

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION
PRIVATE POND APPLICATION**

Name and address of applicant: Phalen Ranch Co.
264 Road 407
Ismay, MT. 59336

Is approval for a private pond permit application recommended? Yes

Location of pond:

County: Custer **Legal description:** 6N 53E S15 W1/2NW1/4

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located: Pond is located on White Knob Creek, a tributary to Sheep Creek, a tributary of Powder River, which is a tributary of the Yellowstone River.

Fish species proposed for introduction: Rainbow trout or crappie

Is this species legally present in the drainage? Yes

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage: No species of special concern have been documented in White Knob Creek or Sheep Creek. Some are documented in the Powder River which is approximately 25 creek miles downstream from the pond. Escaped rainbow trout or crappie will have minimal chance to survive the limited water supply between the pond and the Powder River. If escaped fish do reach the Powder River impacts to the existing fishery and species of special concern are minimal. Both species already exist within the Powder River drainage. Following is a summary by year of fish species sampled and the approximate location:

- 1) Sheep Creek 1980 at river mile 2.0: northern pike, common carp, creek chub, flathead chub, sand shiner, fathead minnow, longnose dace, white sucker, black bullhead, yellow bullhead.
- 2) Sheep Creek 2004 at river mile 11.5: black bullhead, plains minnow, lake chub, flathead chub, white sucker, longnose dace, green sunfish, fathead minnow.
- 3) Sheep Creek 2006 at river mile 1.0: fathead minnow, common carp, white sucker, plains minnow, green sunfish.

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

None Minor Major

Comments: If the fish escape downstream the ephemeral nature of White Knob and Sheep Creek will limit trout or crappie survival, which poses little impact to downstream fish species.

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

None Minor Major

Comments: In the rare event that trout or crappie escape downstream the numbers that would survive would have little impact to other fish populations in the Powder River.

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

None Minor Major

Comments: Fish will consume some invertebrates in the pond.

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

None Minor Major

Comments: Rainbow trout are physically unable to spawn in small ponds that lack cold running water. Crappie can and often times are successful at natural reproduction in ponds that have a maximum depth of 11 feet or more.

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

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).

Do not stock (no action alternative)

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any. Restrictions on what species can be stocked in ponds. Fish must be purchased from a private hatchery that has been tested and documented to be free of disease or other pathogens.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction: None

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction: None

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 minor and non-controversial.

Decision Notice: Considering there are no environmental impacts associated with stocking this private pond and no comments are expected if the EA was posted for public comment this EA is considered the decision notice and a private pond license will be issued to proceed with fish stocking as outlined in the application.

EA prepared by: Kenneth M Backes **DATE:** 7/17/2015