



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

HELENA AREA RESOURCE OFFICE

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July 23, 2002

TO: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

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

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103

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

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

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

Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715

Perry Backus, 65 Redtail, Dillon, MT 59725

Tom Sathers, Headwaters Fish & Game Assoc., P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941

Broadwater County Commissioners, Broadwater County Courthouse, Townsend, MT 59644

Lewis and Clark County Commissioners, 316 N Park, Helena, MT 59601

Jefferson County Commissioners, Box H, Boulder, MT 59632

Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited, Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807

Steve Luebeck, George Grant TU, Box 563, Butte, MT 59703

David Payne, Missouri River TU, 4620 Liberty, Helena, MT 59601

John Wilson, Montana Trout Unlimited, 405 Monroe, Helena, MT 59601

Jack Sautter, Broadwater Stream and Lake Comm., 41 River Road, Townsend, MT 59644

Virgil Binkley, Broadwater Rod and Gun, Box 641, Townsend, MT 59644

*Jefferson
Miss*

Prickly Pear Sportsman's Association, Box 48, East Helena, MT 59635
Tom Gannon, Backcountry Horsemen of Montana, Box 2106, Clancy, MT 59634
James Mahaer, Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen, Box 4008, Helena, MT 59601
Paul Updike, Box 460, Townsend, MT 59644
Loren Davis, 1429 Helena Avenue, Helena, MT 59601
Joel Davis, 3892 E. US Highway 12, East Helena, MT 59635
Kenneth and Patricia Peterson, 1024 Peosta, Helena, MT 59601
Tom Williams, 48 Highway 437, Toston, MT 59643
Keith Kirscher, 49 Lower Ray Creek Road, Townsend, MT 59644
Ken Romo, 74 Meyer Road, Townsend, MT 59644
Gerald Reller, 300 Goose Bay Lane, Townsend, MT 59644
John Stoner, 63 River Road, Townsend, MT 59644
Aaron Shewman, 3895 Kismet, Helena, MT 59601
Neil Larson, Box 9506, Helena, MT 59604
Maurice Smith, Box 852, Boulder, MT 59632
Michael Turcotte, 644 Ambrose Creek Road, Stevensville, MT 59870
Kenneth Liston, 1909 Luck Strike Rd, Helena, MT 59602
Tom Russ, 700 McClellan Creek Road, Clancy, MT 59634
Gordon Thompson, 1027 N. Jackson Street, Helena, MT 59601
Robert Tomich, Box 229, Boulder, MT 59632
Jim Stipcich, 8856 Jackpine Drive, Helena, MT 59602
Sam Samson, Box H, Boulder, MT 59632
Michael Garrity, 2216 5th Ave, Helena, MT 59601
Ken Gardner, 41 Strawberry Lookout Rd, Clancy, MT 59634
Ed Finstad, Box 592, East Helena, MT 59635
Leslie O'Neil, Box 305, Clancy, MT 59634
Marshall and Carol Sewell, Box 840, Boulder, MT 59632
Iwy Obrigewitch, 201 N. Oak, Townsend, MT 59644
Neil Larson, Box 9506, Helena, MT 59604
Earl Dorsey, 805 Mill Road, Helena, MT 59602
Ecology Center, 801 Sherwood St. Suite B, Missoula, MT 59802
Roger Sanderson, 152 Hwy 437, Toston, MT 59643
Don Hulett, 5850 York Road, Helena, MT 59602
Bill Koehnke, 7 Greaves Road, Toston, MT 59643
Tim Meloy, 1324 9th, Helena, MT 59601
Tim Mulligan, 91 E Hwy 2, Whitehall, MT 59759
Dave Ewan, 26 Crazy Mountain, Clancy, MT 59634
Tom and Judy Kilmer, 621 2nd St., Helena, MT 59601
Melissa Kwasney, Box 123, Jefferson City, MT 59638
Darrell Baum, 430 Quarter Circle Rd., Box 470181, Winston, MT 59647
Jane Hartman, Wilsall, MT 59086
Stewart Brandborg, 187 Tin Cup Rd., Darby, MT 59829
Duane Grimes, 20 Hole in the Wall, Clancy, MT 59634
Gay Ann Masolo, 20 Buck Drive, Townsend, MT 59644
Rick Dale, 5 Rocky MTN Drive, Whitehall, MT 59759
Tim Ravndal, Box 287, Townsend, MT 59644
Robert Ament, American Wildlands, 40 E. Main Street, Suite 2, Bozeman, MT 59715
Stan Frasier, Montana Wildlife Federation, Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Craig Luton, 11 Sleeping Giant Ln, Clancy, MT 59634
Kane Quenemoen, 2 Sierra Ln, Clancy, MT 59634
Mike Benson, 41 Spruce St, Clancy, MT 59634
Richard Starkel, 20 Spruce St, Clancy, MT 59634
Charles A. Sleath, 3 Creekside Ln, Clancy, MT 59634
Wacker, 125 Sierra Ln, Clancy, MT 59634

Ken Gardner, 41 Strawberry Lookout, Montana City, MT 59634
Sheldon M. Maier, 11 Mountain Meadow, Clancy, MT 59634
Greg Van Horssen, 90 Warm Springs Cr. Rd., Clancy, MT 59634
Walter and Lyn Williams, 55 Woodland Park Loop Rd., Clancy, MT 59634
Ron Vick, 570 McClellan Cr. Rd., Clancy, MT 59634
Ann W. Galbraith, 76 Casey Meadow Rd, Clancy, MT 59634
Tom Russ, 700 McClellan Cr. Rd., Clancy, MT 59634
Pat M. Bauernfeind, 20 Wapiti Ln. Clancy, MT 59634
Robert Poirier, 27 Woodland Park Loop, Clancy, MT 59634
Don Peavey, 275 Warm Springs Cr. Rd, Clancy, MT 59634
Jennifer Viets, 53 Woodland Park Loop, Clancy, MT 59634
Larry Lamping, 3740 Old US Hwy 12, East Helena, MT 59635
Henry Van Diest, PMB 2107, Montana City, MT 59634
Jim Haslip, 705 East Main, East Helena, MT 59635
Hank Methison, Box 19, Clancy, 59634
Dean Allport, 233 McClellan Creek Rd, Clancy, MT 59634
Joe Calman, 2 Vigilante Tr, Clancy, MT 59634

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Enclosed, please find the decision notice on the South Fork of Warm Springs and McClellan creek Cutthroat Trout Restoration Projects. Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the high risk of extinction of genetically pure WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains, it is my decision to proceed with the construction of migratory fish barriers and the removal of nonnative fish in the South Fork of Warm Springs Creek and the upper McClellan Creek drainage with mechanical removal methods. This effort is part of the previously approved Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program (July 1999), and 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 by multiple state and federal agencies, and organizations in May 1999).

It is our belief that these projects will further help secure pure WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains by reducing threats from nonnative trout species. If you have questions or would like to discuss these projects in further detail, please contact me at the Helena Area Resource Office (495-3260) or Project Biologist Lee Nelson (266-3425).

Thank you for you interest.

Sincerely,



Michael Korn
Helena Area Coordinator



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Decision Notice: Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program: South Fork of Warm Springs Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project and McClellan Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project

July 23, 2002

Proposal

The proposed projects are designed to help secure native and genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) populations in the South Fork of Warm Springs Creek and upper McClellan Creek drainage (above Willard Creek) by reducing competition from nonnative trout. Nonnative trout would be removed from the project reaches using mechanical removal methods including electrofishing and trapping. Barriers to upstream fish migration would also be constructed at the lower end of the project stream reaches to prevent nonnative trout reinvasion. These projects are part of the overall Elkhorns Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program that is intended to ensure the long-term persistence of the seven remaining WCT populations in the Elkhorn Mountain Range.

Montana 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), Environmental Assessments (currently available from Lee Nelson, 406-266-3425) were completed for each project by FWP and released for public comment in June 2002.

Public comments on these projects were taken for 30 days (June 20, 2002, to July 19, 2002) and public meetings regarding the projects were held in Clancy (July 2, 2002) and Montana City (July 3, 2002). The Environmental Assessments were mailed to over 100 individuals/ groups on the FWP MEPA mailing list, and from a list of those who had previously expressed interested in cutthroat trout restoration projects in the Elkhorn Mountains. In addition, a letter discussing the proposed projects was delivered to local landowners near the project areas through a U.S. Postal Service route delivery. News releases or Legal Notices, which announce the availability of the EA and information about the public meetings, were published in the *Helena Independent Record* and *Boulder Monitor*. Press releases were also sent to local radio and television stations. Additionally, the EA was posted on the FWP web site.

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

Summary of Issues Addressed in the Environmental Assessment

The Environmental Assessments list the issues in detail. These include:

- Threats to WCT in Montana, the Elkhorn Mountains, and proposed project streams.

- Current distribution of WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains.
- Methodology of barrier construction and nonnative trout removals.
- Restoration objectives for reducing abundance of nonnative trout.

Supplementary information: because these projects are being conducted on U.S. Forest Service lands the Helena National Forest analyzed the ground breaking activities of the projects under the National Environmental Protection Act. A Decision Memo regarding this review is included in the mailing with this document.

Summary of Public Comment

At the close of the comment period, July 19, 2002, FWP had received one written comment and one verbal comment. Attendance at the public meetings was sparse with only one person attending the public meeting in Montana City, while no people attended the Clancy meeting.

Written Comments on the Proposal

Comment 1. I fully support FWP's proposed restoration projects on the South Fork of Warm Springs Creek and McClellan Creek in the Elkhorn Mountains. The respondent also expressed hopes that this project will not be compromised or stopped by individuals who have expressed their opposition to these kinds of projects in the past.

Response: Noted

Comment 2: The Jefferson County Commission supports these projects and the work to restore native fish species in the Elkhorns.

Response: Noted

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the high risk of extinction of genetically pure WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains, it is my decision to proceed with the construction of migratory fish barriers and the removal of nonnative fish in the South Fork of Warm Springs Creek and the upper McClellan Creek drainage with mechanical removal methods. This effort is part of the previously approved *Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program* (July 1999), and 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 by multiple state and federal agencies, and organizations in May 1999).

This project will help secure pure WCT in the Elkhorn Mountains by reducing threats from nonnative trout species. I find there to be no significant impact on the human or physical environment associated with these projects, except to help ensure the long-term persistence of genetically pure, locally adapted WCT in the Elkhorn Mountain Range. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessments are the appropriate level of analysis, and that Environmental Impact Statements are not required.



July 23, 2002.
Michael Korn
Helena Area Coordinator, FWP

DECISION MEMO

McClellan Creek and
South Fork Warm Creek
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Projects

Helena Ranger District
Helena National Forest
Jefferson County, Montana

DECISION

It is my decision to proceed with the portion of the activities on National Forest System lands described in the Environmental Assessments (EA) entitled; *“McClellan Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project”* and *“South Fork of Warm Springs Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project”*. Implementation of these two projects is planned for the summer and early fall of 2002. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) released the EAs for public comment in June 2002.

McClellan Creek: Specifically, implementation of this project on the Helena National Forest will include construction of a barrier to fish movement on McClellan Creek near the confluence of Willard Creek (T8N R2W section 21) to prevent upstream movements of non-native brook trout. The barrier will be constructed of materials located on site. Non-native fish removal using mechanical means such as electrofishing and trapping is also part of the project and will occur upstream of the barrier once the barrier is completed. As part of the fish removal project a minor amount of brush adjacent to the stream will be cut back slightly to facilitate electrofishing efforts. Additionally, a few burned logs located in the mile reach upstream from the barrier that are now spanning the stream will be removed or partially removed to enhance the success of the planned electrofishing efforts.

South Fork Warm Springs: Implementation of this project will include construction of a migratory barrier to upstream moving fish on Forest Service lands near the Forest Boundary (R3W, T8N, section 26). The barrier is all instream and has no ground disturbing activities associated with its construction. It is possible that a minimal amount of brush and logs may need to be removed from the stream to increase the efficiency of electrofishing.

Additional specifics on project activities are detailed in above-referenced FWP EAs, which are incorporated into the project file for this Decision Memo, as it relates to National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requirements. Additionally, the project file incorporates the Elkhorn Mountains Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program EA, which was released by FWP and the

Helena National Forest in April 1999. These two documents contain the details on purpose and need for the barrier on the Helena National Forest, as well as the general issues, concerns, opportunities and effects of the project.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

FWP and the Helena National Forest completed scoping with the public as part of both of these previously released Environmental Assessments.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The activities on National Forest System lands associated with the restoration of westslope cutthroat trout in McClellan Creek are excluded from detailed analysis because they are in a category listed in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.1 section 31.2, and because there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the projects. The proposed activities are consistent with category 31.26 (Wildlife Habitat Improvement Activities).

The following factors were analyzed prior to determining that extraordinary circumstances were not present relative to this project, as specified in FSH 1909.15:

1. There are no steep slopes affected by the proposed activities.
2. There are no threatened or endangered species or critical habitat affected by the projects.
3. There are no adverse effects to wetlands, floodplains, or municipal watersheds. The small amount of brush trimming and partial removal of logs spanning the stream channel will not affect floodplain function, wetlands or the municipal watershed.
4. Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas are not affected by the projects.
5. There are no inventoried roadless areas within the defined project areas or affected by the projects.
6. There are no natural research areas within the defined project areas or affected by the projects.
7. Native American religious or cultural sites, archeological sites, or historic properties/areas will not be affected by the projects.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

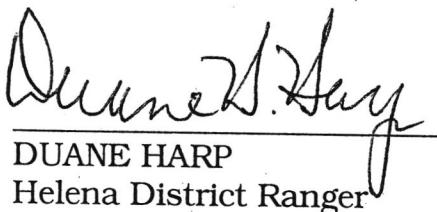
This decision has been made in compliance with the requirements and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act. The decision is also consistent with the management direction in the Helena National Forest Plan, Forestwide Goals and Standards and the specific Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit Management Area (E-4) goals and standards. Further, the project also meets the intent of the 1999 statewide MOU for westslope cutthroat trout that provides for securing existing populations of westslope cutthroat trout.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND CONTACT

The project will begin in August 2002 and will be completed this summer and fall. For additional information concerning this decision contact Jodie Canfield, Elkhorn Coordinator at the Townsend Ranger District, at 406-266-3425. Lee Nelson, project manager for FWP, is also available at the same phone number.

APPEAL RIGHTS

Pursuant to Forest Service Regulations at 36 CFR 215.8(a) (4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of review. Implementation may begin immediately. Detailed records of the analysis and public comments are available for review at the Townsend Ranger District, 415 South Front, Townsend, Montana.



DUANE HARP
Helena District Ranger

DATE 7-22-02