

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

Job Completion Report
Investigations Projects

State of Montana

Name Classification of Public Lands

Project No. F-10-R-7

Title Appraisal of Public Lands

Job No. I

Period Covered May 1, 1958 to April 30, 1959

Abstract:

In 1958 public land survey was conducted on 2,720 tracts in 17 counties in central Montana to determine their desirability as fishing access. Of these tracts 245 or 9.0 percent were recommended for retaining in public ownership as valuable for public fishing access. Lack of water, due mainly to natural drying up, and to a much less degree, irrigation, was the main reason for rejection.

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 is appropriate to insure preservation of public access.

Techniques Used:

Each tract of public land on or near water is visited and appraisals are 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 so that their action on the appraisals and recommendations may be followed.

Findings:

Lake, Glacier, Pondera, Toole, Libery, Hill, Blaine, Chouteau, Judith Basin, Fergus, Wheatland, Golden Valley, Carbon, Stillwater, Yellowstone, Big Horn and Sweetgrass Counties were completed in the public land survey this year. Public land in 2,720 tracts was examined in these counties. Two hundred forty-five tracts (9.0 percent) were recommended for retention from sale. Lack of water due mainly to natural drying up and to a lesser degree irrigation was the main reason for rejection. These counties are located in the more arid part of the state and many of the streams indicated on the maps are no more than dry washes that run water only when snow is melting or during heavy rains.

A map showing the area included in this project is attached. Shown on the map is the area completed to date and the area yet to be completed.

Additional tracts have been purchased this past year under other projects to provide fishing access. This program is becoming more important each year. More tracts are being investigated for purchase as fishing access by the Montana Fish and Game Department.

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 of 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 Bureau of Land Management is now notifying the Fish and Game Department of all sale applications and where more complete information is needed to support a rejection, the information is provided by the Department.

A number of tracts were purchased for fishing access by the Montana Fish and Game Department through the efforts of the Department Land Agent. This acquisition for fishing access should be intensified.

It is also recommended that withdrawals of Public Domain as fishing access be undertaken as soon as possible to further insure public access for fishing.

Prepared by Clinton G. Bishop

Approved by George D. Holton

Date January 14, 1960

MONTANA

FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

SURVEY COMPLETED THROUGH 1958

TO BE SURVEYED

