

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
FISHERIES DIVISION**

**JOB PROGRESS REPORT**

State:	<u>MONTANA</u>	Element 1:	<u>FISHERIES MANAGEMENT</u>
Project No:	<u>F-78-R-1</u>	Job No:	<u>3512</u>
Project Title:	<u>STATEWIDE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u>	Job Title:	<u>MID-YELLOWSTONE DRAINAGE INVESTIGATIONS</u>

Project Period: July 1, 1994 - June 30, 1995

**OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT**

**Activity 1 - Survey and Inventory**

**Objective:** To survey and monitor the characteristics and trends of fish populations, angler harvest and preferences, and to assess habitat conditions in selected waters.

During spring we obtained a fish population estimate from the Yellowstone River near Big Timber and took samples for whirling disease. During the fall, we surveyed the Yellowstone downstream from Huntley Diversion and the Clarks Fork near Bridger. We ran mark-recapture estimates on two sections of East Rosebud Creek and one section of Rock Creek near Joliet during spring, as well as the McKay section of West Rosebud Creek during fall.

As part of an ongoing inventory of purestrain Yellowstone cutthroat trout, we surveyed 10 streams in the Stillwater River Drainage, eight in the Rock Creek Drainage, four in the Soda Butte Creek Drainage during summer. We also surveyed Piney Creek cutthroat in the Pryor Mountains during January. Cooperative surveys included Otter Creek near Big Timber (NRCS), Fly Creek near Pompeys Pillar (BLM), and Soda Butte Creek (brook trout removal with USFWS and USFS).

The Columbus crew flew the Boulder and Stillwater Rivers counting brown trout redds during fall. Spring surveys of rainbow trout redds were unsuccessful due to turbid water.

We helped the USFW set up a voluntary creel card survey at trailheads around the proposed Crown Butte Mine site near Cooke City.

## Activity 2 - Fish Population Management

**Objective:** To implement fish stocking programs and/or fish eradication actions to maintain fish populations at levels consistent with habitat conditions and other limiting factors.

With the USFS, we moved additional purestrain Yellowstone cutthroat trout from the Placer Basin in the East Boulder Drainage to Bad Canyon Creek in the Stillwater Drainage during fall. This work was part of a cooperative reestablishment of cutthroat above a barrier.

## Activity 3 - Technical Guidance

**Objective:** To review projects by government agencies and private parties which have the potential to affect fisheries resources; provide technical advice or decisions to mitigate effects on these resources; and provide landowners and other private parties with technical advice and information to sustain and enhance fisheries resources.

We responded to many phone calls and written requests from the public regarding fishing and issues in the mid-Yellowstone Drainage. We pursued acquisition, development, and protection of FAS's along the river, and dealt with complaints and site abuses. We commented on several Corps of Engineers permit applications and water use applications, as well as USFS allotment plans, wastewater projects, and pipeline proposals.

We collectively attended approximately 22 conservation district meetings and addressed 96 310 applications, as well as about 12 violations and at least a dozen Stream Protection Act applications.

We toured and are tracking the Crown Butte Mine permitting process. We reviewed several EA's, including those associated with the ash disposal site needed for Exxon's cogeneration plant, and the expansion of Red Lodge Ski Area.

We worked with DNRC and other local agency representatives to put on a "Know Your Watershed" Workshop about the mid-Yellowstone; with BLM To survey Fly Creek; with the Yellowstone River Parks Association to consolidate river access; with Alkali Creek School to develop a nature trail; and with NRCS and landowners to create spawning areas in spring creeks near the Boulder River. We also cooperated with Urbani and Associates in rehabilitating a section of East Rosebud Creek.

#### Activity 4 - Aquatic Education

**Objective:** To enhance the public's understanding, awareness and support of the state's fishery and aquatic resources and to assist young people to develop angling skills and to appreciate the aquatic environment.

We presented the latest fisheries information and/or proposed fishing regulation changes to local sports clubs. We gave presentations to multiple classes at Newman and Alkali Creek Elementary Schools, as well as teachers and students participating in the Yellowstone River Watch.

We gave electrofishing demonstrations at Range Days held in spring on the Stillwater River for approximately 100 kids. We held similar demonstrations for a Corps of Engineers workshop on Canyon Creek (fall), and a Butcher Creek project for Columbus and Abasarokee students during spring. We participated in a workshop entitled, "Know Your Watershed, the Mid-Yellowstone" during April.

We provided information for the media and Fisherman Log Newsletter, and are planning an international Public Outreach Symposium in Bozeman (June) through the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

#### **SUMMARY**

We progressed in all objectives except spring surveys for rainbow trout redds. We will continue to pursue these counts each spring to establish trends and serve as an indicator of fish population recovery.

#### **FINAL BUDGET STATUS**

<u>Amount Budgeted</u>	<u>Amount Spent</u>	<u>Balance of Funds</u>
\$87,245.00	\$99,041.40	\$-11,796.40

Regional Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

*R. Ellis* 9/19/95