Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DECISION NOTICE

Western pearlshell mussel translocation project, Blackfoot River Basin, MT

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Montana's only trout stream mussel, the western pearlshell (*Margaritifera falcata*), has disappeared from many of our watersheds in relatively recent times. Reasons for this decline are numerous and include the loss of its primary host fish (westslope cutthroat trout) and habitat degradation. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed the translocation of approximately 1,500 individual *M. falcata* mussels from an abundant viable population located in the mainstem Clearwater River to streams where mussels are identified as absent. This relocation project is associated with anticipated channel disturbance related to the Clearwater Fish Barrier Modification/Removal Project[1] (a.k.a., the Emily-A dam) between Seeley Lake and Lake Inez in Missoula County.

The Clearwater fish barrier project is an important native fish recovery project, and mussels removed from the area would be used to reestablish mussel populations in restored habitat in three other tributaries to the Blackfoot River and help identify mussel conservation methods. This mussel relocation project has been the focus of considerable coordination among FWP, the Montana Natural Heritage program, American Fisheries Society and the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

The public comment period began April 30, 2010 and ran 32 days through May 31, 2010. Legal notices were published once each in the *Independent Record* (Helena, May 1), *Missoulian* (May 1), *Seeley Swan Pathfinder* (Seeley Lake, May 6), and *Silver State Post* (Deer Lodge, May 5)

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[1] FWP, 2009, Revised draft environmental assessment: Clearwater fish barrier modification/removal. Helena. Available: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicnotices/notice.html?action=getPublicNotice&id=2195>
FWP, 2009, Decision notice: Clearwater fish barrier modification/removal project. Helena. Available: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicnotices/notice.html?action=getPublicNotice&id=2232>

newspapers. Notices of this EA went out to adjacent landowners and interested individuals, groups and agencies. The Environmental Assessment (EA) was available on the FWP web site at http://fwp.mt.gov (under "Recent Public Notices") from April 30 through May 31, 2010.

No comments were received from the public or from federal, state or county agency personnel during the public comment period.

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the EA and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the physical or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

It is my decision to implement the proposed action of moving western pearlshell mussels as described in the EA. By notification of this Decision Notice, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. The final EA with this Decision Notice may be obtained from FWP at the above address or viewed on its webpage at http://fwp.mt.gov (under "Recent Public Notices").

Please direct any requests or questions to Mack Long, FWP Region 2 Supervisor, or Ron Pierce, FWP Region 2 Fisheries Biologist (at the address or phone number above).

Mack Long, Regional Supervisor

6/7/10
Date: