MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
FISHERIES DIVISION

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT - Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Projects and Federal Aid for Commercial Fisheries Research and Development Projects

Period: February 1, 1973 through February 28, 1973

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F-1-C-22 Coordination - Arthur N. Whitney and George D. Holton

Holton participated in a project planning meeting covering Region 1 projects. He prepared the fisheries portion of the planning-programming-budgeting report for the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. He obtained information from both George Warner and Gary Wood on the preparation of Federal Assistance forms prescribed in OMB Circular A-102.

F-4-R-22 Statewide Creel Census and Statistical Services - George D. Holton

Revision of the computer programs that calculate population estimates from mark-recovery data was a major project effort. Eleven new names were added to the list of Fisherman Log holders.

F-5-R-22 Northcentral Montana Fisheries Study - Bill Hill and Duane Phinney

Three lakes were checked for dissolved oxygen content in the Choteau area. One of these, a private pond, was checked at the landowner's request, and was found to have low levels of oxygen, as was Wood Lake. Priest Lake had sufficient quantities of oxygen; however, fishermen aren't using the lake,presumably due to rumors of the fish being inedible. This is contrary to findings during the 1972 fishing season in which 75 percent of the fishermen contacted said the flesh was edible. Perhaps a more reasonable explanation for the low utilization of the lake is the low stocking rate (approximately 65 fish per acre).

Two pond owners were contacted concerning fish plants to be made by the Fish and Game Department. Correspondence was carried out with a private individual who is interested in raising trout commercially and then harvesting the fish for sale as food. Also consulted with a private pond owner in relation to raising trout to fingerling size in tanks prior to stocking a pond.

Spear fishermen were checked at Pishkun Reservoir. Time was spent in sorting and filing 35mm slides and reading scales.

Local logging operations were checked for possible stream damage in the Lewistown area. One day was spent on Spring Creek cleaning up after the riprap work done at Burleigh's. Some time was spent checking fishermen.

Members of various government agencies were contacted regarding War Horse Reservoir, which the State Water Resources Division has announced it will give away.

The Great Plains Fisheries Workers Workshop was attended in Calgary by both biologists.

F-7-R-22 Northwest Montana Fisheries Study - Robert J. Domrose

Several days were spent collecting winter dissolved oxygen samples from a number of lakes in the region. Lakes sampled involved Foy's,Rogers, Topless, Bootjack, Monroe, Lavon and Crystal. In a typical winter, dissolved oxygen concentrations dropped to near critical levels in these lakes. However, the winter of 1972-73 was extremely mild and dry, with an unusual number of clear, sunshiny days. As a consequence, dissolved oxygen concentrations were higher than normal. Further dissolved oxygen sampling scheduled for other district lakes was postponed for a more critical year.

Considerable time was spent preparing a projection of stocking planned for all waters in Region One through the next ten years.

Other project activities include the attendance of district and step-down planning meetings, preparing graphs and summarizing material for completion reports, preparing work schedules and summer help needs for next summer, and installation of a thermograph and maintenance of equipment.

F-9-R-21 Southwest Montana Fisheries Study - Workman, Vincent, Peterson, Miller

The spring shocking season was begun with a marking run on Section 3 of Sixteen Mile Creek. A total of 971 fish were marked despite extremely muddy conditions due to runoff. The sample contained 64 percent rainbows, 35 percent browns and 1 percent mountain whitefish.

Data was analyzed for the Madison-O'Dell Study and most of the original draft of a manuscript was prepared for this project. The original draft will be completed by early April. Scales from the 1972 collections on the Madison and East Gallatin Rivers were read.

Access to Brown's Lake is being restricted by a locked gate across an established road. The landowners were contacted in an attempt to alleviate the problem. Documentation was made for additional action.

The Beaverhead Conservation District's annual meeting was attended. Subjects discussed included the need for zoning and land use planning in Beaverhead County and House Bill 474.

Other meetings during the month included one Trout Unlimited meeting in Livingston, a monthly meeting of Beaverhead Sportsmen and the Wildlife Forum at Western Montana College. Other time charged to the project included data analysis, report writing, and editing of tapes from the Hydrology Seminar.

F-11-R-20 Northeast Montana Fisheries Study - Robert Needham

Dissolved oxygen tests were conducted on six reservoirs. Most reservoirs contained relatively high D.O. through the winter. Dissolved oxygen checks were made on a total of 43 reservoirs during the winter.

Three BLM reservoirs were inspected with Dick Trueblood and BLM personnel. Many new BLM reservoirs have good potential for fish or waterfowl. Islands have been constructed for goose nesting; however, intensive fisherman use interferes with good production. In addition, some of these reservoirs contain pipes for releasing stock water and it has not been possible to date to obtain a firm commitment from the BLM regarding anticipated drawdown.

Four reservoirs requested for stocking were surveyed in the Havre area. Three were judged to be unsuitable or extremely marginal. Reservoir productivity information was studied to determine information needed to evaluate effects the proposed Marias-Milk River interchange would have on the productivity of Fresno Reservoir.

F-12-R-19 Western Montana Fisheries Study - Ron Marcoux

Within 11 days after being placed in live cages below the Milltown Dam, 7 of 8 wild trout were dead, while all 8 wild trout remained alive in control stations on the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers. Two reported fish kills were investigated on the Clark Fork below the dam but no dead fish were found. Sedimentation from the drawdown of December and January has been considerable and can be observed for many miles below Missoula. Currently Montana Power is repairing the dam at estimated costs of $250,000.00

Proposed Corps of Engineers riprap projects on Rock Creek and Rye Creek were checked and recommendations made. Both involved placing riprap to protect county roads.

Two Forest Service Planning Units on the Missoula and Ninemile Ranger Districts were commented on. Primary emphasis was to ask that adequate water quality monitoring prior to, during, and following land use activity be implemented. Providing built-in provisions to immediately curb any unforeseen erosion problems was also stressed.

Fish population data from the Clark Fork River and Rock Creek was summarized and tabled to include in a job progress report. A paper concerning the evaluations of the man-made meanders on the Clark Fork River was presented to the Great Plains Fisheries Workers Association.

Meetings attended included the Rock Creek Advisory board and one of the Subcommittee on Water Quality, the Wood Waste Utilization Workshop in the Bitterroot, the Westslope Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Seeley Lake Homeowners Association, and the Western Montana Fish and Game Association Fish Committee.

F-20-R-17 Southcentral Montana Fisheries Study - Pat Marcuson and Steve Swedberg

During the month of February, Marcuson wrote two rough drafts of Job Progress Reports for F-20-R-16, Jobs I-a and II-a.

Thermographs on Bluewater Creek were serviced and maintained. Some gear was requested. Assistance was given to Stoneberg with banding elk and deer in the Stillwater area. A forum on energy needs and coal stripping in Montana was attended.

Considerable mountain lake data were tabulated and recorded on summary tables. Several cards and hydrographic maps were prepared. Hatchery records were reviewed and all fish data were listed on cards of lakes in the Stillwater and Clarks Fork River drainages. Requests for funding were submitted to the Custer and Gallatin National Forests.

Considerable time was spent on data analysis for Job Progress Report F-20-R-17.

A meeting was attended in Cody, Wyoming with Lou Pechacek and Ron Kent, biologists with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Management plans for Bighorn Lake were discussed and information relative to the 1972 season exchanged. Thermographs were serviced on the Bighorn and Yellowstone Rivers.

F-30-R-9 Southeast Montana Fisheries Study - Al Elser

Dissolved oxygen samples were taken in ten reservoirs in southeastern Montana. Oxygen concentrations ranged from 1.2 ppm to 10.4 ppm. Dead fish were reported under the ice at two of the ponds. An experimental gill net was fished under the ice in Tongue River Reservoir. A total of 15 fish were taken, with yellow perch and northern redhorse suckers predominant. Ice fishing pressure on the Tongue has been light. Several large northerns have been reported in recent weeks.

The sturgeon setline study was summarized in progress report form for the Bureau of Reclamation. Objectives of the study were to collect information on distribution, population density,habitat preferences and the possible effects of the aqueduct systems on the pallid and shovelnose sturgeons in the Yellowstone River system. Setlines were fished in the river;a total of 38 fish were taken for a catch rate of 0.03 fish per setline hour (1,090 total setline hours). Channel catfish were the most abundant fish taken, making up 89.5 percent of the total sample. Only one shovelnose sturgeon was taken. Efforts to collect sturgeon with other methods will continue.

F-32-R-9 Helicopter Mountain Lake Survey

No work done on this project this report period.

F-33-R-7 Flathead Lake Fisheries Study - Delano Hanzel

The major emphasis of work was directed toward the analysis of data and preparations of materials for the annual progress report. Work included the examination of scale collections, analysis of growth increments from scale measurements and summarizing netting, plankton and water quality data.

One aerial flight was made over the lake to photograph ice covered areas and the lake area in Polson Bay that will be affected by a proposed land development project.

The office of the project leader was moved to the new office space provided by expansion of the Regional Headquarters. The storage area for the fisheries reference library and a chemical cabinet were constructed.

A regional fisheries personnel meeting was attended where step-down plans and proposed investigations were discussed. An ecological oriented talk on the kokanee of Flathead Lake was presented to two sections of the zoology class at Flathead Valley Community College.

F-34-R-7 Reservoir Investigations - Joe E. Huston

Step-down plans for all reservoir projects were brought up to date and presented at a planning meeting. The completion report for the Hungry Horse Reservoir segment was completed and forwarded to Helena for further editing. Project personnel attended a meeting sponsored by Washington Water Power and attended by Kaniksu National Forest personnel. Preliminary impact of gas supersaturation below Libby Dam was discussed.

1-56-D-7 Fort Peck Reservoir Investigations - James Liebelt

Considerable time was spent preparing and writing an article on commercial fishing in Montana for MONTANA OUTDOORS and also in reviewing literature on reservoir fisheries and limnology.

A program on commercial fishing in Fort Peck Reservoir was presented to the Glasgow Lions Club. One sportsmen's meeting was attended.