FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION

All sections must be addressed, or the application will be considered invalid

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

A. Applicant Name: Trout Unlimited – Alli Pardis

Mailing Address: 627 E. Peach Street

City: Bozeman State: MT Zip: 59715

Telephone: 406 – 431 – 5981 E-mail: Allison.pardis@tu.org

B. Contact Person (if different than applicant):

Address:

City: State: Zip:

Telephone: E-mail:

C. Landowner and/or Lessee Name (if different than applicant): Mannix Brothers, LLC

Mailing Address: 83 Mannix Ranch Drive

City: Helmville State: MT Zip: 59843

Telephone: 406-396-5833 E-mail: mannixbryan@gmail.com

II. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Project Name: Wasson Creek Channel Maintenance Flow

River, stream, or lake: Wasson Creek

Location: Township: 13N Range: 10W Section: 07

Latitude: 46.890924 Longitude: -112.920076 *Within project (decimal degrees)*

County: Powell County

B. Purpose of Project: *(high level, focus on why the project is important)*

This project provides Channel Maintenance Flow, or high-water flow, in conjunction with a minimum instream flow lease to maintain riverine processes and support stream function in Wasson Creek, an important westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) fishery in the Nevada Creek and Blackfoot River Drainage. Wasson Creek is one of the few sources of recruitment for WCT in the middle Blackfoot and population response after initial restoration in 2004 and long-term flow agreements have shown increased WCT abundance and spawning habitat.

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

Wasson Creek is a small 2nd order basin fed tributary to Nevada Spring Creek. Wasson Creek begins on the Helena National Forest and enters private ranchland near mile 4.0. Wasson Creek joins Nevada Spring Creek 100' below the (artesian) spring source, contributing a base flow of 2 CFS outside of the irrigation season. In Nevada Spring Creek, FWP holds an instream water right which protects water from the Wasson Creek Lease and Nevada Spring Creek all the way to Nevada Creek's confluence with the Blackfoot River. Wasson Creek has a long history of fisheries related impairments that include fish passage barriers throughout the system, irrigation dewatering, entrainment of fish to ditches, excessive livestock damage to streambanks, channel straightening, and water quality impairments from agricultural runoff.

This project is the continuation of a minimum instream flow lease and channel maintenance flows in Wasson Creek, an important westslope cutthroat trout tributary to Nevada Creek and the middle Blackfoot River. In 2004, restoration efforts on lower Wasson Creek included grazing management, fish screening (2007), channel restoration, and water leasing. Restoration produced measurable outcomes for water quality and fish response.

The minimum instream flow lease maintains at least 0.75 cfs in Wasson Creek and makes its way to where Nevada Creek confluences with the Blackfoot River or 11 river miles because there are no other irrigation diversions. Once flows reach 0.75 cfs in Wasson Creek, the water user shuts off irrigation diversions to maintain flow in Wasson Creek. This typically occurs in mid-July but can happen as soon as late June in drought years. The minimum instream flow lease has been in place since 2005 and was renewed in 2026 for an additional 20 years. In conjunction with the minimum flow lease, an agreement to not divert during spring high flows has been in place to provide channel maintenance flows to Wasson Creek.

Channel maintenance flows provide important benefits to stream ecosystems by maintaining geomorphic processes instream. These include conveying water and sediment through the stream; maintaining channel and floodplain connection (including storing flood flows); maintaining the ability of the stream to dissipate energy on the floodplain and channel capacity; and maintaining pools, riffles, meanders, and other physical habitat for aquatic ecosystems (Schmidt and Potyondy, 2004). Existing irrigation water rights and irrigation conveyance systems allow the Wasson Creek water user to capture most or all of the high-water flow produced in Wasson Creek during the spring, essentially flattening the hydrograph. As a result, Wasson Creek provided minimal habitat pre-project with limited spawning gravel beds and minimal channel complexity. Fish surveys showed no WCT present in the dewatered reach of Wasson Creek.

After channel restoration and implementation of grazing management practices and flow leasing the landowner noted a surprisingly quick recovery following a fire in the watershed. They attribute that recovery largely to the channel maintenance flows which appeared to effectively sort and transport sediments in the channel desirably and promote riparian recovery after cattle exclusion. Subsequent fish and habitat monitoring support this anecdotal evidence and WCT abundance in 2024 was observed above the long-term average with notable increases in redd observations in the restored reach.

This proposal requests funding to support a 10-year agreement to maintain channel maintenance flows in Wasson Creek to match funding secured from the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program which is funding the minimum instream flow lease portion. The agreement commits the landowner to maintain high water flows in Wasson Creek for 3/5 years (based on 1.5 return interval for bankfull flows) for a two-week period when creek flow is at and exceeding measured bankfull. The flexibility to allow high water past the diversions some 3 out of 5 years allows us to implement high flows on years where water conditions are particularly favorable to achieving channel maintenance processes.

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

Primary habitat issues in Wasson Creek are sedimentation and riparian habitat loss from erosion and grazing, poor spawning habitat, and dewatering. The minimum instream flow agreement and channel maintenance flows, in conjunction with previous restoration activates, maintain a minimum baseflow in Wasson Creek which has improved water temperatures, fish passage, and habitat. Channel maintenance flows maintain geomorphic processes for sediment sorting to maintain pools, riffles and associated spawning and rearing habitat. High flows also improve fish passage and promote floodplain connectivity by allowing water to flow over bankfull conditions.

E. Length of stream or size of lake that will be treated (project extent): The project improves instream flow for approximately 11 miles of Wasson Creek, Nevada Spring Creek and Nevada Creek.

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

F. Project Budget Summary:

Grant Request (Dollars):	**$**	**30,000**
Matching Dollars:	**$**	**130,000 (Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program)**
Matching In-Kind Services:*	**$**	

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

Other Contributions (not used as match)	**$**	
Total Project Cost:	**$**	**160,000**

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

H. Attach project location map(s) that include:

- [x] Extent of the project, including context (relation to major landmark or town)
- [x] 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)
- [X] If water leasing or water salvage is involved, attach a supplemental questionnaire (*https://myfwp.mt.gov/getRepositoryFile?objectID=36110*)

J. Attach support letters or statements of (e.g., landowner consent, community or public support). For FWP statement, attach provided template. List any other project partners:

Blackfoot Challenge, Big Blackfoot Chapter Trout Unlimited, FWP

III. 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.*

This is a 10-year water agreement for channel maintenance flows.

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.*

As part of initial restoration efforts, grazing management was implemented in lower Wasson Creek, and riparian conditions have improved. The landowner has recently acquired the remaining private parcel upstream, and BBCTU and the landowner are working on restoration plans, including an updated grazing management plan for a large portion of Wasson Creek, including the beneficial reach associated with the water lease.

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?

TU maintains a stream flow monitoring site on Wasson Creek to ensure instream and channel maintenance flows are met. Wasson Creek is monitored by FWP in their normal monitoring schedule and there is some pre-project data available that has been used to assess benefits and implement adaptive management of the overall restoration project.

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

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

Westslope cutthroat trout

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

This project is intended to enhance wild fish habitat by allowing the natural processes that form and maintain instream habitat to occur at frequent intervals. Minimum instream flow arrangements are critical for late season habitat conditions but allowing high flows to shape pools and riffles and access floodplains is also just as important for the long-term health of tributaries supporting wild and native trout populations.

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

The collaborative restoration and instream flow projects implemented throughout Wasson Creek have resulted in increased recruitment of migratory populations of westslope cutthroat trout and populations are increasing in the downstream Blackfoot River reach. This section is an important reach for anglers.

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

Since implementation of the restoration and flow project on Wasson Creek, abundance of WCT has increased in Wasson Creek and Nevada Spring Creek. These fish spawn and rear in Wasson Creek and make their way into the Blackfoot River providing recruitment and fishing opportunities in the Blackfoot River. Public fishing is not allowed onsite but benefits from the project are realized downstream as this system provides nursery and spawning habitat to migrating fish that make their way to the Blackfoot River.

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

The continuation of this water lease will maintain observed water quality and fishery benefits.

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

No. There are no upstream or downstream irrigation diversions.

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

No. The property is enrolled in the Block Management Program.

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: Alli Pardis Date: 5/15/2026

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 bailey.duxbury@mt.gov

BUDGET TEMPLATE SHEET FOR FUTURE FISHERIES PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

Both tables MUST be completed appropriately or the application will be invalid. Please see the example budget sheet for clarification.

PROJECT COSTS					GRANT REQUEST AND FUNDING			
Work Items (Itemize by Category)	**Number of Units**	**Unit Description***	**Cost/Unit**	**Total Cost**	**FUTURE FISHERIES REQUEST**	**Matching Contributions (Cash or In-Kind)*** **	**Other Contributions (Funds not used as match)**	**Total Funding**
**Units = feet, hours, cubic yards, etc. Do not use lump sum unless necessary.*								
Personnel								
Survey				$ -				$ -
Design				$ -				$ -
Engineering				$ -				$ -
Permitting				$ -				$ -
Oversight				$ -				$ -
Maintenance**				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Travel								
Mileage				$ -				$ -
Per diem				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ -		$ -	$ -	$ -
Construction Materials								
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Equipment, Labor, and Mobilization								
Lease Payment	1	High/Low flow wa	$160,000.00	$ 160,000.00	30,000.00	130,000.00		$ 160,000.00
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
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			Sub-Total	$ 160,000.00	$ 30,000.00	$ 130,000.00	$ -	$ 160,000.00
			OVERALL TOTALS	$ 160,000.00	$ 30,000.00	$ 130,000.00	$ -	$ 160,000.00

(Revised 5/18/2026)

BUDGET TEMPLATE SHEET FOR FUTURE FISHERIES PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

**For projects that include a maintenance request, it cannot exceed 10% of the total project cost.

***Match can include in-kind materials or labor. Justification for in-kind labor (e.g. hourly rates used) can be noted below. Do not use government salaries as match.

Additional budget detail:

APPLICATION MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

Total should equal match listed above; do not include requested funds

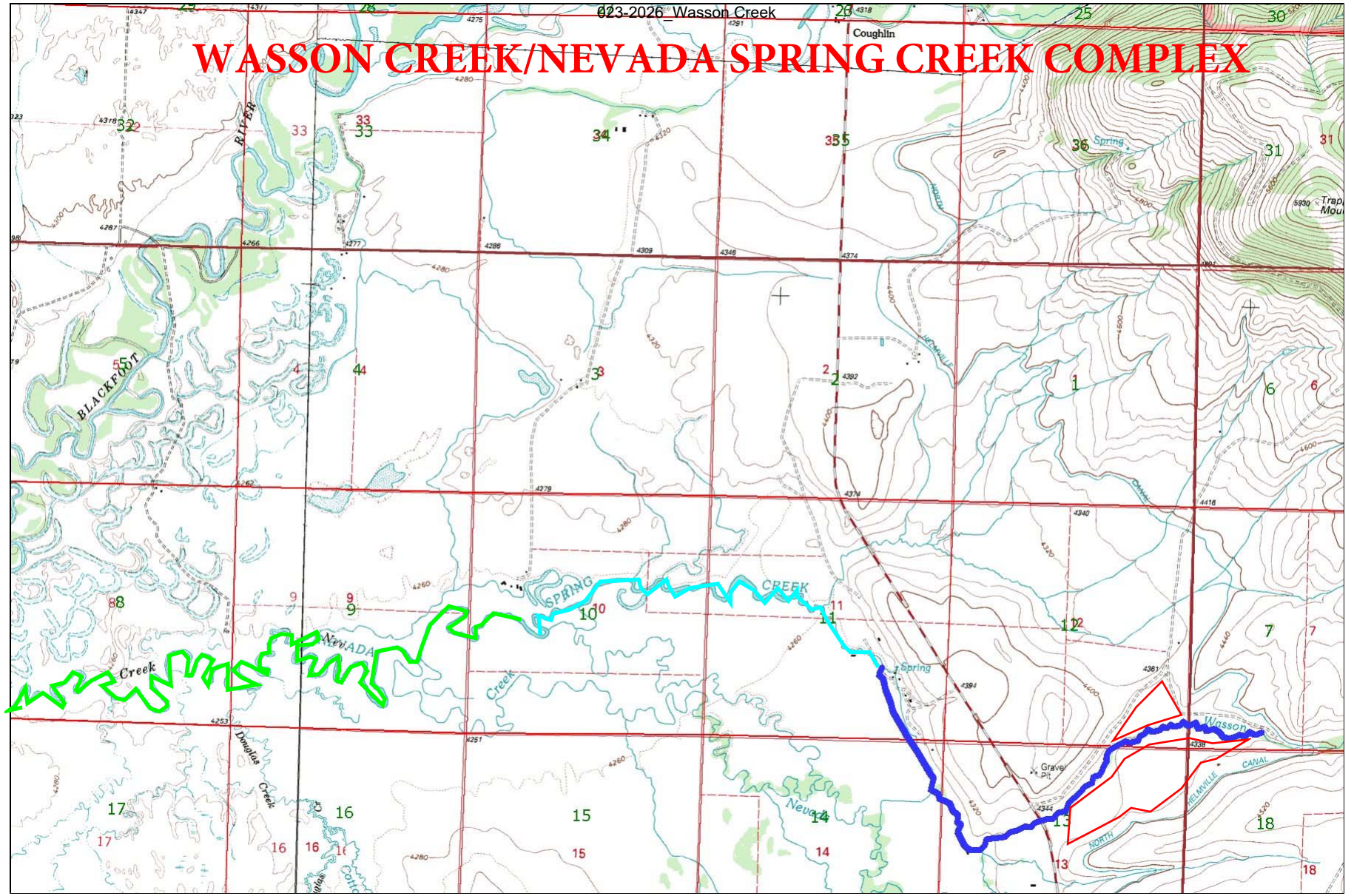
CONTRIBUTOR	IN-KIND	CASH	TOTAL	Secured? (Y/N)
Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program	$ -	$ 130,000.00	$ 130,000.00	Y
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
TOTALS	$ -	$ 130,000.00	$ 130,000.00	

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Total should equal other contributions listed above; these are funds not specically matched to the Future Fisheries application

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

WASSON CREEK/NEVADA SPRING CREEK COMPLEX



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Nevada Creek

Wasson Creek

Nevada Spring Creek

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Future Fisheries Improvement Program

Appendix: FWP Statement

Project Title: **Wasson Creek Channel Maintenance Flow Agreement**

Please describe the potential impact of the project, including the priorities of the Fisheries Division and the importance to Montana's anglers.

Wasson Creek is an important spawning and rearing stream for migratory westslope cutthroat trout. This drainage has been the focus of considerable investment over the last two decades, and long-term monitoring has demonstrated that past efforts produced expected fishery benefits. Few cutthroat trout were present in lower Wasson Creek prior to restoration efforts in 2004. Following project actions, radio telemetry studies documented spawning occurring in the section influenced by the instream flow agreements. Recent surveys in 2024 found densities of cutthroat trout within the targeted reach were above the long-term average, highlighting the sustained benefits of the restoration efforts.

Channel maintenance flows are particularly important in this stream where primary habitat issues are the result of grazing, erosion, and chronic dewatering. Maintenance flows not only create and maintain channel morphology and spawning habitat, but also facilitate upstream migrations during the cutthroat trout spawning season. This project will complement the benefits of the expected split-season lease renewal. This proposal is an important component of the broader restoration strategy for Wasson Creek. Maintaining the past benefits of restoration actions and developing additional restoration opportunities within this important drainage is a high priority for westslope cutthroat trout management in the Blackfoot River watershed. This work contributes to Blackfoot River drainage fishery goals and objectives of the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan.

This project provides public benefits by improving habitat conditions for migratory westslope cutthroat trout in an important spawning and rearing tributary. Research has demonstrated that cutthroat trout from the Blackfoot River and Nevada Creek migrate into Wasson Creek to reproduce. Therefore, improved spawning and rearing habitat that leads to increased production should result in more cutthroat trout that migrate to areas where they are available to, and sought by, anglers.

Name of FWP Biologist Patrick Uthe Date: 5/6/2026

Please attach to the FFIP application and materials and submit according to listed deadlines.

5/15/2026

Re: Future Fisheries Improvement Program Grant: Wasson Creek Instream Flow Lease

Dear Future Fisheries Citizen Review Panel:

The Mannix Brothers Ranch has been engaged and active partners in Wasson Creek and Blackfoot Watershed restoration for over two decades. We have seen stream health on Wasson Creek improve through implementation of the flow lease and restoration activities. We are supportive of continuing this work and renewing the high and minimum flow water agreement through this funding proposal request.

Sincerely,

Bryan Mannix

Bryan Mannix

406-396-5833

Mannix Brothers, LLC

83 Mannix Ranch Drive

Helmville, MT 59843