



DECISION NOTICE
on
FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECTS

**BRACKETT CREEK HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AND EROSION CONTROL
WILSON CREEK STREAM AND FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION**

August 14, 2023

Proposed Action

Through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP), funding would be provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to two projects on 1) Brackett Creek, Park County; and 2) Wilson Creek, Gallatin County. The projects are described below.

Brackett Creek Habitat Improvement and Erosion Control. Brackett Creek (Park County) is a tributary to the Shields River near Clyde Park that currently supports a population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Water leases in the stream are secured or ongoing, but channel instability remains. The project area was affected by channelization, land management practices, and an undersized bridge; these activities led to channel instability and streambanks that are vulnerable to erosion as well as limited deep pool habitat. This applicant proposes to remove the bridge causing channel instability, increase riparian vegetation along eroding banks, and re-slope the banks as needed. The overall goals are to increase watershed resilience and floodplain connection and protect and improve wild and native fish habitat by stabilizing eroding banks using stable channel geometry, native vegetation, and the use of soft techniques.

Wilson Creek Stream and Floodplain Restoration. Wilson Creek (Gallatin County) is a tributary to the Gallatin River. It contains populations of rainbow trout, brown trout, and Rocky Mountain sculpin. At the project location, south of Gallatin Gateway, Wilson Creek was ditched for agriculture, creating a straightened, widened channel. It was also impacted by dewatering during peak irrigation season and a loss of vegetation. This created poor habitat for salmonid reproduction or rearing and reduced the overall health of the stream. The project would restore the incised stream channel and connect it to the floodplain, create in-stream habitat complexity, and partially relocate the stream channel. The goals are to enhance spawning and rearing habitat for resident and migratory salmonids and to recontour the stream channel to increase floodplain connectivity and increase the potential for water storage that can contribute to late season flows in Wilson Creek and the Gallatin River.

Alternative Considered

No action. The proposed action of funding these projects would not occur. The applicants would either not complete the improvements or would obtain funding from other sources.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

FWP 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 both the proposed projects by FWP and released for public comment. The EAs were available for public comment from July 28, 2023, to August 12, 2023. A legal notice was printed in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle and the Draft EAs were posted on the FWP webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notice>.



Public Comment

No comments were received for either EA during the public comment period.

Decision Notice

There are no modifications necessary to the Draft EAs based on public comment. The Draft EAs, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final documents for this proposal. This is based on the lack of public comment and the positive benefits of this activity as outlined in each EA. I find there are no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with these projects. Therefore, I conclude that both EAs are the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. FWP will adopt the draft EAs as the final EAs and proceed with the projects as planned.

Thank you for your interest,

Eileen Ryce
Fisheries Division Administrator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks