



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

February 2, 2010
1420 East 6th Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
 Fisheries Bureau
 Endangered Species Coordinator
 Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries Division
 Missoula Office
Montana State Library, Helena
MT Environmental Information Center
Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
Wayne Hadley, 1016 Eastside Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722
Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715
Lewis and Clark Conservation District
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena
Big Blackfoot Chapter Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 1, Ovando, MT 59854
Lewis and Clark County, P.O. Box 1725, Helena, MT 59624

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Program tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project calling to replace an existing undersized and perched culvert on Lincoln Spring Creek, a tributary to Keep Cool Creek located within the Blackfoot River drainage, with a properly sized structural steel bottomless arch on metal footings. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream fish passage to the upper five miles of the stream. This proposed culvert replacement project is located on a county road approximately 1 mile west of the community of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., March 3, 2010 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. Funding for this project through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432. Please note that this draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above.

Sincerely,

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Section
Fisheries Bureau
e-mail: mlere@mt.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Lincoln Spring Creek Culvert Replacement Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 that directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves providing funding for physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding for a project calling for replacement of an existing undersized and perched culvert at a county road crossing on Lincoln Spring Creek with a steel structural plate bottomless arch culvert. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream fish passage at this road crossing to improve connectivity to the upper 5 miles of the stream. The project site is located on a county road crossing approximately 1 mile west of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County (Attachment 1).

I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted on an existing county road crossing on Lincoln Spring Creek located within Township 14 North, Range 9 West, Sections 22 and 23 in Lewis and Clark County.

II. Need for the Project: One goal within Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks six-year operations plan for the fisheries program is to “restore and enhance degraded fisheries habitats” by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore important habitats on private and public lands. This proposed project would help meet this goal.

Lincoln Spring Creek is a first order tributary to Keep Cool Creek located in the Blackfoot River drainage. The stream currently supports populations of brown trout and brook trout, but historically supported both bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Almost 2 miles of the stream were enhanced during 2009 by restoring the dimension, pattern and profile of the channel, creating conditions that have the potential to again support bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Currently, a perched and undersized culvert (5 foot in diameter concrete pipe) acts as a partial migration barrier to fish, especially during periods of high flow. As a result, migratory connectivity to the upper five miles of the stream is impaired. This project calls for replacing the existing culvert with a bottomless arch crossing of sufficient size to meet stream simulation criteria, providing passage for all aquatic organisms.

III. Scope of the Project:

This proposed project would replace the existing undersized culvert with a steel structural plate bottomless arch culvert mounted on metal footings. Dimensions of the new crossing include a 16-foot span with a 7-foot 1-inch rise. The culvert would be 40-feet in length. The new culvert is designed to provide for stream simulation through the crossing. Additionally, the hydraulic capacity of the new pipe would satisfy a 100-year flood event. Reference data indicates that the bankfull width of the stream at this crossing is approximately 13 feet. This project is expected to cost \$49,375.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to \$7,925.00. The remainder of the funding would come from outside sources and in-kind services.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Replacing an existing undersized and perched culvert with a properly sized bottomless arch culvert would create a more stable stream crossing that would enhance upstream fish passage and improve migratory connectivity to the upper 5 miles of the stream. This work would complement previous habitat enhancement work that recently has been completed in the drainage.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, the operation of equipment in the active stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota (318 authorization). A 124 permit (Montana Stream Protection Act) will be obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers will be contacted to determine the need to meet 404 provisions of the Clean Water Act.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be temporarily disturbed during construction. All disturbed areas would be re-vegetated with a native grass seed mix.

5. Aesthetics.

In the short term, aesthetics would be adversely impacted due to ground disturbance and the presence of heavy construction equipment.

7. Unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Although not currently present in the drainage, the intent of the project, in part, is to encourage the use of Lincoln Spring Creek by native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. These two species are found in adjacent drainages and in the Blackfoot River. Enhancing connectivity to the upper five miles of Lincoln Spring Creek has the potential to benefit both bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations.

9. Historic and archaeological sites

This site has been previously disturbed by the construction and maintenance of the existing stream crossing. As a result, there is a very low likelihood that cultural

properties will be impacted by the completion of the proposed project. Should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during the project, the State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and the site will be investigated.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

14. Transportation networks & traffic flows.

Traffic on a portion of the county road likely would be delayed, interrupted, or re-routed. The period of construction is expected to take no longer than two weeks.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no action is taken, this road crossing on Lincoln Spring Creek will continue to act as a partial fish migration barrier and migratory connectivity to the upper five miles of the stream will remain impaired.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative is designed to replace an existing undersized culvert on Lincoln Spring Creek with a larger bottomless arch culvert. The new culvert would be sized to adequately meet stream simulation guidelines, providing migratory passage for all aquatic organisms. This work would complement previous habitat enhancement work that has been completed in the drainage. The intent of the project is to improve overall habitat for salmonids in the Lincoln Spring Creek drainage.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission also will review the proposed project and funding will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA also will be published on Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks webpage: fwp.mt.gov.

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on March 3, 2010

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Section
Fisheries Bureau
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 East 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
Telephone: (406) 444-2432
e-mail: mlere@mt.gov

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
 1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701
 (406) 444-2535

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Title Lincoln Spring Creek Culvert Replacement Project
 Division/Bureau Fisheries Bureau -Future Fisheries Improvement
 Description of Project The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding for a project calling for replacing an undersized and perched culvert located on Lincoln Spring Creek with a much larger bottomless arch culvert. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream fish passage, improving migratory connectivity to the upper 5 miles of the stream. The project site is located at a county road crossing approximately 1 mile west of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities				X		
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows			X			X

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Lewis and Clark County, Lewis and Clark Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office
 Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Ryen Aasheim, Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by: Mark Lere

Date: January 19, 2010