

# FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

## REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

SUMMER 2024

**Date: June 12, 2024**

**Location: AC Marriott, Missoula MT**

### **Review Panel Attendees:**

In Person: Bill Mytton, Nancy Winslow, Ron Pierce, David Cope, Clint Peck, Zachary Bashoor, Mike Newton, Bob Schroeder, Gabrielle Thorsen, Bill Semmens, Peter Skidmore

### **FWP staff:**

In Person: Adam Strainer, Michelle McGree, Ryan Comstock

**Applicants and others in attendance:** Pat Saffel (FWP), Tess Scanlon (Trout Unlimited), Ben LaPorte (Big Hole Watershed Committee), Adam Switalski (Clark Fork Coalition), Grant Williams, Andy Fisher (Clark Fork Coalition), Ryen Neudecker (Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited), Patrick Uthe (FWP)

### **Panel business (before project review):**

- Clint Peck brought the meeting to order.
- Pat Saffel was introduced as guest speaker. Pat talked about Fish Management in Region 2. Michelle gave a presentation on the status of the program and the budget.

### **Panel business (after project reviews):**

- Next meeting was set for December 5<sup>th</sup> in Helena.

### **Application discussions and funding recommendations:**

#### **1. Flint Creek Phase 3A Riparian Restoration (022-2024)**

Amount Requested: \$60,000

FWP Recommendation: \$60,000

Project Representative: Tess Scanlon

#### Discussion Items:

- Budget and reach, 1400 feet or two miles = 2500 feet of riparian fencing and 1400 feet of bank work.
- \$278,000 total for Phase 3A of Flint Creek.

- Landowner contribution was brought up; landowner will be providing fencing cost (\$6500). Fencing options – buffer or grazing pasture – this is to be determined, but will happen before construction begins.
- Question about buffering around side channels. This will be adjusted.
- There are three more phases on this stream, and two more landowners want to delist for sediment.
- Prior work was discussed. Fish population monitoring was explained; more will happen eventually. Riparian pastures are not very successful without monitoring. Wood having to be hauled in was talked about, the cost and challenges of this, including loading and unloading.
- Talked about possible side channel for dewatering.
- Questioned on cobbles and size being imported. At this current time, no test pits have been dug, so they are preparing to bring it in.
- Brought up that fencing alone wouldn't get habitat gains that are wanted. Fencing buffer is on the minimal side, potential for wider buffer (50 feet), better grazing management.
- Question about prioritizing areas, rewarding/protecting landowners doing the right thing.

Motion: Motion made to fund the project at \$60,000

Motion Made by: Bill Mytton

Motion Second by: Bob Schroeder

Panel Action: Motion passed (unanimous)

## 2) Granite Creek (023-2024)

Amount Requested: \$63,170

FWP Recommendation: 63,170

Project Representative: Adam Switalski

- Oversight includes E/O, this includes showing time spent on the project.
- Mobilization and demobilization, this was decided that it would just be referenced as mobilization.
- Cost of the excavator and rock were discussed. The cost is due to pit being about a mile away.
- What is the streambed simulation material that will be used? Size classes of rock are based on current stream, there will be many different sizes being used.
- Rebuilding the banks due to disturbances. They are following USFS specs; using a design done by engineering firm that was USFS approved and does some oversight, this would be the same with the road that is being put in, it will be built to USFS specs.

- Question about type of fish that are in this tributary to Lolo Creek. Adam Switalski noted that it is mostly brown trout, but also cutthroat and rainbow. Bull trout are also in the drainage (detected by eDNA).
- Spoke about differences in concrete, pre-cast or poured on site. Engineering firm is working with contractor on concrete footing, design, and construction.

Discussion Items:

- Discussion on the price of materials. Panel member thought the cost was still too high.

Motion: Motion made to fund project at \$63,170

Motion made by: Bob Schroeder

Motion second by: Nancy Winslow

Panel Action: Motion passed (unanimous)

**Amount Approved: \$63,170**

### 3) Kamperschroer Spring Creek Spawning Enhancement (024-2024)

Amount Requested: \$63,076.00

FWP Recommendation: \$63,076.00

Project Representative: Ben LaPorte

- Project is designed to maintain fishing and tourism in the area (Question E on application).
- Project will adjust width and depth of stream.
- Ineligible budget items would be switched to match.

Discussion Items:

- Talked about surface water management.
- Question asked about spring creek area flooding. Yes it does, but this is maintained by various headgates. Big Hole won't flood over due to high terraces.
- 20 year maintenance and beaver control was discussed. Landowners will take care of maintenance; beaver management is on FWP. Asked about beaver dams currently on spring creek, were told they would be removed.
- Discussion of irony of beaver vs. not beaver.
  - Landowner had paid to remove beaver last year, but we don't know the plan moving forward.
- Spawning vs. rearing habitat was discussed.
- Monitoring was discussed. Biologist is not doing electrofishing on site since there is a section downstream that will cover needed monitoring.
- We don't know where recruitment collapse is happening (between age 0 or age 1), however saw significant response of one year of good water.

- Designed channel dimensions to flush fine sediment & retain coarser spawning substrate. The width-to-depth ratio will go from 16 to a range of 8-10.

Motion: Fund project at \$63,076 (with budget adjustments)

Motion made by: Mike Newton

Motion second by: Zack Bashoor

Panel Action: Motion passed (unanimous)

**Amount Approved:** \$63,076

#### 4) Threemile Reservoir Dam Maintenance (025-2024)

Amount Requested: \$75,000

FWP Recommendation: \$75,000

Project Representative: Grant Williams

- This is a five-year plan, for tree removal around and near the dam.
- Three Phases:
  - Remove small trees and vegetation above the dam.
  - Instillation of hydro pressure in the dam for monitoring.
  - Removal of large trees around base of dam, without destabilizing the dam.

#### Discussion Items:

- Question about who the landowners were (the Chapel and Grant Williams); however, DNRC controls the dam and reservoir, Hardy Ranch & Gearing Ranch have water rights.
- Maintenance was addressed; all four stakeholders will be involved in maintaining the vegetation.
- Fisheries value was discussed. Westslope cutthroat population was removed in the 2000's to protect unaltered populations. This has big potential for broodfish stock.
- Discussion about dam being high hazard, one ranch is downstream of the dam in the flood area, and Birdseye Rd. is in the flood area as well.
- There was concern over the piping and how they plan to address the roots and vegetation. 90% of vegetation and 20 large trees are the biggest concern. There is a plan for water management and piping.
- Question was brought up about why irrigators haven't done anything. There wasn't a clear requirement before 2023.
- Spoke about access either for kids or disabled as a goodwill gesture. Grant said he would talk with Chapel and ranch owners about limited access.

Motion: Fund Project at \$75,000

Motion made by: Ron Pierce

Motion second by: Bill Mytton

Panel Action: Five Yea and Four Nay, motion passed

**Amount Approved:** \$75,000

## 5) Upper Clark Fork Sager Diversion (026-2024)

Amount Requested: \$50,000

FWP Recommendation: \$50,000

Project Representative: Andy Fisher

- Relocating pump station and upgrade the diversion to help with fish and flow of water.
- This will benefit brown and westslope, and possibly bull trout as well.

### Discussion Items:

- Question about probability of contaminated soil. Andy said they've been doing soil sampling with DEQ, and should have sampling wrapped up by end of next week (6.17-21, 2024).
- Question about how project will improve public access. Andy said on south side of road they have funding from FWP to enhance boater access. Currently, anglers have to drop boats at the headgate.
- Rock Weirs - \$350.00 each. This cost is based on past projects; plan to put it out for bid, and will look for cost savings removing the structure.
- Question about stream flows. Currently it is a flat ditch and hard to regulate. Project would produce less ditch loss and flows are more immediately returned to Clark Fork (5 cfs). The water right is 15 cfs and they use 10 cfs.

Motion: Motion made to fund new amount of \$50,000

Motion made by: Zach Bashoor

Motion second by: Nancy Winslow

Panel Action: Motion passed (Unanimous)

**Amount Approved:** \$50,000

## 6) Upper Douglas Fish Passage (027-2024)

Amount Requested: \$75,000

FWP Recommendation: \$75,000

Project Representative: Ryen Neudecker & Patrick Uthe

- Removing fish ladder at middle reservoir
- Construct another fish ladder at upper reservoir
- This project is heavily focused on reinforcing a pure brood

### Discussion Items:

- Question about removing middle reservoir; Ryen said it wasn't an option due to existing pivots.
- Asked about what the weir plates were made of. Ryen said that a local fabricator makes them, and they are made of steel with a round edge. It was brought up that the weir

plates were a better option than rock, and that this was done at Frazier Creek and was highly successful.

- Question about public access, Ryen said there is access with permission.

Motion: Motion made to fund \$75,000.00

Motion made by: Bill Mytton

Motion second by: Zach Bashoor

Panel Action: Motion Passed (unanimous)

**Amount Approved:** \$75,000