

January 2, 2014
1420 East 6th Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
 Fisheries Bureau
 Endangered Species Coordinator
 Missoula Office
Montana State Library, Helena
MT Environmental Information Center
Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
Wayne Hadley, 1016 Eastside Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722
Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715
Lewis and Clark Conservation District, 790 Colleen Street, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena
Big Blackfoot Chapter Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 1, Ovando, MT 59854
Rick and Mary Sampson, P.O. Box 32, Dagmar, MT 59219

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Program tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project calling for replacing two existing, undersized road culverts located on Keep Cool Creek. The lower culvert would be replaced with a hardened ford, since the need for access is limited. The upstream 24-inch culvert would be replaced with an 87-inch by 73-inch steel plate arch-pipe. The intent of this project is to enhance upstream migratory connectivity for primarily brown trout, and possibly bull trout. This proposed project is located on private road crossings on the Grosfield Ranch approximately 1 mile northeast of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., February 3, 2014 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. Funding for this project through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432. Please note that this draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above.

Sincerely,

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Bureau
Fisheries Division
e-mail: mlere@mt.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Keep Cool Creek Fish Passage Enhancement Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 that directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves providing funding for physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding to a project calling for the replacement of two undersized culverts located on private road crossings on Keep Cool Creek, a tributary to the Blackfoot River. The lower culvert, which currently is breached by the stream, would be replaced by a hardened ford. The upstream culvert, currently an undersized 24-inch pipe, would be replaced with an 87-inch by 73-inch steel plate arch-pipe. The upper crossing impedes upstream fish passage in higher flows and is causing impairments to the stream channel. Replacing this culvert with a much larger arch-pipe would improve migratory connectivity to the middle reaches of Keep Cool Creek. The project site is located on Keep Cool Creek approximately 1 mile northeast of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted Keep Cool Creek located within Township 14 North, Range 8 West, Section 18 in Lewis and Clark County (Attachment 1).

II. Need for the Project: One goal within Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks six-year operations plan for the fisheries program is to “restore and enhance degraded fisheries habitats” by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore important habitats on private and public lands. This proposed project would help meet this goal.

Keep Cool Creek is a tributary to the Blackfoot River that supports brown trout, and limited bull trout use, in its lower reaches. Currently, upstream fish passage is hindered by an undersized road culvert located near stream mile 5.0 (Attachment 2). Additionally, a road crossing located at stream mile 4.0 presently consists of a breached undersized culvert. This project calls for removing the breach culvert at the lower road crossing and converting it to a hardened ford, since access needs are very limited. The upstream 24-inch culvert would be replaced with an 87-inch by 73-inch steel plate arch-pipe. The new arch-pipe is designed to replicated the streambed located both upstream and downstream of the crossing, allowing uninhibited passage for all aquatic organisms.

III. Scope of the Project:

An existing undersized, breached culvert located at stream mile 4.0 would be removed and replaced with a hardened ford. A ford is being proposed since access requirements at this stream crossing are very limited. The new ford would be hardened with cobble. Additionally, an undersized 24-inch in diameter culvert located at stream mile 5.0 would be replaced with a 137-inch by 87- inch steel plate arch-pipe (Attachment 3). The dimensions of the new arch-pipe are based on stream channel characteristics collected both from a reference reach and from hydraulic analyses. The width of the channel at bank full discharge is 6 feet. As

a result, the dimensions of the proposed new pipe will accommodate natural channel conditions. The hydraulic capacity of the new structure would accommodate a 100- flood event. This project is expected to cost \$16,552.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to \$6,000.00. The remainder of the funding would come from outside sources and in-kind services:

Contributor	In-kind services	In-kind cash
USFWS		\$7,620.00
Big Blackfoot Chapter TU	\$2,932.00	

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Replacing an undersized culvert that currently hinders upstream fish passage with a much larger arch-pipe would enhance upstream passage for all aquatic organisms and improve migratory connectivity within the middle reaches of Keep Cool Creek. Brown trout, and possibly bull trout, likely would benefit from the project.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, the operation of equipment in the active stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota (318 Authorization). A 310 permit (Montana Streambed and Land Preservation Act) will be obtained from the local conservation district, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers will be contacted to determine the need to meet 404 provisions of the Clean Water Act.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be temporarily disturbed during construction. All disturbed areas would be re-vegetated with a native grass seed mix.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

Vegetation and cover would be disturbed during the period of construction. However, proposed re-vegetation efforts in the form of seeding with a native mix of grass seed would mitigate this disturbance.

5. Aesthetics.

In the short term, aesthetics would be adversely impacted due to ground disturbance and the

presence of heavy construction equipment.

7. Unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Keep Cool Creek supports limited use by bull trout. Enhancing migratory connectivity to the middle reaches of the stream may benefit this threatened fish species.

9. Historic and archaeological sites.

The project site previously has been disturbed by the construction of the two private road crossings. As a result, there is a very low likelihood that cultural properties will be impacted by the proposed project. Should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during the project, the State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and the site will be investigated.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

None.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no Future Fisheries funding is provided, the applicant would have to either seek other sources of funding to complete the project or upstream fish passage on a portion of Keep Cool Creek would continue to be impeded.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative is designed to provide partial funding to enhance migratory connectivity for fish populations in Keep Cool Creek by replacing an undersized culvert with a much larger arch-pipe. The new arch-pipe would provide year-round upstream passage for all aquatic organisms. Additionally, an existing breach culvert would be replaced with a hardened ford to restore channel dimensions and maintain channel stability.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

The project application to the Future Fisheries Improvement Program has been posted on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks webpage for public comment. No comments have been received to date. The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public

review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission also will review the proposed project and funding will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA also will be published on Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks webpage: fwp.mt.gov.

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on February 3, 2014

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Mark Lere, Program Officer
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Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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Helena, MT 59620
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MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
 1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701
 (406) 444-2535

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Title Keep Cool Creek Fish Passage Enhancement Project
 Division/Bureau Fisheries Division -Future Fisheries Improvement
 Description of Project The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding to a project calling for the replacement of two undersized culverts located on private road crossings on Keep Cool Creek, a tributary to the Blackfoot River. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream fish passage for fish populations residing in the stream. The project site is located about 1 mile northeast of the town of Lincoln on the Grosfield Ranch in Lewis and Clark.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			X			X
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

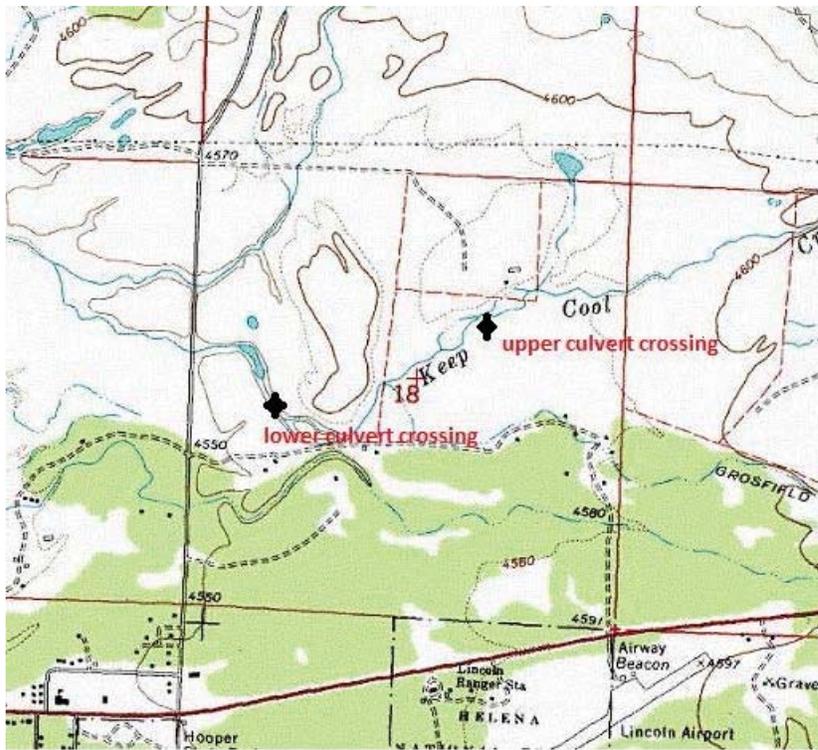
	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities				X		
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Lewis and Clark Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Ryen Neudecker, Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited
 Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by: Mark Lere

Date: December 26, 2013



Map showing project location on Keep Cool Creek.

ATTACHMENT 1



Existing road crossings on Keep Cool Creek.

ATTACHMENT 2

