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Ref:DV112-04
July 27, 2004

To: Governor's Office, Attn: Todd O'Hair, PO Box 200801, Helena, 59620-0801
John Cleveland, 6810 N Roxbrough Road, Littleton, CO 80125
Carl Keller, BPA, Environmental Policy, PO Box 3621 KEC-4, Portland, OR 27208
Environmental Quality Council, PO Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Director's Office - Marilyn Johnson; Fisheries Division - Karen Zackheim; Legal Unit - Brandi Fisher; Endangered Species Coordinator - Arnold Dude; Nongame Coordinator - Heidi Youmans; Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries - Robert Snyder; Kalispell FWP.
*Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, PO Box 201202, Helena, 59620-1202
*Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
*Jon Dahlberg, DNRC, 2250 Hwy 93 N, Kalispell, 59901
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 18th Ave., Bozeman, 59715
Commissioner Mike Murphy, 2401 Recreation Road S, Wolf Creek, 59648
Sen. Aubyn Curtiss, PO Box 216, Fortine, 59918-0216
Rep. Rick Maedje, PO Box 447, Fortine, 59918-0447
Rep. Eileen Carney, PO Box 1193, Libby, 59923
Montana Wilderness Association, 43 Woodland Park Drive #9, Kalispell, 59901
Ecology Center, 801 Sherwood, Suite B, Missoula, 59802
Jim Mann, Daily Inter Lake, 727 E. Idaho, Kalispell, 59901
Montana Ecosystem Defense Council, Will Snyder, 40 E. Main #3, Bozeman, 59715
Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, PO Box 278 Pablo, 59855
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, PO Box 595, Helena, 59624
Montana Wildlife Federation, PO Box 1175, Helena, 59624
Lincoln County Commissioners, 512 California Avenue, Libby, 59923
Glen Anacker, Trout Unlimited, PO Box 638, Kalispell, 59903-0638

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, has completed an environmental assessment (EA) for a bank stabilization and habitat restoration project tentatively planned to rehabilitate approximately 9,300 feet of Libby Creek southwest of Libby in Lincoln County, Montana.

There were no changes to the draft; therefore, the draft becomes the final EA. A copy of the decision document is enclosed. Please submit any questions or comments to Fisheries Biologist Jim Dunnigan or Fish & Wildlife Technician Jay DeShazer, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 475 Fish Hatchery Road, Libby, MT 59923, or e-mail to jdunnigan@state.mt.us or jdeshazer@state.mt.us.

Sincerely,

Daniel P Vincent
Region One Supervisor

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Enclosure

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DECISION NOTICE FOR LIBBY CREEK CHANNEL RESTORATION PROJECT (LOWER CLEVELAND PHASE)

July 27, 2004

Project Proposal and Justification:

Libby Creek is an important bull trout and redband trout spawning and rearing tributary to the Kootenai River below Libby Dam. Upper Libby Creek has been degraded by past management practices, including road building, hydraulic and dredge mining, and riparian logging. This past activity has resulted in accelerated bank erosion along a number of meander bends, resulting in channel degradation and poor fish habitat. Currently the stream channel is over-widened, contains multiple channels, and is shallow, with limited pool habitat. Upper Libby Creek near the proposed project site is currently unable to adequately transport stream flow and bedload supply and still maintain a stable channel.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) will implement a stream restoration project that will stabilize approximately 9,300 feet of upper Libby Creek and enhance habitat for adult and juvenile bull trout and redband trout. This project will be constructed in two phases. The first phase of the project will be completed in the fall of 2004 (9/1/04 – 12/31/04) and will include the upper 3,100 feet of stream beginning at the upstream project boundary area. The second phase of the project will include the remaining 6,200 feet of stream channel and will be constructed in the fall of 2005 (9/1/05 – 12/31/05). The project will realign and reshape the channel to an appropriate dimension, pattern, and profile, installing log and rock vanes and rootwads throughout the project, and planting native vegetation along the riparian corridor to stabilize the stream banks. Montana FWP has completed two previous restoration projects on Libby Creek, and the currently proposed project represents the continuation of our effort to restore the ecological function of the Libby Creek watershed within the next 5 -10 years. The intent of the project is to: 1) reduce the sediment sources and bank erosion throughout the project area by incorporating stabilization techniques that function naturally with the stream and decrease the amount of stress on the stream banks; 2) convert the channelized portions of stream into a channel type that is self-maintaining and will accommodate floods without major changes in channel pattern or profile; 3) use natural stream stabilization techniques that will allow the stream to adjust slowly over time and be representative of a natural stream system; 4) improve fish habitat, particularly for bull trout and redband trout; and 5) improve the function and aesthetics of the river and adjacent riparian ecosystem.

Location of Project:

This project will be conducted on Libby Creek, located on property owned by Liberty Placer Mining Company approximately 16 miles southwest of the town of Libby in Lincoln County, Montana, within Township 28 North, Range 30 West, NE 1/4 Section 36, and Township 28 North, Range 30 West, NW 1/4 Section 31, SW 1/4 Section 30.

Environmental and Social Impacts of Project:

There will be short-term increases in turbidity during the project construction phase. During construction, all reasonably applicable Best Management Practices will be employed to minimize sedimentation to Libby Creek. For example, we will minimize turbidity by 1) scheduling construction during a low-flow period; 2) constructing temporary clear-water bypass channels, so that much of the new channel construction can be conducted in the dry; 3) using pumps to dewater areas as necessary during construction of bank revetment and instream structures; and 4) filtering water across vegetated floodplain areas that drain away from the active channel during construction. We expect that any short-term increases in turbidity will not adversely impact the aquatic biota within Libby Creek.

We expect that any short-term and nonsignificant impacts associated with this project will be mitigated by the long-term benefits. Soils along the stream margin would be disturbed during channel construction, but would quickly stabilize following proposed revegetation efforts. Overall, the project is expected to reduce bank erosion and improve channel stability by restoring a degraded portion of the channel to a proper dimension, pattern, and profile, and reestablishing a healthy riparian zone. Likewise, riparian vegetation and cover would experience minor disturbance during the period of construction. However, proposed revegetation efforts would ultimately improve the riparian community and the overall aesthetics within this area. One of the major objectives of this project is to improve rearing and migration conditions for native salmonids in Libby Creek. We expect that these restoration efforts and associated instream structures will provide stream gradient control, fish habitat, and interim protection of reconstructed stream banks. The project will improve salmonid rearing and migration conditions by increasing the frequency and quality of pool habitat, stabilizing eroding stream banks and shifting stream channels, lowering summer water temperatures, and increasing the abundance and complexity of instream cover. These habitat improvements may increase the long-term carrying capacity and productivity of local populations of redband trout and bull trout.

Public Involvement:

In compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, an environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from June 17

through July 18, 2004. Notices were advertised in three local newspapers (Daily Inter Lake, Tobacco Valley, and Western News), a news release was done, and notification was mailed to local conservation groups, timber companies, selected businesses, and natural resource agencies. We also mailed a copy of the EA to Liberty Placer Mining Company. Copies of the EA were made available at three local libraries, the state library in Helena, the FWP Region 1 headquarters in Kalispell, and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks internet website. We did not receive any comments during this public comment period.

Decision notice:

Based on agreements reached through the project analysis and lack of public comment, I recommend that we implement plans to construct and restore approximately 9,300 feet of upper Libby Creek located on property owned by the Liberty Placer Mining Company.

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Daniel P. Vincent, Region One Supervisor Date
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks