

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FISHERIES DIVISION

JOB PROGRESS REPORT

State: MONTANA Project Title: STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS
Project No: F-46-R-6 Study Title: SURVEY AND INVENTORY OF COLDWATER STREAMS
Job. No: I-i Job Title: MID-YELLOWSTONE DRAINAGE INVESTIGATIONS
Project Period: July 1, 1992 - June 30, 1993

OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

- 1) 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.

- 2) To ensure, within hydrologic constraints, that flows in streams supporting fisheries do not fall below minimums identified during the Yellowstone River instream reservation process.

Minimum instream flows determined in the Yellowstone River instream process were protected through Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks review of new water use permit applications.

- 3) To maintain water quality at or above 1975-85 average 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.

Timber sale plans, grazing allotment management plans, environmental assessments and environmental impact statements are reviewed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to maintain fish populations and protect stream habitat.

- 5) To reduce impacts on river stability and fish habitat caused by yearly maintenance at headgate structures.

Irrigation projects affecting river stability and fish habitat were dealt with through the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975 and HB661 of 1987.

- 6) To maintain a minimum of 123,000 angler-days per year within the mid-Yellowstone drainage. (State funded)

Fisheries information necessary for managing the mid-Yellowstone River and Stillwater River was collected at several electrofishing sites within each drainage. Some of this data will be used to update the Stillwater River Management Plan in 1994.

- 7) To redistribute fishing pressure and minimize overcrowding through the purchase of additional access sites in key areas. (These areas include Rock Creek between Roberts and Joliet; Yellowstone River at Big Timber, between Columbus and Reedpoint and between Columbus and Laurel; and on the East and West Rosebud drainages.)

Additional improvements were completed on the newly acquired Otter Creek Fishing Access Site near Big Timber. A new fishing access site on Rock Creek near Joliet was purchased and other land parcels were investigated but no other purchases were completed.

- 8) To maintain riparian and floodplain areas in their natural condition.

Maintaining riparian and floodplain areas in their natural condition was encouraged through Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks review and comments pertaining to subdivision proposals, Stream Protection Act projects, and Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act projects.

- 9) To complete cutthroat trout inventory in one drainage of the mid-Yellowstone reach each year beginning in 1989. (State funded)

Additional cutthroat inventory work was completed in Bad Canyon Creek in preparation for a proposed project to enhance a remnant cutthroat population in the stream's headwaters. Additional cutthroat inventory work was done on Iron Creek and the Upper East Boulder.

- 10) To complete inventory of cutthroat trout in the three forks of the Boulder drainage: East Fork 1990, West Fork 1991 and Main Boulder 1992 (state funded).

Cutthroat inventory work in the three forks of the Boulder Drainage was completed with the collection of additional cutthroat from the Upper East Boulder in Placer Basin.

- 11) To increase public awareness of the diversity of opportunities and hazards of water-based recreation on mid-Yellowstone. (State funded)

Assistance was given to a private company developing a floater's guide to the mid-Yellowstone River. A representative of the company was given a tour of the river and drafts of the guide were reviewed and commented on.

- 12) To improve level of understanding among anglers regarding management policies and options, and encourage their participation in the decision-making process.

A number of sports club meetings were attended to answer anglers' questions and explain management policies and options. Fisheries management presentations were made to several groups.

- 13) To protect and maintain rainbow spawning areas in the upper Stillwater River in their present condition.

Several counts were made of rainbow trout using spawning areas in the upper Stillwater River. The Stillwater Mining Company sediment monitoring program is reviewed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

- 14) To maintain cutthroat population numbers in Meatrack Creek at or above 1984 levels.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks assists USFS water quality and turbidity monitoring of grazing impacts in Meatrack Creek.

SUMMARY

Some progress on all objectives was achieved.