



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 10, 2009

To: Governor's Office, Mike Volesky, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. 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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the replacement of rainbow trout with westslope cutthroat trout in a private pond near Cherry Creek, tributary to the Big Hole River near Melrose. We are proposing to remove rainbow trout legally stocked into the private pond through mechanical means (i.e., netting and electrofishing) and replacing them with westslope cutthroat trout from the Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda. The purpose for the fish removal and restocking is to protect native, non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout in Cherry Creek from hybridization with rainbow trout should any fish from the pond escape and colonize Cherry Creek. Because of the limited potential impact to public resources and the non-controversial nature of the project, we determined that no public comment period was required.

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:

Jim Olsen

1820 Meadowlark Lane

Butte, MT 59701

Or e-mailed to: jimolsen@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor

Attachment

Replacement of Rainbow Trout with Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Private Pond Near Cherry Creek, Tributary to the Big Hole River.

DECISION NOTICE

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

Proposed Action

Cherry Creek harbors an unhybridized population of westslope cutthroat trout. A man-made pond located on private ground surrounded by National Forest lands is permitted for, and currently contains, rainbow trout. The outlet of this pond drains into Cherry Creek. Because rainbow trout can hybridize with westslope cutthroat trout and because hybridization is one of the main threats to cutthroat trout conservation, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) with the cooperation of the landowner is proposing to remove the trout from the pond using mechanical means (i.e., gillnetting, seining and electrofishing). Removed rainbow trout will be donated to the local food bank. Once the rainbow trout are removed from the pond, it will be restocked with between 100 and 200 unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout from the Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda. The private pond license will be modified to allow only westslope cutthroat trout stocking in the future. There is no planned public access to the pond once the project is completed.

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 in May of 2008. FWP cutthroat specialists and FWP legal department reviewed the document prior to proceeding with the decision notice. Because of the non-controversial nature of the project and the limited potential for impact to public resources, it was determined that no public comment period was required.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to select Preferred Alternative: removal of rainbow trout with mechanical means and replacing them with unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout from Washoe Park Hatchery in Anaconda to protect the population of unhybridized westslope cutthroat trout in Cherry Creek. I find there are very minimal impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project.

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor
