

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

FISHERIES DIVISION
JOB PROGRESS REPORT

STATE: MONTANA

PROJECT NUMBER: F-46-R-5

JOB NUMBER: VI-D

PROJECT TITLE: STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

STATE TITLE: STATEWIDE SURVEY AND INVENTORIES

JOB TITLE: STREAMBANK PERMITTING AND SURVEYS

PERIOD COVERED: JULY 1, 1991 TO JUNE 30, 1992

ABSTRACT

The six contractors hired in 1990 all renewed contracts for stream project inspections for this report period. They inspected 324 projects and attend 18 conservation district meetings. The contractors spent about 691 hours on inspections and meetings and traveled over 8,500 miles. The average cost per contracted project inspection was \$50.10 compared to \$64.66 in FY 1991. The "310" inspections reviewed by contractors represents about 29% of the projects received by conservation districts statewide. Funding was provided to the Bitterroot Conservation District for a hydrology survey on a troublesome reach of the Bitterroot River.

OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

1. To assist Regions 1-5 with contracts for streambank permitting activities. Six contracts were established in these Regions and in Region 8.
2. To provide assistance to conservation districts for streambank inventories and stream corridor management. Funding for program assistance was provided to one conservation district.

BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURES

County conservation districts administer the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310). The Act requires private individuals, corporations, firms, associations and companies to obtain a permit before commencing with a project to alter or modify the bed or banks of a stream. The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP) administers the Stream Protection Act (SPA) which requires all governmental entities to give notice and obtain a permit before commencing with projects that alter or modify the bed or banks of fishing streams. Fisheries personnel participate in the review and recommendation process of both Acts in order to protect fish habitat.

The field review and recommendation activity consumes considerable time of fisheries managers and biologists. The majority of the 310 and SPA projects are located in Regions 1-5 and Region 8. These regions were given assistance by employing contractors to do routine 310 and SPA inspections.

Personal services contracts were negotiated with firms and individuals qualified to represent the DFWP on stream permitting activities. Each contract was limited to \$5,000. The mechanics of the contracts named the Regional Fishery Manager as a liaison with the contractor. The fishery manager receives notification of proposed projects from conservation districts and assigns which projects shall be handled by the contractor. Time and place of field reviews are scheduled by the conservation district. After reviewing the proposed projects, the contractor makes written recommendations to the fishery manager or an assigned fisheries biologist. Fisheries personnel may accept or modify the recommendations before submitting them to the conservation district. Contractors also attend conservation district meetings as requested by either the district or the fishery manager. Contractor involvement with SPA projects are similar except the fishery manager assigns field reviews directly to the contractor.

Conservation districts lack funding to do inventories, surveys or management planning relating to stream corridors. Studies and conservation programs sponsored by districts are usually funded by grants. Districts were solicited to determine programs they wished to develop involving stream corridor surveys, inventories, planning projects or educational materials. Proposed programs were submitted to DFWP for priority review and recommended funding. Regional fishery personnel were asked to review and comment on projects prior to funding. Contracts were prepared for those projects selected to assist with habitat preservation and enhancement of aquatic resources.

FINDINGS

During this report period, the six contractors inspected 324 projects and attended 18 conservation district meetings. The contractors claimed 8,490 miles and expended 691 hours inspecting projects, traveling and attending conservation district meetings. The total cost was \$16,232 or an average of \$50.10 per project. Time and costs submitted by contractors is similar to what DFWP personnel would have committed toward administration of the program.

Contractor costs per project were about 22% less than costs in FY 91. This could be attributed to better coordination by conservation districts and fishery managers to set up inspections. Also, contractors became more familiar and efficient with the procedures of the program. Statewide, contractors inspected 29% of the applications declared projects by Conservation Districts.

Contractors represented the DFWP on 39% of all projects team inspected.

The following table summarizes stream permitting activities by individual contractors and costs associated with those activities.

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Region Served</u>	<u>Projects</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Miles Traveled</u>	<u>Cost Per Project</u>
H. Johnson	1	113	241*	3,329	\$41.52**
Land & Water	2	48	127	1,740	75.56
Inter-Fluve	3	50	71	1,183	49.40
E. Love	3	31	70	936	60.98
Eco. Resources	3,4,8	11	31	569	86.65
P. Haverkamp	5	<u>71</u>	<u>151*</u>	<u>733</u>	<u>36.63</u>
		324	691	8,490	\$50.10

* Estimated - contractor worked on a per project basis.

** Variations per project cost by individual contractors is mostly caused by trip distance and the number of projects inspected per trip.

Funding was provided to the Bitterroot Conservation District to sponsor a river rehabilitation study on a portion of the Bitterroot River north of Hamilton, Montana. Past land management activities have caused an unstable condition in a river reach that now threatens a county park, a reach of highway and valuable riparian areas. Several private landowners, Ravalli County Commissioners, the Department of Highways and the DFWP are interested in resolving the unstable river condition. The study will be conducted later this year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this project be continued. Contracting stream permitting work to qualified independent contractors is anticipated to free up over 700 hours of fishery managers and biologists time. This time can be spent on other priority programs. Those managers and biologists that have utilized the contractors have expressed satisfaction with the program. The contractors do not inspect all 310 projects nor attend all the conservation district meetings. Several of the 310 projects and the conservation districts meetings are handled by DFWP personnel, so association is maintained with the agricultural community. Stream corridor projects dealing with educational materials, surveys, planning and inventories intended to assist landowners should continue. Programs aimed at preservation and enhancement of stream habitat will help DFWP fulfill its objectives of protecting habitat to help maintain angler days for the recreating public.

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