

**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>3531</u>
Project Title:	<u>STATEWIDE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u>	Job Title:	<u>SOUTH CENTRAL MONTANA COLDWATER FISHERIES 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.

In the spring, we electrofished and marked trout in the Selkirk shocking section on the upper Musselshell River as part of a mark-recapture estimate. High spring-runoff prevented us from completing a recapture run so we obtained no estimate. High spring flows also prevented the collection of trout samples for whirling disease analysis. During the fall, we collected fish on Careless Creek as part of a cooperative project with NRCS.

In summer, we surveyed 48 lakes in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, including 14 in the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone Drainage, 15 in the Rock Creek Drainage, eight in the Boulder River Drainage, eight in the Stillwater Drainage, two in the East Rosebud Drainage, and one in the Slough Creek Drainage. We also surveyed two lakes in the Crazy Mountains.

We surveyed Cooney, Deadmans Basin, and Bighorn reservoirs in spring and fall, and the Afterbay Reservoir in spring. We sampled East and West Rosebud and Emerald lakes during spring for trend analysis, and conducted a creel census on these lakes during the summer of 1995. Along with the creel, we also set up a voluntary trailhead creel card survey in the East and West Rosebud drainages. Another part of the study involved sampling water chemistry, aquatic invertebrates and aquatic vegetation in several high elevation lakes to determine differences between lakes with and without fish populations.

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.

During FY96, 36 lakes were planted with trout in Region 5. One was also stocked with kokanee salmon.

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 coldwater issues in southcentral Montana, particularly about building, stocking, and managing private ponds. We also prepared many EA's (20+) for pond permits.

We attended six conservation district meetings, addressed 25 310 applications, 8 Stream Protection Act applications, and one 310 violation. We continued to work with NRCS on a cooperative process pursuing habitat restoration on Careless Creek. As members of the Musselshell Basin Commission, we are seeking better allocation of stream flows in the Musselshell drainage.

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. A tribal student from Little Bighorn College was part of our mountain lake sampling crew during summer. Cabin owners at Deadmans Basin Reservoir helped with spring and fall gill netting on the reservoir.

We provided information for the media and Fishing Log Newsletter, and conducted an international Public Outreach Symposium in June through the Montana Chapter AFS.

SUMMARY

We progressed in all objectives.

FINAL BUDGET STATUS

Amount Budgeted

\$67,186.00

Amount Spent

\$55,355.59

Balance of Funds

\$11,830.41

Regional Supervisor

R. Ellis