



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

August 5, 2019

To: Governor's Office, Tim Baker, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701
Jack Atcheson, 2309 Hancock Avenue, Butte MT 59701
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725
Big Hole Watershed Committee, P.O. Box 931, Butte, MT 59703
Montana Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807
Dan Vermillion, FWP Commissioner, Livingston MT
Earnest and Colleen Bacon, 2215 Fishtrap Creek Road, Wisdom, MT 59761
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, 730 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725-9424
George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 563, Butte, MT 59703
Skyline Sportsmen, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59703
Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711
E.T. Bud Moran, Chairman CSKT, PO Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855
Al Lubeck, 2710 Amherst, Ave, Butte, MT 59701
Adam Rissien, ORV Coordinator, Wildlands CPR, PO Box 7516, Missoula, MT 59807
Josiah Pinkham, Tribal Arch., Nez Perce Tribe, PO Box 365, Lapwai, ID 83540
John and Sandy Gordon, 119033 Juniper Acres Rd, Butte, MT, 59750
Phil Ralston, 54289 MT Highway 43, Wise River, MT 59762
Martin White, 3308 46th Ave. SE, Mandan ND, 58554-4730
Jerry Lussie, 305 Main Street, Anaconda, MT 59711
Jim Schmeller, Montana Living Trust, 4935 Everett Rd, Akron, OH 44333
Kieth and Jean Rankin, P.O. Box 28, Anaconda, MT 59711
Richard Seddon, 2017 Harrison Ave# 237, Butte, MT 59701
Haddox Ventures LLC, 9141 Briar Forest Dr., Huston, TX 77024
Frank Stanchfield, 62311 Hwy 43, Wise River, MT 59762
Mathew White, 4977 Foothill Rd, Butte, MT 59701

Lewis Pesanti, 1424 Sunrise Ln, Butte, MT 59701
Jim Street, 448 Red Fox Rd., Wise River, MT 59762
Donna Brown, P.O. Box 4, Wise River, MT 59762
Jim Bacon, 1000 Bossard Rd, Anaconda, MT, 59711
Bart Bacon, 3014 Carter St, Butte, MT, 59701
Wade Fellin, 36894 Pioneer Mountains Scenic, Wise River, MT 59762
Don Stodden, P.O. Box, 96, Wise River, MT 59762
Debbie and Mike Robbins, 750 Alder Creek Rd, Wise River MT 59762
J.P. Gordon, 709 Illinois St., Butte, MT 59701
Tony Schoonen, 3609 Willoughby, Butte, MT 59701
Lee Krugerud, 1541 Lower Seymour Lake Rd, Wise River, MT 59762
Jason Barlman, 1901 Florence, Butte MT 59701
Steve Lubeck, 17 Queens Court, Butte, MT 59701
Scott Reynolds, 7263 Cobiac Drive, Saint James City, FL 33956
Jack Hencock, 1374 Deep Creek Rd. Wise River, 59762 and 14366 E. 29th Place, Yuma, Az. 85367
Ken Schmidt, 2946 N. Cable Rd, Anaconda MT 59711

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) prepared and EA to review the impacts of a proposed project to restore a 2000-ft reach of French Creek on the Mt Haggin Wildlife Management Area southeast of Anaconda. The project would create a new stream channel and direct flow of the stream away from an erosion-prone areato an area with an intact floodplain and a healthy riparian area where erosion rates will be significantly less. The cause of the impairment in this reach of stream was past mining practices within and upstream of the immediate project area. French Creek was channelized in a ditch from the confluence of French Gulch to the proposed project area. Placer mining occurred at the lower end of the project area on French Creek. Extensive placer mining occurred in French Gulch and Moose Creek farther upstream and the massive amounts of sediment generated through these mining operations were deposited in the reach currently being proposed for restoration. These deposited sediments contributed to a highly unstable stream channel. The stream channel has migrated west and runs along the base of a high eroding bank of unstable silt and clay material. Each year the creek cuts into the 50-ft tall bank and causes massive calving into the stream. The proposed project would relocate the stream channel away from this eroding area into an area of the floodplain of French Creek that is well vegetated and would allow proper stream function without chronic erosion. The newly formed stream channel would be slightly longer than the existing channel and would contain high quality aquatic habitat. The habitat benefits of the project would be reduced erosion and sedimentation downstream. This sedimentation is having significant impacts on fish and other aquatic life. Stream and riparian habitat would also be improved. Wetland areas would be enhanced and wildlife habitat for moose and elk would be improved. The project would benefit native Arctic grayling, westslope cutthroat trout and western pearlshell mussels. This project is expected to be completed in conjunction with the restoration of placer mining impacts on Oregon Creek which was evaluated in a previous Environmental Assessment. The project was also noticed in the Mt Standard and Dillon Tribune.

In the EA it was mentioned that the cultural inventory for the area had not been completed. That assessment has now been completed and a report submitted to FWP. The area contains significant prehistoric cultural resources which the creek is actively eroding. Therefore, the stream has the potential to significantly benefit cultural resources by slowing and even stopping the erosion of these resources into the stream where they lose their cultural context. There are also cultural resources in the vicinity of the proposed access route. The access route will be adjusted in consultation with the cultural resource specialist to avoid these areas to the extent practicable. There area where the major stream work is to occur does not have any known significant cultural resources.

A total of 2 comments were received on the EA. Responses to these comments follow this cover letter. No new issues were raised that were either addressed in the original EA, Supplemental Analysis or that could not be addressed in this document.

Comment 1: (Anaconda Sportsmen)

We the Anaconda Sportsmen's Club is in favor of this project. Stabilizing this steep bank mention reducing erosion. Riparian habitat would be improved; Wetland areas would be enhanced, and wildlife habitat for moose and elk would be improved. The project would benefit native Arctic grayling, westslope cutthroat trout, and western pearlshell mussels. Thank You, Gary Ouldhouse President

FWP Response: FWP concurs with this comment.

Comment 2: (Jack D Jones)

I received your card/ notice but your computer site on the card would not come up (not available) for the E.A. how convenient for deception? The card describes a proposed action to "restore stream habitat by relocating roughly 2000 feet of French Creek from an area that experiences high rates of erosion to an area with an intact floodplain and a healthy riparian area where erosion rates will be significantly less". This is untrue and deception and you well know it? FWP is falsely trying to justify constructing a dam/ impoundment there for the unsound fish poisoning venture on a Wildlife Management Area.

Response: FWP had no other reports of not being able to access the EA from any of the people listed above who the EA notice was sent to. The document was and is still accessible on the FWP website.

Below are photos take of the eroding area in the spring of 2019 to supplement those found in the EA taken in previous years:





This project is independent of the fish barrier project. Although the fish barrier will act to trap any sediments generated from the proposed channel restoration project upstream and prevent impacts to aquatic life and water quality downstream.

FWP is trying to deceive (lie) to the public. There is no erosion there at all it is a stable streambed and riparian area now in addition to moose habitat. A NO action alternative is the only alternative.... leave as is keep a FWP dozer out of French Creek. FWP has now resorted to lying to the public to justify constructing an impoundment that has no place there all in an attempt try to prevent poisonous rotenone and antimycin Fintrol from flowing downstream into Deep Creek & private wells and the Bighole River..... fess up FWP be honest? FWP however recently dosed a terrible road with eroding soil down this steep hill with NO public input deception again FWP contributing to erosion. FWP will violate the Montana Stream Preservation Act and Montana Water Quality Act MCA-75-3-607 other laws with this latest boondoggle it's shameful.

FWP Response: See photos above for evidence of erosion. This erosion is causing a decline in the quality of fishery downstream as cited in the EA. The fish barrier and road accessing the fish barrier is not part of this analysis. The road accessing the fish barrier was fully analyzed through a previous public process that Mr. Jones was a part of. The location chosen for the road accessing the fish barrier site was actually in response to public comment because it would reduce impacts and erosion versus the one proposed in the proposed action. FWP has obtained or will obtain all necessary permits for the project prior to construction.

Even more disgusting federal aid Dingell –Johnson Act (64 Stat. 430 16 U.S.C. 777-777dollars-Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (16U.S.C. U.777-777k.64 Stat.430). is being used since the ' west slope' does not qualify for rare or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act and never will a hybrid subspecies this is a diversion of federal funds by FWP a violation of the Act. We need USFWS-DJ oversight now of FWP. Native trout has always been the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout FWP considers evil with native Montana whitefish, and non native brook trout, brown trout, rainbow/YCT cross Montana's sport fisheries resource today as always is FWP anti

sport fishing today?. FWP has no problem poisoning the Montana native Sculpin, Cottus spp. as well like in Cherry Creek next to the Madison River that happened. That rotenone also flowed into the blue ribbon Madison River killed fish there a FWP cover-up. The same players involved there are in French Creek now. Why are these people still on the FWP payroll? Fish poisoning lunatics!

FWP Response: No Dingle-Johnson funds are being spent on the construction of the stream channel on French Creek. Westslope cutthroat trout are native to the upper Missouri River drainage including the Big Hole River and French Creek. Yellowstone cutthroat are only native to the Yellowstone River drainage in Montana. Westslope cutthroat trout exist in 5% of their historic range in the Missouri River drainage which FWP believes qualifies as rare. The species has been petitioned to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. Mountain whitefish, brook trout, brown trout and rainbow trout are all sport fish in Montana and are managed as such. FWP is seeking balance between sportfish management and native fish conservation. FWP believes that non-native sport fish management can coexist with native fish restoration where the vast majority (80%) of our fisheries in the upper Missouri River drainage will continue to be managed for brown, rainbow and brook trout. FWP hopes to increase native westslope cutthroat trout from 5% of their historic range to 20%.

FWP keep out of French Creek your latest proposal will contribute to erosion the “area” was stable until FWP Fisheries came along. FWP cares less about moose and moose habitat on a WMA unbelievable FWP won’t even mention moose a primary ungulate species there FWP will destroy moose habitat. These so called fisheries biologists should retire leave its one poisoning venture after another. After millions and millions of sportsmen dollars spent-wasted on these boondoggles there is not one providing sport fisheries for the hybrid west slope none look at the Montana fishing regulations 2019 still NONE. Then when the west slopes get to large artificially fed at the Anaconda Hatchery funded by Ted Turner they are released into the small lake at Homestake Lake USFS for kids fishing – it’s put and take every year.

FWP Response: FWP did consider moose habitat and the project will increase moose habitat. The new channel and wetland expansion will create more riparian habitat which will benefit moose. The French Gulch channel restoration upstream has greatly increased riparian habitat which will benefit moose. It is anticipated that the French Creek channel restoration project will also restore habitats in the floodplain that are currently sagebrush back to riparian vegetation.

Although not related to this project there are multiple examples of westslope cutthroat restoration projects that have resulted in high quality sport fisheries. Cherry and Granite lakes and Van Houten Lake all in the Big Hole drainage are high quality fisheries that have resulted from cutthroat restoration. Westslope cutthroat trout are stocked into 27 mountain lakes in the Big Hole drainage and hundreds of other lakes across the state and produce high quality sport fisheries.

Homestake lake is a put and take fishery for westslope cutthroat trout. The lake is very shallow (5-6 ft) and as such it partially or entirely winterkills each year due to lack of oxygen under the ice. Therefore, it requires annual stocking of catchable sized fish to maintain the family fishery. Nearby Delmoe Lake is also stocked annually with westslope cutthroat trout fingerlings. Because this lake does not winterkill it produces a high-quality fishery for cutthroat trout with fish up to 20 inches.

NO to constructing an impoundment in French Creek and a violation the Montana Stream Preservation Act and other laws!!

FWP Response: All necessary permits for this and other projects on French Creek have been obtained or will be obtained prior to construction.

FWP today has lost credibility and lacks understanding of the resources in place now. Why so difficult to clean house in FWP..... politics ????

FWP Response: FWP has no comment on this topic as it does not pertain to the subject of this Environmental Analysis.

End of Comments.

After having considered these comments and potential benefits and the potential drawbacks of the proposed project, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed action to restore the stream channel in French Creek. It is also my decision that the EA remains the appropriate level of analysis for this project. There are no long-term, significant impacts of the project that either cannot be mitigated for or that are deemed beneficial.

Questions regarding these Decision Notices should be mailed to:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
French Creek Stream Channel Restoration
Attn: Jim Olsen
1820 Meadowlark Ln.
Butte, MT 59701

Or e-mailed to: jimolsen@mt.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Deleray', is written over a solid blue horizontal line.

Mark Deleray
Region Three Supervisor