls. Rainbow Reservoir is approximately 1.5 miles long, has 126 surface acres and impounds water to approximately ½ mile upstream of Giant Springs State fish hatchery. There is about 1.5 miles of free-flowing Missouri River in Great Falls between Black Eagle Dam and the head of Rainbow Reservoir.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Brown trout.

Purpose of introduction:

Stocking is proposed to enhance existing brown trout population to improve urban fishing opportunities in Great Falls area. Brown trout exhibit good growth in this area (up to 10 pounds) but numbers are limited by poor recruitment of young fish, likely caused by high degree of flushing loss over Rainbow Dam.

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

Yes. Brown trout are common in this area and have been stocked previously by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 1944, 1947, and 1950. The reservoir/river area adjacent to Giant Springs is stocked annually with rainbow trout to provide urban fishing opportunity in the Great Falls area. Brown and rainbow trout growth is good in this area but reproduction is poor due to limited spawning habitat and high flushing rate.

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage:

None in this area. Warm and coolwater species of concern found 20-200 miles downstream include pallid sturgeon, blue sucker, sicklefin chub, sturgeon chub, and sauger.

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

None Minor Major

Comments: No significant impacts are expected. There is limited natural brown trout reproduction in this area and the population is isolated by dams.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation? None Minor Major

Comments: Brown trout are already present in this area and have been stocked previously. Brown trout will consume fish as part of their diet. Brown trout habitat is limited in downstream areas of the Missouri River due to high summer water temperatures and high turbidity. Previous fisheries survey work has documented no significant

interaction between brown trout and warm/cool water fish species in downstream areas.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?
 None Minor Major

Comments: Brown trout will consume invertebrates in this area but unlikely to have significant effect.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:
 None Minor Major

Comments: Some natural reproduction will likely occur but recruitment appears to be limited by high flushing losses over Rainbow Dam.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked? No. Species is already common in this area.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? No.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action). Do not stock.

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

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction: None.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction: PPL Montana (operators of Black Eagle and Rainbow Dams).

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. Impacts expected to be very minor.

EA prepared by: Steve Leathe, Region 4 Fisheries Mgr. **DATE:** May 17, 2000

Comments will be accepted until: June 9, 2000

Comments should be sent to: MDFW&P, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls 59405