

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

FISHERIES DIVISION
JOB PROGRESS REPORT

STATE: MONTANA PROJECT TITLE: STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

PROJECT NO: F-46-R-2 STUDY TITLE: SURVEY AND INVENTORY OF COLDWATER AND WARMWATER ECOSYSTEMS

JOB NO: V-b JOB TITLE: SOUTH CENTRAL MONTANA COLDWATER FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

PROJECT PERIOD: July 1, 1988 THROUGH June 30, 1989

JOB OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

1.) To ensure, within hydrologic constraints, the flows in streams supporting trout fisheries do not fall below 1975-85 averages.

Comments were submitted on 5 new water use permit applications. Instream flow needs within the Musselshell drainage were assessed and recommendations submitted in the Application for Reservations of water in the Missouri River Basin above Fort Peck Dam, Volume 3.

2.) To maintain the region's streambanks and channels in their present or improved condition.

Projects affecting stream habitat were dealt with through the Montana Stream Protection Act of 1963 (SPA) and the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975 (310). During FY 1988, 6 SPA's and 10 310's were processed on the Musselshell and Bighorn River drainages. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks sponsored a stream dynamics workshop in Billings and Columbus for riparian landowners, conservation districts supervisors, and agency personnel.

3.) To maintain water quality at or above current levels as measured at U.S.G.S. water quality monitoring stations.

Eight water discharge permit applications were reviewed.

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

were reviewed to ensure adequate protection mitigation and compensation of fisheries resources.

5.) To maintain a trout fishery of at least 4,200 angler-days per year with a catch rate of 0.5 fish per hour on the upper Musselshell River. (State funded).

Trout populations in the Selkirk section of the Musselshell River have been monitored for 4 consecutive years. A statewide creel survey will be conducted during 1989-90 to estimate angler use and catch rates.

6.) To acquire a fishing access site on the Musselshell River between Selkirk Fishing Access Site (FAS) and Harlowton. (State funded)

No progress was achieved during this report period.

7.) Maintain 27,000 angler-days per year trout fishing in Cooney Reservoir while the walleye population develops.

Trout populations in Cooney Reservoir were monitored via gill-net, trap-net and electrofishing surveys. Angling success and pressure were assessed through spot creel checks. The statewide creel survey scheduled for 1989-90 will provide an estimate of angler use.

8.) Establish naturally reproducing populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in East and West Rosebud and Emerald lakes.

McBride cutthroat trout have been planted into these lakes each year since 1986. Gill-netting and spawning area surveys indicated the cutthroats are not yet using the inlet streams for spawning. Introduction of a rainbow trout strain is being considered.

9.) Maintain acceptable (0.25 fish/hr.) fisheries in lakes and reservoirs where natural reproduction is inadequate. (State funded)

Maintaining acceptable fisheries in lakes and reservoirs with inadequate reproduction was accomplished through the annual regional planting program.

10.) Increase use of Yellowtail Afterbay to 10,000 or more angler-days/year and Lodge Grass Storage Reservoir to at least 5,000 angler-days/year. (State funded)

Information and education efforts were increased to encourage more use of Yellowtail Afterbay and Deadman's Basin. Fish populations were monitored in these waters through netting surveys. A statewide creel survey will be conducted during 1989-90 to estimate angler use and catch rates.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has begun to assume management of Lodge Grass Reservoir at the request of the Crow Tribe.

11.) Maintain approximately 40,000 angler-days per year in Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lakes. (State funded)

Fish populations were monitored in 28 Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lakes and management was coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service. A voluntary trailhead creel census was implemented at the major access points into the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

12.) Make at least 1,000 angler contacts per year on major cold water lakes and reservoirs. (State funded)

Approximately 1,000 anglers were contacted through spot surveys at Cooney and Deadman's Basin Reservoirs, with help from the Enforcement and Parks Division through creel census.

SUMMARY

Objective 6 was not accomplished because no suitable parcels of land became available during the report period. Progress on all other objectives was achieved.