

MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT
FISHERIES DIVISION

JOB COMPLETION REPORT

State Montana
Project No. F-31-R-5 Title Statewide Fish Habitat Study
Job No. III Title Water Resource Planning
Period Covered July 1, 1968 through June 30, 1969

ABSTRACT

Participation of Montana's fishery division in water resource development is essential to insure suitable environments for fish in project construction. This participation improved considerably with constructing agencies providing several research contracts to the Montana Fish and Game Department to obtain essential ecological data. Unfortunately planning activities supported by sound data are still not a reality. In an effort to solve this problem final preparations for Montana's first ecological planning unit were completed with field work scheduled to begin July 1, 1969.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this job are to evaluate the benefits or losses of fisheries habitat related to water development projects and to participate with agencies preparing plans and projects that will ultimately affect Montana's fishery resource. It has been a further object of this job to develop a planning procedure that will lead to the development of a state fisheries plan.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Planning

Planning activities during the report period primarily involved continued participation on the Columbia-North Pacific Comprehensive Framework Plan, and on Montana's Planning Council. The Smith River Planning project was submitted as a Federal Aid in Fisheries Restoration Project and preparations for commencing were made.

Work on the Columbia-North Pacific Comprehensive Framework Plan consisted of continued editing of the Present Status Section, preparing the Future Demands section and beginning on the Means to Satisfy Needs section. In addition to

preparing parts of the report, considerable time was spent challenging many of the basic assumptions upon which the planning process was predicated. Unfortunately dictated guidelines left little opportunity for successful challenge or imagination.

Participation on the Governor's Planning Council consisted of continued attendance at meetings designed to keep other state agencies informed about planning being carried out within individual agencies.

The Smith River Planning project was conceived a year earlier and was designed to pursue fish and wildlife planning from the field level up rather than from the administrative level down. It assumes nothing and begins with intensive field inventories. Budgetary problems prevented its initiation a year earlier. In the interim, the outline was refined, hopefully improved, and re-submitted for financing. This project's inventory work began July 1, 1969.

Water Resource Development Projects

The involvement of Montana's Fish and Game Department in water resource development projects continued through the report period. The department was involved in work on existing projects, projects under construction, and planning for new water developments.

Work on existing projects continued to be concentrated on Fort Peck Reservoir and Clark Canyon Reservoir. The problem on Fort Peck is to achieve suitable water level fluctuations to accomodate spawning northern pike. To this end, numerous meetings were attended with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although the Corps was sympathetic to our problem, little real progress can be shown. Emphasis is gradually being shifted to the construction of spawning and brood marshes where environmental conditions can be controlled. Considerable progress was made toward understanding some of the basic ecological problems associated with Clark Canyon Reservoir. During the report period a \$138,000 five-year ecological study was funded by the Bureau of Reclamation and begun.

Libby Reservoir was the only project actively under construction during the year and it continued to present numerous problems. Some of the study agreements reached previously were activated during the year and at the present time both fish and game research projects have been activated. These projects are being financed by the Corps of Engineers and are being carried out by Fish and Game Department biologists. Additional projects have been designed and submitted for funding.

Comments and suggestions were offered on a wide variety of water development proposals during the report period. These were offered in response to requests made by a variety of federal, state and private organizations requesting assistance. In most instances, this advice consisted of making existing data available or offering opinions not necessarily supported by facts.

Interagency Participation

Numerous groups continue to assemble to discuss water resource development and management. Since results of these meetings could ultimately affect Montana's fishery resource, participation by our agency is important. In order to explain the needs of the fishery resource, numerous meetings were attended and many programs outlining fish habitat requirements presented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the increasing difficulty of obtaining federal construction dollars, the field of water resource development is rapidly becoming a planning activity. A most notable exception to this trend is in the area of small watershed projects. Unfortunately most of the planning, particularly the comprehensive basin planning efforts, is being conducted with too little basic data and some false assumptions. Therefore, it is recommended that participation in these planning programs be either curtailed to review activities only or abandoned altogether. The time thus saved should be dedicated to fish and wildlife plan formulation that begins with adequate basic data. If this data is not available, appropriate field inventories must be initiated to proceed with plan formulation. It is further recommended that this planning effort be directed toward meeting the habitat needs of fish and wildlife.

Prepared by James A. Posewitz

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