



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

## HELENA AREA RESOURCE OFFICE

June 20, 2003

TO: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620  
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:  
Director's Office  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Enforcement Division  
Lands Section  
Design & Construction Bureau  
Legal Unit  
FWP Commissioners  
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715  
Thomas Mendyke, Helena IR, 317 Cruise Ave., Helena, MT 59601  
Tom Sathers, Headwaters Fish & Game Assoc., P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941  
Broadwater County Commissioners, Broadwater County Courthouse, Townsend, MT 59644  
Lewis and Clark County Commissioners, 316 N Park, Helena, MT 59601  
Jefferson County Commissioners, Box H, Boulder, MT 59632  
Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited, Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807  
Steve Luebeck, George Grant TU, Box 563, Butte, MT 59703  
David Payne, Missouri River TU, 4620 Liberty, Helena, MT 59601  
John Wilson, Montana Trout Unlimited, 405 Monroe, Helena, MT 59601  
Jack Sautter, Broadwater Stream and Lake Comm., 41 River Road, Townsend, MT 59644  
Virgil Binkley, Broadwater Rod and Gun, Box 641, Townsend, MT 59644  
Prickly Pear Sportsman's Association, Box 48, East Helena, MT 59635  
Tom Gannon, Backcountry Horsemen of Montana, Box 2106, Clancy, MT 59634  
James Mahaer, Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen, Box 4008, Helena, MT 59601  
Paul Updike, Box 460, Townsend, MT 59644  
Dave Brown, Elkhorn Working Group, 4510 Harmony Lane, Helena, MT 59602  
Loren Davis, 1429 Helena Avenue, Helena, MT 59601  
Joel Davis, 3892 E. US Highway 12, East Helena, MT 59635  
Kenneth and Patricia Peterson, 1024 Peosta, Helena, MT 59601  
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*Jefferson  
Misc.*

Keith Kirscher, 49 Lower Ray Creek Road, Townsend, MT 59644  
Ken Romo, 74 Meyer Road, Townsend, MT 59644  
Gerald Reller, 300 Goose Bay Lane, Townsend, MT 59644  
John Stoner, 63 River Road, Townsend, MT 59644  
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Neil Larson, Box 9506, Helena, MT 59604  
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Leslie O'Neil, Box 305, Clancy, MT 59634  
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Iwy Obrigewitch, 201 N. Oak, Townsend, MT 59644  
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Earl Dorsey, 805 Mill Road, Helena, MT 59602  
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Tim Mulligan, 91 E Hwy 2, Whitehall, MT 59759  
Dave Ewan, 26 Crazy Mountain, Clancy, MT 59634  
Tom and Judy Kilmer, 621 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Helena, MT 59601  
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Rep. Jill Conhenour, 2610 Colt Dr. East, Helena, MT 59635-3442  
Rep. Scott Mendenhall, 281 McKeon Ln., Cardwell, MT 59721  
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Jeff Hoeffner, Townsend  
Rick Diehl, Townsend  
Chuck Hahn, Townsend  
John Hahn, Townsend  
Elizabeth Radley, Helena  
John and Sherry Zipperian, Clancy  
James Madison, Clancy  
Gallatin County Commissioners, Bozeman

## Decision Notice

Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program: Introduction of Westslope Cutthroat Trout Into Bar None Pond For Conservation Purposes; Dutchman Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project; and Introduction of Westslope Cutthroat Trout to Whitehorse Creek

### Proposal

The proposed projects are part of the overall Elkhorns Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program that is intended to ensure the long-term persistence of the seven remaining pure westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) populations in the Elkhorn Mountain Range. The proposed projects (three Environmental Assessments) include establishing a WCT brood pond on the Bar None Ranch that would increase the recovery program's ability to collect eggs for future WCT introduction efforts; securing an existing WCT population in Dutchman Creek by mechanically removing (electrofishing and trapping) a small number of nonnative trout from the upper 2-mile reach of the stream; and introducing pure WCT from local populations into currently fishless Whitehorse Creek.

### Environmental Policy Act Process

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is required to assess potential impacts of the proposal to the human and physical environment. In compliance with requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), Environmental Assessments (currently available from Lee Nelson, 406-266-3425) were completed for each project by FWP and released for public comment in May 2003.

Public comments on these projects were taken for 32 days (May 2, 2003, to June 2, 2003) and public meetings regarding the projects were held in Montana City (May 13, 2003) and Townsend (May 15, 2003). The Environmental Assessments were mailed to over 100 individuals/ groups on the FWP MEPA mailing list, and from a list of those who had previously expressed interested in cutthroat trout restoration projects in the Elkhorn Mountains. News releases or Legal Notices, which announce the availability of the EA and information about the public meetings, were published in the Helena Independent Record, Boulder Monitor, Jefferson County Courier, Whitehall Ledger, and Townsend Star. Press releases were also sent to local radio and television stations. Additionally, the EA was posted on the FWP web site.

Issues raised during the public comment period on the Environmental Assessments are addressed in the comment section of this Decision Notice. There are no modifications to the Draft Environmental Assessments based on public comment, and the Draft Environmental Assessments and this Decision Notice together serve as the final documents.

### Summary of Issues Addressed in the Environmental Assessment

The Environmental Assessments list the issues in detail. These include:

- Threats to WCT in Montana, the Elkhorn Mountains, and proposed project streams.
- Current distribution of WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains.

- Methodology of WCT collections and introductions into fishless Whitehorse Creek and Bar None brood pond.
- Restoration objectives for reducing abundance of nonnative trout.
- Methodology of nonnative trout removals.

### Summary of Public Comment

At the close of the comment period, June 2, 2003, FWP had received one written comment. No people attended the public meetings in Montana City and Townsend.

### Written Comments on the Proposal

Comment 1. "Montana TU supports introduction of westslope cutthroats into Whitehorse Creek, removal of non-native trout from Dutchman Creek and establishment of a brood and rearing pond for westslope cutthroats at the Bar None Ranch. After reviewing the EAs for these projects we find they are full consistent with overall objectives for westslope cutthroat restoration in the Elkhorns, and are soundly designed."

Response: Noted

### Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessments, public comment, and the high risk of extinction of genetically pure WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains, it is my decision to proceed with the establishment of a WCT brood pond on the Bar None Ranch, removal of nonnative trout from the upper reach of Dutchman Creek, and the introduction of pure WCT to Whitehorse Creek. These efforts are part of the previously approved Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program (July 1999), and are consistent with statewide conservation and restoration strategies, goals and objectives as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana (signed by multiple state and federal agencies, and organizations in May 1999).

I find there to be no significant impact on the human or physical environment associated with these projects, except to help ensure the long-term persistence of genetically pure, locally adapted WCT in the Elkhorn Mountain Range. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessments are the appropriate level of analysis, and that Environmental Impact Statements are not required.



June 20, 2003.

Michael Korn  
Helena Area Coordinator, FWP