

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

SUMMER 2018

Date: June 14, 2018

Attendees: Alan Johnstone, Bill Semmens, Bill Wichers, Chuck Dalby, Clint Peck, Senator Jed Hinkle, Jim Stone, Karin Boyd, Michael Johns, Nancy Winslow

FWP staff: Michelle McGree, Eric Roberts, Kim Wedde

Applicants and others in attendance:

Ryen Neudecker (Big Blackfoot Chapter of TU; BBCTU), George Liknes (U.S. Forest Service; USFS), Teresa Scanlon (Trout Unlimited; TU), Rob Roberts (TU), Paul Parson (TU), Andy Brummond (FWP), Holly Hill (Greater Gallatin Watershed Council; GGWC), Matt Barnes (Morrison & Maeirle; M&M), Dave Moser (FWP, phone), Bruce Roberts (USFS, phone), Ryan Kreiner (FWP), David Stout (Ruby Valley Conservation District), Pedro Marques (Big Hole Watershed Committee), Scott Graham (Dept. of Environmental Quality), Mike Ruggles (FWP).

Panel business (before project review):

- Michelle is working on an article for Montana Outdoors that would feature a project or two completed with Future Fisheries dollars, as well as highlight the Program itself. The journalist has taken photographs and done several interviews, and is waiting for fall construction to finish the story.
- Michelle is working on increasing communications of Future Fisheries dollars, potentially publishing several storymaps of completed projects.
- Several projects were completed under budget or were cancelled, providing turnback dollars.
- The agenda was approved.
- Program balances were reviewed. The funding available (unexpended and uncommitted) for the final three cycles:
 - RIT \$ (changed to Native Fish Program by 2013 legislature): \$498,823.92
 - License \$ (General Future Fisheries Program): \$85,782.00
 - Grand Total \$ available: \$584,605.92
- FWP recommendations were presented, totaling \$325,510.00

Panel business (after project review):

- Project balances were reviewed post-recommendations. Terry Chute was chosen as the panel representative for the prioritization. The prioritization committee will meet in July.
- The Fish & Wildlife Commission will meet August 9, 2018 to finalize funding awards.
- Winter meeting: Helena (Montana Wild) on December 13, 2018.

Application discussions and funding recommendations:

- 1) **Copper Creek decommissioning** (021-2018). Copper Creek (Lewis & Clark County) is a third-order tributary to the Landers Fork, which feeds the upper Blackfoot River and flows 14 miles entirely through United States Forest Service (USFS) land. It contains populations of Bull Trout and pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout and is listed as critical Bull Trout habitat. Telemetry studies have traced Bull Trout originating from Copper Creek as far as 100 miles downstream. In the project area, the stream recently accessed old channels, and in 2014 part of the road eroded into the stream. Sediment has been identified as a limiting factor for Bull Trout habitat and therefore this project, which involves eliminating a chronic source of sediment to Copper Creek, has been identified as a priority for restoration. This project would decommission approximately one mile of road adjacent to Copper Creek. The goal is to re-establish floodplain connectivity and function, restore the riparian corridor, and eliminate a chronic source of sediment while maintaining public access.

Amount Requested: \$48,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but request that the applicant consider the following questions: 1) What is the regional FWP fisheries support for the project? 2) What are the consequences of partial funding?

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker (BBCTU) and George Liknes (USFS)

Discussion Items:

- Knotek supports the project. High priority for migratory Bull Trout.
- What are the consequences of partial funding? The project may not happen, needs to get completed by end of 2018. Other small pots of money may be options.
- Noted that it is nearly a 90% match
- Has a temporary treatment in place
- USFS will maintain and install aggressive vegetation
Represents a proactive stream treatment. Great to do project the right way.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$48,500 for the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Karin Boyd

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; Motion Passes

Amount Approved: \$48,500

- 2) **Cottonwood / North Fork Cottonwood passage & decommissioning** (022-2018). North Fork Cottonwood Creek is a tributary to Cottonwood Creek (Powell County), which flows into the middle Blackfoot River. It supports populations of Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Cottonwood Creek is a high priority tributary and is listed as critical Bull Trout Habitat and a Bull Trout core area stream. At the North Fork Cottonwood Creek crossing there is an undersized culvert that inhibits fish passage. This culvert would be replaced with a bottomless arch structure that would accommodate flood capacity, fish passage, and transport debris and bedload. The adjacent road would be rerouted approximately 400 feet upstream from its current location. The historical floodplain along Cottonwood Creek would be reestablished. The goal is to improve fish passage, reestablish floodplain connectivity and function, restore the riparian corridor, eliminate a chronic source of sediment, and retain public access. Future Fisheries funding has helped complete several other projects in the drainage.

Amount Requested: \$36,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but ask the applicant to consider the following questions: 1) What is the regional FWP fisheries support for the project? 2) What is the fishery value gained by opening the North Fork Cottonwood Creek? 3) What is the flood capacity of the culvert? 4) How is fish passage inhibited? 5) Please provide a simple overview map showing the locations of the tributaries, roads, and culverts/treatments. 6) Budget: What is LS (lump sum) road decommissioning?

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker (BBCTU) and George Liknes (USFS)

Discussion Items:

- Will reconnect two miles of Westslope Cutthroat Trout habitat
- Flood capacity is for a 100-year flood
- Grade control in culvert is designed using info from successful past projects
- Oversight differences between projects a function of different consulting firms.
- Great match

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$36,500 for the project

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Michael Johns

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; Motion Passes.

Amount Approved: \$36,500

- 3) **Brewster Creek fish passage** (018-2018). Brewster Creek (Granite County) is a tributary to Rock Creek and supports populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout. Brewster Creek is a spawning tributary for lower Rock Creek and contains resident and migratory Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout (low levels), and other trout and non-game fish. This project would remove a culvert

that is the only major fish passage on lower Brewster Creek and is located 400 feet upstream of the confluence with Rock Creek. A farm bridge would be installed so Brewster Creek could be reconnected to Rock Creek. The goal is to reconnect habitat for Bull Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and other aquatic species.

Amount Requested: \$16,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but ask the applicant to clarify the flood capacity of the bridge. We also request that the applicant verify that FWP in-kind match is not salaries.

Project Representative: Tess Scanlon (TU) and Rob Roberts (TU)

Discussion Items:

- The bridge capacity is 25- to 50-year flood interval, due to the topography of the site cannot do 100-year capacity. Will double the capacity of the stream.
- Primarily Westslope Cutthroat Trout project, also trying to help Bull Trout.
- Will consider consolidating crossings in the future.
- FWP match is materials (bridge stringers).
- Will open spawning areas, potentially provide better recruitment into Rock Creek.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$16,000 for the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; Motion Passes

Amount Approved: \$16,000

- 4) **Cedar Creek large woody debris** (019-2018). Cedar Creek (Mineral County) is a tributary to the middle Clark Fork River and supports populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, and Mountain Whitefish. It is listed as a priority Bull Trout watershed and core Bull Trout habitat. Activities important to Bull Trout recovery include removal of riparian roads, improving instream habitat, and restoring mining claims. Within the project area, Cedar Creek was impacted by placer mining, leaving much of the riparian corridor disturbed. Railroad and road systems also contributed to confinement of the stream channel. This proposal is phase three of a larger project and would relocate the road, create a floodplain, and install large wood structures in one mile of stream to encourage instream habitat development. The goal is to improve overwintering, spawning, and rearing habitat for Bull Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and other aquatic species through reduced erosion, cooler water temperatures, and increased habitat.

Amount Requested: \$28,660

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but ask the applicant to provide photographs of the current project area as well as a more legible copy of the designs. Is there an overview of the project

showing the expected location of the LWD structures and vegetated streambanks? We also request that the applicant verify that USFS in-kind match is not salaries.

Project Representative: Paul Parson (TU)

Discussion Items:

- Previous work created great off-channel habitat
- This is phase 3, building off of past success.
- Have funding for relocating road, asking for funding to build structures.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$28,660 for the project.

Motion Made by: Michael Johns

Motion Second by: Karin Boyd

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; motion passes.

Amount Approved: \$28,660

- 5) **Mulherin Creek instream flow lease renewal** (026-2018). Mulherin Creek (Park County) is a tributary to the Yellowstone River and supports populations of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, Mountain Whitefish, and Mottled Sculpin. Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout are also in the project vicinity. Mulherin Creek is important coldwater habitat and a stronghold for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout refugia, spawning, and recruitment. This project would renew a 20-year old instream flow lease that has been successful in retaining minimum flow and important aquatic habitat in Mulherin Creek. The goal is to continue instream flow benefits and provide quality habitat for conservation of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout

Amount Requested: \$38,175

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding.

Project Representative: Andy Brummond (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- Lots of monitoring completed by FWP and 50% match.
- Good fishery, lots of angling value.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$38,175.

Motion Made by: Michael Johns

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; Motion Passes

Amount Approved: \$38,175

- 6) **Confederate Gulch stabilization** (020-2018). Confederate Gulch (Broadwater County) is a tributary to Canyon Ferry Lake and supports populations of Brook Trout. This project would stabilize streambanks on the Harris property. The goal is to repair stream banks by installing rock.

Amount Requested: \$14,408

FWP Recommendation: We do not recommend funding this project but encourage the applicant to further explore the problems, current conditions, and potential for fish habitat improvement. We recommend that the applicant pursue funding for design, consult with the fisheries biologist and/or FFIP staff, and re-consider Future Fisheries once the project is further developed.

Project Representative: None

Discussion Items:

- Unclear the source of erosion, whether it is a significant problem, or what the treatment would be.
- Without additional information, impossible to determine the value to the fishery and the Future Fisheries Program.
- FWP will visit with the applicant to determine if a project should be developed for the Winter 2019 grant cycle.

Motion: Table the project. Recommend working with FWP to develop a more comprehensive plan.

Motion Made by: Nancy Winslow

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously

Amount Approved: \$0 (tabled)

- 7) **East Gallatin bank stabilization** (023-2018). The East Gallatin River (Gallatin County) is a tributary to the Gallatin River and supports populations of Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, and Mountain Whitefish. At this project location, new landowners experienced problems with channel stability and erosion, due to the lack of proper riparian vegetation. This project would create bioengineered banks that include a woody matrix and plantings such as root wads, sod mats, and woody vegetation. The goal is to reduce lateral erosion and create a more natural riparian area to increase resiliency, decrease erosion and sediment loading, improve complexity of aquatic habitat, and increase shading. The project is expected to directly enhance wild fish habitat.

Amount Requested: \$63,950

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial funding at the level of **\$18,675** (earthwork, ballast rock, and ½ of the wood toe matrix request). We do not fund the items listed under mobilization that include bonding and general requirements. We ask the applicant to consider the following: 1) Do you plan to address the upstream riprap, and have you considered the bigger picture in this reach or the East

Gallatin? 2) You might consider installation of the wood toe matrix only on the outside meander bend and do a softer treatment on the straight section; 3) What is the current condition of the past streambank stabilization and plantings by others? 4) Have you approached the City regarding the encroachment toward Nelson Road/Red Fox Lane?

Project Representative: Holly Hill (GGWC) and Matt Barnes (M&M)

Discussion Items:

- The upstream riprap has not yet been addressed.
- The landowners are very interested in stabilizing the straight section of the stream. Motivation for project is to maintain residence.
- There is no community vision at this point; people are doing individual projects. Should have a more collaborative strategic plan to regain stream length.
- Have not discussed the project with the City regarding the road encroachment.
- Project is a bank stabilization project with probably limited fishery benefits. No public access is available.
- Applicant has started discussing partnerships and wants the project to be a demonstration that can expand work in the watershed. Some other Future Fisheries work was done upstream and downstream of this reach in 2002 and it is in good shape.
- Noted disappointment that the landowner was not present.

Motion: Recommend tabling the project until a more collaborative, watershed-type approach can be developed that will be more sustainable long term.

Motion Made by: Michael Johns

Motion Second by: Allen Johnstone

Panel Action: Unanimous Yes; motion passes

Amount Approved: \$0 (tabled)

- 8) **North Fork Spanish Creek barrier supplement** (028-2018). North Fork Spanish Creek (Madison County) located on property owned by Turner Enterprises, Inc. aims to restore Westslope Cutthroat Trout to 17 miles of historical stream habitat and 9 acres of high mountain lake habitat. The project would install a fish barrier on North Fork Spanish Creek, use piscicides to remove non-native brook trout and hybridized Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and re-establish Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This project is considered the best and largest opportunity to restore native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the in the Gallatin River sub-basin. This project was initially funded in 2016 (\$60,000), and the current request is a supplement based on higher than expected construction costs.

Amount Requested: \$27,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but ask the applicant to explain the consequences of partial funding.

Project Representative: Dave Moser (FWP) and Bruce Roberts (USFS), on the phone

Discussion Items:

- This project has brought lots of money to the table.
- Costs were elevated due to complicating factors. It is important to get a competent contractor to build the project.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$27,500 for the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously (Jedediah Hinkle abstains)

Amount Approved: \$27,500

- 9) **Wall Creek fish barrier** (030-2018). Wall Creek (Madison County) is a tributary to the Madison River and supports populations of 95% pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Currently, Rainbow Trout are allowed access to Wall Creek and can hybridize with Westslope Cutthroat Trout. To prevent further dilution of genetic purity and risk losing Westslope Cutthroat Trout conservation status, the applicant intends to install a fish barrier that will isolate the conservation population. The barrier would protect nearly 8 miles of headwater streams and contribute to the restoration goal for Westslope Cutthroat Trout east of the Continental Divide.

Amount Requested: \$40,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but request the applicant comments on the likelihood of securing additional funds.

Project Representative: Dave Moser (FWP), on the phone

Discussion Items:

- Design is complete, funded by Northwestern Energy.
- Priority is getting seed money to secure the project. Additional funding likely from Trout Unlimited, Montana Trout Foundation, Northwestern Energy.
- Construction may be summer 2019.
- Genetic monitoring and testing will begin in 2018.
- Would like to have seed money to move project forward.

Motion: Approve seed money of \$20,000 for the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously (Jedediah Hinkle abstains)

Amount Approved: \$20,000

10) **Ramshorn Creek fish barrier** (029-2018). Ramshorn Creek (Madison County) is a tributary to the Ruby River and, if completed, would support populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Rocky Mountain Sculpin above the barrier and Brook Trout, Brown Trout, and Rainbow Trout below the proposed barrier. As part of the project, a fish passage barrier would be installed in conjunction with an irrigation delivery structure that will ensure delivery of water and reduce maintenance and avoid channel manipulation. This project is in the Ruby watershed and is an essential component in implementing native fish restoration in Ramshorn Creek and its tributaries. The goal is to conserve an important population of Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the Ruby watershed.

Amount Requested: \$10,000 (revised request)

FWP Recommendation: We support the project but due to limited funds we recommend tabling the proposal until the design is completed. We encourage the applicant to consider other partners and reapply when the project is more established. We would like to see pictures and a description of the current barrier culvert and the existing diversion. (previous ask was \$40k)

Project Representative: David Stout (RVCD)

Discussion Items:

- The ask has been changed to \$10,000
- Lewis & Clark chapter of Trout Unlimited donating \$4,000 and BLM funds of \$31,500 are available.
- The landowner is enthusiastic about native fish, but due to personal reasons can't contribute funds at this time.
- Fall construction is planned.
- This barrier will be 10 miles below the current barrier and will primarily affect public land. The Panel is glad that the applicant is using a side channel.
- The public will have access to a new reach of native fish habitat, but the fish will not be trophy sized.

Motion: Fund the project at the revised ask of \$10,000.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Karin Boyd

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously

Amount Approved: \$10,000

11) **French Creek channel reconstruction & sediment reduction** (024-2018). French Creek (Deer Lodge County) is a tributary to Deep Creek, which flows into the Big Hole River. It is part of the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area and within the proposed Artic Grayling and Westslope Cutthroat Trout recovery area. Past projects in the watershed funded by Future Fisheries include French Gulch channel restoration (completed; 2015, 2016 grants), French Creek riparian fencing (completed; 2016), and the French Creek fish barrier (in progress; 2014 grant). The goal of restoration in the upper French

Creek drainage is to restore mining-related damage and establish an interconnected stream system (over 40 miles of stream) for Artic Grayling and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This project would address mining-related damages due to an unnatural dike that has been confining the stream channel and leading to significant erosion and sediment deposition. Reference stream conditions would be used to construct an unconfined stream channel east of the channel's current location (2700 lineal feet). Native sods and willows would be used to construct the banks of the new channel and bioengineering techniques would be used at meander bends. The goal is to enhance fish habitat by reducing a major sediment source that impacts spawning substrate and water quality.

Amount Requested: \$273,476

FWP Recommendation: We support the project, but given the limited amount of funds and the stage of project development, we recommend tabling the proposal. We ask the applicant to further develop the design, funding outlook, and/or potential alternatives and return to Future Fisheries for funding.

Project Representative: Pedro Marques (BHWC)

Discussion Items:

- Additional design is needed. Will get additional 319 funding to finish design.
- Consider using/finding remnant channels to reduce the project cost. LIDAR is planned.
- Additional funding sources are advised. Applicant is hoping first estimates are very conservative. Funding from Trout Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy is possible.
- Area is lightly grazed, excluded so no fencing is needed.
- Good project, but large amount of Future Fisheries funding.

Motion: Table the project (\$0)

Motion Made by: Nancy Winslow

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously

Amount Approved: \$0

- 12) **Loneman Creek riparian fencing** (025-2018). Loneman Creek (Sanders County) is a tributary to the Little Thompson River and contains Westslope Cutthroat Trout. The Little Thompson River is impacted by sediment, nutrients, and water temperature, and monitoring indicates that Loneman Creek has elevated temperature when compared to a nearby reference stream. The project area is negatively impacted by cattle, which have unrestricted access to the creek. This project proposes to install exclusion fencing to allow the stream to recover and improve habitat, shade, and reduce temperatures, nutrients, and sediment. The goal is to encourage recovery of the stream and riparian areas, improve water quality, and enhance aquatic habitat.

Amount Requested: \$2,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding but request that the applicant describe the grazing plan (if applicable) and the establishment of off-channel water sources.

Project Representative: Ryan Kreiner (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- Exclosure is small enough that off stream water isn't necessary at this point. Will water upstream of fence.
- Reference stream is much colder than Loneman Creek.
- Grazing plan includes maintenance of the fence. Fencing is barbed at the top (error in the application).
- Most significant issues are temperature, grazing, and presence of Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

Motion: Approve the recommended amount of \$2,000 for the project.

Motion Made by: Alan Johnstone

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously

Amount Approved: **\$2,000**

- 13) **Musselshell River Meathouse restoration** (027-2018). The Musselshell River (Musselshell County) is a tributary to the Missouri River and supports populations of sauger, channel catfish, smallmouth bass, and native minnows. In the area near Roundup, the applicants intend to restore the floodplain and riparian area on a newly-purchased property near an abandoned mine that also experiences flooding. This project would excavate and remove waste coal from the area, remove berms, create a floodplain that could accommodate a more natural flow pattern, and install habitat in the riparian area that is expected to create floodplain nursery habitat and additional cover for fish. The goals are to mitigate flooding events, improve the fishery and riparian habitat, improve recreational access, and reclaim a mine site. Past projects on the Musselshell River have encouraged fish passage (Egge diversion removal, 2015; Deadmans Basin diversion dam fishway, 2014).

Amount Requested: \$69,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding, but ask the applicant to provide additional information on the use of riprap (location, amount) and consider increasing the density of willow cuttings.

Project Representative: Mike Ruggles (FWP) and Scott Graham (DEQ)

Discussion Items:

- Riprap is existing and part of the removal/restoration. Will be buried or removed.

- Budget and ask is inconsistent; funding at \$58,644.50 would be acceptable to the applicants as they may use less money. Will know more about funding spring 2019.
- Delaying or not funding the project would not completely derail the project
- Great letters of support from the community. Public access and flood mitigation.
- Unique and good opportunity to fund restoration instead of using a band-aid on the problem.
- One State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) issue. Permitting will be done by DES.
- Stream length is 1.1 miles.
- Pond would be natural with gravel excavation. If it supports fish, it is expected to release sauger if/when it floods. Will not get water rights.

Motion: Approve the project at \$58,644.50.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Michael Johns

Panel Action: Motion passes unanimously

Amount Approved: \$58,644.50

Adjourn