



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

November 17, 2005

To: Governor's Office, Mike Volesky, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620

James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Bob Raney, 212 South 6th, Livingston, MT 59047

Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715

Headwaters Fly Fishers, PO Box 10372, Bozeman, MT 59719

Anaconda Sportsman Club, #2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711

Skyline Sportsman Association, PO Box 173, Butte, MT 59701

Prickly Pear Sportsman Association, 21 S Hills Road, Clancy, MT 59634

George Grant Chapter TU, PO Box 563, Butte, MT 59703

Lewis and Clark Chapter TU, PO Box 432, Twin Bridges, MT 59754

Madison -Gallatin Chapter TU, PO Box 52, Bozeman, MT 59715

Tom Sathers, Headwaters Fish & Game Association, PO Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941

Dick Oswald, 730 N Montana, Dillon, MT 59725

State Land Coalition, Jack Atcheson Pres., 3210 Ottawa Street, Butte, MT 59701

Big Hole River Foundation, PO Box 3894, Butte, MT 59701

Steve Egeline, District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701

Silver Bow County Commissioners, 155 West Granite, Butte, MT 59701

Montana Tech Fly Fishing Club, Montana Tech, 1300 West Park Street, Butte, MT 59754

Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Butte/Silver Bow Water Utilities, 129 W. Galena, Butte, MT 59701

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program: Introduction of Westslope Cutthroat Trout into a Fishless Reach of Basin Creek. This project proposes to obtain a combination of live fish and fertilized eggs from fish residing in lower Basin Creek to establish approximately 300 Westslope Cutthroat trout in a barren reach of Basin Creek. Three written comments and one verbal comment were received during a 34-day comment period ending November 15, 2005.

This Draft EA is available for review in Helena at FWP's Headquarters, the State Library, and the Environmental Quality Council. It also may be obtained from FWP at the address provided above, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov> .

It is my decision to proceed with the proposed project, with no changes to the Draft EA.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Ron Spoon
P.O. Box 1137
Townsend, Montana 59644

Or e-mailed to: rspoon@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor

Attachment

Decision Notice

Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program: Introduction of Westslope Cutthroat Trout into a Fishless Reach of Basin Creek

Proposal

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed introduction of westslope cutthroat trout into a fishless reach of Basin Creek. This project proposes to obtain a combination of live fish and fertilized eggs from fish residing in lower Basin Creek to establish approximately 300 westslope cutthroat trout in a barren reach of the headwaters of Basin Creek. The project will take place for at least 3 years and should be completed by 2008. The objective of the project is to enhance the existing cutthroat trout population in Basin Creek by increasing the reach of occupied habitat by approximately 2 miles (current distribution about 1.5 miles; future distribution about 3.5 miles). The proposed project is part of a variety of efforts within the overall Silver Bow Creek drainage intended to protect and enhance westslope cutthroat trout.

Environmental Policy Act Process

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is required to assess potential impacts of the proposal to the human and physical environment. In compliance with requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) an environmental assessment (currently available from Ron Spoon, 406-266-4237) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on October 12, 2005.

Public comments on the project were taken for 34 days and a public meeting regarding this project was held in Butte on October 20, 2005. The Environmental Assessment was mailed to 30 individuals and groups on the FWP MEPA mailing list. A legal notice announcing the availability of the EA was published in the Butte Standard. The EA was also available on the FWP web site.

Issues raised during the public comment period on the EA are addressed in the comment section of this Decision Notice. There are no modifications to the Draft Environmental Assessment based on public comment, and the Draft Environmental Assessment and this Decision Notice together serve as the final document for this proposal.

Summary of Issues Addressed in the Environmental Assessment

The Environmental Assessment lists the issues in detail. These include:

- Threats to WCT in Montana and in the Silver Bow Creek drainage
- Current distribution of WCT in Basin Creek
- Methodology of WCT transfer relating to genetics and fish pathogens
- Competition and predation impacts on invertebrates and amphibians

Summary of Public Comment

At the close of the comment period, November 15, 2005, FWP had received three written comments and one verbal comment. Two individuals representing agencies attended the public meeting in Butte on October 20, 2005.

Public Comments on the Proposal

Comment #1. "I support the idea of planting some cuts in Basin Creek in the Highlands."

Response: Noted

Comment #2. "We (Montana Historical Society) feel there is a low likelihood cultural resources will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time." SHPO Project #: 2005101707.

Response: Noted

Comment #3. "Please accept my comment in favor of the Basin Creek fish project proposed by your department. The preservation of native westslope cutthroat trout is extremely important, especially in the Silver Bow Creek watershed. These remnant populations in headwater areas will be critical in helping to restore a native fishery in a restored Silver Bow Creek."

Response: Noted

Comment #4 (verbal). "You (FWP) have permission to access Basin Creek via the Butte/Silver Bow Water Utilities gate at Basin Creek Reservoir to implement this project."

Response: Noted

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the risk of further population decline of westslope cutthroat trout throughout the historic range of the species, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed project. This project is consistent with statewide conservation and restoration strategies, goals and objectives as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana signed in 1999.

I find there to be no significant impact on the human or physical environment associated with this project, except to promote the long-term persistence of westslope cutthroat trout in Basin Creek and in the Silver Bow Creek watershed. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

November 17, 2005

Patrick J. Flowers
Regional Supervisor

Date