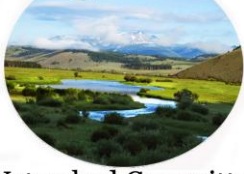


# Big Hole



Watershed Committee

## Big Hole Watershed Committee

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October 31, 2013

To: Western Native Trout Initiative  
Letter of Support for French Creek Fish Barrier, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Dear Western Native Trout Initiative,

The Big Hole Watershed Committee pledges support of the French Creek Fish Barrier Project led by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and designed to expand the territory of our native westslope cutthroat trout.

The Big Hole Watershed Committee seeks understanding and agreement among individuals and groups with diverse viewpoints on water use and management in the Big Hole River watershed of southwest Montana. We work in four focus areas: Water Quality & Quantity, Weeds, Wildlife and Land Use Planning. We have long been a part of supporting fisheries projects in the Big Hole. The Arctic grayling issues were the genesis of our organization. We have worked with Jim Olsen during his position as the Big Hole River Fish Biologist and support his work. Jim is professional and knowledgeable. He has completed several high-impact, successful westslope cutthroat trout restoration projects in the Big Hole area in recent years.

French Creek is part of the Deep Creek drainage, a large tributary of the Big Hole River. The BHWC recently published an EPA and DEQ approved Middle-Lower Big Hole River Watershed Restoration Plan for improving water quality. Our plan specifically identifies the French Creek drainage as an area in need of restoration due to its importance to the fishery. The BHWC provided administration support of other work spearheaded by Jim Olsen in French Creek in 2013. In addition, BHWC recently secured \$126,400 to restore riparian areas in California Creek (upstream of French Creek) in order to reduce sediment inputs. The Montana Natural Resources Damages Program has also committed significant funds to repair upland sediment sources in the highlands of this area. There is significant momentum to work in this area and it is critical that the work be done in unison. Therefore, it is extremely important the French Creek barrier work be funded.

The Big Hole Watershed Committee is committed to partnering with Jim Olsen on this project and will support him and his work any way that we are able.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Downing  
Executive Director  
Big Hole Watershed Committee