



MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 5, 2021

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to remove non-native trout (hybrid cutthroat trout and brook trout) from a 2.7 mile stretch of Cottonwood Creek near Dillon and replace them with unaltered westslope cutthroat trout (WCT). WCT presently occupy 3.7% of their historic habitat within the Beaverhead watershed. Cottonwood Creek is one of eight streams within the Beaverhead watershed that still supports an unaltered WCT population; however, the population is only comprised of about 520 fish confined to the upper 0.6 miles of stream above a natural waterfall. In 2020, a wooden fish barrier was installed on the lower end of Cottonwood Creek in preparation for this project. Removing non-native trout below the natural waterfall and restoring WCT in 2.7 additional miles of habitat would bring the total number of unaltered WCT in the drainage to >2,500 fish which would greatly increase the population's probability of long-term persistence. WCT have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Montana state law authorizes FWP to manage candidate species to prevent the need for listing under the ESA. FWP Region 3 (Upper Missouri River) has a goal of restoring WCT (>90% pure) to 20% of their historic range in order to prevent listing under the ESA.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the attached proposal. The public comment period will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. July 5, 2021. Comments should be sent to the following:

Ryan Kreiner
Native Fish Biologist
730 ½ Montana Street
Dillon, MT 59725

Or e-mail to rkreiner@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Marina Yoshioka
Region 3 Supervisor

Attachment