

**WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT RESTORATION IN 2 SMALL STREAMS IN
THE BIG HOLE RIVER DRAINAGE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region Three, Bozeman
June 28, 2013**

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to restore native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) to the West Fork of Mudd Creek and York Gulch. Barriers precluding upstream fish movement have already been constructed in both streams. An irrigation ditch connects the West Fork of Mudd Creek to York Gulch upstream of the constructed fish barriers, and fish passage is present between the two. FWP proposes to remove Brook trout present in the streams upstream of the fish barriers using the piscicide rotenone. The non-hybridized WCT present in York Gulch would be captured using electrofishing prior to fish removal, held in non-treated waters, and used to repopulate the stream following brook trout removal. Fish from non-hybridized populations would be used to repopulate the West Fork of Mudd Creek where westslope cutthroat trout are currently not present and may be used in York Gulch where WCT density is very low. Tailed frog tadpoles would be salvaged from the West Fork of Mudd Creek prior to brook trout removal and released back to the stream.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on May 3, 2013.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 30 days (through June 4, 2013). The EA was mailed to 60 individuals and groups; legal notice was printed in the Montana Standard (Butte) newspaper. A draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>. No comments were received.

Decision

It is therefore my decision to proceed with the proposed action to restore westslope cutthroat trout to the West Fork of Mudd Creek and York Gulch based on the Environmental Assessment, the lack of public comment, and benefits and risks associated with this project. I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. I therefore conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Patrick J. Flowers
