

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION***All sections must be addressed, or the application will be considered invalid***I APPLICANT INFORMATION**

A Applicant Name: Ruby Habitat Foundation

Mailing Address: PO Box 638, 117 N. Main St

City: Sheridan State: MT Zip: 59749

Telephone: 406-660-2709 E-mail: dave@rubyhabitat.org

B Contact Person (if
different than applicant): David Delisi

Address: Same as above

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: 406-660-2709 E-mail: dave@rubyhabitat.org

C Landowner and/or Lessee
Name
(if different than applicant): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

I PROJECT INFORMATION

A Project
Name: Cattail Creek Spawning Tributary

River, stream, or lake: Cattail Creek, tributary to the Ruby River.

Location: Township: 05S Range: 04W Section: 30

Latitude: 45.36262 Longitude: -112.13013 *Within project (decimal degrees)*

County: Madison

B Purpose of Project: _____

This project will “retire” an existing channel-and-pond system, originally created from an irrigation drain ditch, and create a new channel for the purpose of increasing spawning habitat, rearing habitat, recruitment, and abundance in the Ruby River. The existing channel system is unsustainable as a fishery and only provides marginal spawning habitat, mainly due to gradual widening and accumulation of fine sediment. Further, because of the preexisting private pond licenses and subsequent required rotating fish screens, there is no current access to Ruby River fish. The new proposed channel, designed with brown trout spawning preferences in mind, will create 2475 feet of enhanced spawning and rearing habitat, and open that habitat to the Ruby River.

C Brief Project Description (attach additional information to end of application). Please include the . anticipated construction schedule:

The Ruby Habitat Foundation's Woodson Ranch is a 1200+/- acre ranch located in SW Montana. We are a non-profit entity whose mission boils down balancing wildlife and agriculture, while providing managed public access for both educational and recreational pursuits. We stand as an example of thoughtful land stewardship in the beautiful Ruby Valley of Southwest Montana. Among the ways we implement our mission is through a managed public access program. Last year, we welcomed over 2000 people to the ranch, some 400 of whom came to flyfish on the Ruby River.

The Cattail Creek Spawning project will replace an artificial stream channel and pond system that was created in the 1990s as a recreational fishery. This system was stocked with rainbow trout under a private pond license, which has since expired. The last stocking of rainbow trout was in 2015. Over time, the existing system has become over-widened, shallow, and slower, all of which has resulted in accumulations of fine substrates and degradation of fish habitat. The system includes two water sources, a spring and a permitted diversion from Alder Creek, a tributary of the Ruby River. This water flows through a settling pond, a rotating fish screen, a large pond, a control structure (another fish barrier) and then through a meandering stream and pond system before passing through another fish screen and emptying into the Ruby River.

In spite of the barriers to fish, brown trout have found their way into this system, and we have monitored their spawning activity through annual redd counts in late October or early November since 2015.

This project will be characterized by the following attributes:

- ❑ This project will **remove three existing barriers to fish movement**—the two rotating fish screens and the pond outlet structure between the first pond and the subsequent stream-pond system. The existing ponds will be reclaimed and converted to emergent wetlands. We will create a new channel that is a) shorter than the old system by approximately 400' and b) that is specifically designed to create spawning habitat for wild fish.
- ❑ Channel dimensions include: 4.5 to 5.5 foot width, 15 foot floodplain, riffle depth of 0.75 to 1.0 foot and a velocity of 1.5 to 1.7 feet per second, and a pool depth of 2 feet – on average of 1 per every 60 feet of channel length.
- ❑ Substrate will consist of native alluvium borrowed from on site and will include the addition of approximately 550 cubic yards of 7/8" to 1.5" washed round rock to enhance spawning opportunities.
- ❑ Brush matrices (alluvium/willows) will be installed along all outside channel margins to provide juvenile trout habitat.
- ❑ Fish barriers at the lower end will be moved and grade will be such that fish access to the system from the Ruby is available.
- ❑ **Water rights** for this project are already in place: 41C 85008 00, 2 cfs, Alder Creek, Fishery, 1/1 to 12/31, and 41C 85009 00, 2 cfs, Unnamed Tributary to the Ruby River, Fishery and wildlife/waterfowl, 1/1 to 12/31. No additional rights required or affected.
- ❑ We will alter the grade at the lower end to facilitate fish passage upstream from the Ruby. We will decrease width and increase water velocity to improve habitat.

In the first fall, after the conclusion of this project, which we anticipate to be by **end of winter 2023/2024**, we expect to see increasing numbers of redds and, because this system will now be available to fish in the Ruby River for the first time in decades, we believe this will enhance recruitment to the Ruby River, at a time when that system, like others in Southwest Montana, are showing declining numbers of brown trout.

D What was the cause of habitat degradation and how will the project correct the cause?

The original system was intended to be a stocked recreational fishery and was designed to serve that purpose, not as a wild trout spawning resource. This channel configuration, as well as the passage of time, allowed this system to erode its banks, gradually widening and slowing as it did so, eventually reducing trout habitat quality. As a result, the Foundation decided to re-evaluate our goals for the resource and determined that we need to attempt to increase the quantity and quality of spawning habitat for Ruby River trout. To that end, the proposed channel geometry is shorter and narrower, allowing for higher velocities which better pass sediment and maintain cleaner substrates for spawning habitat. This project will also allow for the removal of 3 impediments to fish access to this channel.

E Length of stream or size of lake that will be treated (project extent):

2475' of new spawning channel

Length/size of impact, if larger than project extent (e.g., stream miles opened):

By virtue of connection to the Ruby River, impact will include the Ruby River and those waters connected to same (e.g., Beaverhead, Big Hole).

F Project Budget Summary:

Grant Request (Dollars): \$ 107,358

Matching Dollars: \$ 124,908

Matching In-Kind Services:* \$

**salaries of government employees are not considered matching contributions*

Other Contributions (not part of this app) \$

Total Project Cost: \$ 232,266

G Attach itemized (line item) budget – see *budget template*

H Attach project location map(s) that include:

- ☒ Extent of the project, including context (relation to major landmark or town)
- ☒ Indication of public and private property
- ☒ Riparian buffer locations and widths (if applicable) and grazing locations

I Attach project plans:

- ☒ Detailed sketches or plan views with the location and proposed restoration
- ☒ Pre-project photographs (GPS location strongly recommended)
- ☐ If water leasing or water salvage is involved, attach a supplemental questionnaire (<https://myfwp.mt.gov/getRepositoryFile?objectID=36110>)

J Attach letters or statements of support (e.g., landowner consent, community or public support, and FWP fisheries support). List any other project partners:

See appendix

MAINTENANCE AND MONITORING (attach additional information to end of application):

- A A 20-year maintenance commitment is required*. Please confirm that you will ensure this protection and describe your approach. Attach any relevant maintenance plans. Yes ☒ No ☐

*If it is a water leasing project, describe the length of the agreement.

The Ruby Habitat Foundation is committed to stewarding all of our property in perpetuity, including Cattail Creek. Portions of the ranch, including much of the Ruby River and associated wetlands, are already in a conservation easement, providing permanent habitat protections.

- B Will grazing be part of or adjacent to the project? If so, describe or attach land management plans, including short term and long term grazing regimes. If the landowner is not the applicant, please describe their involvement in the project. *If you want assistance with grazing plan development, note your need.*

Yes, grazing is an important aspect of our management. We do not have cows on site full time, but lease the land out in the late fall, early winter, to nearby ranchers whose cattle graze the aftermath of the summer growing season. We rotationally graze the riparian areas, including those around Cattail Creek, once every three years. At the conclusion of this project, we will exclude grazing with the use of electric fencing for a **minimum of 3 years** to promote revegetation around the project and to avoid disturbance within the channel.

- C Will the project be monitored to determine if goals were met? If so, what are the short-term and long-term plans to assess benefits and lessons learned? Were pre-project data collected? Will monitoring information be shared with FWP?

Yes, we will monitor the success of the project by measuring several components. First, flows will be monitored using staff gauges, and adjusted as necessary to ensure adequate discharge within the new channel dimensions to maintain habitat quality. Second, we will use photos and established channel cross sections to monitor channel dimensions. And third, we will count brown trout redds each fall as we have since 2016. Here is the historic data we collected regarding redds:

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
27	30	36	31	9	33	30	32

We are happy to share these results and others with FWP upon request. MTDFWP has also indicated a commitment to post-construction monitoring to assess the projects benefits to the Ruby River fishery.

PROJECT BENEFITS (attach additional information to end of application):

- A What species of fish will benefit from this project?

Predominantly brown trout.

- B How will the project protect or enhance wild fish habitat?

The primary benefit of this project is to increase abundance of wild brown trout in the Ruby River system. Currently obstructed from the existing channel by rotating fish screens, brown trout will undoubtedly find this newly accessible stream beneficial both for spawning and rearing. Due to the water sources of Alder Gulch Creek and groundwater inputs, brown trout and Mountain Whitefish may also use the channel for thermal refuge during periods of low flow and higher temperatures in the Ruby River.

C What is the expected improvement to fish populations, both short term and long term? How might the project translate to angler success?

Current data from FWP shows a decline in brown trout abundance in the main stem of the Ruby River to levels at or near historic lows. Whatever the cause, by providing high-quality habitat and easy access for spawning, this project will increase fish reproduction in an area that will directly benefit the currently-impaired Ruby River's fish population. Because the new system is not designed to create better fishing opportunities within the system itself, but rather to enhance spawning habitat for fish in the Ruby River, we do not expect the new system to improve fishing success within its length. However, as other projects have demonstrated (e.g., the Hells Canyon improvements on the Jefferson some 10-15 years ago), we expect this project to have a positive impact on brown trout abundance within the Ruby River for decades to come.

D Will the project increase public fishing opportunity for wild fish and, if so, how? Is public fishing allowed onsite? If not, describe how the public would access the project benefits.

The opportunity to fish for wild trout is directly related to access and to fish abundance. We believe this project will increase fish numbers within the Ruby River system, thereby increasing the opportunity for anglers. Our managed access program allows fishermen to access the property for fishing. To ensure our programs have no negative impacts on fish populations, we limit fishermen to four rods per day. We also have imposed self regulation through a seasonal (fall) spawning closure on the newly restored Clear Creek Channel. Over the past 8 years, we have welcomed anywhere from 375 to 600 flyfishers each year to Woodson Ranch. Excluding the fall spawning season, folks visiting will be given the opportunity to fish in Cattail Creek to enjoy the improved habitat and opportunities. Further, there have been several spawning tributary improvements in the area that have resulted in increased numbers of fish in the adjacent "main" river; we expect this project to benefit the Ruby River directly by expanding spawning habitat, and that will directly impact the quality and opportunity for catching wild trout by the public.

E Aside from angling, what local or large-scale public benefits will be realized from this project?

Ruby Habitat Foundation, as its name implies, is laser-focused on habitat. This project will not only improve the habitat on the ranch, but because we welcome over 2000 people per year to the ranch—400 for fishing in 2022, higher numbers for science and educational programs, slightly lower numbers for exercising or wildlife watching, etc.—we will expose people to this project and highlight it for them. We will also share the project's scope and process with our large distribution list through our many communications with them (quarterly newsletters, annual reports, weekly photo-essays, etc.). The benefits of this messaging campaign could be substantial—many of our guests own property of their own, some in Montana, some out-of-state—by showing the process, the final product, and the measured results, we hope to influence people to undertake their own conservation and habitat-improvement projects.

F Will the project interfere with water or property rights of adjacent landowners? (explain):

No. This project lies entirely within the boundaries of Ruby Habitat Foundation's Woodson Ranch and does not affect or involve the use of any adjacent landowners' property or water rights. The Woodson Ranch has a sufficient water rights for this system with a beneficial use of fishery, and fish and wildlife.

G Will the project result in the development of commercial recreational use on the site (including paid access)? Explain:

No. Ruby Habitat Foundation's own managed recreational access program will remain in place as it currently stands: we allow four fishermen per day to recreate on the property (this project, at about ½ a mile, is approximately 5% of the linear length of fishable waters on the property—about 10 miles total—with the Ruby River, Alder Creek, and Clear Creek providing the other 95%; we require NO payment for such access and take reservations on a first-come, first-served basis. No additional development will result from this project.

H Is this project associated with the reclamation of past mining activity?

No.

Each approved project applicant must enter into a written agreement with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks specifying terms and duration of the project. The applicant must obtain all applicable permits prior to project construction. A competitive bid process must be followed when using State funds.

V AUTHORIZING STATEMENT

I (we) hereby declare that the information and all statements to this application are true, complete, and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge and that the project or activity complies with rules of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

Applicant
Signature:



Date: November 15, 2023

Submittal: Applications must be signed and received on or before November 15 and May 15 to be considered for the subsequent funding period. Late or incomplete applications will be rejected.

Mail to: FWP Future Fisheries Fish Habitat Bureau PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701	Email: Future Fisheries Coordinator FWPFFIP@mt.gov (electronic submissions must be signed) For files over 10MB, use https://transfer.mt.gov and send to mmcgree@mt.gov
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PROJECT COSTS					CONTRIBUTIONS			
WORK ITEMS (Itemize by Category)	NUMBER OF UNITS	UNIT DESCRIPTION*	COST/UNIT	TOTAL COST	FUTURE FISHERIES REQUEST	MATCH (Cash or Services)**	OTHER (Not part of this application)	TOTAL
Personnel***								
Survey, Design and Permitting-Partially Complete	1	Lump	\$9,300.00	\$ 9,300.00	-	9,300.00		\$ 9,300.00
Construction Oversight-Contracted	80	Hours	\$140.00	\$ 11,200.00	5,600.00	5,600.00		\$ 11,200.00
Project Management-Staff	40	Hours	\$100.00	\$ 4,000.00	-	4,000.00		\$ 4,000.00
Project Maintenance-Staff	20	Hours	\$100.00	\$ 2,000.00		2,000.00		\$ 2,000.00
Outreach	20	Hours	\$50.00	\$ 1,000.00		1,000.00		\$ 1,000.00
			Sub-Total	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 5,600.00	\$ 21,900.00	\$ -	\$ 27,500.00
Travel								
Mileage	12	Trips	\$300.00	\$ 3,600.00	1,800.00	1,800.00		\$ 3,600.00
			Sub-Total	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00	\$ -	\$ 3,600.00
Construction Materials****								
Spawning Gravel	500	Yards	\$36.50	\$ 18,250.00	9,125.00	9,125.00		\$ 18,250.00
Seed	10	acres	\$75.00	\$ 750.00	375.00	375.00		\$ 750.00
Woody Plants	100	Each	\$15.00	\$ 1,500.00	750.00	750.00		\$ 1,500.00
Misc. Planting Materials	1	Lump	\$1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	500.00	500.00		\$ 1,000.00
Electric Fencing Materials	5000	Feet	\$0.25	\$ 1,250.00	-	1,250.00		\$ 1,250.00
Herbicide	5	Gallons	\$80.00	\$ 400.00	200.00	200.00		\$ 400.00
			Sub-Total	\$ 23,150.00	\$ 10,950.00	\$ 12,200.00	\$ -	\$ 23,150.00
Equipment, Labor, and Mobilization								
Remove Fish Screens	2	Each	\$1,275.00	\$ 2,550.00	1,275.00	1,275.00		\$ 2,550.00
Excavate New Channel	9,350	Yards	\$5.00	\$ 46,750.00	23,375.00	23,375.00		\$ 46,750.00
Dewatering for Alluvium Borrow Site	336	Hours	\$51.00	\$ 17,136.00	8,568.00	8,568.00		\$ 17,136.00

Borrow Alluvium for Channel Construction	4500	Yards	\$8.15	\$ 36,675.00	18,337.50	18,337.50		\$ 36,675.00
Aquire Willows for Brush Matrices	1	Lump	\$7,700.00	\$ 7,700.00	3,850.00	3,850.00		\$ 7,700.00
Construct New Channel and Floodplain	2475	Lineal Feet	\$10.24	\$ 25,344.00	12,672.00	12,672.00		\$ 25,344.00
Connecting Channel	250	Lineal Feet	\$16.70	\$ 4,175.00	2,087.50	2,087.50		\$ 4,175.00
Reclaim Existing Channel and Ponds	1	Lump	\$17,168.00	\$ 17,168.00	8,584.00	8,584.00		\$ 17,168.00
Reclaim North Edge of House Pond-Borrow Site	1	Lump	\$5,853.00	\$ 5,853.00	2,926.50	2,926.50		\$ 5,853.00
Mobilization and Demobilization	1	Lump	\$10,965.00	\$ 10,965.00	5,482.50	5,482.50		\$ 10,965.00
Revegetation-Herbaceous Species	4	Hours	\$75.00	\$ 300.00	150.00	150.00		\$ 300.00
Revegetation-Woody Species	32	Hours	\$75.00	\$ 2,400.00	1,200.00	1,200.00		\$ 2,400.00
Weed Control	8	Hours	\$125.00	\$ 1,000.00	500.00	500.00		\$ 1,000.00
			Sub-Total	\$ 178,016.00	\$ 89,008.00	\$ 89,008.00	\$ -	\$178,016.00
TOTALS				\$ 232,266.00	\$ 107,358.00	\$ 124,908.00	\$ -	\$232,266.00

APPLICATION MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

(do not include requested funds or contributions not associated with the application)

CONTRIBUTOR	IN-KIND	CASH	TOTAL	Secured? (Y/N)
Ruby Habitat Foundation		\$ 44,908.00	\$ 44,908.00	YES
Private Donors	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	YES
Private Donors	\$ -	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	NO
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
TOTALS	\$ -	\$ 124,908.00	\$ 124,908.00	

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

(contributions not associated with the application)

CONTRIBUTOR	IN-KIND	CASH	TOTAL	Secured? (Y/N)
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
TOTALS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

RUBY HABITAT FOUNDATION CATTAIL CREEK SPAWNING CHANNEL LOCATION MAP

NOVEMBER 2023

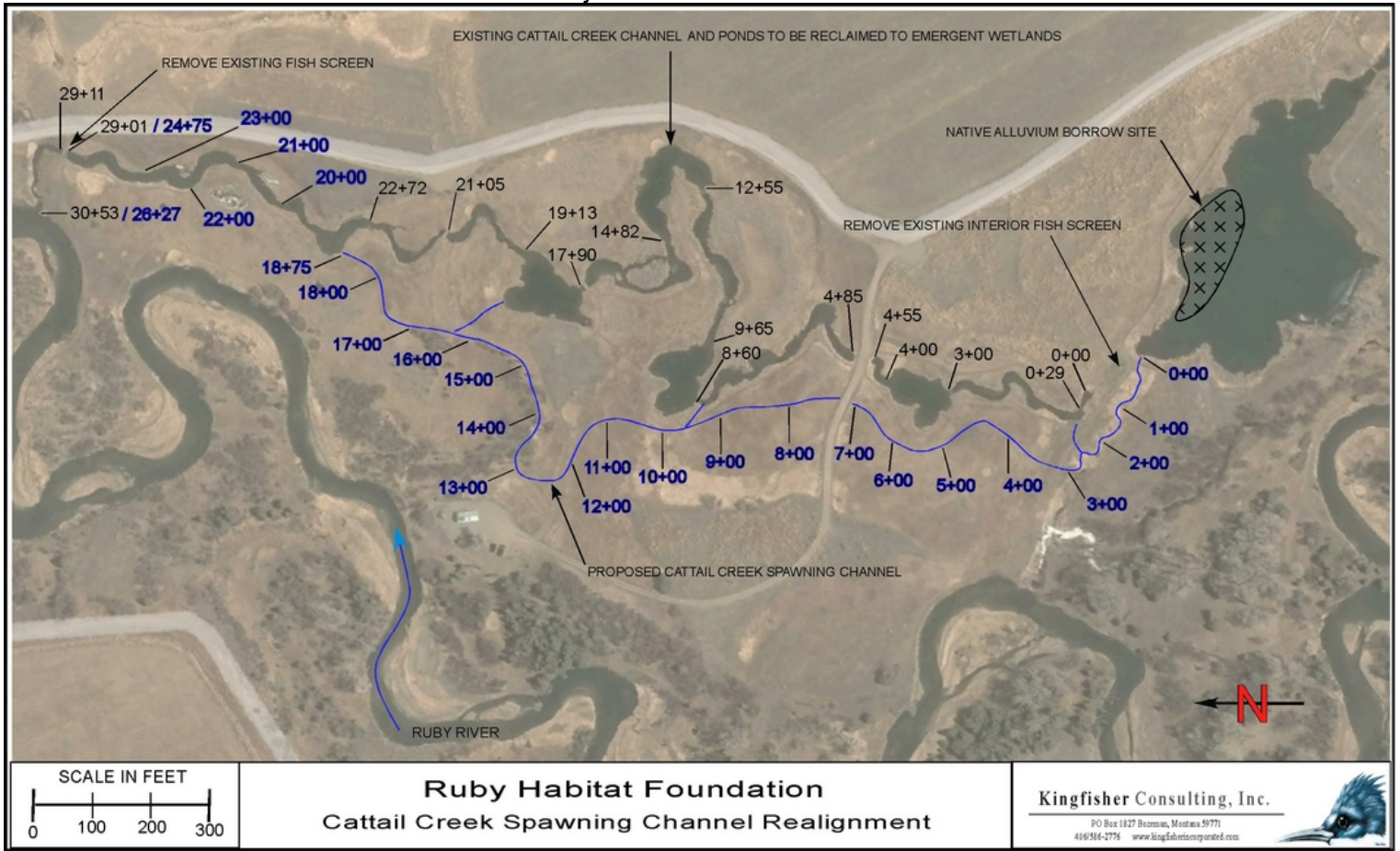
PROJECT LOCATION
SW 1/4, SEC 29, NW 1/4, SEC 32, T5S, R4W

Kingfisher Consulting, Inc.

PO Box 1827 Bozeman, Montana 59771
406/586-2776 www.kingfisherincorporated.com



Project Plan Views



Fish Screen and Avulsion Photos



The photo to the left shows the very end of the existing system which is where the spinning wheel of a fish screen sits. This is also going to be the end of the new channel as noted with the stake and measurement (2475').

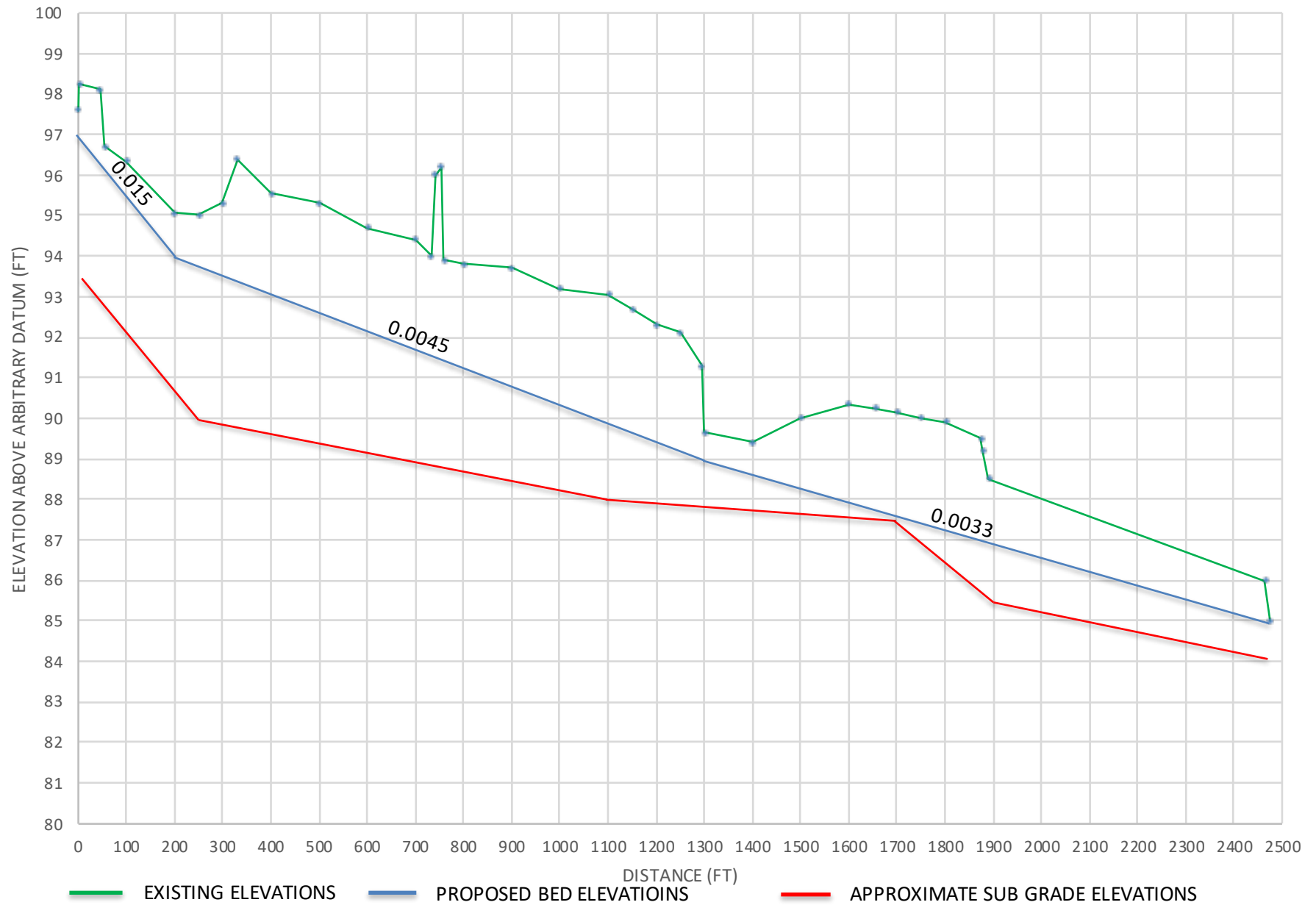


This photo shows the elevation drop below the fish screen, both of which prevent up- and down-stream movement of fish in the existing system. These screens (there is one at the upper end, too), will be removed.



This photo shows the location where the existing system avulsed—the majority, but not all, of the channel now flows down the left side of the island.

Ruby Habitat Foundation Proposed Cattail Creek Spawning Channel Realignment Profile



CATTAIL CREEK 2+00 to 13+00

INPUT=YELLOW BOXES

OUTPUT=GRAY BOXES

Begin Elevation	94	
End Elevation	89	
Distance	1100	
Total Slope	0.00454545	
Pool Length	10	
Riffle Length	50	
Riffle Slope	0.00568182	
Channel Width	5.5	
Channel Depth	0.75	
Wetted Perimeter	7.000	
Cross Section	4.125	
Hydraulic Radius	0.589	
Slope	0.00454545	
Manning's n	0.045	
Cross Section	4.125	
Wetted Perimeter	7.000	
Velocity	1.575	FPS
Discharge	6.495	CFS

CATTAIL CREEK 13+00 to 25+00

INPUT=YELLOW BOXES

OUTPUT=GRAY BOXES

Begin Elevation	89	
End Elevation	85	
Distance	1200	
Total Slope	0.00333333	
Pool Length	10	
Riffle Length	50	
Riffle Slope	0.00416667	
Channel Width	4.5	
Channel Depth	1	
Wetted Perimeter	6.500	
Cross Section	4.500	
Hydraulic Radius	0.692	
Slope	0.00333333	
Manning's n	0.045	
Cross Section	4.500	
Wetted Perimeter	6.500	
Velocity	1.500	FPS
Discharge	6.749	CFS

RUBY HABITAT FOUNDATION CATTAIL CREEK SPAWNING CHANNEL

Heavy Equipment

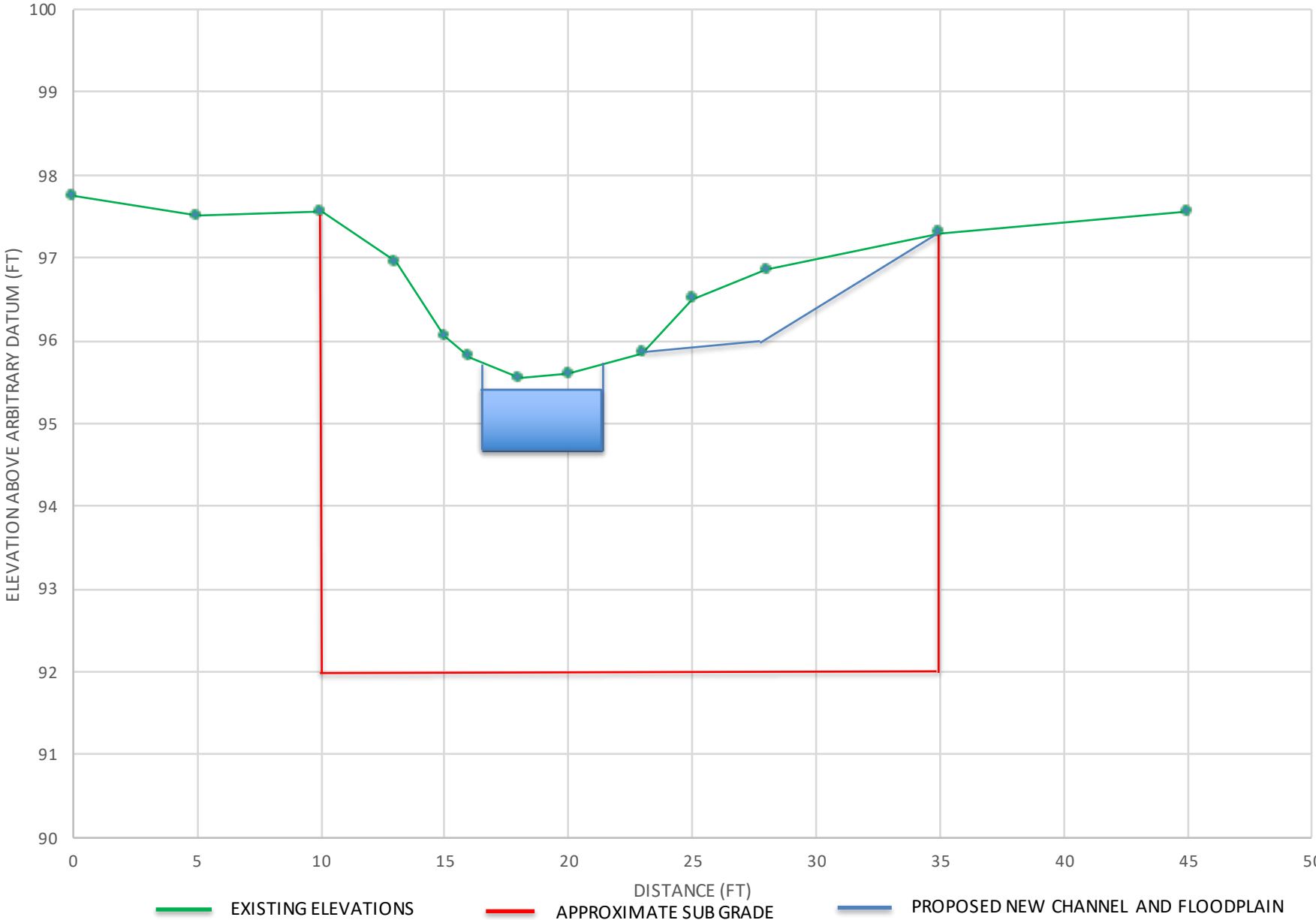
Project Element	Unit	Amount	Price	Total	Notes
Remove existing rotating fish screen	Lump		\$1,275.00	\$1,275.00	Remove fish screen, headwall, rip rap, regrade stream banks
Excavate new channel	Cubic Yards	9,350	\$5.00	\$46,750.00	Excavate 25' wide prism to accommodate stream channel, floodplain, and brush matrices-salvage wetland sod
Dewatering for alluvium borrow	Hours	336	\$51.00	\$17,136.00	12-inch pump to dewater existing house pond for duration of alluvium borrow-channel and floodplain construction (14 days)
Borrow alluvium for channel construction	Cubic Yards	4,500	\$8.15	\$36,675.00	Borrow alluvium from house pond for channel, floodplain, and brush matrices construction
Spawning gravel	Cubic Yards	500	\$36.50	\$18,250.00	Provide and install 7/8" to 1.5" washed round rock
Acquire willows for brush matrices	Lump		\$7,700.00	\$7,700.00	Mini excavator with cutting head, 315 excavator to load trucks, trucks to deliver willows to channel
Construct channel and floodplain	Lineal Feet	2475	\$10.24	\$25,344.00	Construct bedforms, floodplain, brush matrices, and place salvaged wetland sod-Includes rock for 3 drop structures at pond outlet
Connecting channel	Lineal Feet	250	\$16.70	\$4,175.00	Construct channel connecting existing pond outlet structure (no longer primary outlet) and new spawning channel
Reclaim existing channel and ponds	Lump		\$17,168.00	\$17,168.00	Fill and reclaim existing Cattail Creek and associated instream ponds into emergent wetlands (1.52 acres). Cat 324 DL long reach
Reclaim North edge of House Pond	Lump		\$5,853.00	\$5,853.00	Reclaim the edge of House Pond where alluvium has been extracted once channel construction is complete
Mobilization and Demobilization	Lump		\$10,965.00	\$10,965.00	3 Excavators, 3 six-wheel drive off road trucks, D6 dozer, 12" pump, oil/fuel truck, and matts (tire tops)
TOTAL				\$191,291.00	

Project Oversight

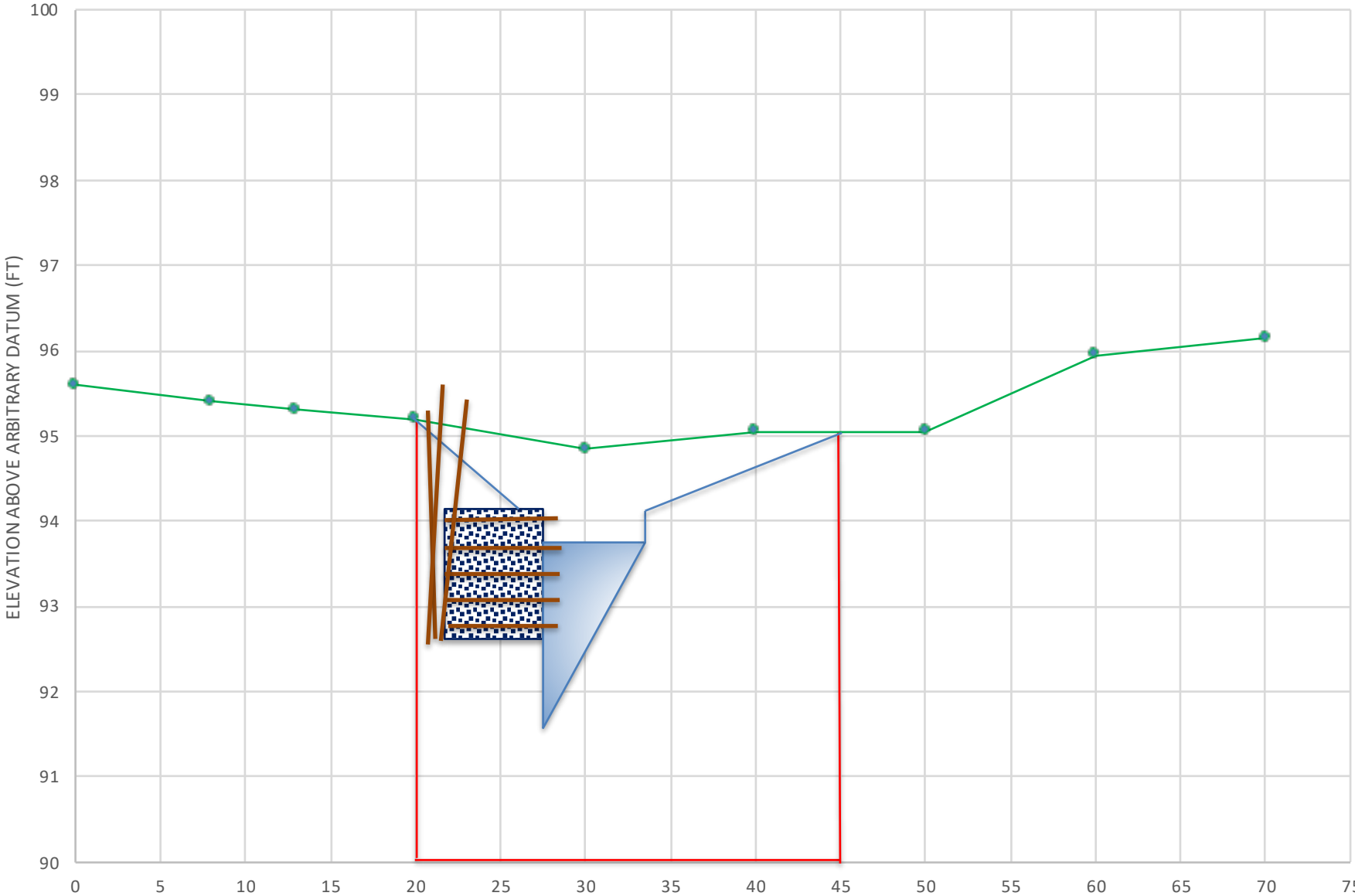
Project Element	Unit	Amount	Price	Total	Notes
Installation	Hours	80	\$140.00	\$11,200.00	Construction oversight, survey, staking, design
Travel and mileage	Per trip	12	\$300.00	\$3,600.00	Travel time @ 1/2 rate and mileage @ \$0.70 per mile
TOTAL				\$14,800.00	

TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST \$206,091.00

Ruby Habitat Foundation Cattail Creek Cross Section @ 1+50

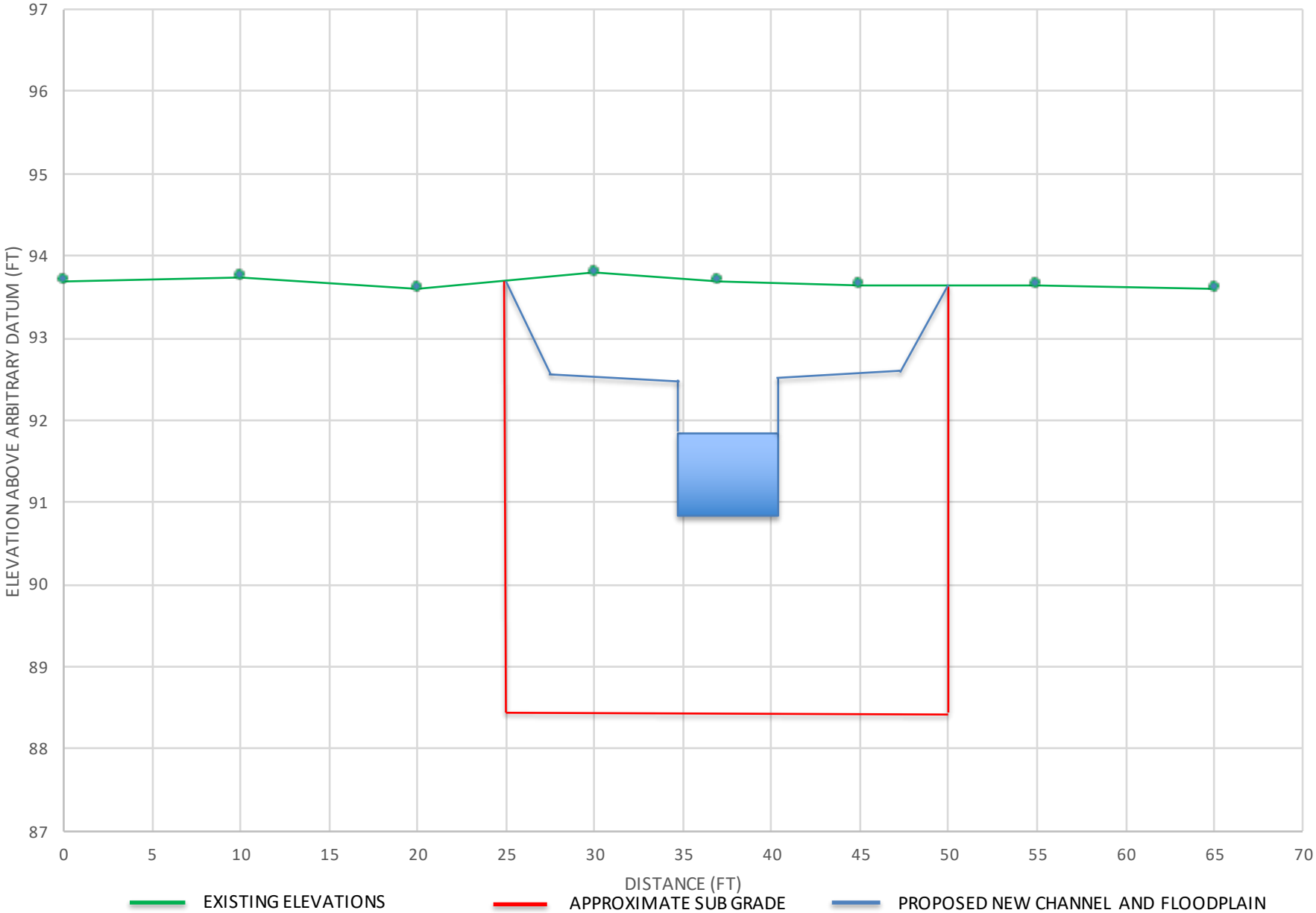


Ruby Habitat Foundation Cattail Creek Cross Section @ 5+00

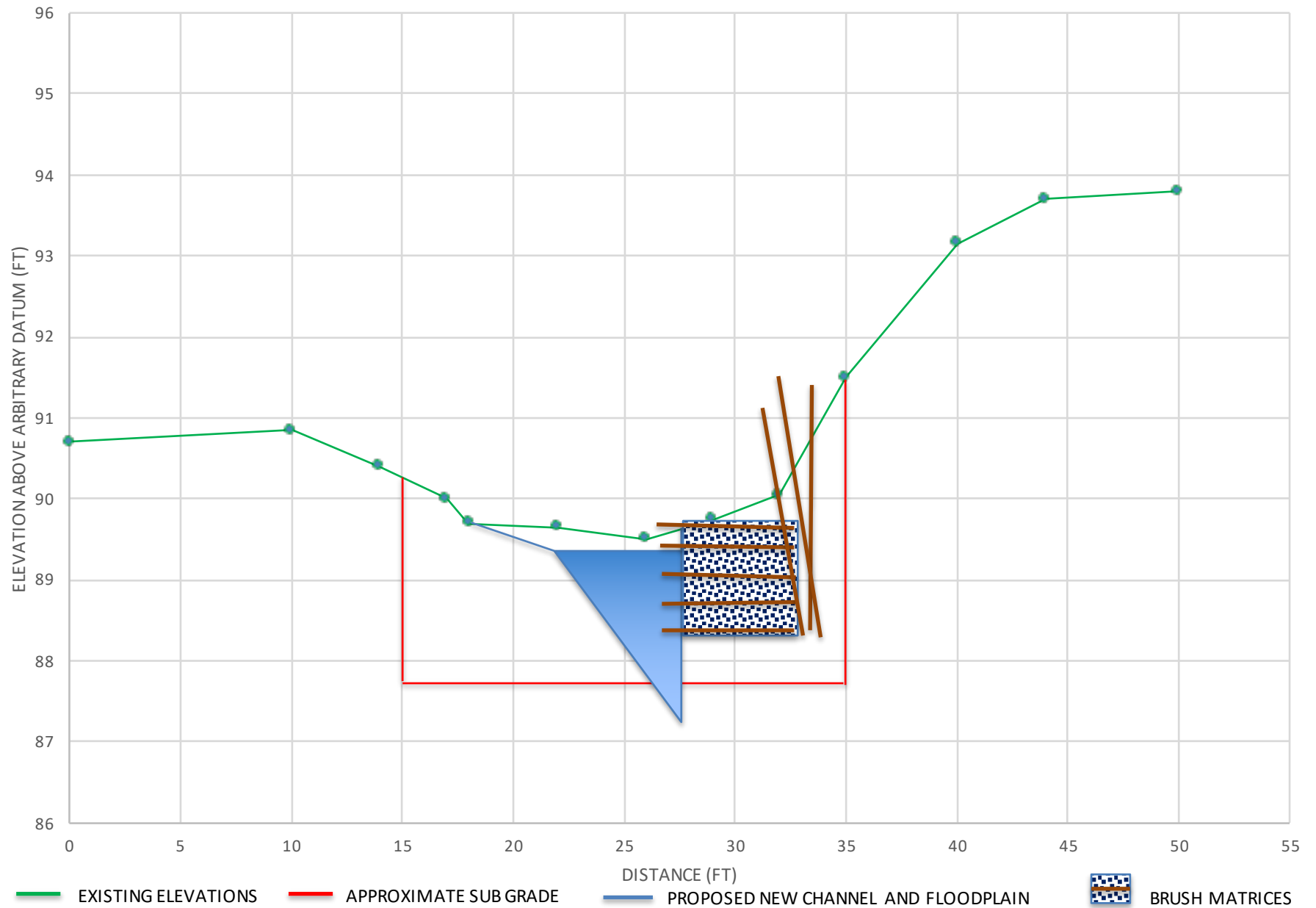


EXISTING ELEVATIONS APPROXIMATE SUB GRADE PROPOSED NEW CHANNEL AND FLOODPLAIN BRUSH MATRICES

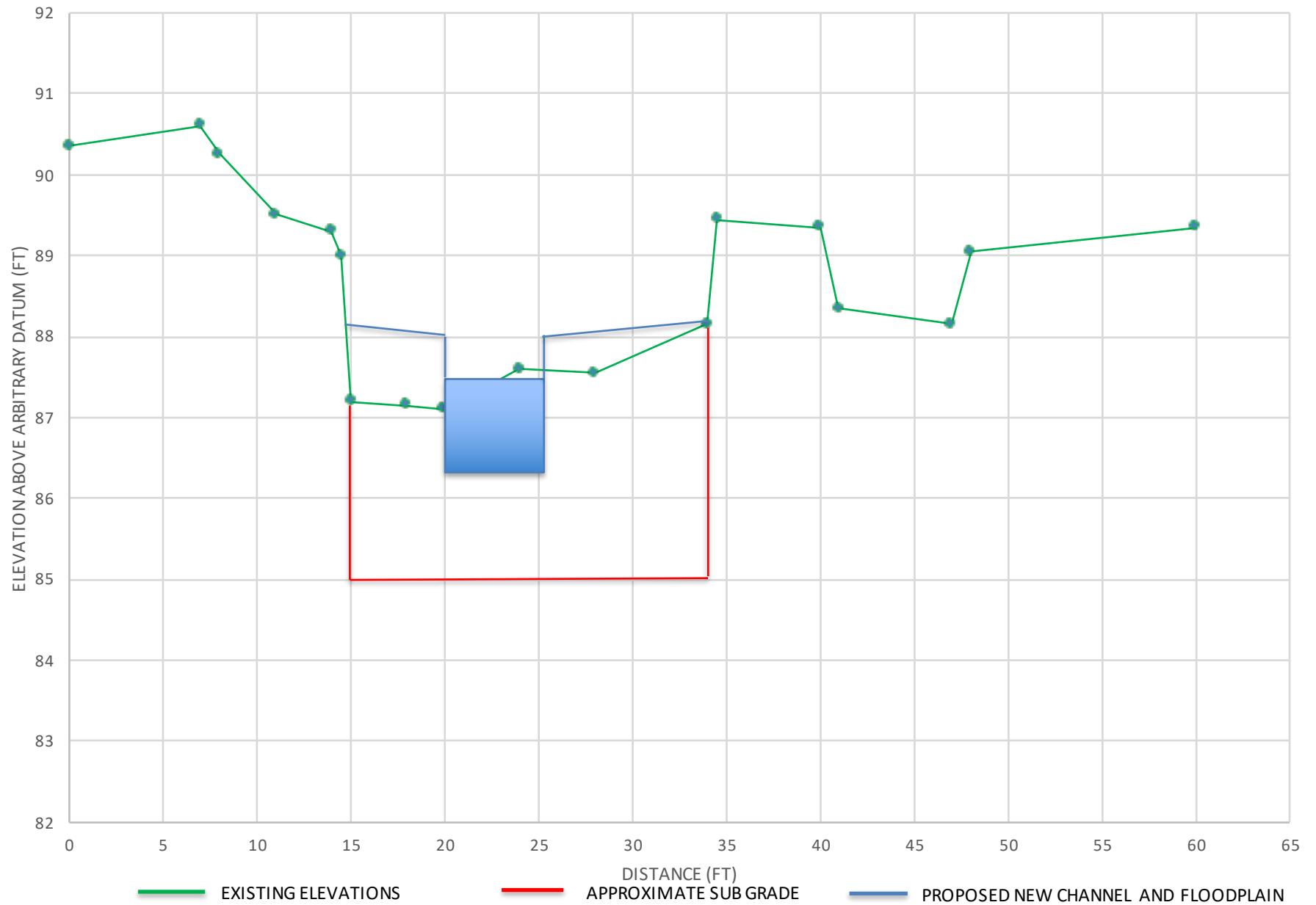
Ruby Habitat Foundation Cattail Creek Cross Section @ 9+00



Ruby Habitat Foundation Cattail Creek Cross Section @14+30



Ruby Habitat Foundation Cattail Creek cross Section @ 20+40



From: Kendall VanDyk, Managing Director
The Montana Land Reliance
PO Box 355
Helena, MT 59624

To: FWP Fisheries Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Future Fisheries Grantors,

Please consider this a letter of strong support for the Cattail Creek Spawning Enhancement project planned by Ruby Habitat Foundation.

It is my belief that this project will enhance spawning habitat for wild trout in the Ruby River system. Given the well-publicized and alarming decline in the numbers of fish in this system as documented in my own work, to have solution-focused support from private entities is not only appreciated, it is important.

This project will add spawning habitat that did not exist before, or that was, at best, inhibited. Opening this nearly-half-mile of new habitat to the Ruby will provide an assist to the trout and, at this point, any such help is much appreciated.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns,

Sincerely,



Kendall Van Dyk
Managing Director, The Montana Land Reliance
(406) 690-1728

From: John Clark
Ruby Valley Landowner & Sportsman

To: FWP Fisheries Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Future Fisheries Grantors,

Please consider this a letter of strong support for the Cattail Creek Spawning Enhancement project planned by Ruby Habitat Foundation.

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This project will add spawning habitat that did not exist before, or that was, at best, inhibited. Opening this nearly-half-mile of new habitat to the Ruby will provide an assist to the trout and, at this point, any such help is much appreciated.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Clark", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Clark
Ruby Valley Landowner and Sportsman (714) 343-
9092



*Sustaining the
agricultural way of
life by honoring our
heritage, providing
for the future,
respecting the land,
and serving our
community.*

**GILMAN IH CATTLE CO.
47 RUBY ROAD
P.O. BOX 36
Alder, MT 59710
(406) 842-5390**

November 13, 2023

From: Les Gilman, president, Gilman IH Cattle Co.
& former Executive Director, Ruby Habitat Foundation
PO Box 36
Alder, MT 59710

To: FWP Fisheries Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Future Fisheries Grantors,

Please consider this a letter of strong support for the Cattail Creek Spawning Enhancement project planned by Ruby Habitat Foundation.

It is my belief that this project will enhance spawning habitat for wild trout in the Ruby River system. Given the well-publicized and alarming decline in the numbers of fish in this system as documented in my own work, to have solution-focused support from private entities is not only appreciated, it is important.

This project will add spawning habitat that did not exist before, or that was, at best, inhibited. Opening this nearly-half-mile of new habitat to the Ruby will provide an assist to the trout and, at this point, any such help is much appreciated.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns,

Sincerely,

Les Gilman, president
Gilman IH Cattle Co.
& former Executive Director, Ruby Habitat Foundation
(406) 596-1090



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3 Headquarters
1400 South 19th Street
Bozeman, MT 59715

November 15, 2023

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Future Fisheries Improvement Program
1420 E. Sixth Ave.
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) panel,

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) strongly supports the Ruby Habitat Foundation Future Fisheries Improvement Program application to provide connected trout spawning and rearing habitat to the Ruby River in Cattail Creek.

Trout abundances in these reaches of the mainstem Ruby River are at near historic lows. Even more troubling is little evidence of recent recruitment; the fishery is presently disproportionately comprised of older fish. Cattail Creek is presently an oversized slough channel that is isolated from the Ruby River and provides little spawning and rearing habitat. However, this proposal provides one of the best opportunities to improve mainstem trout recruitment and abundances in the mainstem Ruby River because, unlike other tributaries, it has reliable flow throughout the irrigation and spawning seasons. Strong landowner commitment to restoration make this reach ideal for targeted intervention. Ruby Habitat Foundation has restored several miles of Clear Creek, a distributary channel to the Ruby River, and serves as an educational demonstration ground for projects that are environmentally and agriculturally compatible and sustainable. Additionally, Ruby Habitat Foundation is committed to allowing public access to the reaches of the Ruby River that flow through its land, ensuring that the benefits to the Ruby River from Cattail Slough will be realized by the angling public. This project has a high likelihood of success; the proposed techniques have been implemented elsewhere in the Ruby River watershed to successfully provide spawning and rearing habitat and FWP is committed to post-construction monitoring to assess this project's benefits to the fishery.

FWP is committed to ensuring a successful outcome to this project and believes the aforementioned proposal is an essential part of achieving one. Please don't hesitate to contact Matt Jaeger (mattjaeger@mt.gov) if you have further questions. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project and your continuing dedication to restoring and conserving Montana resources.

Sincerely,

Warren Hansen
Acting Region 3 Supervisor

About Ruby Habitat Foundation

The Ruby Habitat Foundation, and the associated 1200 +/- acre Woodson Ranch which is stewarded by the Foundation, is a 509(a)3 Support Organization for The Montana Land Reliance. Our mission is as follows:

The Ruby Habitat Foundation is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural resources, and social and economic makeup of the Ruby Valley and southwest Montana by, among other things:

- ☐ **Supporting agriculture in the community and the diversification of agricultural operations to ensure the long-term viability of working ranches;**
- ☐ **Working with landowners, educational institutions, foundations, and other entities to protect and enhance open space and wildlife habitat;**
- ☐ **Encouraging education and training to broaden the understanding of resource management issues, and responsible management of private lands;**
- ☐ **Promoting the concept of resource accountability and developing examples of minimal impact resource management for agricultural and recreational uses while protecting the environment.**

When Craig and Martha Woodson purchased Woodson Ranch in 1992, they immediately began to improve the land using best practices gleaned from both research and the local ranching community. After 10 years of such improvements, they donated the land to The Montana Land Reliance which then established the Ruby Habitat Foundation to “run” the place with the above mission as the directive.

One of the highlights of our operation is the managed access program. This program allows the public to schedule time to come on to the ranch for recreational purposes ranging from flyfishing to birding, hunting, nature watching, hiking, cycling and horse riding. In the past 5 years alone, we have welcomed close to **10,000 people to the ranch** for these purposes.

Now 21 years old, we are proud of the activities we have accomplished to fulfill our mission. From soil health experiments to managing deer herd size through hunting, we stand as an example of public-oriented, science-driven stewardship in the beautiful Ruby Valley of Southwest Montana.

For more information, please don't hesitate to visit our website (www.rubyhabitat.org) or to contact our Outreach Coordinator, David Delisi, at 406-660-2709 or dave@rubyhabitat.org.