

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 STREAMS  
JOB NO: I-i JOB TITLE: MID-YELLOWSTONE DRAINAGE INVESTIGATIONS  
PROJECT PERIOD: July 1, 1988 THROUGH June 30, 1989

JOB OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT

1.) To maintain the reaches 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 1989, 21 SPA's and 54 310's were processed for the mid-Yellowstone River Drainage. In addition, approximately 30 310 violations were investigated. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks sponsored stream dynamics workshops in Columbus and Billings for riparian landowners, conservation district supervisors, and agency personnel.

2.) To ensure, within hydrologic constraints, that flows in streams supporting fisheries do not fall below minimums identified during the Yellowstone River instream reservation process.

Minimum instream flows determined in the Yellowstone River instream process were protected through review of 18 new water use permit applications during FY 1988.

3.) To maintain water quality at or above 1975-85 average levels as measured at U.S. Geological Survey water quality monitoring stations.

Eleven 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.

The impacts of a new exploratory adit on the east side of the Stillwater River drainage were monitored. Plans by Chrome

Corporation of America to develop a chrome mine near Nye were reviewed, and a study was proposed. Plans by Stillwater PGM Resources to develop a smelter facility adjacent to the Stillwater River were reviewed. A study to gather data on potential mining impacts in the Boulder Drainage was initiated. PGM is funding a person to gather creel information and assist with data collection. Plans for a proposed gold mining operation near Cooke City were reviewed, and a study was proposed. Monitoring continued on the effects of sheep grazing along Meatrack Creek. Meetings were held with the Gallatin National Forest to discuss proposed timber sales, mining development and plans for roads.

- 5.) To reduce impacts on river stability and fish habitat caused by yearly maintenance at headgate structures.

Irrigation projects affecting river stability and fish habitat were dealt with through the Montana Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975, and 43 ten-year plans for annual maintenance of headgates were prepared as mandated under House Bill 661.

- 6.) To maintain a minimum of 123,000 angler days per year within the mid-Yellowstone drainage. (State funded)

Progress was made towards development of a management plan for the Stillwater Drainage, and fisheries information necessary for the development of a mid-Yellowstone River management plan was collected. Progress was made collecting fisheries information necessary for the development of a Boulder River management plan.

- 7.) To redistribute fishing pressure and minimize overcrowding through the purchase of additional access sites in key areas. (These areas include Rock Creek between Roberts and Joliet; Yellowstone River at Big Timber, between Columbus and Reedpoint and between Columbus and Laurel; and on the East and West Rosebud drainages.) (State funded).

Three land parcels along the Yellowstone River were purchased. One access site is located near Big Timber and two near Worden. Funding requests were submitted for development of boat launching facilities at two of the locations. A number of other land parcels were investigated, but no other purchases were completed.

- 8.) To maintain riparian and floodplain areas in their natural condition.

Maintaining riparian and floodplain areas in their natural condition was encouraged through review and comments pertaining to several subdivision proposals.

A workshop on riparian management was attended. Landowners along lower Red Lodge Creek were encouraged to leave riparian and floodplain areas natural during a department sponsored erosion control meeting.

- 9.) To complete cutthroat trout inventory in one drainage of the mid-Yellowstone reach each year beginning in 1989. (State funded)

Cutthroat inventory work was initiated in the Bridger Creek drainage during 1989. Additional sampling has been scheduled for a crew of U.S. Forest Service people hired to help with the cutthroat inventory work within the Gallatin Forest.

- 10.) To complete inventory of cutthroat trout in the three forks of the Boulder drainage, east fork 1990, west fork 1991 and Main Boulder 1992.

Objective 10 is scheduled to be addressed at a later date. Cutthroat inventory work in the east fork is scheduled during the fall of 1989.

- 11.) To increase public awareness of the diversity of opportunities and hazards of water-based recreation on mid-Yellowstone. (State funded)

No progress was achieved during this report period.

- 12.) To improve level of understanding among anglers regarding management policies and options, and encourage their participation in the decision-making process.

Progress was made towards completion of the Stillwater Drainage management plan. The draft plan has been released to the public for comment during July 1989. Angler understanding of management policies and options is enhanced through Department representatives' participation at sportsman club meetings.

- 13.) To protect and maintain rainbow spawning areas in the upper Stillwater River in their present condition.

Several counts were made of rainbow trout using spawning areas in the upper Stillwater River. The Stillwater Mining Company sediment monitoring program is reviewed each year.

- 14.) To maintain cutthroat population numbers in Meatrack Creek at or above 1984 levels.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks assists U.S. Forest Service in reviewing water quality and turbidity monitoring of grazing impacts in Meatrack Creek. The F.S. has decided to discontinue the sheep grazing allotment within the Meatrack Creek drainage.

#### SUMMARY

Objective 10 was not scheduled to be addressed during FY89. Objective 11 was not accomplished because of a shortage of funding to cover the cost of the project. EPP proposals to fund the project have been submitted three consecutive years without success. Progress on all other objectives was achieved.