

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION
PRIVATE POND APPLICATION
Two Ponds**

Name and address of applicant: Volf Ranch (Jeff Volf)
Box 69
Judith Gap, MT 59453

Have the ponds been approved for a private pond permit? Yes.

South Pond was previously licensed to C. A. Volf. Permit number 4-0184 and meets requirements for a private pond permit.

North Pond was not previously licensed. North Pond is on-stream, but topographic map (Figure 1) and aerial photos (Figure 2) indicate perennial water for at most, 1/3 mile upstream. Landowner reports no fish above the pond. In my opinion it is highly unlikely there would be reproducing game fish upstream of this pond. Game fish from the pond may visit that reach of stream.

Does the pond have water rights? Yes.

South Pond: 41S 110103-00; statement of claim to Charles L. Volf and Joan B. Volf
Priority date 4/30/1957; Irrigation; 247 acre-ft.

North Pond: 41S 110107-00; statement of claim to Charles L. Volf and Joan B. Volf
Priority date 4/19/1957; irrigation, 712 acre-ft

Note: Charles and Joan are Jeff Parents. Joan is still part owner in ranch and Charles is deceased.

Location of pond:

County: Fergus

Legal description:

South Pond. T11N,R17E,S8,NWSWSE 46.726107; 109.606214

North Pond T11N,R17E,S8 NWSWNE 46.7333; 109.60576

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located: Ponds are located in the headwaters of the Ross Creek Drainage (Judith).

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Rainbow trout

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

Yes, distributed throughout the Judith River drainage and in Ross Fork Creek. Rainbow trout have been stocked in both ponds (south pond legally) for decades.

Landowners mistakenly thought license was for both ponds.

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage: Northern redbellyxfinescale dace hybrids have been sampled about 40 miles downstream of the pond in Ross Fork Creek.

RISKS:

Inlets to or outlets from the pond? Yes No **Explain:**

South Pond does not have an outlet structure (Figure 3). Screens are not possible on the current outlet. Stocked fish will go downstream into Ross Fork Creek. The North Pond has an outlet structure that most fish could go through (Figure 4). It appears to be "screened" with very large wire. Ross Fork Creek is likely seasonal downstream for several miles from of the ponds and is not rainbow trout habitat.

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations: None Minor Major

Comments: These non-native trout are already present or have access to lower Ross Fork Creek. Adverse genetic impacts are considered unlikely. Rainbow trout are present in both ponds.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation? None Minor Major

Comments: See above. May eat minnows or other fish in ponds or Ross Fork Creek. Rainbow trout are present in both ponds, impacts to existing fish species will be similar to that of the past several decades.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?

None Minor Major

Comments: Trout will consume some invertebrates in pond, as has occurred for decades.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location: None Minor Major

Comments: South Pond; spring fed with tiny Inlet stream. North Pond; inflow stream flows seasonally and, based on topographic maps, may have perennial water about 1/3 mile above pond. Reproduction seems unlikely for rainbow trout in both ponds.

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

South Pond. Yes. Would be challenging; pond does not appear to have a drawdown structure. Would likely need to be chemically treated and/or pumped.

North Pond. Yes has irrigation drawdown structure that could likely dewater most of the large pond. May require chemical treatment of remaining pool.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? No

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

Do not stock.

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

Species restrictions.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction: None.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction: None.

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 action.

No. Minor impacts expected.

EA prepared by: Anne Tews

DATE: 2/2/2009

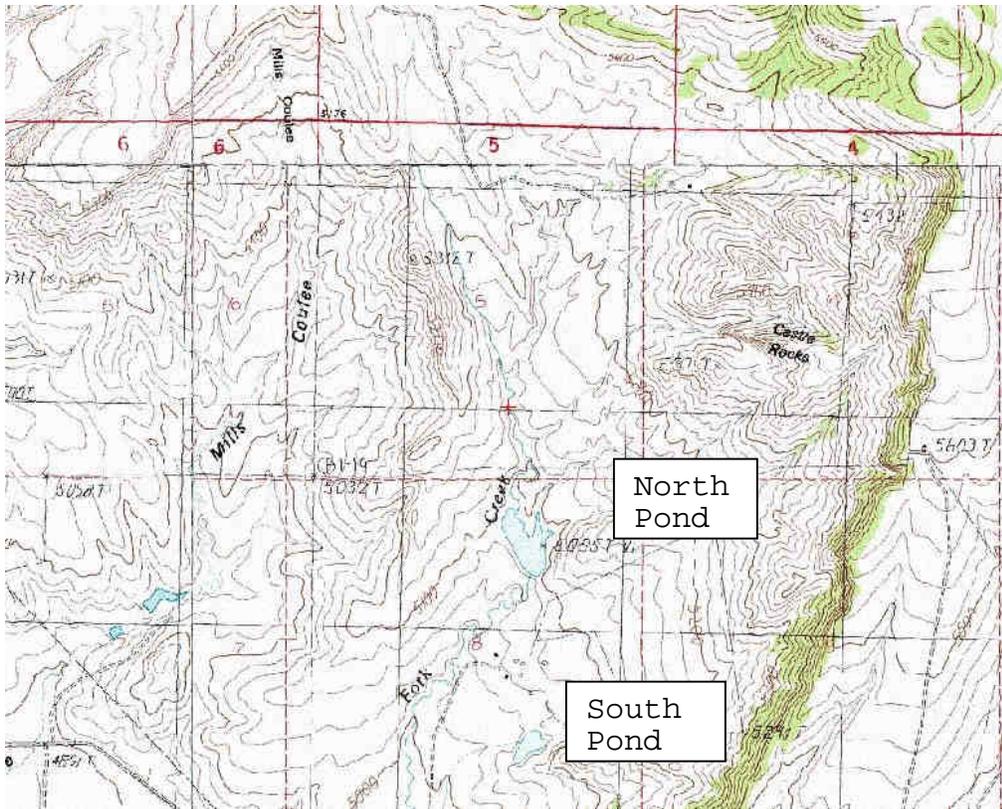


Figure 1. Topographic map of upper and lower Volf ponds

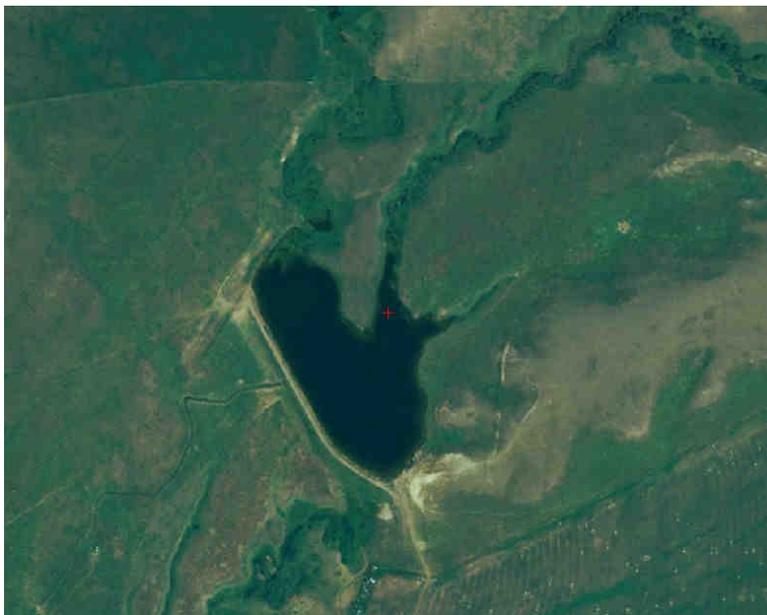


Figure 2. Aerial photo of Volf North Pond.



Figure 2. South Pond; overall view (upper photo); outlet (lower photo).



Figure 2. North Pond; Overall view of pond with outlet structure (upper) and outlet (lower).

**DECISION RECORD
FISH POND LICENSE**

DECISION: Issue

- Private Pond License**
- Commercial Pond License**
- One Time Permission to Plant Letter**
- Denial**

EA# Title: Volf Ranch North & South Private Ponds

APPROVED SPECIES: Rainbow Trout

LICENSE RESTRICTIONS:

DECISION REASONING:

- Pond meets all other requirements for Private Pond License.**
- Other (specify) Pond does not meet criteria for private pond permit but impacts should be minimal.**

George Liknes

George Liknes
Regional Fisheries Manager

7/9/2009

Date