Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION

Description of water body:

Name: Big Casino Creek Reservoir
County: Fergus
Legal description: T15N, R18E, S27

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located:

Impounding Casino Creek, which is a tributary of Big Spring Creek, creates the reservoir. The impoundment occurs at river mile 1.4 of Casino Creek, which flows into Big Spring Creek at river mile 22.8.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

Largemouth bass, black and white crappie

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

No, the proposed species are not currently present in the drainage.

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage:

No species of special concern have been identified in the drainage.

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

__X__ None _____ Minor _____ Major

Comments: No populations of largemouth bass or crappie currently exist, nor are they able to hybridize with other species currently present in the reservoir.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation?

_____ None _____ Minor __X__ Major

Comments: The objective of the proposed fish stocking is to reduce the number of stunted yellow perch in the reservoir which would increase the size and quality of yellow perch. Adding largemouth bass and crappie would also provide a diversity of species for this fishery.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?

_____ None __X__ Minor _____ Major

Comments: Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be consumed, but no population level impact is expected.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:

_____ None _____ Minor __X__ Major

Comments: It is anticipated that largemouth bass and crappie would successfully reproduce in the reservoir, as the necessary habitat exists. It is not likely that largemouth bass and crappie would reproduce successfully if both species escape over the dam, because they do not reproduce in a stream environment.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Largemouth bass and crappie could be greatly suppressed by discontinued stocking and reservoir draw downs. It would be possible to trap largemouth bass and crappie in order to remove them from the reservoir.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?

No.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action alternative would result in the status quo at Big Casino Reservoir. The fishery in Big Casino Creek Reservoir would not provide any quality angling for yellow perch, largemouth bass or crappie. There would be no increase in angling diversity in Big Casino Reservoir.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any:

The reservoir and the proposed species would continue to be managed according to the general Central Fishing District regulations.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:

Nearby landowners may be affected by increased public use. These impacts would be minor as the site is maintained and monitored as a state fishing access site.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction:

The local chapters of Walleyes Unlimited and Trout Unlimited would be notified via direct correspondence. Copies will also be made available to local sporting goods stores and licensing agents. The proposal will also be available at the Lewistown FWP office and on FWP's website.

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? YES/NO? If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

No EIS required. Action is expected to be minor.

EA prepared by: Clint Smith, Lewistown Area Fisheries Biologist

Date: June 23, 2014

Comments will be accepted until: July 21, 2014

Comments may be submitted to:

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