



February 6, 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to restore native Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) to Elk Creek in the Madison Valley in southwest Montana. Historically, WCT, Arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish were the only salmonid species in the Madison Valley. The primary threat to WCT in southwest Montana is competition and predation by nonnative species, and the WCT population in Elk Creek has been reduced to occupying 0.8 miles of the headwaters due to competition with nonnative brook trout.

Nonnative fish upstream of an existing fish barrier will be removed using a piscicide (rotenone) for two consecutive years. After two treatments have been completed and the stream has been verified to be fishless using environmental DNA, WCT will be allowed to repopulate 8 miles of habitat and will serve as a source of aboriginal Madison River WCT for future introductions.

WCT conservation efforts such as this are necessary to ensure the species' long-term persistence. WCT (<10% nonnative trout introgression) currently occupy 11% of their historic range in SW Montana, but core populations (<1% nonnative trout introgression) exist in only 5.5% of their habitat. Additionally, 47% of Core populations remain at-risk. The conservation goal for WCT is to restore them to 20% of historically occupied habitat while continuing to manage the vast majority of habitat (80%) for non-native fish like Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout, and Brown Trout. Since 2010, 23 population restoration projects have been completed in Region 3 that have restored about 329 miles of Core WCT.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the Environmental Assessment for Elk Creek. The EA can be found at <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices> or a hard copy may be requested from the Region 3 FWP office at 406-577-7900. Public comment will be accepted until March 8, 2025 at 5:00pm. Comments should be sent to the address or email listed below.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Elk Creek Native Fish Restoration

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Sincerely,

Kelly Proffitt
Region 3 Supervisor