



DECISION NOTICE
Nevada Creek Restoration (Phase 8)
[FWP-DN-FSH-R8-2025-003]

4/25/2025

ACTION

Decision Notice (DN). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) shall prepare a DN for the proposed action. The DN must identify the agency decision, the reasons for the decision, and any special conditions surrounding the decision or its implementation.

With this action, FWP hereby adopts the Draft Environmental Assessment or Draft EA as final, without modification, and approves Alternative 2, the proposed action.

AUTHORITY: MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

According to the applicable requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act or MEPA and its implementing rules and regulations, before a proposed action may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify, consider, and disclose any potential impacts of the proposed action on the affected human environment. The level of environmental review will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. The agency is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors. *Title 75, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 3, Montana Code Annotated (MCA)*.

Based on these factors, FWP determined a Checklist EA (Draft EA) constitutes the appropriate level of review for the proposed action. Therefore, to assess and disclose potential impacts of the proposed action, FWP prepared a Draft EA for public review and comment. See *Public Participation Process* below.

Further, FWP must consider any substantive comments received in response to an EA and proceed in accordance with one of the following steps: determine the EA did not adequately reflect the issues raised by the proposed action and issue an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS; determine the EA did not adequately reflect the issues raised by the proposed action and issue a supplemental EA; or determine the Draft EA adequately addressed the issues raised by the proposed action and make a final decision, with appropriate modification resulting from the analysis provided in the Draft EA and the analysis of any substantive public comments received. See *Public Comment and FWP Response* below.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Draft EA was made available for public review and comment from March 31 through April 15, 2025.

The Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notice>. The Draft EA was also made available for public review on the Environmental Quality Council or EQC website: <https://leg.mt.gov/mepa/search/>, by individual request, and through notice to identified interested parties. FWP received no comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Nevada Creek is a tributary to the middle Blackfoot River near Helmville that supports populations of westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and brown trout. The project area had past channel manipulations and streamside vegetation removal that led to bank erosion issues. In 2010 and 2017-2024, nearby Future Fisheries channel restoration projects addressed extensive instream and riparian habitat and resulted in reduced sediment, increased stream complexity, improved riparian condition, and increased trout abundance. This project is phase 8 and would continue the restoration downstream. It intends to restore fish passage and natural stream and riparian function upgrading existing irrigation diversions, lowering channel width-to-depth ratios, increasing pool frequency and overhead cover, and implementing a grazing management plan. The goal is to improve fish passage while also improving instream, riparian, and upland habitat within a working landscape. The end result would be a benefit to aquatic species, particularly westslope cutthroat trout. The FWP action would be funding the project through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The project applicant is Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Construction is scheduled for fall 2025.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to build upon the previous seven phases of Nevada Creek restoration and improve trout habitat by restoring channel stability, aquatic habitat function, fish passage and riparian health while working in collaboration with several project partners and a private landowner who is committed to conservation in the Blackfoot River watershed. The project is needed, as the area has been affected by past channel manipulations and streamside vegetation removal and improvements are required to improve water quality, stream and riparian function, and fish habitat. The benefits are expected to include increased watershed resilience and floodplain function, improved water quality through reduced erosion, increased fish abundance, and improved ability to deliver water rights. Specific treatment types are shown in Figure 2 and include channel restoration, bank treatments, floodplain grading, and side channel reactivation. These improvements to water quality, floodplain storage (and therefore reducing flood flows and potentially increasing water storage and late season streamflow) could benefit the public both in the immediate and downstream areas as well as anglers in the Blackfoot River. Previous phases of restoration on Nevada Creek have shown these benefits.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED

Alternative 1: No Action

In addition to the proposed action, and as required by MEPA, FWP analyzes the "No-Action" alternative in the EA. Under the No-Action alternative, the proposed action would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the human environment would occur. The No Action alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed action may be measured.

Under the "No Action" alternative, if no funding is provided through the FFIP, either the applicant would have to seek additional sources of funding to complete the project, or the affected area of Nevada Creek would remain impaired for floodplain reconnection, stream function, sediment, riparian vegetation and habitat complexity.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, stream and floodplain restoration would occur on Nevada Creek.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received no public comments on the Draft EA.

DECISION

Based on the environmental review provided in the Draft EA, and in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies, FWP determined the proposed action (Alternative 2), will not have significant adverse impacts on the human environment associated with the proposed action and constitutes a reasonable and appropriate strategy to achieve identified objectives. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is unnecessary. FWP hereby adopts the Draft EA as final and approves the Alternative 2, the proposed action.

With this DN, FWP hereby adopts the Draft EA, without modification, and approves the proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Brown".

Peter Brown
Acting Habitat Bureau Chief
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks