



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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April 16, 2004
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

APR 26 2004

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

LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY 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, P.O. Box 5925, Helena, MT 59604
Zachary and Patricia Wirth, 2020 Sieben Canyon Road, Wolf Creek, MT 59648
Donald and Nancy Johnston, 2450 Sieben Canyon Road, Wolf Creek, MT 59648
Sieben Ranch, 1600 Sieben Canyon Road, Wolf Creek, MT 59648
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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In March, 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 a reach of Little Prickly Pear and Big Sheep creeks located upstream of Wolf Creek Canyon on the Rocking Z Ranch. In exchange, the salvaged water created by the project would be converted or leased for in-stream flow purposes. The intent of the project is to enhance fish and wildlife habitat on the two streams.

Based on the EA, it is my decision to proceed with providing funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the Upper 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lere', written in a cursive style.

Mark Lere
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division

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

Prepared By
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
April 16, 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 Little Prickly Pear and Big Sheep creeks, located upstream of Wolf Creek Canyon.

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) released by FWP March 15, 2004. The 30-day comment period for this EA ended April 15, 2004.

No comments or 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 upper Little Prickly Pear and Big Sheep creeks irrigation conversion and in-stream flow project. The action will benefit the fishery and riparian wildlife on Little Prickly Pear and Big Sheep creeks and on 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