

**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-2</u>	Job No:	<u>3511</u>
Project Title:	<u>STATEWIDE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u>	Job Title:	<u>UPPER BIGHORN RIVER INVESTIGATIONS</u>
Project Period:	July 1, 1995 - June 30, 1996		

**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 summer and fall, we completed fish population estimates at two sections, representing the upper 32 miles of the Bighorn River. High spring flows precluded redd surveys scheduled with Trout Unlimited and a high school science class. We collected 40 yearling rainbow and 20 yearling brown trout during early summer for whirling disease testing. We shocked the upper three miles of the Bighorn River in the spring of 1996 to look for gas bubble trauma in trout, to collect additional whirling disease samples, and to look for walleye in the river. We continued to maintain a thermograph just downstream from Afterbay Dam, and car counters at two FAS's.

We continued to analyze data from the angler opinion and creel census survey conducted during 1992-93, and began writing the final report for this project.

**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.

No actions completed or planned.

**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 on the upper Bighorn River. We pursued acquisition, development and protection of FAS's along the river, and dealt with complaints and site abuses.

We attended the annual Bighorn Basin Interagency Coordination Meeting in Cody, Wyoming during March; corresponded with the National Park Service about future management of the Afterbay and Lind access sites; discussed Crow Reservation fisheries with the USFWS, river flows with the USBR, and fish population trends with the Bighorn Alliance.

We coordinated efforts with the Big Horn Conservation District to review several stream projects in the Bighorn Basin and provided technical assistance to the applicants to protect fisheries resources involved.

#### **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 on the Bighorn River and/or proposed fishing regulation changes to the local Trout Unlimited club, Billings Rod and Gun Club, and the Bighorn River Alliance. We assisted with Huck Finn Day, a kids fishing day on the Bighorn River, and spoke with the flyfishing club at Senior High School. We provided information for the media and the Fishing Log Newsletter, and conducted an international Public Outreach Symposium in Bozeman through the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

#### **SUMMARY**

We progressed in all objectives except Fish Population Management which was not applicable to this job.

#### **FINAL BUDGET STATUS**

<b><u>Amount Budgeted</u></b>	<b><u>Amount Spent</u></b>	<b><u>Balance of Funds</u></b>
\$46,650.00	\$42,607.70	\$4,042.30

Regional Supervisor *R. Ellis* 9/6/96