

Title: Transfer of Westslope Cutthroat Trout from South Fork Willow and Cottonwood Creeks to Jumping Creek (Smith River Drainage)

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes transferring non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) from South Fork Willow and Cottonwood creeks in the Castle Mountains to Jumping Creek in the Little Belt Mountains. Non-native brook trout were removed with piscicides from 3.5 miles of Jumping Creek upstream of a constructed fish barrier in 2008 and 2009 as described in a separate environmental assessment in 2008. For the proposed transfer, eggs would be collected from spawning WCT during spring, fertilized, and incubated to the eye-up stage prior to being outplanted in Jumping Creek. All three streams are within the Smith River Basin and located on Lewis and Clark National Forest. South Fork Willow and Cottonwood creeks support two of the last six remaining non-hybridized populations of WCT in the Smith River Basin. Transfers would continue until a genetically viable population is established, from 2 to 5 years. The Environmental Assessment was put on the web on 3/3/2010 and the comment period ended 4/1/2010. No comments were received. There was an internal review and the transfer was approved by the FWP Fish Health Committee. Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the current high risk of extinction of genetically pure WCT in the Smith River Drainage, the decision to proceed with the proposed transfer was recommended. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this decision notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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DECISION RECORD

Transfer of Westslope Cutthroat Trout from South Fork Willow and Cottonwood Creeks to Jumping Creek (Smith River Drainage)

Receiving Waters:

Name: Jumping Creek
Location: T12N, R8E, Sec 5, 8, 18
County: Meagher County

Donating Waters:

Name: Cottonwood Creek
Location: T8N, R7E, Sec 23
County: Meagher County

Name: South Fork Willow Creek
Location: T8N, R7E, Sec 1
County: Meagher County

Fish Species Proposed for Introduction: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes transferring non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) from South Fork Willow and Cottonwood creeks in the Castle Mountains to Jumping Creek in the Little Belt Mountains. Non-native brook trout were removed with piscicides from 3.5 miles of Jumping Creek upstream of a constructed fish barrier in 2008 and 2009 (environmental assessment 2008). For the proposed transfer, eggs would be collected from spawning WCT during spring, fertilized, and incubated to the eye-up stage prior to being outplanted in Jumping Creek. All three streams are within the Smith River Basin and located on Lewis and Clark National Forest. Transfers would continue until a genetically viable population is established, from 2 to 5 years.

Description of Public Notification/Review Process: The Environmental Assessment was put on the web on 3/3/2010. The comment period ended 4/1/2010. There was an internal review and the transfer was approved by the FWP Fish Health Committee.

Summary of Public Comments: No comments were received

Recommendation: Transfer westslope cutthroat trout as described in the environmental assessment.

George Liknes

11/29/2010

Regional Fisheries Manager

Date