

**APPENDIX IV**

**FISHERIES MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Between the EA and this decision, several discussions have occurred with representatives of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, (MFWP). These discussions have focused on the statutory roles and relationships between the agencies as they relate to fisheries management and fish stocking. Additionally, we discussed our goals and objectives for fish stocking and Wilderness management.

Appendix IV contains new language relative to fisheries management in the AP. The new language retains the intent of the goals and objectives from the EA for comment, however three adjustments have been made:

- 1) We have clarified the text to reflect that MFWP has the statutory authority to manage fisheries and stock fish in Wilderness. Certain limitations exist and are spelled out in an interagency Memorandum of Understanding among the USDA, Forest Service, USDI, Bureau of Land Management, and International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies initially adopted in 1986.
- 2) Minor word changes have been made to goal and objective statements.
- 3) Forest Service fisheries guidelines have been removed from the document. This change was made to reflect that the statutory authority to stock and manage fisheries rests with the State and not the Forest Service. In its place, we have agreed with the State to establish an interagency working group to develop strategies to improve our native fish stocks, manage recreational impacts in Wilderness and deal with specific issues as they arise.

The following sections within the EA are changed in the following way:

**Chapter 1 – page 4, item 3 is replaced with:**

3) Seek agreement with MFWP, which has statutory authority for fisheries resources, regarding which water bodies will be stocked and which species will be used.

**Chapter 1 – page 6, Purpose and Need for Action 3 – Develop Fish Stocking Within the Wilderness, paragraphs 1 and 2 will be changed as follows:**

Seek agreement with MFWP, which has statutory authority for fisheries resources, regarding which water bodies will be stocked and which species will be used.

Stocking fish in previously fishless lakes may result in changes in the biological community. (**Fishless is defined as a lake or stream that does not currently support fish.**) Most of the waters in the A-P were originally stocked many years ago and stocking

and management of lake fisheries is an important established use. Where wilderness values are negatively impacted by angling use, consult with MFWP to attempt to gain consensus for changes that preserve both values; angling and wilderness.

**Chapter 2 – page 21, Issue 6 – Fish stocking changes native communities, paragraphs 1 and 2 and the indicators for this issue will be changed as follows:**

In recent years questions have been raised about the impacts of fish stocking on natural biological communities. Fish stocking is conducted by MFWP who have full authority to make decisions on this activity. Traditionally, MFWP has consulted with USFS regarding stocking plans and fish activity has largely been done with the agreement of both agencies. The continuation of this cooperation is necessary for both wilderness management and the users of the wilderness. Recreational angling is an important activity for visitors to the A-P and management plans will reflect the need to continue managing and enhancing this use.

Impacts from previous fish introductions are difficult to reverse where natural reproduction sustains the populations. Lakes traditionally managed through stocking will be managed by stocking with hatchery fish. Species used will be confined to those native **[a species present (or formally present) within its historic range or naturally expanded from its historic range, and therefore one that has not been introduced by humans either accidentally or intentionally]**, to the watershed except in circumstances where a long history of exotic (non-native) stocking exists. In those instances, whatever effects the use of exotics (non-natives) may have had are long beyond recall.

Indicators for this issue include:

- Fishless lakes will remain fishless unless compelling future need is identified and acceptable to both USFS and MFWP.
- Native fish populations will be maintained or expanded where opportunities exist.

**Chapter 2 – Pages 24-28, Description of Alternatives B through E where it references guidelines for fish stocking, the Fish Stocking sections of Table II-Actions By Alternative, page 59, and Table III Summary of Standards, Guidelines and Objectives By Alternatives, page 61 will be changed as follows:**

Request that MFWP agree to discuss items relating to fisheries in the A-P that are of concern to USFS. Acknowledge that authority for these decisions rests with MFWP and seek the concurrence of that agency in modifications to any existing management practice. Among the items which may be the subject of discussion and for which MFWP sanction may be sought are cessation of stocking in currently fishless lakes, protection of streams with pure westslope cutthroat or bull trout populations, and manner and location of fish stocking.

**Chapter 2 – Page 31, Fish, replace 1st paragraph and Goal and Objective statements with:**

The intent of this plan is to promote wilderness values as well as acknowledging and preserving existing recreational angling opportunities within the A-P. No comprehensive management plan for fisheries in the A-P exists. It is the goal of this plan to seek consensus with MFWP regarding management of fisheries in the A-P through the formation of a work group representing fisheries and wilderness managers of both agencies charged with the production of a mutually satisfactory plan for adoption by both parties.

Goals (To be sought by the above work group.)

1. Where feasible, maintain and enhance indigenous fish species. [**Indigenous is defined as any species present (or formally present) within its historic range or naturally expanded from its historic range. Species of fish traditionally stocked before wilderness designation may be considered indigenous if the species is likely to survive.**]
2. Seek native biological communities where possible.
3. Contribute to the conservation and restoration of native strains of fish.
4. Provide recreational angling where opportunities currently exist or where establishment of new populations of native species might contribute to the perpetuation of those species and provide recreation as well.

Objectives

1. Fishless lakes represent special esthetic, scientific, biological, and social values. Because of this the Forest Service prefers that these waters remain unstocked. See Table IV, Fish Occurrence in Anaconda-Pintler Lakes, for updates to the table since the EA was published (pages 7-8 of this Appendix).
2. Stock only indigenous species in lakes that have been evaluated and determined appropriate by the MFWP.
3. Maintain fishing tradition and opportunity
4. Request of MFWP that stocking methods be as non-intrusive as possible, recognizing that aerial stocking of fish is allowed in the A-P if this method was used prior to establishment of the Wilderness. Work cooperatively with MFWP to utilize resources of both agencies necessary to make stocking successful and harmonious with wilderness values.

Guidelines - The entire section of the EA for comment, in Chapter 2, pages 32-33 has been removed from the document. This change was made to reflect the statutory authority to stock and manage fisheries rests with the State and not the Forest Service. In its place, we have agreed with the State to establish an interagency working group to develop strategies to improve our native fish stocks, manage recreational impacts in Wilderness and deal with specific issues as they arise.

**Chapter III, page 74 under Fish, first paragraph will be changed to read:**

No baseline data exists. In recent years there have been concerns expressed about the practice of stocking lakes in Wilderness. These concerns involve the changes that occur when naturally fishless lakes are stocked. Of added concern is the need to maintain native species. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are native in drainages west of the Continental Divide and westslope cutthroat trout are native to the upper Missouri River Drainage, east of the Continental Divide. Stocking itself has changed some lakes, however, there is no way of assessing those changes since stocking began in some areas over 50 years ago.

**Chapter III, page 74 under Philipsburg Ranger District replace first paragraph with:**

Species of Salmonids. No genetic test results are available for any of the populations within the wilderness so no definitive statements may be made about their genetic integrity.

**Chapter IV, page 107, item 6, Fish stocking changes native communities, paragraphs 1 and 2 are changed as follows:**

The practice of fish stocking was established prior to the passage of the Wilderness Act; it is a traditional practice and supports a traditional use by visitors. Stocking fish in waters of the A-P Wilderness has altered the natural biological community in and around many of the approximately 17 lakes that support fish, as well as in lakes which are currently barren, but where stocking was attempted in the past. (**Barren is defined usually as a lake that does not support aquatic life, but it is used here to mean a lake that does not currently support fish**). Streams have also been altered by direct stocking or by fish moving into the streams from connected stocked lakes.

Fish stocking is conducted by the MFWP, who have sole authority over this activity. Traditionally, MFWP has consulted with USFS regarding fish management in the A-P.

**Chapter IV, page 108, Issue 6 continued, Effects Common to All Action Alternatives (B-E), Direct and Indirect Effects. Paragraphs 1 and 2 are changed as follows.**

Direction that relates to fish stocking does not vary with action alternatives so the direct, indirect and cumulative effects are the same for all alternatives. Fish stocking is the responsibility of MFWP. Stocking within the A-P is normally carried out in cooperation with USFS. Fishless lakes will not be stocked and will remain fishless unless compelling reasons to do so arise in the future. Should these circumstances develop, decisions regarding stocking would be made with full cooperation with USFS. These fishless lakes and streams serve as representatives of natural conditions without fish predation on amphibians, insects, and other species.

In wilderness emphasis should be on natural processes and conditions. Human disturbance to these natural aspects of the environment should be minimized. Fish stocking is clearly not a natural activity but it is a traditional means of managing wilderness waters and an aspect of the wilderness user's recreational experience. Maintaining fishable lake populations of salmonids, particularly native species is an important role for the A-P. Management strategies intended to protect, augment or enhance native species will be sought cooperatively by MFWP.

**Chapter IV, page 108 Cumulative Effects, replace entire paragraph with:**

The proposed actions move toward more natural conditions in lakes and streams as well as providing ongoing recreational fisheries as determined by MFWP in consultation with USFS. The changes may benefit indigenous fish species although many of the changes to species abundance and distributions are difficult to reverse. Some reduction in the opportunity to catch rainbow and brook trout in the area may result.

**Chapter IV, page 108, Alternative A – No Action, Direct and Indirect Effects, replace entire paragraph.**

No change in angling opportunity or management practices would result. Most impacts to native species have already occurred and are difficult to reverse.

**Chapter IV, page 108, Alternative A- No Action, Cumulative Effects, replace entire sentence with:**

No change from present conditions would be anticipated.

**Glossary**

**Barren** – Usually this refers to a lake that does not support aquatic life but it is used here to mean a lake that does not currently support fish.

**Exotic** – Species not originally occurring in the United States and introduced from a foreign country.

**Fishless** - A lake or stream that does not currently support fish.

**Indigenous** - Any species present (or formally present) within its historic range or naturally expanded from its historic range. Species of fish traditionally stocked before wilderness designation may be considered indigenous if the species is likely to survive.

**Native** – A species present (or formally present) within its historic range or naturally expanded from its historic range, and therefore one that has not been introduced by humans either accidentally or intentionally.

**Non-Native** – A species that has been introduced by humans or a species that has naturally expanded its range from an area where it has been introduced by humans.