



Region 3 Headquarters  
1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496

March 24, 2022

To whom it may concern,

The Decision Notice has been prepared to construct a wooden barrier in Reservoir Creek on private land that will protect 5.3 miles of habitat for unaltered westslope cutthroat trout (WCT). Reservoir Creek is one of seven remaining unaltered populations of WCT in the Beaverhead sub-basin, and one of three remaining unaltered populations which is still unprotected. Once protected, fish in Reservoir Creek can be used to repopulate future projects which will bring WCT closer to the overall goal of 20% of their historic distribution and ensure the long-term self-sustaining persistence of the subspecies in its historical range. This project is unique compared to many other barrier construction projects in that a nonhybridized population currently resides as the only fish species upstream of a seasonal intermittency barrier. If the barrier is constructed before invasion of nonnative trout, no additional and costly restoration activities (e.g., piscicide treatments to remove nonnative trout) would be needed. Many other unaltered populations in the Missouri River headwaters believed to be protected by seasonal intermittency have recently been invaded by nonnative trout and have become hybridized or lost to competition with brook trout.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on February 10, 2022.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 30 days (through March 12, 2022). The EA notice was mailed to 36 individuals and groups; legal notice was printed in the Montana Standard (Butte) newspaper and the Dillon Tribune. A draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notice>. Five written comments were received via email during the comment period. Four comments were supportive of the project, and one questioned the land ownership of the barrier location. Summaries of the comments are given below.

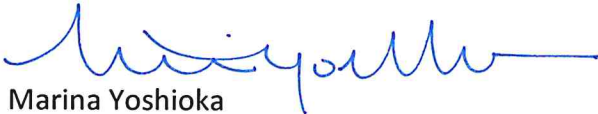
Comments generally supported native species restoration and expressed a desire to restore WCT back to 20% of their historic distribution (or more). Three of the four comments acknowledged the role of nonnative trout in the decline of WCT. One comment requested that our goal should be raised from 20% of historical distribution to 100%.

One comment from an adjacent landowner questioned whether the barrier would be on his property and FWP clarified that the location of the barrier was on an adjacent property (and stream).

Based on the Environmental Assessment and need to conserve WCT, it is my decision to proceed with the Conservation of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Reservoir Creek by Construction of a Wooden Fish Barrier.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marina Yoshioka', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marina Yoshioka  
Region 3 Supervisor