

March 20, 2007  
1420 East 6th Ave.  
P.O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Fisheries Division  
Endangered Species Coordinator  
Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries Office  
Missoula Office

Montana State Library, Helena  
MT Environmental Information Center  
Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
North Powell County Conservation District, 1 Hollenback Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena  
Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 1, Ovando, MT 59854  
Rollin Stone Ranch, P.O. Box 148, Ovando, MT 59854

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Program tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project calling for the installation of a coanda-style fish screen in a diversion on Dick Creek. The intent of the project is to eliminate fish entrainment into the irrigation system and restore migratory connectivity between Dick Creek and downstream waters. The project site is on a diversion owned by the Rolling Stone Ranch located on Dick Creek, at tributary to Monture Creek in the Blackfoot River drainage.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., April 20, 2007 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432. Funding for this project through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. Please note that this draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above.

Sincerely,

Mark Lere, Program Officer  
Habitat Protection Bureau  
Fisheries Division  
Email: mlere@mt.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
Fisheries Division

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Dick Creek Diversion Fish Screen Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 which directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves providing funding for physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal. Additionally, the 1999 Montana Legislature amended statute sections 87-1-273, 15-38-202 and Section 5, Chapter 463, Laws of 1995 to create a bull trout and cutthroat trout enhancement program. The program calls for the enhancement of bull trout and cutthroat trout through habitat restoration, natural reproduction and reductions in species competition by way of the Future Fisheries Program.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding for a project calling for the installation of a coanda-style fish screen in a diversion located on Dick Creek at about stream mile 5. The intent of this project is to eliminate entrainment of fish into the irrigation system and restore migratory connectivity between Dick Creek and downstream waters. This ditch system currently diverts up to 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Dick Creek. The project site is located on the Rolling Stone Ranch approximately two miles north of the community of Ovando (Attachment 1).

- I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted at a diversion on Dick Creek located approximately 5 miles upstream from the junction with Monture Creek within Township 15 North, Range 12 West, Section 16 in Powell County.
- II. Need for the Project: One goal within Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks six year operations plan for the fisheries program is to “restore and enhance degraded habitats” by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore important habitats on public and private lands. This proposed project would help meet this goal.

Dick Creek is a second order spring creek tributary to Monture Creek that flows approximately 14 miles through a mixture of public and private lands. The stream supports westslope cutthroat trout and has been designated as part of a bull trout core area. An un-regulated diversion located approximately five miles upstream from the mouth currently entrains fish during the irrigation season. This project would eliminate fish entrainment and continue to provide the water needed for irrigation by installing a coanda-style fish screen into the diversion. The intent of this project is to enhance fish populations in both Dick Creek and downstream waters.

III. Scope of the Project:

The project proposes to construct a coanda-style self-cleaning fish screen near the head of the irrigation ditch located on Dick Creek. This screen would be designed to filter up to 22 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water diverted into the ditch, with a by-pass pipe diverting 5 cfs back to the creek allowing fish and debris to be returned to the stream. The design calls for meeting the fish screen criteria outline by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Coanda style screens are low maintenance structures that have been shown to be effective in passing debris and fish downstream while diverting the needed water supply. A low maintenance screen is critical due to the remoteness of the project site. This project is expected to cost \$57,098.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to

\$11,016.00.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Removing a main source of fish entrainment from Dick Creek by installing a self-cleaning fish screen into a major irrigation diversion will restore connectivity between Dick Creek and downstream waters for migrating fish. Eliminating entrainment of fish into this diversion is expected to enhance fish populations in Dick Creek and in downstream waters.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

The fish screen will be installed during the non-irrigation season when the ditch is shut down. Short-term increases in turbidity may occur during installation of the by-pass pipe. To minimize turbidity, operation of equipment in the stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota. A 310 permit (Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act) will be obtained from the local conservation district and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers will be contacted for requirements to meet the federal Clean Water Act (404 permit).

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the ditch bank would be disturbed during the construction, but would quickly stabilize following proposed re-vegetation efforts. The footprint for this fish screen is the width of the existing ditch by about 50 feet in length. Re-vegetation efforts call for re-seeding disturbed areas with native grasses.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

Vegetation cover would be disturbed along the ditch bank during the period of construction. Proposed re-vegetation efforts would act to mitigate these disturbances.

5. Aesthetics.

Aesthetics would be adversely impacted during construction due to ground disturbance and the presence of heavy equipment. In the long term, aesthetics would not be adversely affected.

6. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.

Installation of the fish screen will eliminate entrainment of fish into a major irrigation diversion on Dick Creek. Past surveys have documented that Dick Creek supports westslope cutthroat trout, a species of special concern in Montana. Dick Creek has also been identified as part of a bull trout core area. Bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Because Dick Creek has been identified as part of a bull trout core area, the project will be included in Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Section 6 conservation plan with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

7. Historic and archaeological sites

This fish screen would be installed within the existing ditch and installation would cause only minimal ground disturbance. As a result, there is a very low likelihood that cultural properties could be impacted. Should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during the project, the State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and the site will be investigated.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

1. Access to & quality of recreational activities.

This fish screen is expected to enhance fish populations in both Dick Creek and downstream waters. As a result, this project is expected to improve the recreational fishery that these water bodies provide.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no action is taken, this diversion will continue to entrain downstream migrating fish and migratory connectivity to downstream waters will continue to be diminished.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative calls for installing a self-cleaning fish screen in a major irrigation diversion on Dick Creek. The intent of the project is to decrease entrainment of downstream migrating fish into the canal system and enhance fish populations in downstream waters. This project is expected to enhance the recreational fishery that these

water bodies provide and, at the same time, provide the water needed for irrigation purposes.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The proposed project also will be reviewed by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission and funding will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA will be published on Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks webpage: [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov).

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on April 20, 2007.

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Mark Lere, Program Officer  
Habitat Protection Bureau  
Fisheries Division  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620

Telephone: (406) 444-2432  
e-mail: [mlere@mt.gov](mailto:mlere@mt.gov)

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
 1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701  
 (406) 444-2535

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Project Title Dick Creek Diversion Fish Screen Project

Division/Bureau Fisheries Division -Future Fisheries Improvement

Description of Project The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding for a project calling for the installation of a coanda-style fish screen in a diversion located on Dick Creek at about stream mile 5. The intent of the project is to eliminate entrainment of fish into the irrigation system and restore connectivity between Dick Creek and downstream waters for migratory fish.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			X			X
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			X
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction North Powell Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Ryen Aasheim, Big Blackfoot Chapter Trout Unlimited; Confluence, Inc.

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required. EA prepared by: Mark Lere

                     Date: February 26, 2007