MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

FISHERIES DIVISION
JOB PROGRESS REPORT

STATE: MONTANA PROJECT TITLE: STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATION

PROJECT NO: F-46-R-3 STUDY TITLE: SURVEY AND INVENTORY OF COLDWATER STREAMS

JOB NO: I-B, SEGMENT 1 JOB TITLE: WEST CENTRAL MONTANA COLDWATER STREAM INVESTIGATIONS

PROJECT PERIOD: JULY 1, 1989 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1990

OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

JOB OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure within legal and hydrologic constraints that flows in trout stream do not fall below 1975-1985 averages.

Progress was made on this objective. Clark Fork River Instream flow pre-filed testimony was prepared.

2. Maintain existing trout populations at or above the current densities in 5 to 10 test streams.

Trout populations were determined in several smaller tributary streams in the Bitterroot and Blackfoot River drainages. Population densities will be provide the basis for future comparisons and completion of this objective.

3. Maintain 100% of the region's stream banks and channels in their present or better condition.

Stream bank and channel alteration permits submitted for Hydraulic Notices under the Stream Protection Act and 310 permits under the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act were responded to during the year. Seven conservation districts' 310 permits were reviewed during the year and recommendations were made to protect fish habitat. Violations of these permit processes were reviewed and mitigation efforts designed and implemented. Statewide forest practices were reviewed on a random sample of logged areas with a statewide BMP audit team.

4. Maintain water quality at current or improved conditions as reported in the 1986 Montana 305(b) Water Quality Report to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Development projects detrimental to maintenance of water quality in Rock Creek, the Clark Fork, the Bitterroot, the Blackfoot River and all their tributaries were reviewed and permit conditions were recommended where necessary to protect water quality for trout. Violations of water quality standards that were

observed were documented and reported to the Water Quality Bureau.

5. Maintain fish populations and habitat in streams affected by resource development at levels at least as good as current status.

Plum Creek, Champion, and USFS timber sales were reviewed for various fish habitat preservation concerns. We participated in interagency meetings for preservation of fish habitat on Rock Creek, Bitterroot, Blackfoot, and the Clark Fork River.

6. Implement the Bitterroot River/Painted Rocks Water Management Plan and provide minimum instream flows at Bell Crossing consistent with the plan and water availability.

Flows were maintained above 100 cfs at Bell crossing throughout the low flow period with the help of reservoir releases from Painted Rocks reservoir.

7. Maintain genetically pure WsCt populations with population structures at least as diverse as presently exists.

Electrophoretic testing of genetic makeup of two cutthroat populations was completed in the Blackfoot River. Several suspected pure populations occur in the drainage that were not tested because of low standing crops. A westslope cutthroat recovery plan was developed for the Blackfoot River drainage. No kill fishing seasons were established in the Blackfoot and Bitterroot River drainages to protect westslope cutthroat stocks.

8. Develop a voluntary catch and release program for westslope cutthroat trout in rivers and streams to maintain genetically pure populations at least at current levels wherever they exist.

Produced a large multimedia Western Montana Fair display with I&E personnel on native fish species and management problems and options. Voluntary catch and release request published in the Montana Fishing Regulations.

9. Maintain bull trout populations at least at current levels.

Implemented no kill fishing in the Blackfoot River drainage on bull trout. In nineteen larger tributaries to the Blackfoot River we assessed relative bull trout population size and reproduction.

10. Increase the number of trout over 14 inches long in Rock Creek population to at least 200 per mile.

No management actions taken to directly change population structure.

11. Determine if a problem exists between floating and walking anglers on Rock Creek.

A thorough coverage of this objective was completed in last years report. A fish management plan for Rock Creek was completed in cooperation with the USFS and approved by the Fish and Game Commission. Special regulations were imposed on float anglers to reduce bank and float angler conflicts.

12. Maintain the combined number of wild rainbow and brown trout 14 inches and larger in the Darby section of the Bitterroot River at 100 per mile and in the Tucker section at 160 per mile. Maintain rainbow standing crop of 300, of all sizes, in the Poker Joe section downstream from Stevensville.

Bitterroot River trout populations were sampled and report is in progress.

13. Determine the extent of fry loss to irrigation ditches in key spawning tributaries in the Bitterroot. Determine time period during which ditches pose the greatest threat to migrating fry.

Objective was completed and a report is in progress.

14. Increase the number of rainbows 12 inches and larger in the Johnsrud section of the Blackfoot River to at least 300 per mile.

Implemented a 3 trout limit with a 12 inch maximum size limit on brown and rainbow trout in the Blackfoot River drainage.

15. Maintain trout populations at least at current levels in the Blackfoot River upstream form Johnsrud Park.

Implemented special creel limits and habitat improvement programs throughout the Blackfoot River drainage. Designed and solicited funding of habitat improvement projects throughout the Blackfoot River drainage. Contacted landowners for alteration in land management practices on key spawning tributaries.

16. To develop, in cooperation with the USFS, a five-year management plan for Rock Creek.

Objective completed.