

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE
for the
Arctic Grayling Introduction in Chiquita Lake

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3, Bozeman
August 26, 2021

Preface

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared to grant approval for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to stock Arctic grayling into Chiquita Lake, which is in the headwaters of the North Fork of Spanish Creek. Stocking efforts may span a period of three years to help establish multiple age classes of fish.

Chiquita Lake provides suitable habitat for a new grayling population that would be resilient to long-term climate change. Although it is unlikely that grayling would establish self-sustaining populations downstream of Chiquita Lake, dispersal of grayling would permit the colonization of habitats in Spanish Creek and possibly the Gallatin River. Although westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) were proposed in Chiquita Lake in the original environmental assessment (EA), grayling can be established in Chiquita Lake without compromising the overall goal of establishing a large, self-sustaining WCT population throughout the project area. Grayling would occupy a similar niche as WCT, so no adverse ecological effects are expected with the proposed action. The process of introducing grayling or WCT to Chiquita Lake would be the same, so disturbances during those efforts will not differ from what was proposed in the original environmental assessment. Existing grayling populations in the Gallatin River drainage receive similar angling pressure as nearby mountain lakes, so FWP does not anticipate the proposed action will diminish the wilderness character of Chiquita Lake or the surrounding area.

Public Process and Comments

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. Public input on the initially proposed plan to stock WCT in Chiquita Lake was sought by FWP during a scoping period from February 29 to March 31, 2016. In compliance with MEPA, an EA for stocking WCT was released for public comment from April 25 to May 25, 2017. A supplemental EA to amend the proposed action from stocking WCT to stocking grayling in Chiquita Lake was released for public comment on June 30, 2021.

Public comments were taken for 30 days (through July 28, 2021). The public was informed of this EA via the following:

- Two legal notices each in *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* and *Helena Independent Record*.
- Copies of the EA mailed or notification of its availability emailed to the neighboring landowner.
- Public notice posted on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>
- Copies of the EA available at FWP Region 3 Headquarters; by phoning 406-577-7871; or by emailing mike.duncan@mt.gov.

One party submitted supportive comments on the proposal (see below).

Party	Location	Support/Oppose	Comments
Pat Simmons	Bozeman	Support	"I read your EA for grayling introduction in Chiquita Lake and Spanish Creek, which I support. But one issue that never gets covered in these types of projects, is the killing of other fish species, which seems a waste and very sad. Have you done any research on collecting the live other fish species and placing them in another water body so they stay alive. Alternatively, can the killed fish be recovered and be utilized as a food source for Food Banks. I realize this project is located in a wilderness area, so helicopter makes sense and my suggestions would be difficult for this project. For future projects, I suggest you request grant funds to study how fish to be killed with rotenone can be re-utilized either live or as a food source. I'm sure hundreds of people wonder the same thing that I bring up. Thank you."

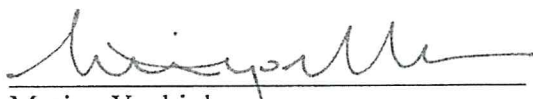
Final Environmental Assessment

The Draft EA, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the EA and public comment, it is my decision to approve the proposed action to stock Arctic grayling in Chiquita Lake.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Marina Yoshioka
Region 3 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

8/31/21

Date