

July 15, 2014  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Division  
Bozeman Office

Montana State Library, Helena  
MT Environmental Information Center  
Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Gallatin County Conservation District, P.O. Box 569, Manhattan, MT 59741  
Wayne Hadley, 1016 Eastside Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722  
Montana River Action, 304 N 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena  
The Trust for Public Land, 111 S Grand Ave., Suite 203 Bozeman MT 59715

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find the enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP). The FFIP tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project that would restore the largest remaining riparian-wetland complex within Bozeman's urban core, improving water quality and providing additional fish habitat and angler access to the East Gallatin River. The project would remove man-made materials and revegetate streambanks as well as restore backwater areas and floodplain connectivity. The East Gallatin River is a tributary to the Gallatin River located within the town of Bozeman in Gallatin County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., August 18, 2014 to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at the address listed above. The funding for this project through the FFIP is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish and Wildlife 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,

Michelle McGree, Program Officer  
Habitat Bureau  
Fisheries Division  
e-mail: [mmcgree@mt.gov](mailto:mmcgree@mt.gov)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
Fisheries Division  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
East Gallatin Restoration at Story Mill

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted sections 87-1-272 through 273, MCA that direct Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP). 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. Additionally, the 1999 Montana Legislature amended statute sections 87-1-273, 15-38-202 and Section 5, Chapter 463, Laws of 1995 to create a bull trout and cutthroat trout enhancement program. This legislation was amended again in 2013 to open the program to all native fish species (statute section 87-1-283). The program now calls for the enhancement of native fish through habitat restoration, natural reproduction and reductions in species competition by way of the FFIP.

The FFIP is proposing to provide partial funding to a project calling for restoration of the largest remaining riparian-wetland complex within Bozeman’s urban core, improving water quality and providing additional fishing access to the East Gallatin River. The intent of the project is to remove man-made materials and revegetate streambanks as well as restore backwater areas and floodplain connectivity. This project will allow the stream channel to adjust to a more natural state and provide habitat for wild fish.

I. Location of Project:

The project site is located on East Gallatin Creek, a tributary to the Gallatin River, within Township 1S and 2S, Range 6E, and Sections 5, 6, 31, and 32 in Gallatin County. It is located within the town of Bozeman between Interstate 90 and Montana Highway 86 (Attachment 1). Minor work would be done on Boulder Creek, a tributary to the East Gallatin River.

II. Need for the Project:

One goal within FWP’s six-year operations plan for the fisheries program is to “restore and enhance degraded fisheries habitats” by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the FFIP to restore important habitats on private and public lands. This proposed project would help meet this goal. Both water quality and stream function are expected to improve with this project.

III. Scope of the Project:

The project site has been impacted by historical agricultural and industrial operations that led to the straightening of the stream, filling of the floodplain, and draining of wetlands. Agricultural and urban runoff, stream entrenchment, and removal of streamside vegetation contributed to diminished water quality. East Gallatin Creek, as well as its neighboring tributary (Bozeman Creek), is listed as impaired by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Nutrients are the water quality pollutant, and sedimentation has been identified as a limiting

factor for fish populations in the East Gallatin watershed.

This project would remove riprap and other man-made objects along 0.5 miles of the East Gallatin River streambed and streambanks. Along 180 feet of the east bank of the river, native riparian species would be planted, reconnecting the creek with its floodplain and providing a bio-engineered solution to bank instability by replacing riprap, reducing erosion and sedimentation, enhancing detrital input to support aquatic macroinvertebrates, and providing overhead cover for fish through willow plantings. Along the west 250 feet of the East Gallatin River, native willows would be planted, and native wetlands would be seeded to provide stability and species diversity to a newly recontoured floodplain, provide detrital input to support aquatic food chains, and provide overhead cover for fish. Where present, invasive plant species would be controlled or removed.

This project would more than double the wetland area to approximately 15 acres and is expected to filter sediment and capture and process nutrients or other pollutants, thereby improving surface and ground water quality. Additionally, the restoration of a backwater channel on Bozeman Creek would recreate rare rearing habitat for juvenile fish in the channelized reach. Restoration of floodplain areas along the East Gallatin River and Bozeman Creek will re-connect the two streams with their historic floodplains and attenuate downstream flood flows. Streambank and riparian rehabilitation would directly improve fishing by increasing habitat diversity and carrying capacity in the reach while expanding public fishing access.

A diagram of general plans is included in Attachment 2. The total estimated cost for this project is \$172,293.80. Of this total, the FFIP would be contributing up to \$51,952.80. The remaining funds will come from other sources and from in-kind services:

Contributor	In-kind services	In-kind cash
The Trust for Public Land	\$113,730	
Trout Unlimited	\$3,500	
Greater Gallatin Watershed Council	\$3,111	
TOTAL = \$120,341		

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life habitats.

Replacing the riprap and man-made objects with native, riparian species and willows is expected to improve stream and function for both terrestrial and aquatic organisms. Restoration activities will disrupt the stream margins, stream banks, and floodplain temporarily; long term, this effort is expected to improve the overall aquatic and riparian habitat in the East Gallatin River, benefiting brown trout, rainbow trout, and other resident fish species.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

There would be beneficial impacts to the drainage pattern or natural surface run-off of East Gallatin River or Bozeman Creek as a result of the proposed project. Due to the proposed reconnection with historical floodplains, East Gallatin River and Bozeman Creek are expected to attenuate downstream flows during flood events. Water quality is likely to improve due to the reconstruction of the streambanks and the rebuilding of riparian areas and floodplain with native species, which would lead to nutrient and sediment capturing and filtering.

Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, operation of equipment in the stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The DEQ 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 Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act) will be obtained from the local conservation district and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) will be contacted for requirements to meet the federal Clean Water Act (404 permit).

3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be disturbed during construction, but the streambank would be stabilized with erosion control fabric and revegetation efforts. Overall, siltation, deposition, and erosion patterns will be improved within the project area and downstream reaches. Bank stabilization and the addition of riparian species are expected to reduce erosion of the stream channel.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality.

Riparian vegetation and cover, primarily grasses, would be disturbed during the period of construction. However, proposed revegetation efforts and the installation of riparian fencing would mitigate these disturbances. Within the project area, non-native species would be removed or controlled, and native species would be established in the riparian areas and wetlands.

5. Aesthetics.

In the short term, aesthetics would be adversely impacted due to ground disturbance and the presence of heavy equipment during construction. Long term, the proposed project would enhance aesthetics in the East Gallatin River by restoring the channel and floodplain to its natural state and function. Man-made objects would be removed, and riparian areas would be re-established using native species.

9. Historical and archeological sites.

The proposed project may require an ACOE 404 permit. Therefore, the State Historic

Preservation Office (SHPO) will be contacted to determine the need for compliance with the federal historic preservation regulations. The project will not begin until a cultural clearance is granted.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

7. Access to & quality of recreational activities.

The East Gallatin River contains fishable populations of brown trout and rainbow trout and supports a recreational fishery. Stabilizing streambanks with native vegetation and creating healthy riparian areas would improve the aquatic habitat within this short reach of river, enhance fish populations and improve fishing opportunities. Additionally, re-establishment of a backwater area on Bozeman Creek would improve recruitment of fish to Bozeman Creek and the East Gallatin River. This project would be located within a newly-created city park, providing public access to fishing opportunities and other recreational activities.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no funding is provided through the FFIP, the applicant would have to either seek additional sources of funding to complete the project, or the existing sections of the East Gallatin River and Bozeman Creek would remain untouched. The ability of the stream channel to adjust over time would continue to be limited by the presence of concrete and other man-made debris along the stream bed and banks. Recreational opportunities associated with fish and wildlife resources will remain limited and aesthetics will continue to be impacted.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative intends to provide partial funding through the FFIP to restore the East Gallatin River to a natural state and allow the stream channel to adjust over time, improving fisheries habitat and water quality. Fishing access and fish populations are expected to improve with the completion of this project.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude, from this review, that the proposed activities will have an overall positive impact on the physical and human environment, and will therefore not require the extensive analysis associated with an EIS.

2. Level of public involvement.

The project application to the FFIP has been posted on the FWP 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 FFIP. The original application included seven letters of support. The proposed project also will be reviewed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and funding will be contingent upon their approval. The EA will be distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter and will be published on the FWP webpage: [www.fwp.mt.gov](http://www.fwp.mt.gov)

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on August 18, 2014.

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Michelle McGree, Program Officer  
Habitat Bureau  
Fisheries Division  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620  
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e-mail: [mmcgree@mt.gov](mailto:mmcgree@mt.gov)

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
 1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701  
 (406) 444-2432

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Project Title: East Gallatin Restoration at Story Mill

Division/Bureau: Fisheries Division / Habitat Bureau (FFIP)

Description of Project: The FFIP tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project calling for restoration of the largest remaining riparian-wetland complex within Bozeman's urban core, improving water quality and providing additional fishing access to the East Gallatin River. The intent of the project is to remove man-made materials and revegetate streambanks as well as restore backwater areas and floodplain connectivity. This project will allow the stream channel to adjust to a more natural state and provide habitat for wild fish.

**POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO THE 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		
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			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		

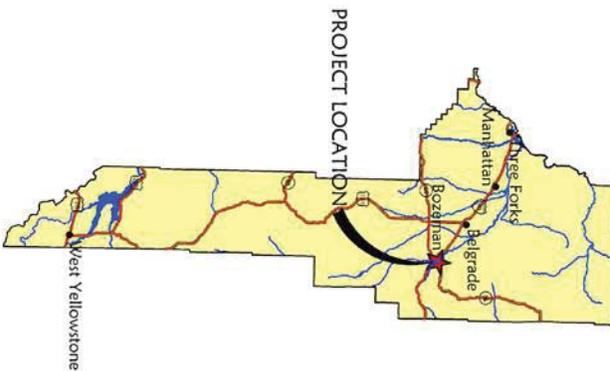
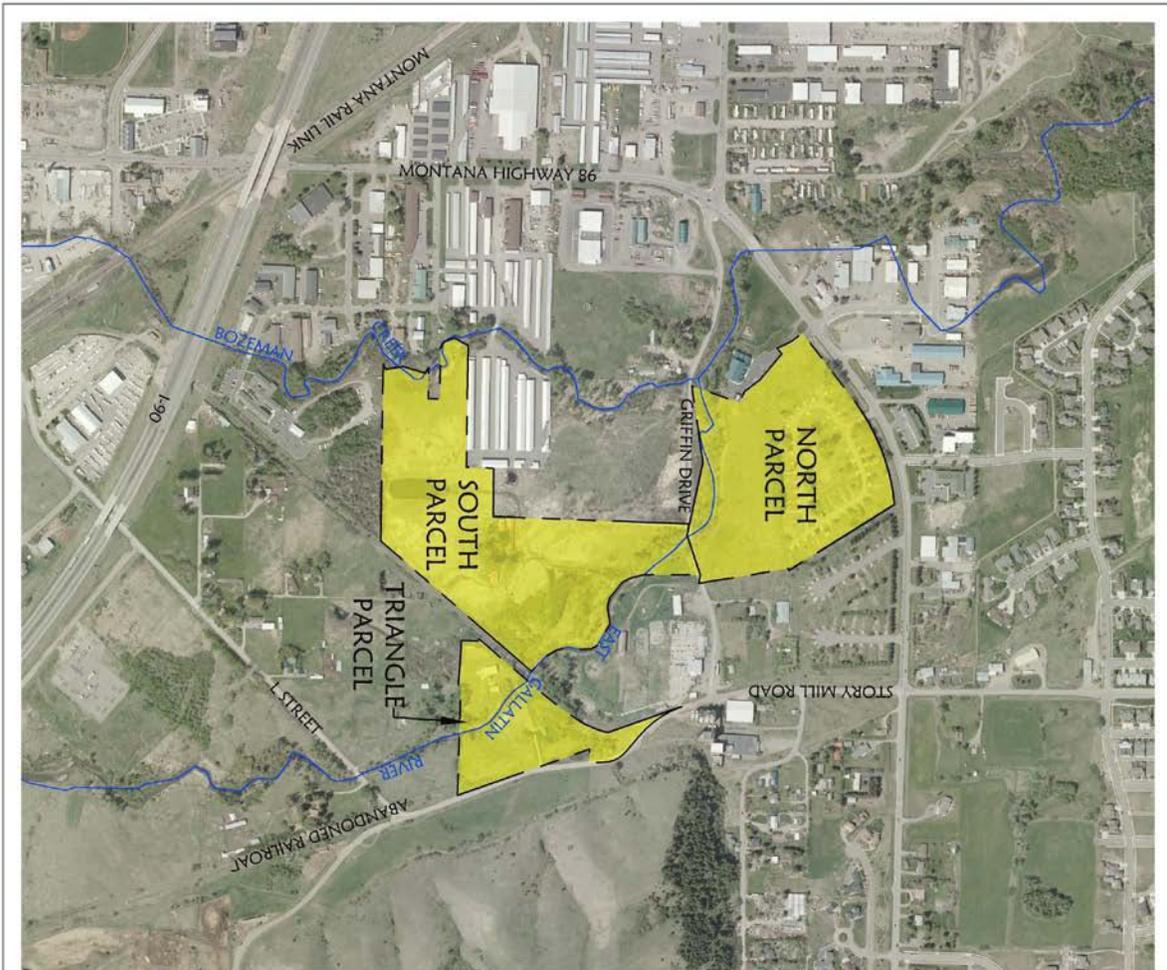
Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: Gallatin Conservation District, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, ACOE, DEQ, SHPO

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA The Trust for Public Land, RESPEC Consulting & Services

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by: Michelle McGree

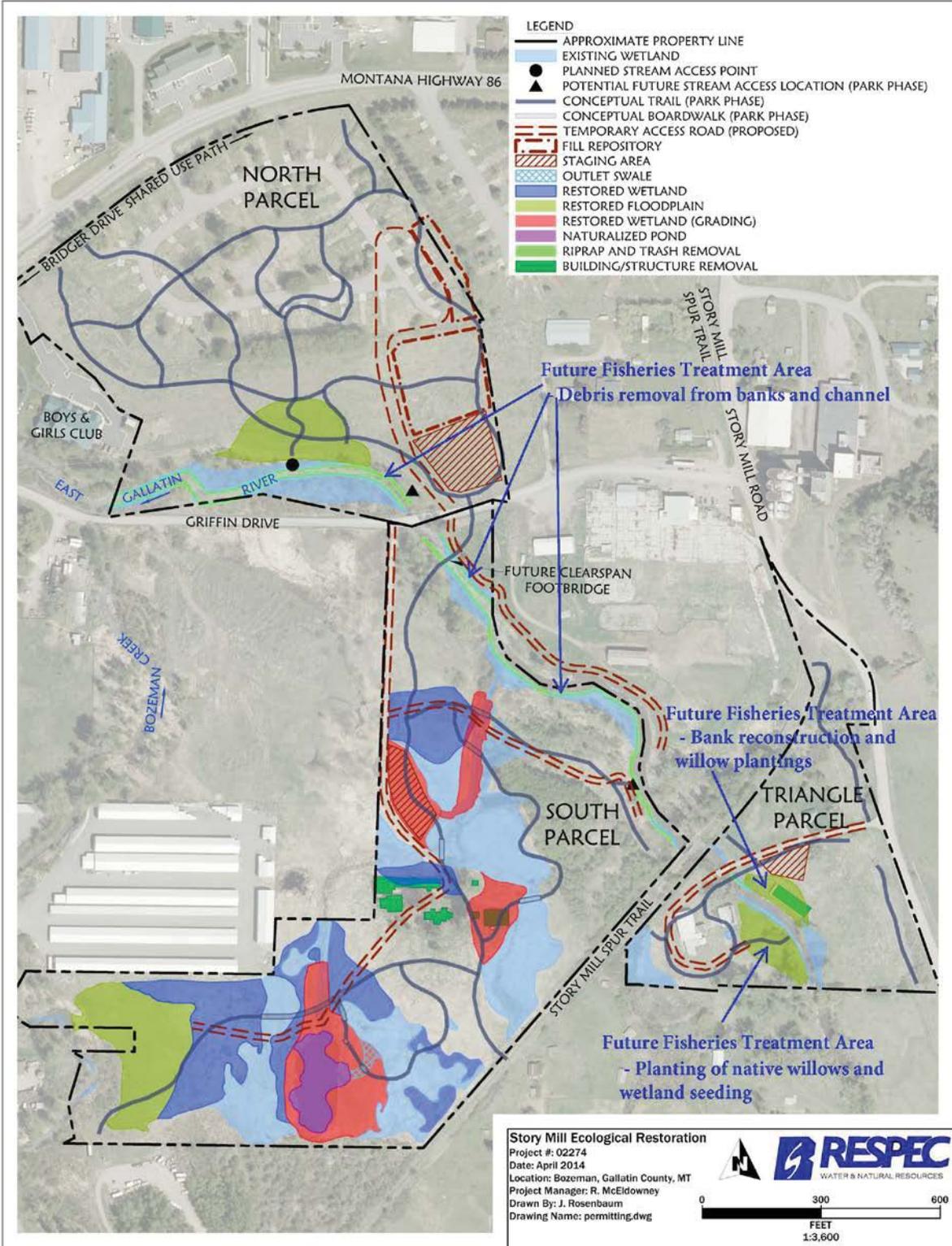
Date: July 15, 2014



**Story Mill Ecological Restoration**  
 Project #: 02274  
 Date: May 2014  
 Location: Bozeman, Gallatin County, MT  
 Project Manager: R. McElowney  
 Drawn By: J. Rosenbaum  
 Drawing Name: vmap\_permitting.dwg



ATTACHMENT 1



ATTACHMENT 2