

Environmental Review of Fish Introduction

Description of water body and action:

Name: Wolf Creek Ranch Pond South County: Fergus
Legal Description: T18N R15E S11 NW NW Water Code: 16-8975

To stock rainbow trout, brook trout or brown trout in a Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) owned pond. The pond is about 2.5 surface acres and 15 acre-feet at full pool. Maximum depth is about 14 feet. A private pond license was granted to this pond for a previous owner for brook trout and rainbow trout. Pond appears to keep good water levels based on aerial photography from July 2005. Pond is located about 7 miles east of Denton, Montana (Figure 1).

Name of the drainage where the pond is located:

The pond is located on Ox Creek, a tributary to Wolf Creek (Judith River). The Judith River is located about 42 miles downstream.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Rainbow trout, brook trout or brown trout.

Is this species legally present in the drainage? Yes. A private pond permit was granted for brook trout and rainbow trout for this pond and several nearby ponds in the past. Brown trout are found in the Judith drainage and have been approved for many private ponds.

Species of Special Concern in the drainage:

None known from Ox Creek. The headwaters of Dry Wolf Creek contain pure (N. Fk. Running Wolf) or nearly pure (Dry Wolf Creek) westslope cutthroat trout. The Judith River contains blue sucker and burbot.

Risks:

Potential for impacts on the genetic structure of existing fish populations:

None Minor Major

When the reservoir is releasing water stocked trout could go over the spillway into Wolf Creek, located about 400 yards downstream. It is unlikely that the stocked fish would have negative impacts on the genetics of non-native rainbow, brook trout or brown trout in the Judith drainage. Wolf Creek is not trout water. Sampling done in 2004 and 2005 approximately 5 miles downstream of Ox Creek found a prairie stream assemblage including fathead minnows, lake chub, longnose dace, mountain sucker, northern red belly dace and white suckers. The WCT in Wolf Creek are located over 50 miles upstream and in all likelihood would not be accessible to the stocked fish due to on-stream dams, intermittent flow and high water temperatures.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation:

None Minor Major

The stocked fish will eat small fish in the pond if they are present. Trout probably cannot survive in Wolf Creek due to intermittent water and high water temperatures.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction: ___None
___ Minor ___ Major

It is unlikely that there will be additional impacts.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location: ___None
___ Minor ___ Major

It is unlikely stocked rainbow trout would reproduce in this pond or in downstream intermittent drainages.

If necessary would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Yes the pond is small enough to treat and/or be drawn down by pumps.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable?

No.

Other considerations: Ponds located upstream on Ox Creek have been permitted for brook trout, brown trout and rainbow trout.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

No action. There would not be a new opportunity for public fishing in Fergus County.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any.

Fish stocking will be a beneficial action.

List all agencies and individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction.

Area anglers. Lessee of state land.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction.

Clive Rooney with Montana Department of Natural Resources; George Liknes, FWP

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required YES/NO? If no explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed actions. No. Action expected to be minor.

EA prepared by: Anne Tews, Fisheries Biologist

Date: April 27, 2007 **Comments accepted until:** Due to the minor risks and no anticipated controversial issues associated with this action, no formal comment period was scheduled. Comments will be accepted at any time.

Comments should be sent to: Anne Tews, MFWP, P.O. Box 938, Lewistown, MT 59457:
Email address: antews@mt.gov

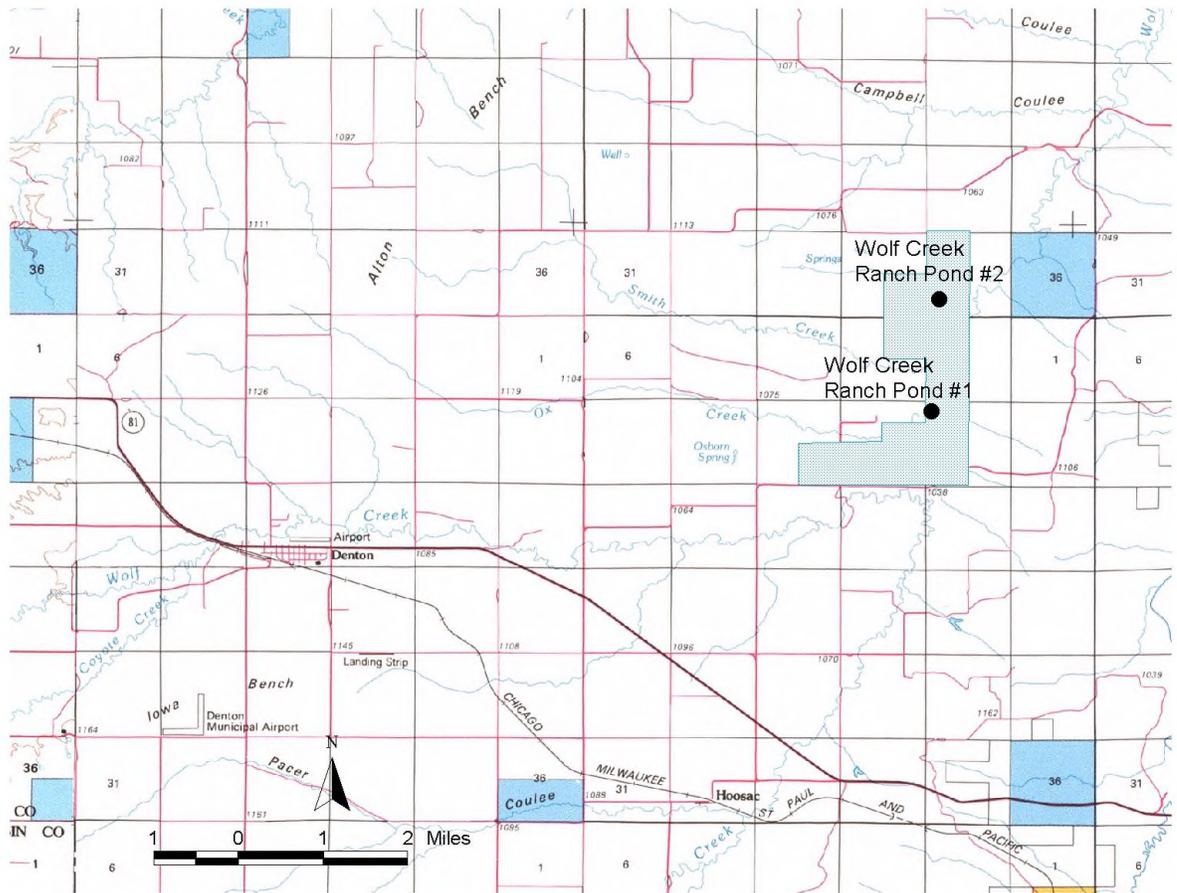


Figure 1. Location of Wolf Creek Ranch Ponds