



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

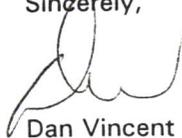
Region One  
490 North Meridian Rd.  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 752-5501  
FAX: 406-257-0349  
Ref:DV224-00  
August 25, 2000

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704  
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Bldg., PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Director's Office – Rich Clough  
Parks Division – Jeff Erickson  
Fisheries Division – Dorothy Lindsay  
Legal Unit  
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's  
Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201  
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800  
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624  
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624  
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923  
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103  
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bozeman, 59773-8298  
Rep. Stanley Fisher, 76 Golf Terrace, Bigfork, 59911  
Sen. Bob Keenan, Box 697, Bigfork, 59911-0697  
Rep. Rob Raney, 212 S. 6<sup>th</sup>, Livingston, 59047  
Flathead County Library, 247 First Avenue E, Kalispell, 59901  
Flathead County Library, Bigfork Branch, PO Box 472, Bigfork, 59911  
Flathead County Commissioners, 800 S. Main, Kalispell, 59901

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the **Tom-Tom Lake rehabilitation project**. During a public comment period from July 10 through August 7, 2000, two comments were received, one in favor of the project and one opposed to the use of piscicide, but favoring the need to address the exotic trout in Tom-Tom Lake.

Therefore, based on the comments and agreements for the need to remove the exotic trout, the draft EA becomes the final EA. A copy of the Decision Document is enclosed for your information.

Sincerely,  
  
Dan Vincent  
Regional Supervisor

DV/nli  
Enclosure

Flathead

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DECISION NOTICE  
FOR THE REMOVAL OF HYBRID YELLOWSTONE X WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT  
FROM TOM-TOM LAKE  
August 18, 2000

**Project proposal:**

1. To chemically rehabilitate Tom-Tom Lake using Rotenone piscicide to remove rainbow trout and rainbow x westslope cutthroat hybrids. This will eliminate the threat contaminating the strongest remaining native westslope population in Hungry Horse Reservoir and the South Fork Flathead River.
2. To restock the lake with genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout of the M012 strain from the Anaconda State Fish Hatchery.

**Site location and characteristics:**

Tom-Tom Lake is located in Flathead County in the Flathead National Forest east of the town of Kalispell. It's legal description is T27N, R18W, S27. The lake is 10.5 surface acres with a maximum depth of 33 feet.

**Project justification:**

In 1941 the lake was stocked with a generic strain of cutthroat trout. Subsequent testing of this strain indicated it was largely comprised of Yellowstone cutthroat genes. In 1984 Tom-Tom Lake fish were tested for genetic purity and found to be Yellowstone cutthroat trout and hybrid Yellowstone x westslope cutthroat. In 1985 a management plan called "swamping" was implemented which involved stocking the lake with high densities of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout annually for five years. In 1990 the lake was sampled for genetics once again to evaluate the success of swamping, and Yellowstone cutthroat genes were still represented at unacceptable levels. Based on this information, FWP biologists determined it was prudent to implement an alternative method of removing the exotic trout from the Tom-Tom Lake system. The proposed method will involve using a piscicide.

**Environmental impacts of project:**

No adverse effects are expected for plants, adult amphibians, reptiles, birds, wild mammals, or humans. Some crustaceans are likely to be affected, but will repopulate the lake to near normal levels generally within one calendar year. Because Tom-Tom Lake is located at 5,825 feet in elevation, it does not provide a suitable food source for traditional fish-eating birds and raptors including, but not limited to, common loons, bald eagles, and osprey.

**Social impacts:**

Although statewide angler pressure estimates indicate no angler use of Tom-Tom Lake, there is empirical information available that indicates the lake receives measurable use by anglers. Given the proximity to other fisheries, it is believed that traditional Tom-Tom Lake anglers may use adjacent lakes for recreational angling during the post treatment and initial restocking and growth period. The lake is isolated from most anglers by virtue of being situated in remote and rugged-mountainous terrain, with no maintained trail. Angling may continue within 1.5 years after restocked fish are of catchable size.

**Public involvement:**

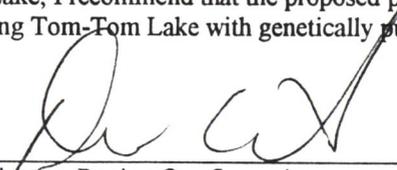
In compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, an environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from July 7 through August 7, 2000. Notices were advertised in the local newspaper, and copies of the EA were made available at local libraries and FWP, Region 1, headquarters in Kalispell.

**Public involvement** (continued)

- One comment was received in favor of all aspects of the project.
- One comment was received in opposition to the use of Rotenone piscicide, but favored the need to address the exotic trout in Tom-Tom Lake.
- One interview was requested by a local newspaper to prepare an article outlining the project during the comment period.

**Decision notice:**

Based on the comments and agreements for the need to remove the threat posed by exotic trout in Tom-Tom Lake, I recommend that the proposed project is implemented to fulfill the desired outcome of restoring Tom-Tom Lake with genetically pure native westslope cutthroat trout.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dan Vincent, Region One Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

8/25/00  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date