

MONTANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
FEDERAL AID IN FISH RESTORATION SECTION
HELENA, MONTANA

JOB COMPLETION REPORT
INVESTIGATIONS PROJECTS

State of Montana

Project No. F-10-R-3

Job No. I-A

Title of Job: Appraisal of Public Lands

Abstract:

Public land survey was conducted on 333 tracts covering 6 counties completely and part of 2 other counties. Of these tracts, 44 percent were recommended for retention from sale because of value for fishing and recreation. Natural drying up of streams and water shortage due to irrigation were the main reasons for not recommending the other 56 percent.

Objectives:

To appraise the public lands both under lease and not under lease for their value as public access to fishing waters of the State. These appraisals to be presented to the State Board of Land Commissioners and the Bureau of Land Management for such action by them as appropriate to insure preservation of public access.

Techniques Used:

Each tract of public land on or near water in Gallatin, Powell, Cascade, Meagher, Jefferson, Ravalli, Madison Counties and part of Missoula County was visited and appraisals were made as follows:

- a. Present land use.
- b. The present and potential value in general terms of the body of water for fishing and recreation.
- c. Value of the land as public access to the water.
- d. Present status of access to the water over each public land tract.
- e. Possible conflict of present land use with that proposed for public access.

Appraisal reports and recommendations were written and presented to the State Board of Land Commissioners and the Bureau of Land Management. Close contact was maintained by the project leader with the State Board of Land Commissioners and the Bureau of Land Management that their action on the appraisals and recommendations may be followed.

Findings:

The public land survey this year was started with the completion of Madison County on the Madison River drainage. Gallatin, Powell, Cascade, Meagher, Jefferson and Ravalli counties were completed in the survey this year along with a start on Missoula county. Public land in 333 tracts was examined in these counties. In addition, maps showing the location of public domain and state lands by county have been prepared for areas of the state yet to be surveyed. One hundred forty-eight tracts (44 percent) were recommended for retention from sale. This percentage is much smaller than previous years (67 percent in 1952 and 63 percent in 1953). The reason for this smaller percentage is likely due to the 1954 tracts being in areas of more valuable farming land and some tracts in drier areas of the state than in past surveys.

Lack of water due mainly to streams drying up naturally was the main reason for rejection, with water shortage due to irrigation being second.

Recommendations:

The public land survey provides information to the State Land Board and the Bureau of Land Management on values of public land tracts for fishing and recreation. The Commissioner of State Lands attaches our report of fishery value to the file card for each land tract. By agreement with the Land Board, recommended lands are to be withheld from sale. The Bureau of Land Management keeps record of our recommendations and considers them along with other information they may have on lands for which sale applications have been received.

The three additional men this year increased greatly the number of tracts covered. The one permanent man has been of much help in getting out the reports and in preparing the county maps showing public land tracts.

It is recommended, after a test flight last fall, that a plane be used in the survey to aid in getting data on isolated tracts. Conferences with the district biologists will provide the needed information on tracts in their districts with which they may be familiar. It is hoped that through the use of the two ideas recommended above, in addition to the regular survey, that the survey may be brought near completion this coming year.

Summary:

Public land survey was conducted on 333 tracts in Madison, Gallatin, Powell, Cascade, Meagher, Jefferson, Ravalli and Missoula Counties. Of these tracts, 44 percent were recommended for withholding from sale. Natural drying up of streams and irrigation were the main reasons for not recommending the remaining tracts for fishing and recreation.

Data and Reports:

The original records and reports are filed in the Helena office.

Prepared by Clinton G. Bishop

Approved by _____

Date April 30, 1955