

**FISHERIES DIVISION  
JOB PROGRESS REPORT**

**STATE:** MONTANA

PROJECT TITLE: STATEWIDE FISHERIES  
INVESTIGATION

PROJECT NO: F-46-R-5

**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, 1991 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1992

### 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. A water lease on Blanchard Creek tributary to the Clearwater River is in progress. A stream restoration project on Rock Creek, tributary to the North Fork of the Blackfoot River, resulted in rewatering 2,100 ft. of channel through cooperation with landowner and irrigation system improvements. Drought conditions continue to reduce stream flows well below 1975-1985 averages throughout the region.

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. Trout population estimates were completed in sections of the Bitterroot and Blackfoot River. Population densities will 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.

Damaged stream sections have been identified and prioritized in the Blackfoot River and tributary streams. Restoration plans are being developed and funding is being developed to impliment the restoration plans.

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. Several hundred conservation districts' 310 permits and Notices of Construction, Stream Protection Act 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.

Clean up of past mining wastes in the Clark Fork and Blackfoot River drainages is being tracked and remedial efforts for fishery impacts recommended. 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.

No kill fishing seasons were established in the Blackfoot and Bitterroot River drainages to protect westslope cutthroat stocks in 1990. A signing and information/education program was implemented to help anglers identify native fish species and regulations pertaining to them.

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.

Continued production of educational materials and programs to develop sensitivity to westslope cutthroat trout. 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. Implemented plans to remove known fish spawning barriers on bull trout spawning streams. Continued public education efforts on the importance of native fish stocks. Started putting together a GIS application on the Blackfoot River to aid in

analysis of basin-wide problems for bull trout.

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. Electrofished the Fish and Game Section in the spring of 1992 and found declines in segments of the rainbow trout population. We suspect drought related impacts.

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

Objective completed.

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 Management Plan objectives implimented with fish regulation changes throughout the main river to reduce fisherman mortality on larger trout.

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.

A Job Progress report was completed on this objective: F-46-R-3 Job I -J.

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. Trout population monitoring in two sampled sections indicate some recovery specifically with harvestable sized fish. In the Johnsrud Park area populations of rainbow trout larger than 12 inches total length have reached densities of 158/mile.

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. Developed 3 stream restoration plans on key spring creeks.

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

Objective completed.

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DATE: August 24, 1992