



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

March 24, 2008

To: Governor's Office, Mike Volesky, State Capitol, Room 204, PO Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202			

MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701
Greater Yellowstone Coalition, P.O. Box 1874, 13 S. Willson, Suite 2, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Wilderness Association, 117 ½ W. Park St. #6, Livingston, MT 59047
Wilderness Society, 503 W. Mendenhall, Bozeman, MT 59715
American Wetlands, P.O. Box 6669, Bozeman, MT 59771
Gallatin Wildlife Association, Glen Hockett, P.O. Box 5276, Bozeman, MT 59717
Madison-Gallatin Chapter Trout Unlimited, Rick Arnold, P.O. Box 52, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Trout Unlimited, Bruce Farling, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807
Federation of Flyfishers, 215 E Lewis St., Livingston, MT 59047
320 Ranch, Inc., Pat Sage, 205 Buffalo Horn Creek, Gallatin Gateway, MT 59730
Covered Wagon, 34035 Gallatin Road, Gallatin Gateway, MT 59730
Cache Creek Outfitters, Charlie Immenschuh, P.O. Box 161212, Big Sky, MT 59716
Ed Hake, P.O. Box 326, Big Sky, MT 59716
Kent Grimm, 5645 Ramshorn, Gallatin Gateway, MT 59730
Lone Mountain Ranch, Inc., P.O. Box 160069, Big Sky, MT 59716
Floyd Jordan, 12 Castle Hill Way, Stuart, FL 34996-6507
Susan Talbot, 11 Greenbrier Drive, Missoula, MT 59802-3353
Ester Fishbaugh, 1380 Wolverine Lane, Bozeman, MT 59718
Yellowstone National Park, Todd Koel, P.O. Box 168, YNP, Wyoming, 82190-0168
Gallatin National Forest, Bruce Roberts, 3710 W. Fallon, Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718
Gallatin National Forest, Jose Castro, 3710 W Fallon Suite C, Bozeman MT 59718

Bud Lily, 16 W. Birch, Three Forks, MT 59752
Western Watershed Project, PO Box 1612, Boise, ID 83701
MEIC, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Headwaters Fish & Game, Randy Newburg, P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941
Headwaters Fly Fishers, Rick Weisend, 81801 Gallatin Rd., Bozeman, MT 59718
FOAM, Robin Cunningham, P.O. Box 311, Gallatin Gateway, MT 59730
Bob von Pentz, PO Box 320, Gallatin Gateway MT 59730
Bert Otis, Emigrant MT

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the Introduction of Westslope Cutthroat Trout to Elkhorn Creek, Gallatin River Drainage. This project proposes to introduce native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) into Elkhorn Creek, a fishless stream in the Gallatin River drainage near Big Sky, MT. The project is designed to increase the overall distribution of WCT, a rare native species in the upper Missouri River drainage, and to preserve the genetic legacy of local "at risk" populations. Two public and one agency comments, all supportive, were received during a 30-day comment period ending June 11, 2007.

It is my decision to proceed with the proposed project with no changes to the Draft EA.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Lee Nelson
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
415 South Front Street
Townsend, MT 59644

Or e-mailed to: leenelson@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor

Attachment

**INTRODUCTION OF WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT TO
ELKHORN CREEK, GALLATIN RIVER DRAINAGE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region Three, Bozeman
March 2008**

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to introduce native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) into Elkhorn Creek, a fishless stream in the Gallatin River drainage near Big Sky, MT. The project is designed to increase the overall distribution of WCT, a rare native species in the upper Missouri River drainage, and to preserve the genetic legacy of local "at risk" populations.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on May 10, 2007.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 30 days (through June 11, 2007). The EA was mailed to 32 individuals and groups; a legal notice was printed in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*; and the Draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>.

Summary of Public Comment

Two supporting public comments were received during the 30 day review period. These comments stated, "Though I can't see why anyone would oppose this effort given the relative elimination of the species by non native species, I felt compelled to write in support of this endeavor.", and "Sound (sic) like a very good project. Good for everyone as far as I can see." The Gallatin National Forest also commented in support of the proposed effort, stating "The Gallatin National Forest fully supports this project and believes it is an excellent example of our respective agencies working together to meet the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in Montana."

Final Environmental Assessment for the introduction of WCT to Elkhorn Creek

There are no modifications necessary to the Draft Environmental Assessment based on public comment. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the need to preserve WCT in the Gallatin River drainage, it is my decision to proceed with the effort to introduce WCT to Elkhorn Creek starting in the summer of 2008.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor
