

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
FISHERIES DIVISION

JOB PROGRESS REPORT

State: MONTANA Project Title: STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

Project No: F-46-R-7 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, 1993 - June 30, 1994

JOB OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks reviews and comments upon all new water use permit applications.

- 2) To maintain the Region's streambanks 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 Society water quality monitoring stations.

Maintaining water quality was dealt with through Montana Fish, Wildlife & 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 Fish, Wildlife & 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 4,200 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 for three consecutive years to assess the affects of drought and irrigation withdrawals. Use of alternative irrigation structures was encouraged.

- 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.

Monitoring of the trout and walleye populations in Cooney Reservoir was conducted by gill-net, trap-net and electrofishing surveys. Improvements to recreation facilities and roads, along with the annual stocking of 150,000 rainbow trout, has helped support heavy angler use.

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

Because of limited success with the McBride cutthroat planted into these three lakes, we switched to DeSmet rainbows in 1990. Monitoring of the DeSmet 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 Fish, Wildlife & Parks through the development of an annual regional planting programs. The status of these fisheries was monitored through periodic netting surveys.

- 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)

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has increased 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. Management of Lodge Grass Reservoir was taken over by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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

Fish populations were monitored in 45 Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lakes and management was coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service.

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

Statewide mail surveys have proven more reliable than incidental warden contacts and spot creel checks. Periodic intensive creel surveys are planned.

SUMMARY

Objective 6 was not accomplished because no suitable parcels of land became available during the report period. Objective 12 was not fully accomplished because of lack of money and manpower to implement an intensive creel census on coldwater lakes. Progress on all other objectives was achieved.

