



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

Region One
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Kalispell, MT 59901
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Ref:DV113-04
July 27, 2004

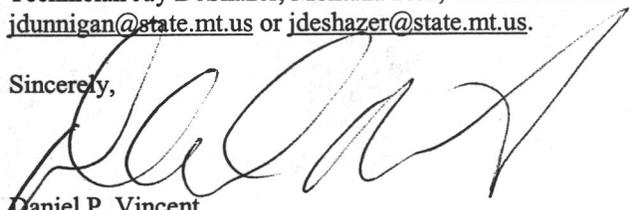
To: Governor's Office, Attn: Todd O'Hair, PO Box 200801, Helena, 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, PO Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Director's Office - Marilyn Johnson; Fisheries Division - Karen Zackheim;
Legal Unit - Brandi Fisher; Endangered Species Coordinator - Arnold Dude; Nongame Coordinator - Heidi
Youmans; Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries - Robert Snyder; Kalispell FWP
Carl Keller, BPA Environmental Policy, PO Box 3621 KEC-4, Portland, OR 27208
*Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, PO Box 201202, Helena, 59620-1202
*Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, 59715
Commissioner Mike Murphy, 2401 Recreation Road S, Wolf Creek, 59648
Sen. Aubyn Curtiss, PO Box 216, Fortine, 59918-0216
Rep. Rick Maedje, PO Box 447, Fortine, 59918-0447
Rep. Eileen Carney, PO Box 1193, Libby, 59923
Alliance for the Wild Rockies, PO Box 8731, Missoula, 59807
DNRC, Kevin Chappell, Ag & Grazing Mgmt. Bur., Trust Land Mgmt., PO Box 201601, Helena, 59620
Citizens for a Better Flathead, PO Box 771, Kalispell, 59903
*DNRC, Jon Dahlberg, 2250 Hwy 93 N, Kalispell, 59901
DNRC, Stillwater Forest, Bob Sandman, PO Box 164, Olney, 59927
Montana Wilderness Association, 43 Woodland Park Drive #9, Kalispell, 59901
Ecology Center, 801 Sherwood, Suite B, Missoula, 59802
Friends of the Wild Swan, Arlene Montgomery, PO Box 5103, Swan Lake, 59911
Jim Mann, Daily Inter Lake, 727 E. Idaho, Kalispell, 59901
Montana Ecosystem Defense Council, Will Snyder, 40 E. Main #3, Bozeman, 59715
Montana for Multiple Use, Peg Wagner, PO Box 3050, Columbia Falls, 59912
Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, PO Box 278 Pablo, 59855
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, PO Box 595, Helena, 59624
Montana Wildlife Federation, PO Box 1175, Helena, 59624
Lincoln County Commissioners, 512 California Avenue, Libby, 59923
Glen Anacker, Trout Unlimited, PO Box 638, Kalispell, 59903-0638
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 100 N Park, Ste 320, Helena, 59601
Pat & Blanche Flanagan, 1555 Grave Creek Road, Eureka, 59917
Leslie Turner, 830 Grave Creek Road, Eureka, 59917

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, has completed an environmental assessment for a bank stabilization and habitat restoration project tentatively planned to rehabilitate approximately 4,800 feet of Grave Creek southeast of Eureka in Lincoln County, Montana.

There were no changes to the draft; therefore, the draft becomes the final EA. A copy of the decision document is enclosed. Please submit any questions or comments to Fisheries Biologist Jim Dunnigan or Fish & Wildlife Technician Jay DeShazer, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 475 Fish Hatchery Road, Libby, MT 59923, or e-mail to jdunnigan@state.mt.us or jdeshazer@state.mt.us.

Sincerely,



Daniel P. Vincent
Region One Supervisor

/ni

Enclosure

c: Doug & Rose Hearn
Jess Floch
Darris Flanagan
Lonny Owen
Lynette Starling
Bob & Susan Horal
John R. Ellis
Judy Gallagher
Edward Stoken
Dave Billow
Roland Snedigar
Duard Johnson

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DECISION NOTICE FOR GRAVE CREEK CHANNEL RESTORATION PROJECT (PHASE 2)

July 27, 2004

Project Proposal and Justification:

Grave Creek is one of the most important bull trout spawning tributaries to Lake Koocanusa in the United States portion of the Kootenai River drainage. Grave Creek also provides water for westslope cutthroat trout habitat, agriculture, and other riparian-dependent resources. This stream is currently on the Montana Water Quality Limited Segment List as an impaired stream. The state of Montana has proposed that Grave Creek be a high priority for Total Mean Daily Load allocation (TMDL). Numerous reaches of the stream exhibit depositional features and associated lateral erosion. Past logging in the upper reaches of the drainage, livestock grazing practices, channelization, and other land management activities likely contributed to the instability of the channel. Sections of lower Grave Creek are currently unable to adequately transport stream flow and bedload supply and still maintain a stable channel. The lower two miles of Grave Creek are over-widened and contain several mid-channel gravel bars and severely eroded stream banks. The current condition of lower Grave Creek provides poor habitat for native salmonids.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), in cooperation with the Kootenai River Network (KRN), will stabilize approximately 4,800 feet of Grave Creek and enhance habitat for adult and juvenile bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. The project will realign and reshape the channel to an appropriate dimension, pattern, and profile, installing log and rock vanes and rootwads throughout the project, and planting native vegetation along the riparian corridor to stabilize the stream banks. This project is the third phase of a larger effort to restore the lower 2 miles of Grave Creek within the next 5 years. The first phase was the Grave Creek Demonstration Project, followed directly downstream by the Grave Creek Phase I Restoration Project. Up to this point, Montana FWP, in conjunction with the Kootenai River Network, has restored the ecological function of approximately 1 mile of lower Grave Creek, upstream of the currently proposed project. The intent of the project is to: 1) reduce the sediment sources and bank erosion throughout the project area by incorporating stabilization techniques that function naturally with the stream and decrease the amount of stress on the stream banks; 2) convert the channelized portions of stream into a channel type that is self-maintaining and will accommodate floods without major changes in channel pattern or profile; 3) use natural stream stabilization techniques that will allow the stream to adjust slowly over time and be representative of a natural stream system; 4) improve fish habitat, particularly for bull trout; 5) improve the function and aesthetics of the river and adjacent riparian ecosystem; and 6) reduce the effects of flooding on adjacent landowners.

Location of Project:

This project will be conducted on Grave Creek, located approximately 12 miles southeast of the town of Eureka, within Township 38 North, Range 25 West, Sections 13 and 14, in Lincoln County. The project site is located on 2 parcels of private property. Patrick and Blanch Flanagan own the most upstream parcel, and Leslie Turner owns the lower parcel.

Environmental and Social Impacts of Project:

There will be short-term increases in turbidity during the project construction phase. During construction, all reasonable and applicable Best Management Practices will be employed to minimize sedimentation to Grave Creek. For example, we will minimize turbidity by 1) scheduling construction to occur during a low-flow period; 2) constructing approximately 3,000 feet of temporary, clear-water bypass channel, so that much of the new channel construction can be conducted in the dry; 3) using pumps to dewater areas as necessary during construction of bank revetment and instream structures; and 4) filtering water across vegetated floodplain areas that drain away from the active channel during construction. We expect that any short-term increases in turbidity will not significantly adversely impact the aquatic biota within Grave Creek.

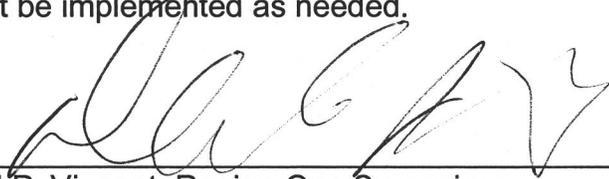
We expect that any short-term impacts associated with this project will be mitigated by the long-term benefits. Soils along the stream margin would be disturbed during channel construction, but would quickly stabilize following proposed revegetation efforts. Overall, the project is expected to reduce bank erosion and improve channel stability by restoring a degraded portion of the channel to a proper dimension, pattern, and profile, and reestablishing a healthy riparian zone. Likewise, riparian vegetation and cover would experience minor disturbance during the period of construction. However, proposed revegetation efforts would ultimately improve the riparian community and the overall aesthetics within this area. One of the major objectives of this project is to improve rearing and migration conditions for native salmonids in Grave Creek. We expect that these restoration efforts and associated instream structures will provide stream gradient control, fish habitat, and interim protection of reconstructed stream banks. The project will improve salmonid rearing and migration conditions by increasing the frequency and quality of pool habitat, stabilizing eroding stream banks and shifting stream channels, lowering summer water temperatures, and increasing the abundance and complexity of instream cover. These habitat improvements may increase the long-term carrying capacity and productivity of local populations of westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout.

Public Involvement:

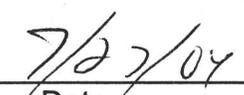
In compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, an environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from June 17 through July 18, 2004. Notices were advertised in three local newspapers (Daily Inter Lake, Tobacco Valley, and Western News), a news release was done, and notification was mailed to all property owners on lower Grave Creek, local conservation groups, local timber companies, selected businesses, and natural resource agencies. Copies of the EA were made available at three local libraries, the state library in Helena, the Montana FWP Region 1 headquarters in Kalispell, and the Montana FWP internet Web site. We did not receive any comments during this public comment period.

Decision notice:

Based on analysis of the project proposal and a lack of comments during the public comment period of the draft environmental assessment for the Grave Creek Channel Restoration Project (Phase 2), FWP has prepared the final environmental assessment for this project. Due to the urgent need to improve native salmonid rearing and migration habitat, reduce sedimentation, and promote bank stability in lower Grave Creek, I recommend that the proposed project be implemented as needed.



Daniel P. Vincent, Region One Supervisor
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Date