

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION

Description of water body:

Name: Rocky Crossing Reservoir
County: Chouteau
Water Code: 15-9125
Legal Description: T29N R13E Sec 17

This reservoir is a long, approximately 1 mile, 10-foot deep reservoir.

Name of the drainage where the lake is located:

The reservoir is located on Big Sandy Creek, which drains into the Milk River, a tributary of the Missouri River. The reservoir is located on private land, but landowner has agreed to allow public access if MFWP stocks fish.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Rainbow Trout and Largemouth Bass. We propose stocking rainbow trout for several years to provide the initial fishery. Largemouth bass would also be stocked to provide the long-term fishery.

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

Yes.

Species of Special Concern in the drainage:

None

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

None Minor Major

Comments: None expected.

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

The reservoir went dry during the recent drought period. Predation and/or competition may occur as fish species repopulate the reservoir from upstream or downstream but minor impacts are expected. Largemouth bass may help control black bullheads if they return to the reservoir.

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

Rainbow trout and Largemouth bass will consume macro-invertebrates, zooplankton and amphibians in the lake. Since fish have been present in the reservoir before, this likely will not change the species composition in the reservoir, but planting fish likely will affect the relative abundance and size of the species currently inhabiting the reservoir. We expect that the effects on the aquatic invertebrate community in the lake from this proposed plant will be very similar to the effects from previous fish populations.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:
 None Minor Major

It is unlikely that rainbow trout could reproduce in the reservoir and limited habitat exists upstream in Big Sandy Creek. Largemouth bass would likely reproduce in the reservoir.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Yes – all fish could be eradicated from the pond by poisoning with rotenone. If rainbow trout and largemouth bass go upstream into beaver ponds in Big Sandy Creek small number of largemouth bass and rainbow trout may not be easily removed

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?

No

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

No Action. If not stocked, anglers would not have a new trout/ bass fishing opportunity near Big Sandy.
Stock only rainbow trout. Landowner would prefer largemouth bass.
Stock only largemouth bass.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any.

None necessary beyond this EA.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:

Sam Bitz, landowner.
Montana anglers.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction:

Steve Leathe, Fish Manager, FWP, Great Falls
Kent Gilge, Fisheries Biologist, FWP, Havre
Sam Bitz, Rocky Crossing Ranch landowner, Big Sandy

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? YES/NO? If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

No. Impacts are expected to be minor and insignificant.

EA prepared by: Paul Hamlin & Steve Leathe

DATE: 5-28-03

PUBLIC COMMENT DEADLINE: November 15, 2003

Comments should be sent to: Steve Leathe, MFWP, 4600 Giant Springs Road,
Great Falls, MT 59405; Email address: sleathe@state.mt.us