



***Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks***

1420 E 6th Ave, PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701  
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**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

**PART 1. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

Project Title: Fish Stocking a BLM Pond in Prairie County accessible via the Heitz Ranch

Application Date: 9/7/2022

Name, Address and Phone Number: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PO Box 1630

Miles City, MT 59301

(406) 234-0925

Project Location: Northern Prairie County;  
Lat: 47.12572 Long: -106.06439;  
TRS: T16N R45E S20

**Description of Project:** One-time only stocking of catchable sized rainbow trout (7 inches long) in 2022 into a BLM pond to establish a new angler opportunity in the local area. If trout overwinter, future stocking efforts include yellow perch from the Miles City Hatchery or a wild fish transfer from another fishery. Access to the pond may include a small piece of private property and need to secure landowner permission from the Heitz Ranch. This is not expected to be an issue considering the landowner has been a block management cooperator for several years and was the individual that called about fish stocking options at this and one other pond.

**Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction:** Christina Stuart – BLM Fish Biologist in Miles City; Jared Krebs (biologist) and Steve Dalbey (Fish Manager) with FWP in the Glasgow office

## **PART 2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats			X			X
3. Introduction of new species into an area			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectional odors				X		
9. Historical and archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

### **Comments**

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

1.2: Fish stocking in another wise fishless water can reduce the aquatic insect production from predation by rainbow trout. Tiger salamander larvae can also be displaced due to indirect competition for aquatic insects and fear of predation from larger bodied fish. Predation does occur if predatory fish species are stocked, however rainbow trout have little if any real predation on tiger salamander larvae.

1.3: Very minor impacts, mentioned in prior comment, can occur if dam breaches and fish flush into downstream habitats. The risk of this impact is very small and survival of rainbow trout in warm prairie streams, including Timber Creek, is very low. The risk is somewhat higher for yellow perch considering they could temporarily survive within the prairie stream. This risk is not new considering other prairie ponds within the Timber Creek drainage have been historically stocked with rainbow trout (numerous ponds) and yellow perch (Hedstrom Lake).

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat			X			X
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				X		
7. Access to and quality of recreational activities			X			X
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

## **Comments**

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided as comments.)

2.2: If fish survive summer and winterkill there would be a small positive benefit from the new recreational opportunity provide to the local area.

2.7: Same positive benefit listed under 2.2.

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?** No

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?** No

**Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action when alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider. Include a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

- 1: No Action – includes not stocking fish. Angling opportunities are rare in the local area, failure to establish a fishery during this relatively wet period keeps angling opportunities low.
- 2: Stock rainbow trout and yellow perch. This alternative, if fish survival occurs for some period, provides local anglers and families an additional outdoor recreational opportunity close to home.

**Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:** Christina Stuart – BLM Fish Biologist



**EA prepared by:** Kenneth M Backes

**Date Completed:** September 8, 2022