

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

WINTER 2020

Date: December 10, 2019

Attendees: Bill Semmens, Bill Wichers, Chuck Dalby, Clint Peck, Jim Stone, Nancy Winslow, Terry Chute, Bill Mytton, Karin Boyd, Tony Cate, Bruce Farling, Ivan Kloberdanz

FWP staff: Michelle McGree, Eric Roberts, Kim Wedde

Applicants and others in attendance: Jim Olsen, Chris Edgington, Jed Whiteley, Andrea Price, Ryen Neudecker, Alicia Stickney, Clint Sestrich, Cody Nagel, Travis Lohrenz, Ladd Knotek, Caleb Uerling, Tracy Wendt (Muddy Creek), Kascie Herron (phone)

Panel business (before project review):

- The agenda was approved.
- FWP recommendations were presented.
- Michelle discussed strategies to fund projects, given the number of requests and limited funding. RIT funding must target native species. License dollars can be used for native or nonnative projects.
- Program balances were reviewed. The funding available (unexpended and uncommitted) is:
 - RIT \$ (native species): \$500,000
 - License \$ (General Future Fisheries Program): \$153,016.95
 - Grand Total \$ available: \$653,016.95*possible funding returned from several approved projects

Panel business (after project review):

- Nancy Winslow made the motion to rescind the funding recommendation for Muddy Creek (007-2020) and table the project. Chuck Dalby second; motion passed (see notes for Muddy Creek application).
- Project balances were reviewed. Terry Chute was chosen as the panel representative for the prioritization. The prioritization committee will meet immediately after the Panel meeting.
- The decision was made to keep funding levels as recommended, and not change based on prioritization.
- The Fish & Wildlife Commission will meet February 6, 2020 to finalize funding awards.
- Summer meeting date and location to be determined with follow-up email.
- Jim Stone stepped down as chair. A motion was made by Terry Chute to make Clint Peck the new chair (second by Bill Mytton). Motion passes (unanimous).

Application discussions and funding recommendations:

1) Doolittle Creek fish barrier (003-2020)

Amount Requested: \$10,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$10,000) but ask for more detail on the budget costs and note that grant funds cannot be used for travel time.

Project Representative: Jim Olsen

Discussion Items:

- Did you use a hydraulic calculation to assure fish can't get over? Did 100-year flow test. Not a specific jump test but these structures are very effective (anecdotal data).
- How long before populations branch out? Usually not too long, approximately 5-10 years. Currently approx. 125 fish, potential to be 300+ fish/mi.
- These types of wood structures usually last 30 years, may last even longer.
- Public access is very good (public USFS road).
- Funding is unsecured but likely. Hope to build in 2020.
- Is there public buy-in to prevent transport? No comments on the environmental assessment. Good thing is that it is brook trout (do not hybridize).
- WCT were petitioned a while ago, but not since. Species as a whole is in good shape, locally less so. Holding the line.

Motion: Motion made to fund the project at \$10,000

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Approve (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$ 10,000

2) **Cottonwood Creek fish barrier (002-2020)**

Amount Requested: \$7,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$7,500) but ask the applicant to confirm who is responsible for long term maintenance and if fishing is allowed.

Project Representative: Chris Edgington

Discussion Items:

- Ranch owner is responsible for long term maintenance.
- Is there a written agreement with the landowner for maintenance and is the agreement transferrable? Not currently but it can be explored.
- Public access is BLM and state above. Easy access from the top; public fishing is allowed.
- This appears to be similar structure size to other fish screens. Why is it double the cost? It is a 6-foot drop instead of a 4-foot drop.
- Why is the barrier larger? The gradient is probably higher. It is what the engineer is recommending.

Motion: Motion made to fund the project at \$7,500

Motion Made by: Chuck Dalby

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Approve (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$ 7,500

3) **Lee and West Fork Lolo Creeks fish passage improvement and decommissioning (005-2020)**

Amount Requested: \$30,500

FWP Recommendation: We recommend tabling the proposal based on the limited fisheries benefit information described in the application but would support the project with convincing information on fisheries benefits.

Project Representative: Jed Whiteley

Discussion Items:

- If the project isn't fully funded the momentum with the Forest Service could be lost. There is no long-term maintenance.
- The status of the DEQ 319 grant should be known the following week. If get reduced FFIP funding, would need to reduce 319 funds.
- Why Lolo Creek is a bad place to have barriers? (general idea of barriers east of the divide, connectivity west of the divide) Ladd Knotek explained in many cases in the W there are pure, isolated populations that offers recruitment and don't have the same threats as the E (<http://fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors/HTML/articles/2008/WestslopeCutts.htm>).
- How would excavation & stream work impact the population? As long as the work is done at the right time of year there is likely a short-term negative impact but a positive long-term impact.
- Project is more to protect the cutthroat we have, less to increase the abundance of the population.
- Proportionate ask for barriers/roads that are fisheries problems.

Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project (\$30,500)

Motion Made by: Terry Chute

Motion Second by: Nancy Winslow

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$ 30,500

4) **Lolo Creek Zens channel restoration (006-2020)**

Amount Requested: \$122,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend tabling the proposal based on the limited fisheries benefit information described in the application but would support the project with convincing information on fisheries benefits.

Project Representative: Kascie Herron (not on phone during discussion)

Discussion Items:

- What are the downstream impacts?
- There are some things the Panel could provide funding for, but some are outside of the panel's wheelhouse.
- Is it a FEMA delineated 100-year flood plain? Unsure.
- Habitat is migratory corridor with limited value for fish, aside from instream/cover habitat.

Motion: Motion made to table the project. Michelle McGree will discuss the recommendation with the applicant and emphasize that they can reapply with stated benefits to fisheries.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Terry Chute

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$0

5) **Wheelbarrow Creek Threemile fish passage (012-2020)**

Amount Requested: \$19,420

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial funding (\$18,920), noting that administrative costs are not allowed.

Project Representative: Andrea Price

Discussion Items:

- Ask was reduced to \$18,920.

- Is a Forest Service and FWP Wildlife Management Area road. The landowner supports the project but FWP would be responsible for the bridge and its maintenance.
- The road needs to be used for logging timber so a railcar bridge could not be used.
- Design flow for the bridge? Culvert would be fine but for passage a small bridge would be best. It will be designed to pass a 100-yr flood event.

Motion: Motion made to partially fund project at \$18,920

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$ 18,920

6) Boles Creek fish screening and passage (001-2020)

Amount Requested: \$25,625

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$25,625).

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker

Discussion Items:

- Is this a low maintenance fish screen? Yes. There are no moving parts and the staff has a lot of familiarity with these screens. Can have debris; sediment can be removed.
- Is the fish screen a barrier? No, has a 6" jump height and a pool. This is the only diversion on the creek.
- How do you control water down the ditches; by the diameter of the pipe? It is sized for the water right and with a pipe and valve. Will have 60 ft of pipe and then an open ditch.
- Thought lost Bull Trout after the fire, but population rebounded and stream has high importance.

Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project (\$25,625).

Motion Made by: Bill Mytton

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$25,625

7) Nevada Creek phase 4 stream restoration (008-2020)

Amount Requested: \$66,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$66,000).

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker

Discussion Items:

- What are the plans for grazing management and woody vegetation? In the first phase, the willows were planted ½ foot too low, so they are growing slowly. On phases two and three, the willow planting height was adjusted, and they are coming in well.
- The landowner on this project has livestock so there will be an electric fence, light grazing, and a management plan. The land is used primarily used for haying.
- What is the reservoir capacity lost? About 545 tons of sediment per year. 12% storage capacity was lost between 1930-2006. Unsure of recent loss, can be episodic and depend on reservoir management.
- Project checks fisheries improvement boxes, benefits the reservoir and upstream tributaries.

Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project (\$66,000).

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Terry Chute

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$66,000

8) Muddy Creek fish passage and fencing (007-2020)

Amount Requested: \$15,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$15,000) if the applicant can provide information on design alternative they are considering.

Project Representative: Tracy Wendt

Discussion Items:

- Why does the crossing need to be maintained? The landowner crosses regularly and would like to be able to get vehicles and farming equipment over it. The Irrigation District needs to use the crossing occasionally as well.
- Is there public access? There is upstream access on USFWS property, but the main benefit is to the Sun River where there is more access. Property is owned by the Irrigation District.
- There are more crossings upstream but no barriers between here and the Sun River.
- What is the possibility of getting your matching funds secured? MWCC is doing its review process and there were favorable comments. DEQ funds haven't been given final decisions yet. If the project was partially funded it would still be able to move forward.
- Would like to see a bridge used instead of a culvert, possibly a railcar bridge. Is a design/build application.
- How much will this improve water quality? Probably a small amount.

1st Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project if the option is a low-cost bridge.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Bruce Farling

Panel Action: Motion passes (Y 10; N 2; Recused 1)

Additional Discussion (end of meeting, revisited project):

- The panel is has typically taken the stance of asking applicants to come back with a more substantial design; concerned they would be inconsistent amongst funding recommendations.
- There was concern that funding with the requirement that a bridge be built does not allow Future Fisheries to have input on the bridge design, which could be an important part of project success.

2nd Motion: Rescind previous motion and make new motion to table the proposal until additional design information can be provided.

Motion Made by: Nancy Winslow

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$0

9) O'Neill Creek culvert replacement (009-2020)

Amount Requested: \$15,250

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$15,250).

Project Representative: Caleb Uerling, Alicia Stickney

Discussion Items:

- The design implies the culvert passes heavy loads. Will it go through a full hydraulic review? It is oversized do didn't need a hydraulic review (bankfull is 10 feet, bridge span will be 18.8 ft).
- Why is Natural Resource Damage (NRD) bringing this project when they have substantial amounts of money for restoration and could pay for the work? They can't fund "regular government function" and even though they are contributing to this project they can't pay for it all.
- Resident westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) are found above the culvert.
- Is removing the culvert a threat to the WCT population? Only sampled natives in O'Neil Creek. It is possible, but unlikely that non-natives would expand now. Want to manage for fluvial populations that need migratory corridors and add available habitat.

Motion: Motion made to fund the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$15,250

10) Eagle Creek YCT connectivity (004-2020)

Amount Requested: \$87,560

FWP Recommendation: We recommend fully funding (\$87,560).

Project Representative: Clint Sestrich

Discussion Items:

- Applicant revised the ask to \$43,780 due to Forest Service funding becoming available.
- Can you move the road and consolidate to one culvert? No, would be too expensive and difficult with the terrain.
- Why isn't a concrete culvert used? Too expensive.
- Designed for a 100-year flood (86 cfs).
- Why culverts? Bridges cost more and have more maintenance (inspected regularly). There will be logging/traffic on the road, so it needs to be robust.
- Will it change the road grade? It may make a hump in the road, but there is also a lot of existing fill.

Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project at the new ask of \$43,780.

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: Motion passes (Y 11; N 2)

Amount Approved: \$43,780

11) Reser Reservoir dam reconstruction and fish habitat improvement (010-2020)

Amount Requested: \$40,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend fully funding (\$40,000).

Project Representative: Cody Nagel

Discussion Items:

- Have spawning beds been installed in other places in Montana? Not personally aware of other projects but have done extensive research with other states that use this tool.

- Is there sufficient oxygen at this depth year around? Yes. 30 ft maximum depth and no winter kill history.
- There is discrete gradation of gravel so the cost per CY is expensive. It is coming from an offsite pit.
- Would the project still move forward if partially funded? Probably would have to buy less gravel.
- Would it be restocked? Yes, but there is a remnant fish population. Would trap and transfer then stock. May rotenone and restock in the future with transferred largemouth bass and other forage species.
- Proposing 6-7 spawning beds, >10 habitat structures like brush piles and reefs.
- Sediment is not a concern as there is far less sediment here than other locations. Not likely to fill structures.
- It is a time sensitive project; the work can be done when the BLM has the equipment and is working on the dam.
- Monitoring will be completed using visuals, cameras, and netting.

Motion: Motion made to fully fund the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Mytton

Motion Second by: Tony Cate

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$40,000

12) Wall Creek fish barrier supplement (011-2020)

Amount Requested: \$40,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend fully funding (\$40,000).

Project Representative: Travis Lohrenz

Discussion Items:

- Is the connectivity to the Madison good? Yes, and Wall Creek doesn't go dry.
- Would treated timbers work instead of a large, concrete barrier? No; it is too big of a system and project site.
- Why is the ask for \$20,000 more than it was originally? NW Energy wanted to contribute less. Did approach Madison/Gallatin Trout Unlimited, but they wanted to be last at the table.
- Is not fluvial; protecting a resident population.

Motion: Motion made to partially fund at \$20,000.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Nancy Winslow

Panel Action: Motion passes (unanimous)

Amount Approved: \$20,000