

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTIONS  
PRIVATE POND APPLICATION**

**Name and address of applicant:** Big Hole Ranch LLC  
PO Box 37  
Melrose, MT 59743

**Has the pond been approved for a private pond permit in the past?** Yes. (3-980014)

**Location:** Pond is located approximately 0.2 miles upstream of the confluence of Cherry Creek (near Melrose) and Big Hole River.

**County:** Beaverhead      **Township:** 2S      **Range:** 9W      **Section:** 2

**Name of the drainage where the pond would be located:** Cherry Creek

**Name(s) of fish species proposed for introduction:** Westslope Cutthroat Trout >8 inches.

**Is this species native to the drainage? If not, was it introduced legally (i.e. by a fish management agency)?** Yes. Species is native.

**List species of special concern present in the drainage:** Arctic Grayling are present in the Big Hole River but are rare in the vicinity of the above named pond. Westslope Cutthroat are native to the Big Hole River and Cherry Creek, but are rare in the Big Hole River in the vicinity of the pond. A conservation population of unhybridized Westslope Cutthroat Trout is present in Cherry Creek.

**RISKS:**

**Inlets to or outlets from the pond?** Yes X No \_\_\_ **Explain:** The inlet of the pond is a spring that originates between 100 and 200 yards upstream of the pond on Big Hole Ranch LLC property. The spring flows to the pond directly at a flow rate of approximately 50-100 gal/min. The outlet of the pond is at the south end and consists of a pipe at the top elevation of the dam/berm. The culvert pipe is fitted with a screen with ½ inch mesh. Because of aquatic and wetland vegetation in the pond, the screen is prone to clogging and requires constant maintenance. The pond outlet drains down a steep slope into a wet area and into Cherry Creek before entering the Big Hole River.

**Potential for impacts on genetic structure of wild fish populations?**

None \_\_\_ Minor X Major \_\_\_

**Comments required for minor or major impacts:** Due to the presence of an outlet with substantial flow, a screening mechanism that requires constant maintenance and the proximity between the pond and Cherry Creek and the Big Hole River. The likelihood of stocked Westslope Cutthroat Trout escaping from the pond to the creek and river is greater than ponds with no outlet or outlets that do not drain directly into an adjacent stream. However, if the screen is maintained and consistently cleaned and the size of fish stocked is greater than 8 inches. The escapement and mixing with wild Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Cherry Creek is greatly reduced.

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

**Comments required for minor or major impacts:** See comment above.

**Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?**  
None\_\_ Minor X Major\_\_

**Comments required for minor or major impacts:** This is an artificial pond which has been stocked in the past. Although not observed during the pond inspection, it is likely that amphibians inhabit the pond or use it for breeding and rearing. Because the pond was artificially created and has been stocked in the past. There is no reason to believe that there will be any additional impacts to amphibians or other aquatic organisms.

**Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location?**  
None\_\_ Minor X Major\_\_

**Comments required for minor or major impacts:** There is a possibility that spawning could occur in the inlet stream. Gravel is present. However the likelihood of successful spawning is low because of the small size of the inlet stream and poor quality of spawning habitat.

**If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked? How?**  
Yes, through the use of an approved piscicide or cease stocking and wait for fish to age-out.

**Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?** Not likely.

**Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).**  
No action. Leave pond barren of fish.

**Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any.** None, other than the maintenance of screen on outflow of pond.

**List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:**  
N/A

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

**Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? Yes\_\_ No X** If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action. The pond meets all criteria for a private pond license with no or minimal potential effects on the fishery of Cherry Creek or the Big Hole River.

**Literature Cited:** N/A

**EA prepared by:** Jim Olsen

**Comments will be accepted until:** N/A

**Comments should be sent to:** N/A

**Email Address:**