Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION OF RAINBOW TROUT INTO DRY FORK COULEE RESERVOIR

Proposed Action:

Stock hatchery rainbow trout (RB), (*Onchorhynchus mykissi)* into Dry Fork Coulee Reservoir.

Need for Action:

The landowner would like to have FWP stock rainbow trout into the reservoir and then provide reasonable access for public fishing.

Description of water body:

Name: Dry Fork Coulee Reservoir Location: T27N, R11E, S14SW¼
Water Code: County: Chouteau

Drainage where pond is located:

Dry Fork Coulee Reservoir is located on private land (Briese Ranch) approximately ten miles southwest of Big Sandy, MT. The reservoir is located on Dry Fork Coulee, a tributary to Coal Banks Coulee approximately 5 miles upstream from the confluence of Coal Banks Coulee and the Missouri River.

Species proposed for introduction and stocking history:

Rainbow trout are proposed for introduction into Dry Fork Coulee Reservoir. There is no record of fish being stocked into this reservoir.

Species of Special Concern in the drainage

No species in local waters. Six Species of Special Concern inhabit the Missouri River. These include:blue sucker (*Cycleptus elongates*), paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*), pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*), sauger (*Stizostedion canadense*), sickelfin chub (*Macrhybopsis meeki*), and sturgeon chub (*Macrhybopsis gelida).*

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

___None _X_ Minor __ Major

No fish exist in the reservoir. Dry Fork Coulee and Coal Banks Coulee are intermittent drainages. It is possible during heavy rain or snow events that stocked RB will escape from Dry Fork Coulee Reservoir into Coal Banks Coulee and then into the Missouri River. Rainbow trout are present in very low numbers upstream and downstream of the confluence of Coal Banks Coulee and the Missouri River. High water temperatures and high turbidity levels in the Missouri River would limit the success and survival of these rainbows.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation?

___None _X_ Minor __ Major

No fish are present in the reservoir. Dry Fork Coulee and Coal Banks Coulee are intermittent drainages and do not support fish populations. Outflow from the reservoir would flow into the Missouri River. High water temperatures and high turbidity levels in the Missouri River would limit the success and survival of these rainbows.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?

__ None _X_ Minor __ Major

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians will be consumed, but no population level impacts are expected.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:

__ None _X_ Minor __ Major

Reproduction in the lake is unlikely. Rainbow trout have the potential to escape during excess inflow into the reservoir and perhaps survive and reproduction in the Missouri River.

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

It would be feasible to chemically treat this reservoir.

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).

1) **No Action:** Continue use as a stock water reservoir.

2) **Preferred alternative is to stock rainbow trout**. Establishment of a RB fishery will increase the fishing opportunities in the Big Sandy area.

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:

Kim Briese, landowner
Montana anglers.

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

Steve Leathe, Fish Manager, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Great Falls
Kim Briese, Landowner, Big Sandy

Is an EIS required? No, the action is expected to be minor and beneficial.

EA prepared by: Paul Hamlin, Fisheries Technician III Date: July 19, 2005
Comments will be accepted until: August 24, 2005
Comments should be sent to: Paul Hamlin, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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