MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FISHERIES DIVISION

JOB PROGRESS REPORT

State:	MONTANA	**Project Title:**	STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS
Project No:	F-46-R-5	**Study Title:**	SURVEY AND INVENTORY OF COLDWATER AND WARMWATER ECOSYSTEMS
Job. No:	V-b	**Job Title:**	SOUTH CENTRAL MONTANA COLDWATER FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

Project Period: July 1, 1991 - June 30, 1992

OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

1) To ensure, within hydrologic constraints, that flows in streams supporting fisheries do not fall below 1975-85 averages.

   Testimony was given during the Missouri River Basin water hearings concerning instream flow needs within the Musselshell drainage.

2) To maintain the region's stream banks and channels in their present or improved condition.

   Projects affecting stream habitat were dealt with through the Stream Protection Act of 1963 and the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975.

3) To maintain water quality at or above current levels as measured at U.S. Geological Survey water quality monitoring stations.

   Maintaining water quality was dealt with through Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks review and comment on water discharge permit applications and renewals.

4. To maintain fish populations and habitat in streams affected by resource development activity at levels at least as good as present status.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks reviews timber sale plans, grazing allotment management plans, environmental assessments and environmental impact statements to ensure adequate protection, mitigation and compensation for fisheries resources.

5) To maintain a trout fishery of at least 4,000 angler-days per year with a catch rate of 0.5 fish per hour on the upper Musselshell River. (State funded)

Trout populations in the Selkirk section of the Musselshell River have been monitored each year since 1985, with the exception of 1991, to assess the affects of severe drought conditions.

6) To acquire a fishing access site on the Musselshell River between Selkirk Fishing Access Site (FAS) and Harlowton. (State funded)

No progress was achieved during this report period.

7) To maintain 27,000 angler-days per year trout fishing in Cooney Reservoir while the walleye population develops.

Trout populations in Cooney Reservoir were monitored by gill-net, trap-net and electrofishing surveys. Angling success and pressure was assessed through creel checks. A graduate study on walleye/trout interactions in the reservoir was contracted through the Cooperative Fisheries Unit at Montana State University.

8) To establish naturally reproducing populations of McBride cutthroat trout in East and West Rosebud and Emerald lakes.

Because of poor growth and survival of McBride cutthroat trout in these three lakes, DeSmet strain rainbows were introduced in 1990. Monitoring of the success of these plants has been conducted with gill-nets and spawning area surveys.

9) To maintain acceptable (0.25 fish/hr.) fisheries in lakes and reservoirs where natural reproduction is inadequate. (State funded)

Maintaining acceptable fisheries in lakes and reservoirs with inadequate reproduction was accomplished by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks through the development of annual and five-year regional planting programs.

10) To increase use of Yellowtail Afterbay to 10,000 or more angler-days/year and Lodge Grass Storage Reservoir to at least 5,000 angler-days/year. (State funded)

At the request of the Crow Tribe, management of Lodge Grass Storage Reservoir has been turned over to the USF&WS. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has continued its information and education effort to encourage more use of Yellowtail Afterbay and Deadman's Basin. Fish populations were monitored in these waters through netting surveys.

11) To maintain approximately 40,000 angler-days per year in Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lakes. (State funded)

Fish populations were monitored in 32 Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lakes. Management was coordinated with the USFS.

12) To make at least 1,000 angler contacts per year on major coldwater lakes and reservoirs. (State funded)

Angler contacts were made through implementation of warden creel census plus spot creel census on Cooney and Deadman's Basin Reservoirs. A special graduate student project on Cooney Reservoir has resulted in collection of additional creel census information.

SUMMARY

Objective 6 was not accomplished because no suitable parcels of land became available during the report period. Progress on all other objectives was achieved.