

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
WINTER 2014 FUNDING CYCLE**

**Decision Notice and Response to Public Comment**

Prepared by  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
March 13, 2014

**Proposal and Final Action**

Members of the Future Fisheries Review Panel submitted funding recommendations for 9 of 10 proposed projects from the 2014 winter funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission (Commission) for final approval. The Future Fisheries Review Panel is an independent board appointed by the governor (87-1-273, MCA). As a final action, the Commission adopted all of the funding recommendations, as submitted by the Future Fisheries Review Panel, at their public meeting held in Helena on March 13, 2014.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program was established in 1995 to establish and implement a statewide voluntary program that promotes fishery habitats and spawning areas for the rivers, streams, and lakes of Montana's fisheries in order to enhance future fisheries through natural reproduction (87-1-272, MCA).

**Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)**

MEPA requires Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to assess the potential consequences of the proposed action for the human and natural environment. Environmental Assessments (EA) were prepared and released by FWP on January 2, 2014 for five individual proposed projects associated with the Winter 2014 Future Fisheries funding cycle. The 32-day public comment period ended February 3. These proposed projects included:

Bozeman Creek channel restoration project  
Gleason Creek culvert fish passage project  
Keep Cool Creek culvert fish passage project  
Stony Creek diversion reconstruction and fish screen project  
Browns Gulch channel restoration project

The remaining four projects funded by Commission approval either fell under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM), the federal National Environmental Policy Act, or ongoing/pending Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks processes.

**Summary of Public Comment**

The following is a summary of comments received from five drafted EA's, as well as associated responses from FWP. One commenter stated overall support for all five of the projects addressed in the EA's.

**Bozeman Creek channel restoration project**

No additional public comment was received.

**Gleason Creek culvert fish passage project**

No additional public comment was received.

**Keep Cool Creek culvert fish passage**

No additional public comment was received.

**Stony Creek diversion reconstruction and fish screen project**

The Pintlar Ranger District submitted several comments:

- 1. As the jurisdictional land owner of the property at the project site, the USFS should be included in the list of other groups and agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction on page 6 of the EA.**

Response: The omission of the USFS as an entity which may have overlapping jurisdiction was an oversight on our part. The USFS will be added to the list on page 6 of the EA.

- 2. The project will be subject to analysis as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) including compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.**

Response: As the landowner, this project cannot move forward without permission from the USFS. Should federal processes determine that this project cannot move forward, Future Fisheries Program dollars approved for the project will be returned to the overall Program funding pool.

- 3. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service will also be undertaken by the USFS.**

Response: Program funding will not be made available until a consultation concurrence is received by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

- 4. As mentioned in the EA, all applicable permits pertaining to water quality will be obtained prior to project construction.**

Response: Noted.

**Browns Gulch channel restoration project**

The State Historic Preservation Office submitted the following:

- 1. ...due to the amount of ground disturbance required by the undertaking we feel that the project has the potential to impact cultural properties. We, therefore, recommend that a cultural resource inventory be conducted in order to determine whether or not sites exist and if they will be impacted.**

Response: A cultural resource inventory will be conducted and Program funding will not be made available until a cultural clearance is granted by SHPO.