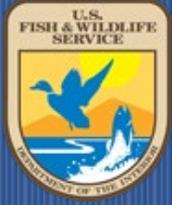


Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

BILLINGS–BOZEMAN–LEWISTOWN, MT

September 2020



Habitat Restoration:

SELWAY MEADOWS

During August of 2019, a cooperative agreement was established with Montana Fish Wildlife and Park to utilize NFHP (Western Native Trout Initiative) funds to construct a barrier on Selway Creek, Montana. The goal of this project was to construct a fish barrier with a subsequent removal effort of all non-native fish upstream. Once the piscicide treatment is completed (planned fall 2021), the upstream reach will be stocked with pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout from genetically diverse, and unaltered aboriginal populations.

Barrier construction commenced during the summer and was nearly completed in late September.

With the side-walls and barrier completed and the backfilling finished, the stream channel is reestablished prior to returning flows. Photo: Matt Jaeger, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.



Laying a good foundation is important for long-term retention of constructed fish barriers. Here workers are placing reinforcing steel rods in the foundation of the Selway Creek fish barrier. Photo: Matt Jaeger, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.



Forming up the walls following the completion of the foundation. Photo: Matt Jaeger, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.



Habitat Restoration
cont.:

RATTLESNAKE DAM

This project is located on Rattlesnake Creek approximately 3.5 miles upstream of its confluence with the Clark Fork River near Missoula, MT. The dam was originally constructed in the early 1900's and has been blocking migrations of threatened Bull Trout ever since. In 1983, the dam was rendered inoperable and in 2014 efforts commenced to consider removing the dam.

We partnered with Trout Unlimited and others to provide National Fish Passage Program funding to assist with dam removal. The removal was completed in September and some stream channel and bank restoration are all that remain to finish this project.



Rattlesnake Dam prior to removal.
Photo: USFWS-George Jordan



Rattlesnake Dam during demolition. Photo: Rob Roberts, Trout Unlimited



For the first time in approximately 100 years, Bull Trout and other native fish can migrate unimpeded in Rattlesnake Creek. This project increased habitat connectivity by approximately 20 river miles. Photo: Rob Roberts, Trout Unlimited

[Sikes Act–Malmstrom
Air Force Base:](#)

Montana FWCO biologists Michael (Josh) Melton and Andrew Gilham, along with biotech Geoff Popken completed annual population assessment surveys on Powwow Pond.

This pond is managed as a recreational pond for airmen, their families, and guests.

A number of years ago we decided to move away from a put-and-take trout fishery and began to stock species (Largemouth Bass and Bluegill) that would reproduce in the pond.

Once a year Rainbow Trout are stocked in low numbers for the annual Kid’s fishing day event (which was cancelled this year due to COVID-19 concerns).

All in all, this change has resulted in a well-used fishery on base.



Largemouth Bass collected from Powwow Pond, Malmstrom Air Force Base during 2020 surveys. Photo: USFWS Josh Melton.



We have received angler reports of some "dandy" Bluegill being caught in Powwow Pond. Here is one of such specimens collected during this month's surveys. Photo: USFWS Josh Melton.

St Mary Bull Trout:

Technician, Jason Marsh worked with staff from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the installation of PIT-tag arrays in large rivers in an effort to garner ideas on how to deploy PIT arrays in areas where stream widths are greater than 25 m (for sites like Swiftcurrent Creek, St. Mary Canal, St. Mary River).

Jason and Geoff worked on developing new antenna designs for planned PIT array work in coming months. Efforts included ordering new antenna and noise filtering supplies based on recommendations from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to address problems associated with the St. Mary Canal and Divide Creek sites.

Additionally, in the coming months, they are going to build and install double-loop, 10 AWG antennas at the Divide Creek PIT-array sites to address obsolete antenna design issues there.

As part of a separate cooperative conservation project with Glacier Park and the Blackfoot Tribe that is aimed at restoring native fishes to pristine headwater habitats, Andrew prepared collected genetic samples (fin clips) from a potential Westslope Cutthroat Trout donor population in the Lee Creek drainage and will be sending those to the Montana Conservation Genetics Lab in Missoula for analysis.

Jim Mogen and George Jordan continued to serve on the St Mary Bull Trout minimization team and provided input related to the proposed measures to reduce fish loss in the canal, including block net locations and sizes for canal salvage efforts and screen size and placement on the canal headgates. Jim also reviewed the St. Mary Biological Opinion, providing Ecological Services with comments and suggestions where appropriate. Additionally, Jim has been working with Reclamation contractor, Lynn Kaeding, on

development of their next paper—a quantitative assessment of the two-decade time series of mark-recapture data for the various St. Mary Bull Trout populations.

Other Happenings:

Fall fish surveys on the Blackfeet Reservation were cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*For more information, click on the following logos
Or feel free to contact any of the Montana FWCO
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