YOUNGS CREEK WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT BROODSTOCK PROJECT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
MEPA/NEPA CHECKLIST

MISSION. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

All Montanans have the right to live in a clean and healthful environment. This brief environmental analysis is intended to provide an evaluation of the likely impacts to the human environment from proposed actions of the project cited below. This analysis will help FWP to fulfill its oversight obligations and satisfy rules and regulations of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action:

Development	_____
Renovation	_____
Maintenance	_____
Land Acquisition	_____
Equipment Acquisition	_____
Other (Describe)	___X____

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to collect approximately 300 juvenile westslope cutthroat trout (WCT, *Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) from streams within the upper Youngs Creek drainage in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. These fish would be collected, transported by packstock out of the wilderness, and driven by hatchery truck to Sekokini Springs Cutthroat Trout Conservation Facility in Blankenship, Montana, where they would be raised to maturity and spawned. This facility is operated under a Special Use Permit administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Offspring produced from the wild donor fish would be used for restoration efforts associated with the South Fork Flathead Drainage Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Program. The primary goal of this project is to conserve genetic diversity among populations of westslope cutthroat trout. Therefore, it is important to collect enough wild juvenile fish from the donor source so that a minimum of 25 adult pairs survive to spawn and produce fry. Genetic testing of the

adults and the fry they produce will be used to determine whether the fish used to reestablish naturally reproducing populations in select mountain lakes are representative of the wild donor source in the Youngs Creek drainage. If the rearing of the fish proves unsuccessful (for example, not enough fish survive to maturity or there is not sufficient genetic variation), the remaining fish would be transferred to a cutthroat-trout-only kids fishing pond.

2. Project sponsor:

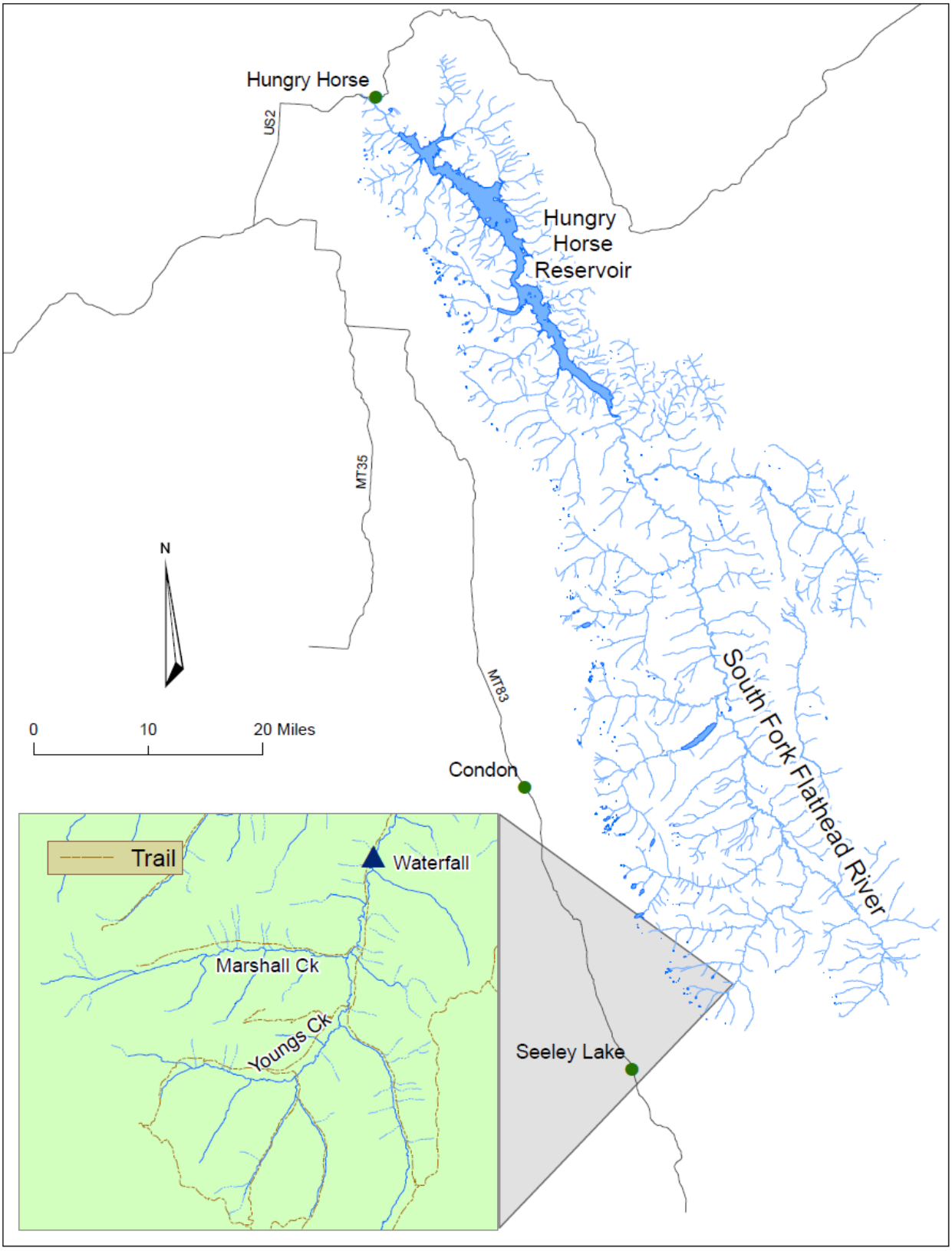
   Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
   490 North Meridian Road
   Kalispell, MT 59901
   mboyer@mt.gov

3. Anticipated Timeline:

   Estimated commencement date: July 22, 2013
   Estimated completion date: July 26, 2013
   Current status of project design (% complete): 90%

4. Location affected by proposed action:

   Powell County, Range 13W, Township 18N.
   (See map next page.)


Hungry Horse
US2
Hungry
Horse
Reservoir
MT35
N
MT83
0
10
20 Miles
Condon
South Fork Flathead River
Trail
Waterfall
Marshall Ck
Youngs Ck
Seeley Lake

5. Project size - estimate the numbers of acres that would be directly affected that are currently: N/A

(a) Developed:
residential..... ___ acres
industrial ..... ___ acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... ___ acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas ..... ___ acres

(d) .....Floodplain ___ acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... ___ acres
dry cropland ..... ___ acres
forestry ..... ___ acres
rangeland..... ___ acres
other..... ___ acres

6. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The South Fork Flathead River drainage in Montana is a stronghold for WCT; however, hybridization with nonnative rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*O. bouvieri*) poses a threat to many WCT populations across this species' range. In 2007, FWP began implementation of the South Fork Flathead Drainage WCT Conservation Program. The goal of this multi-year project is to conserve genetically pure WCT populations in the South Fork Flathead by replacing nonnative trout in headwater lakes with native WCT.

Genetic data from throughout the native range of WCT indicate that there are large genetic differences among populations of this species. These differences among populations are the result of both variation in the number of successful spawning adults among years and natural selection for traits that confer a competitive advantage for individuals in particular environments. Conservation of genetic variation is crucial for long-term persistence of a species and, in the case of WCT, requires the continued existence of many populations throughout its range. Since substantial genetic differences exist among WCT populations, introduction of WCT from a single brood source has the potential to unfavorably alter the genetic characteristics of wild WCT elsewhere within the South Fork Flathead by disrupting important local adaptations within populations. From a conservation genetics perspective, the ideal approach would be to use within-drainage stocks for restoration efforts. During the public scoping process for the Environmental Impact Statement

(FWP 2005), the development and use of within-drainage stocks of WCT was identified as a desirable management action to conserve unique and, presumably, locally adapted WCT populations in the South Fork Flathead drainage. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for westslope cutthroat trout in Montana recommend that locally adapted, genetically pure populations be maintained. This Agreement is a collaborative and cooperative effort among resource agencies, conservation and industry organizations, tribes, resource users, and private landowners.

Montana's captive M012 WCT broodstock was established in the mid-1980s with wild fish collected from 12 tributaries in the South Fork Flathead and two tributaries in the Clark Fork drainage. The primary intent of using multiple donor sources to create the broodstock was to increase genetic variability and maximize the likelihood that fish from the brood would perform well in a range of lakes and ponds where they would be stocked. Since this broodstock was established, it has been managed under the guidance of the University of Montana Conservation Genetics Lab and FWP's staff geneticist. Fish from the M012 broodstock have been used extensively for both genetic swamping and reestablishing WCT populations in lakes within the South Fork following rotenone treatment. In all of these situations, fish stocked in lakes are able to move downstream and potentially reproduce with wild, aboriginal WCT whose genetic characteristics are often substantially different from that of the M012. Therefore, to minimize the possibility of altering genetic variation in wild populations, it is preferable to develop and use within-drainage stocks for WCT conservation in the South Fork Flathead.

To assist with conserving genetic variation among WCT populations, FWP developed the Sekokini Springs Cutthroat Trout Conservation Facility to raise wild WCT for restoration projects. From 2009 to 2012 juvenile WCT from Danaher Creek (also a South Fork Flathead River tributary in the Bob Marshall Wilderness) were collected from the wild and raised to maturity and spawned at Sekokini Springs using the same approach being proposed for Youngs Creek. Fry produced from these wild fish were outplanted in Necklace Chain of Lakes in 2012 and will be stocked in Lick Lake in 2013. Creating a short-term broodstock from WCT in the Youngs Creek drainage would conserve additional genetic variation not found in either the M012 or Danaher Creek sources of WCT.

Approximately 300 juvenile WCT would be collected from tributaries in the Youngs Creek drainage using angling gear. To avoid a substantial short-term reduction in local fish densities, fish would be collected from several locations. The exact timing of collection would be based on snowmelt and trail conditions, but is planned to occur the week of July 22. Capture of juveniles would take place when spawning adults are absent from the stream, thus avoiding immediate risk to the spawning population. Our past experience collecting wild juveniles from Danaher Creek suggests that the proposed work in the Youngs Creek drainage should not produce a significant effect on fish densities.

Three mules would be needed to transport WCT. Live fish would be placed in plastic bags filled with water and oxygen in a cooler with a block of ice to aid survival during transportation from Youngs Creek to the Lodgepole Creek trailhead, a distance of approximately 12 miles. Fish would then be transported by hatchery truck to the

Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility near Blankenship, Montana, for genetic and disease testing and rearing. Over four years of wild fish collection from Danaher Creek, survival from the stream to the hatchery exceeded 99%.

7. Alternatives to the proposed action:

No-Action Alternative: FWP would not collect juvenile WCT from Youngs Creek. There would be no short-term impacts to fish populations in Youngs Creek or to wilderness trails associated with this alternative. This alternative would not allow for the establishment of an alternate source of WCT from the Youngs Creek drainage for the South Fork Flathead Drainage WCT Conservation Project and, therefore, not maintain as much genetic diversity in remaining wild WCT stocks.

Alternate Donor Source Alternative: FWP would collect WCT from an alternative source of genetically pure and disease-free WCT. At this time potential donor sources may include Little Salmon Creek, White River, Spotted Bear River, or Doctor Lake. In the past, these populations have tested genetically pure; however, it is not known how logistically feasible it would be to collect an adequate number of juvenile WCT from these drainages. In the future, FWP plans to gather data from these and other drainages to assess their suitability as donor sources. There are several streams that drain to Hungry Horse Reservoir that contain relatively high densities of genetically pure WCT. However, these populations have been or are planned to be used as donor sources for infusion into the M012 broodstock of WCT. Since genetic variation within these populations would be represented in the M012, development of a broodstock from any of these populations would not conserve the maximum amount of WCT genetic variation found among populations within the South Fork Flathead River drainage. Consequently, this alternative is not being pursued further at this time.

8. Listing of each local, state, or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

(a) Permits		
Agency Name:	Permit: None required	Date Filed:

(b) Funding	
Agency Name: Bonneville Power Administration	Funding Amount: $66,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities	
Agency Name: United States Forest Service - Flathead National Forest	Type of Responsibility: Landowner

9. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this environmental checklist:

United States Forest Service - Flathead National Forest

10. Name of preparer(s) of this environmental checklist:

Matt Boyer, FWP Fisheries Biologist, Kalispell, MT

11. Date submitted: June 13, 2013

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to the Proposed Action. The reason for this is because based on the description of Alternative A: No Action, FWP would not pursue the collection of juvenile WCT from Youngs Creek for genetic testing and, potentially, restoration efforts at another location of the South Fork Flathead drainage for the benefit of the species. If the No Action Alternative were implemented, there would be no changes to the physical or human environment, and existing conditions at Youngs Creek would remain undisturbed.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		X				

All packstock and personnel would travel on established trails and camp at existing backcountry campsites during project implementation. No impacts to soils or geologic features are expected as a result of this project.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13c.)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Any discharge that will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				
f. Other		X				

This project would not use any mechanized equipment and will not produce any emissions or objectionable odors. Only packstock and angling gear would be used to carry out the project objectives. There would be no conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. Effects to a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations?		X				
n. Other:		X				

Personnel would need to wade in the streams to collect the desired fish, but this would not create a disturbance to streambed substrate, and stream water quality will not be affected by this project. There would be no effects to groundwater sources.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Effects to wetlands or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Personnel and packstock would travel on established trails, would stay at backcountry campsites, and would not adversely affect native vegetation. Feed for the animals would be located at the trailhead and is required to be certified weed free. There would be no effects to any plant communities or wetlands as a result of this project.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?			X		X	
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?		X				
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the affected location?		X				
j. Other:		X				

This project would not affect critical fish or wildlife habitat. The diversity and abundance of WCT and other fish populations would not be affected by this project, in part, because fish collection would be spread across several sites within the Youngs Creek drainage. Youngs Creek has similar densities of WCT as Danaher Creek, and our past experience collecting approximately 300 juvenile WCT per year for four consecutive years suggests that a noticeable decline in fish abundance did not occur. Bull trout, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, do occur in the Youngs Creek drainage; however, their distribution is restricted by a barrier waterfall on Youngs Creek, and our proposed sampling would occur upstream of this barrier. Thus, there would be no bull trout mortality associated with this project. No species that are not currently or historically present would be introduced as a result of this project.

Three mules would be needed to transport WCT. Live fish would be placed in plastic bags filled with water and oxygen in a cooler with a block of ice to aid survival during transportation from Youngs Creek to the Lodgepole Creek trailhead, a distance of approximately 12 miles. Fish would then be transported by hatchery truck to the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility near Blankenship, Montana, for genetic and disease testing and rearing. Over four years of wild fish collection from Danaher Creek, survival from the stream to the hatchery exceeded 99%.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No mechanical equipment or other noise generating equipment would be used to carry out this project; consequently, there would be no electrical effects or increase in noise levels.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. A conflict with any existing land use, the presence of which would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on, or relocation of, residences?		X				
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		X				
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
g. Other:		X				

This project would conform to traditional wilderness uses as specified in the FWP and USFS Cooperative Agreement for Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Management on National Forest Wilderness Lands in Montana and would not interfere or conflict with existing land use policies.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?		X				
f. Other:		X				

There would be no impacts to human health or increased human risk associated with this project because no chemicals, pesticides, or mechanized equipment would be used.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No community impacts are expected as a result of this project because all work will take place within designated wilderness or at a remote trailhead location. It is possible that commercial outfitters may be using the trailhead and/or trails at the same time that this project takes place, but because of the few number of animals and personnel involved, adverse impacts would not be expected.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. An effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered, governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If so, specify:		X				
b. Effects on the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other.		X				
Additional information requested:						
f. Define projected revenue sources.	Bonneville Power Administration Hungry Horse Mitigation Program					
g. Define projected maintenance costs.	There are no maintenance costs associated with this project.					

This project would not affect public services, taxes, or utilities. Funding for this work would be provided by BPA and administered through FWP budgets.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:		X				

All travel associated with this project would take place on established trails. All personnel would camp at established backcountry campsites, and stock would use established facilities at the Lodgepole Creek trailhead.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Adverse effects to historic or cultural resources?		X				
e. Other:		X				

There are no historically significant sites or cultural resources within the project area or along the travel route, so there would be no impacts to these resources.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources, which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy?		X				
Additional information requested:						
g. List any federal or state permits required.	None required					

This project would be relatively small in scope, with little to no environmental and human impacts, and would not have cumulatively considerable impacts or pose any hazardous conditions. It would not conflict with any existing state or federal laws or set precedents for future actions that would be significant. As such, this project would not be expected to generate significant controversy or public debate.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Discuss the cumulative and secondary effects of this project as a whole.

   Depending upon the number of fish collected in each age class and their survival to maturity at Sekokini Springs, additional juvenile fish collection in the Youngs Creek drainage may be necessary to augment the broodstock in subsequent years. If additional fish collections were necessary, they would occur in multiple locations within the drainage to avoid adverse effects on the donor source and would not occur more than once a year in a given drainage to avoid effects to the resource and on local recreation.

   No secondary impacts to the remaining WCT populations in Youngs Creek drainage or any other resources are anticipated. No cumulative impacts are predicted to any resources except for WCT. If the project is successful and the Youngs Creek WCT spawn and mature to be used in future restoration efforts, cumulative impacts of the project would be beneficial for the genetic material these fish can contribute to other WCT populations within the South Fork Flathead drainage system.

2. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this Environmental Checklist (Part II), is an EIS required?

   No, the current checklist addresses all concerns for this project, and there are no unmitigated impacts associated with the proposed action. This level of review is sufficient for the scope of this project.

3. Public involvement for this project:

   A public notice will be printed in the *Daily Inter Lake*. Copies will also be available at Region 1 Headquarters in Kalispell and posted to the FWP website (http://fwp.mt.gov).

4. Public comment period:

   The public comment period will extend for three weeks. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., Thursday, July 4, 2013, and can be mailed to:

   Youngs Creek Broodstock Project
   Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
   Region 1 Headquarters
   490 N. Meridian Road
   Kalispell, MT 59901

   Or e-mail comments to: mboyer@mt.gov

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affected Environment – The aspects of the human environment that may change as a result of an agency action.

Alternative – A different approach to achieve the same objective or result as the proposed action.

Categorical Exclusion – A level of environmental review for agency action that does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively cause significant impacts to the human environment, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review, and for which an EA or EIS is not required.

Cumulative Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in relation to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

Direct Impacts – Primary impacts that have a direct cause and effect relationship with a specific action, i.e., they occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact.

Environmental Assessment (EA) – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that either do not significantly affect the human environment or for which the agency is uncertain whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

Environmental Assessment Checklist – An EA checklist is a standard form of an EA, developed by an agency for actions that generally produce minimal impacts.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – A comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human environment that likely would result from an agency action or reasonable alternatives to that action. An EIS also serves a public disclosure of agency decision-making. Typically, an EIS is prepared in two steps. The Draft EIS is a preliminary, detailed written statement that facilitates public review and comment. The Final EIS is a completed, written statement that includes a summary of major conclusions and supporting information from the Draft EIS, responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS, a list of all comments on the Draft EIS and any revisions made to the Draft EIS, and an explanation of the agency's reasons for its decision.

Environmental Review – An evaluation, prepared in compliance with the provisions of MEPA and the MEPA Model Rules, of the impacts to the human environment that may result as a consequence of an agency action.

Human Environment – Those attributes, including but not limited to biological, physical, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic factors, that interrelate to form the environment.

Long-Term Impact – An impact, which lasts well beyond the period of the initial project.

Mitigated Environmental Assessment – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that normally would require an EIS, except that the state agency can impose designs, enforceable controls, or stipulations to reduce the otherwise significant impacts to below the level of significance. A mitigated EA must demonstrate that: (1) all impacts have been identified; (2) all impacts can be mitigated below the level of significance; and (3) no significant impact is likely to occur.

Mitigation – An enforceable measure(s), designed to reduce or prevent undesirable effects or impacts of the proposed action.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – The federal counterpart of MEPA that applies only to federal actions.

No-Action Alternative – An alternative, required by the MEPA Model Rules for purposes of analysis, that describes the agency action that would result in the least change to the human environment.

Public Participation – The process by which an agency includes interested and affected individuals, organizations, and agencies in decision making.

Record of Decision – Concise public notice that announces the agency's decision, explains the reason for that decision, and describes any special conditions related to implementation of the decision.

Scoping – The process, including public participation, that an agency uses to define the scope of the environmental review.

Secondary Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that are indirectly related to the agency action, i.e., they are induced by a direct impact and occur at a later time or distance from the triggering action.

Short-Term Impact – An impact directly associated with a project that is of relatively short duration.

Significance – The process of determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are serious enough to warrant the preparation of an EIS. An impact may be adverse, beneficial, or both. If none of the adverse impacts are significant, an EIS is not required.

Supplemental Review – A modification of a previous environmental review document (EA or EIS) based on changes in the proposed action, the discovery of new information, or the need for additional evaluation.

Tiering – Preparing an environmental review by focusing specifically on narrow scope of issues because the broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that may be incorporated by reference.