

BA
all
covered



3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
March 2, 2000

Tom Iverson
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority
2501 Southwest 1st Avenue, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97201

Subject: North Fork Blackfoot River bull trout recovery project proposal

Dear Mr. Iverson:

Please accept this support letter for the North Fork Blackfoot River bull trout restoration project now being considered for BPA funding. If funded, this project will address final phases of the North Fork recovery project and help meet several Blackfoot River bull trout recovery goals. This project should be very attractive for BPA funding because it addresses critical needs of a 'resident' listed fish species, will be a cost effective on-the-ground project, and complements work of an established and extremely successful watershed restoration program in the Blackfoot.

The Blackfoot River supports one of the better populations of fluvial bull trout within the range of the species. The North Fork supports the bulk (>50%) of the Blackfoot Watershed's fluvial bull trout spawning. Over the past ten years, recovery efforts have led to an upward trend for this population. However, there is still a lot of work to be done; inefficient irrigation in the lower North Fork limits rearing capacity and severely degraded tributaries of the lower North Fork (Rock and Kleinschmidt Creeks) have resulted in a wide range of impacts.

For the lower North Fork, improving instream flow is key to restoring bull trout in the area of Kleinschmidt Flat (lower ~ 15 miles of stream). For this area, we have identified low flows in rearing areas as a primary limiting factor. With summer water temperatures 8-12 degrees (F) cooler than the main stem Blackfoot River, increasing North Fork flows will not only restore rearing habitat but also reduce thermal stress in the main stem Blackfoot River below its confluence with the North Fork.

In addition to flow and temperature considerations in the North Fork, sections of Rock and Kleinschmidt Creeks (confluence at river mile 6.1) are both severely degraded and support very limited bull trout use, despite low summer temperatures a combined summer flow of ~ 25 cfs. Because of significant groundwater inflows, both streams probably supported historical bull trout spawning. Furthermore, through restoration both streams have potential to provide high quality rearing areas and serve as thermal refugia during periods of river warming.

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Upon completion of the North Fork Restoration project, we expect to meet several bull trout management goals. These include 1) increasing recruitment of fluvial bull trout the Blackfoot River, 2) restoring thermal refugia during periods of warming and 3) augmenting summer instream flows in the main stem Blackfoot River.

Please give this proposal strong consideration for funding – it would be money well spent!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ladd Knotek".

Ladd Knotek
Regional Fisheries Program Manager
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