



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

March 23, 2004
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Fisheries Division
Endangered Species Coordinator
Water Resources Program Manager
Great Falls Office

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
MT Environmental Information Center
Montana Audubon Council
State Historic Preservation Office
Lewis and Clark County Conservation District
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
Montana State Library, Helena
Pat Barnes Chapter, Trout Unlimited, 62 Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601
Missouri River Fly Fishers, P.O. Box 1985, Great Falls, MT 59403
Christian and Nora Hohenlohe, Ox Bow Ranch, P.O. Box 215, Wolf Creek, MT 59648
Josephine Lahti, 1350 Craig Frontage Road, Wolf Creek, MT 59648
Robert Wirth, P.O. Box 225, 1000 MT Highway 434, Wolf Creek, MT 59648

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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In February, you received a draft environmental assessment (EA) prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Program tentatively planned to provide partial funding to a project calling for the conversion of a flood irrigation system to a pivot sprinkler system on the Ox Bow Ranch. In exchange, the salvaged water created by the project would be converted to in-stream flow purposes in lower Little Prickly Pear Creek.

Based on the EA, it is my decision to proceed with providing funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the Little Prickly Pear Creek Irrigation Conversion and In-stream Flow Project. I find no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. The completed EA and the attached Decision Notice provide an appropriate level of analysis. Please consider the draft EA and Decision Notice as the final document.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Lere
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division

DECISION NOTICE
**LITTLE PRICKLY PEAR CREEK IRRIGATION CONVERSION AND IN-
STREAM FLOW PROJECT**

Prepared By
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
March 23, 2004

I. Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to provide funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to improve in-stream flows in lower Little Prickly Pear Creek, a tributary to the Missouri River located near the town of Wolf Creek.

II. Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA required FWP to assess the potential consequences of this proposed action for the human and natural environment. The proposal was detailed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by FWP February 18, 2004. The 30-day comment period for this EA ended March 22, 2004.

No issues were raised during the public comment period on the EA. The Draft EA and Decision Notice will serve as the final document.

III. Summary of Public Comment

No public comment was received.

IV. Modifications to the Environmental Assessment

Modifications to the Draft EA are deemed to be unnecessary.

V. Decision

After review of the proposal, it is my decision to proceed with providing funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the Little Prickly Pear Creek irrigation conversion and in-stream flow project. The action will benefit the fishery and riparian wildlife on Little Prickly Pear Creek and the Missouri River.

I find there to be no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude that an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. The completed EA and the Decision Notice provide an appropriate level of analysis.

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division