



Patrick Byorth, Director
Montana Water Project

Mark Lere
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Habitat Protection Bureau
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

November 18, 2013

RE: Upper Shields River Barrier as Yellowstone Cutthroat Conservation Project

Dear Mark,

Hope all is well with you and the Future Fisheries Improvement Program continues to roll along. I just wanted to voice Trout Unlimited's support for Carol Endicott's proposal to construct a temporary barrier in the Shields River near the Gallatin National Forest boundary. As you know, TU's Montana Water Project is focused on conservation and restoration of habitat and water quality and quantity for coldwater fish. We are glad to support this project, which entails removing recently invading brook trout and installing a temporary barrier to prevent their reinvasion.

In my tenure with FWP and with TU, I have spent considerable time in the upper Shields and am concerned with the recent invasion of brook trout into the headwater tributaries inhabited by Yellowstone cutthroat trout. In the short term, mechanical or chemical removal of brook trout coupled with a barrier should conserve this headwater population of cutthroat. However, in the long term, we hope FWP will continue its efforts to restore the dwindling fluvial cutthroat population in the Shields River mainstem and confront the source of brook trout invasion in Smith Creek.

By securing the headwaters populations now and shifting focus to restoring habitat and flow in the mainstem, we are likely to secure a future for Yellowstone cutthroat in the Shields. We appreciate Carol's and her partners' efforts and look forward to working with them on this worthy project. Please convey our support to the FFIP Panel. Thanks!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick C. Byorth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Byorth