

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

Project Title: Coal Creek/Flathead River Basin Monitoring Study
Project Number: MDFWP 3177-1
Project Biologist: Thomas Weaver
Project Technician: Jeff Hutten
Project Manager: John Fraley
Report for the Month: September 1990

1. Summary of significant results.

We completed the electrofishing for late summer fish population estimates in all stream sections selected for monitoring during 1990. Preliminary results indicate juvenile bull trout populations are at lower than normal levels in the Dead Horse Bridge section of Coal Creek and in the Puzzle Creek section of Morrison Creek. The number of juvenile bull trout handled in all other sections appeared closer to the range normally observed. We began collecting substrate scores and the 1990 spawning area substrate samples by McNeil core sampling in conjunction with our electrofishing work.

Preliminary bull trout redd counts indicate that final counts should begin the first week of October in Swan River and Middle Fork tributaries. Adult bull trout are still actively spawning in North Fork tributaries; final redd counts here should begin during mid month. While conducting preliminary bull trout redd counts, we captured two pairs of adult fish. We obtained approximately 18,000 eggs for experimental bull trout culture work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Creston National Fish Hatchery.

We submitted the final report on the Red Bench Fire streambed composition monitoring work to the U.S. Forest Service. We found that two of the three streambed sampling sites in or below the burned area contained less fine sediment after the fire than they did prior to it. Levels of fine material also decreased at a sampling site located above the burn influenced area. A precipitation event in early November, 1989, may have influenced our results. Since these findings are inconclusive, we recommended continued monitoring to provide a longer period of record.

The project biologist attended the Montana Riparian Association's workshop at Big Mountain and presented the westslope cutthroat trout incubation paper recently submitted for potential publication. Weaver also served as a group leader and conducted a tour of an area where recent forest management activities have had a negative impact on fish habitat.

2. Brief discussion of major problems encountered, changes in work plan, or schedule deviations.

None.

3. Short description of planned activities for the following month.

We will complete the 1990 bull trout redd counts and freeze core several bull trout redds. McNeil core sampling and related substrate work will continue in conjunction with redd counts. Jeff Hutten will begin sieve analysis of the 1989 Whitlock-Vibert box samples and McNeil core samples collected outside the 1990 U.S. Forest Service contract. Forest Service personnel will sieve analyze the 72 core samples specified in this year's contract.

4. Itemized listing of each non-expendable item greater than \$1,000 and each designated sensitive item.

None.

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Loren Bahls, WQB (Helena)
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