



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

*1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718*

January 15, 2013

To whom it may concern:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and the Gallatin National Forest are jointly requesting public input on a proposed project to restore native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) to the headwaters of the South Fork Sixteenmile Creek drainage east of Flathead Pass (See attached map). The South Fork is a tributary to the Middle Fork Sixteenmile Creek which joins main Sixteenmile Creek approximately five miles east of the community of Maudlow, Montana. The Sixteenmile Creek watershed drains the northwest corner of the Bridger Mountains flowing westward entering the Missouri River upstream of Toston, Montana.

Although WCT were historically the only trout species occupying the Sixteenmile Creek drainage, there are no known genetically pure populations remaining in the entire Sixteenmile Creek drainage. The introduction of non native trout (rainbow and Yellowstone cutthroat trout) and subsequent hybridization with WCT has resulted in a mixed population with no conservation value.

WCT are considered a species of concern by the state of Montana and a sensitive species by the U.S. Forest Service. Many similar projects have occurred within the Upper Missouri River basin in recent decades. Cumulatively these projects help prevent extinction of WCT and listing under the Endangered Species Act. MFWP is mandated through State of Montana statute to conduct projects to improve the status of imperiled species. The proposed project would restore westslope cutthroat trout to 6.5 miles of quality habitat in five interconnected tributaries within the headwaters of the South Fork Sixteenmile Creek drainage.

In 2010, agencies identified a fish barrier location. Under this proposal the agencies would construct a fish barrier, then remove all fish upstream from the identified barrier location using a registered fish toxicant. Once all fish are removed, the agencies propose to introduce genetically pure WCT from imperiled populations in other drainages within the upper Missouri River. Stream habitat within the proposed project area is capable of sustaining a large

population of WCT. The agencies anticipate the project taking from two to four years depending on environmental factors (weather, high stream flows, etc.).

MFWP and Gallatin National Forest (See attached letter) are requesting input and comments on the joint proposed project by February 11, 2013. The Agencies will determine the need for a public meeting based on community interest. If you have any written comments regarding the proposed project, please mail them to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, c/o South Fork Sixteenmile Creek Restoration Comments, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59405 or e-mail them to Dave Moser (dmoser@fs.fed.us). If you have any questions regarding the proposed project, please call Ron Spoon (MFWP, Area Fisheries Biologist) at (406) 266-4237.

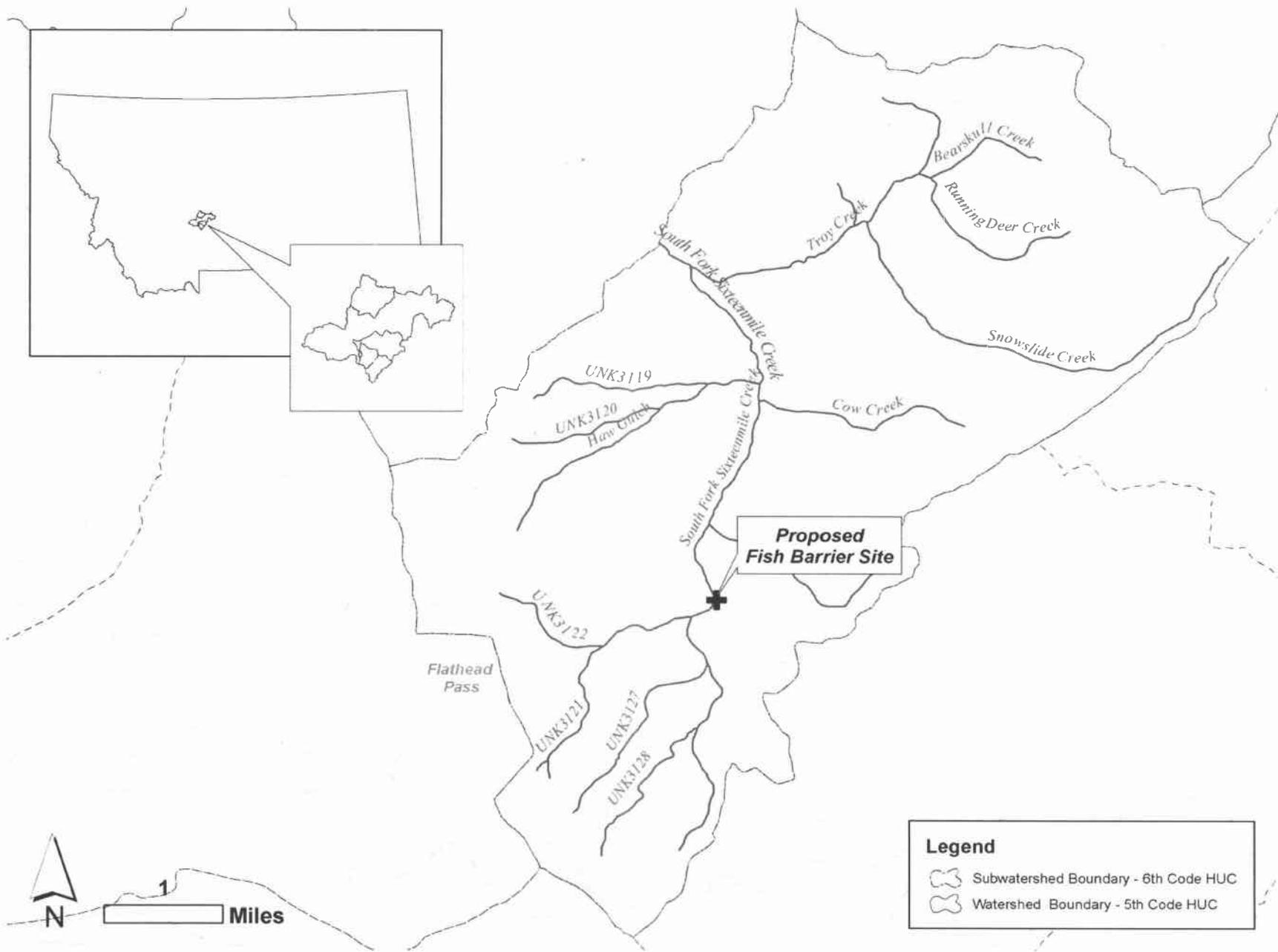
Thanks for your time and consideration of this proposed native fish restoration project.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Flowers
Region 3 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Attachments





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Bozeman Ranger District
3710 Fallon St., Ste C
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-522-2520

File Code: 2670

Date: January 15, 2013

Dear Interested Party:

In the accompanying letter from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the purpose and need and project description for the South Fork Sixteenmile Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration project is described. This proposal is jointly proposed by Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Gallatin National Forest. If approved by both agencies, this project would be implemented over the next two to four years.

Gallatin National Forest has the authority to make a decision on the portion of the project requiring any ground disturbance such as the construction of the upstream fish passage barrier; whereas, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has the authority to make decisions related to the treatment of non-natives and restocking with genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout. To entirely meet project objectives, all three portions or interrelated actions of the proposal would have to be completed.

I am asking you to review the proposal described in the accompanying letter from Montana, Wildlife and Parks and submit any comments or concerns you may have related to the construction of the upstream fish passage barrier to Bruce Roberts, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon St., Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718. You may also email comments to broberts@fs.fed.us. Comments must be postmarked by February 15, 2013 to be considered.

For more information regarding the purpose and need or the proposed actions, please contact Bruce Roberts, West Zone Fisheries Biologist, at (406) 522-2544.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

LISA STOEFFLER
Bozeman District Ranger

