

Chapter 1.0: Purpose of and Need for Action

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Development of the hydropower system in the Columbia River Basin has had far-reaching effects on many species of fish and wildlife. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is responsible for protecting, mitigating, and enhancing fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of federal hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and its tributaries (see Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act (Act), 16 U.S.C. 839 *et seq.*, Section 4(h)(10)(A)). BPA meets this responsibility, in part, by funding projects identified through a regional process led by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

The South Fork Flathead Watershed/Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Program constitutes a portion of the Hungry Horse Dam Fisheries Mitigation Program. The purpose of the Program is to mitigate for the construction and operation of Hungry Horse Dam through restoring habitat, improving fish passage, protecting and recovering native fish populations, and reestablishing fish harvest opportunities. The target species for the Hungry Horse Mitigation Program are bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and mountain whitefish. The Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Program was proposed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and BPA to put into action a part of the Hungry Horse Mitigation Program. The program is designed to preserve the genetically pure **fluvial**¹ and **adfluvial** westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) populations in the South Fork drainage of the Flathead River. The project is a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service (FS). In order to accomplish the goals, MFWP is proposing to remove hybrid trout from identified lakes and streams in the South Fork Flathead drainage on the Flathead National Forest and replace them with genetically pure native westslope cutthroat trout over the next 10 to 12 years. Some of these lakes and streams occur within the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Jewel Basin Hiking Area. Others may also be included as additional information is discovered. BPA funds would be used to implement this project. These activities would occur on lands administered by FS.

Chapter 1 of this **draft environmental impact statement** (DEIS) describes the current situation, why corrective action is needed, and how BPA is working with others to develop alternatives and decide how to proceed.

¹ Words that appear in boldface are defined in the glossary.

1.1 Need for Action

The South Fork Flathead River, above Hungry Horse Dam, contains one of the largest **genetically pure** populations of native westslope cutthroat trout in the nation. The South Fork drainage is protected from invasion by **non-native** fish because of the barrier created by Hungry Horse Dam. However, historic stocking introduced non-native trout species (primarily rainbow trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout) into some headwater lakes that were historically fishless. By the late 1950's, fish managers became aware of the negative impacts that past stocking could have on native westslope cutthroat trout, and shortly thereafter changed to stocking native trout. However, over time, many of the fish in these lakes hybridized.

Genetic surveys have shown that non-native populations in headwater lakes are escaping and residing in the streams below these lakes (Huston 1988; Huston 1989; Huston 1990; Sage 1993; Leary 2002; Rumsey and Cavigli 2002). This downward progression poses a hybridization threat to the remaining genetically pure populations in the South Fork Flathead. Of the 355 lakes in the South Fork drainage above Hungry Horse Dam, 50 are known to have fish populations. Genetically pure westslope cutthroat exist in 28 of the lakes, and 20 are known to have genetically mixed fish as confirmed through the University of Montana's Wild Trout and Salmon Genetics Lab. Two lake populations (Lower Three Eagles and Crater) are currently under evaluation (see table 3-1). Examination of westslope cutthroat trout in the South Fork Flathead River presently confirms their genetic purity; however, their continued existence is at great risk due to the sources of non-native fish from upstream lakes. Hybridized fish have been collected in tributary streams below lakes with **introgressed** populations. Since 1985, most of these lakes have been stocked with pure westslope cutthroat trout from the state's **M012 brood stock** in an effort to maintain quality sport angling and to reduce the non-native trout genes to undetectable levels. However this technique of "genetic swamping" has not worked because of the lengthy amount of time it takes to accomplish the goals (see Section. 1.2, Background).

In summary, action needs to be taken in order to protect the genetic integrity of the genetically pure populations of native westslope cutthroat trout that currently exist in the South Fork Flathead River Watershed by protecting them from hybridization with non-native trout that currently inhabit lakes and streams in the South Fork River drainage.

1.2 Background

The South Fork Flathead River drains 1,681 square miles of land on the Flathead National Forest and is apportioned into several land use areas: the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Great Bear Wilderness, and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area, all of which are administered by the FS (see figures 1-5 below for maps of the project area). The South Fork drainage includes 355 lakes and approximately 1,898 miles of stream habitat. The total surface area of lakes with fish is 2,128 acres, with a mean lake size of 42 acres (range 0.5 to 973). The total surface area of fishless lakes in the drainage is 517 acres, with a mean size of 1.7 acres (range 0.1 to 30). The South Fork drainage was isolated in 1952 by the construction of Hungry Horse Dam approximately five miles upstream of its mouth.

MFWP file records indicate that as early as 1959, fish managers had identified sources of rainbow trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the Graves Creek drainage. As early as 1960 they detected unknown sources of rainbow trout in the Big Salmon drainage and were concerned that **hybridization** could impact the westslope cutthroat trout

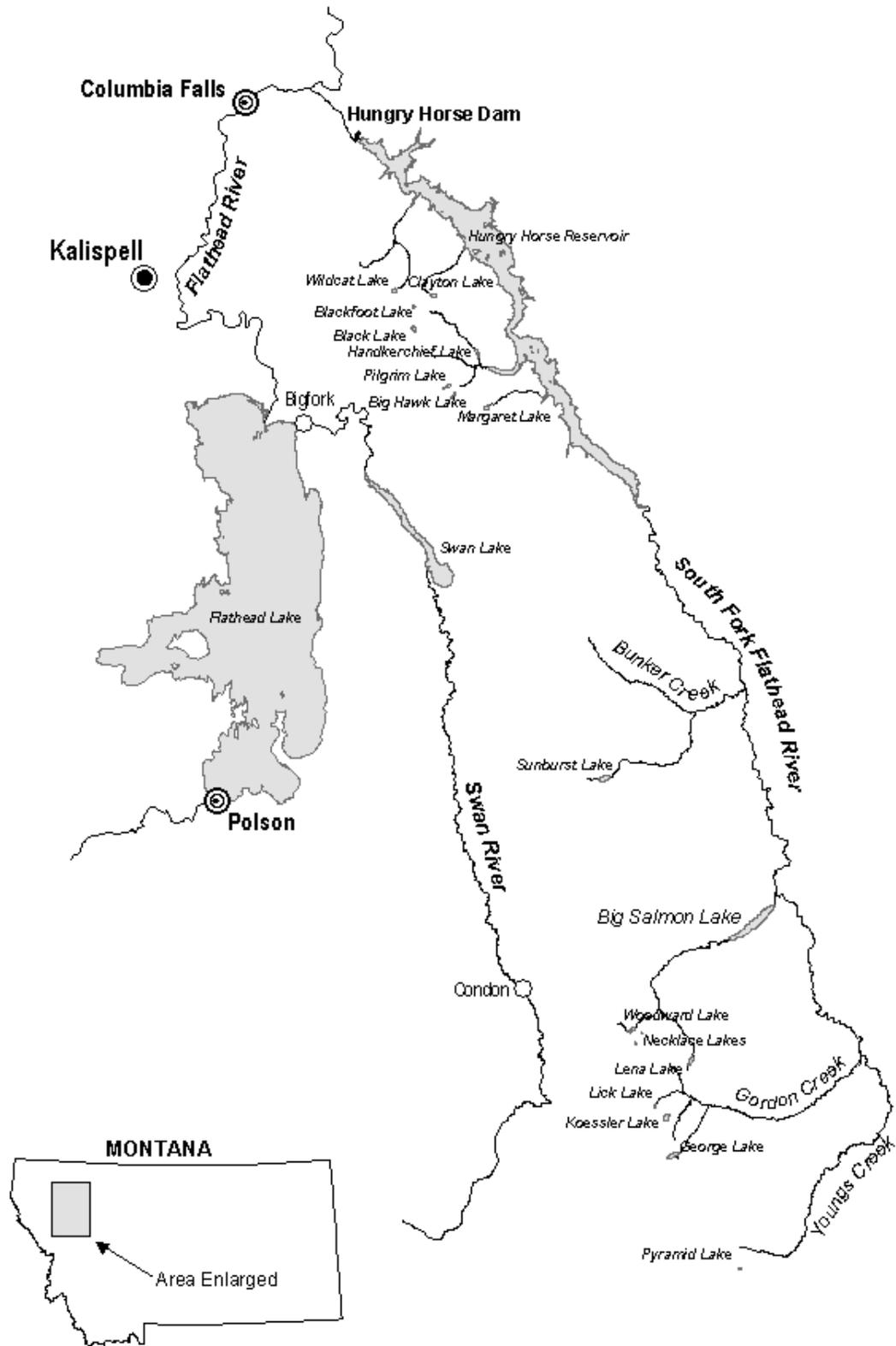


Figure 1-1. Map of the project area.

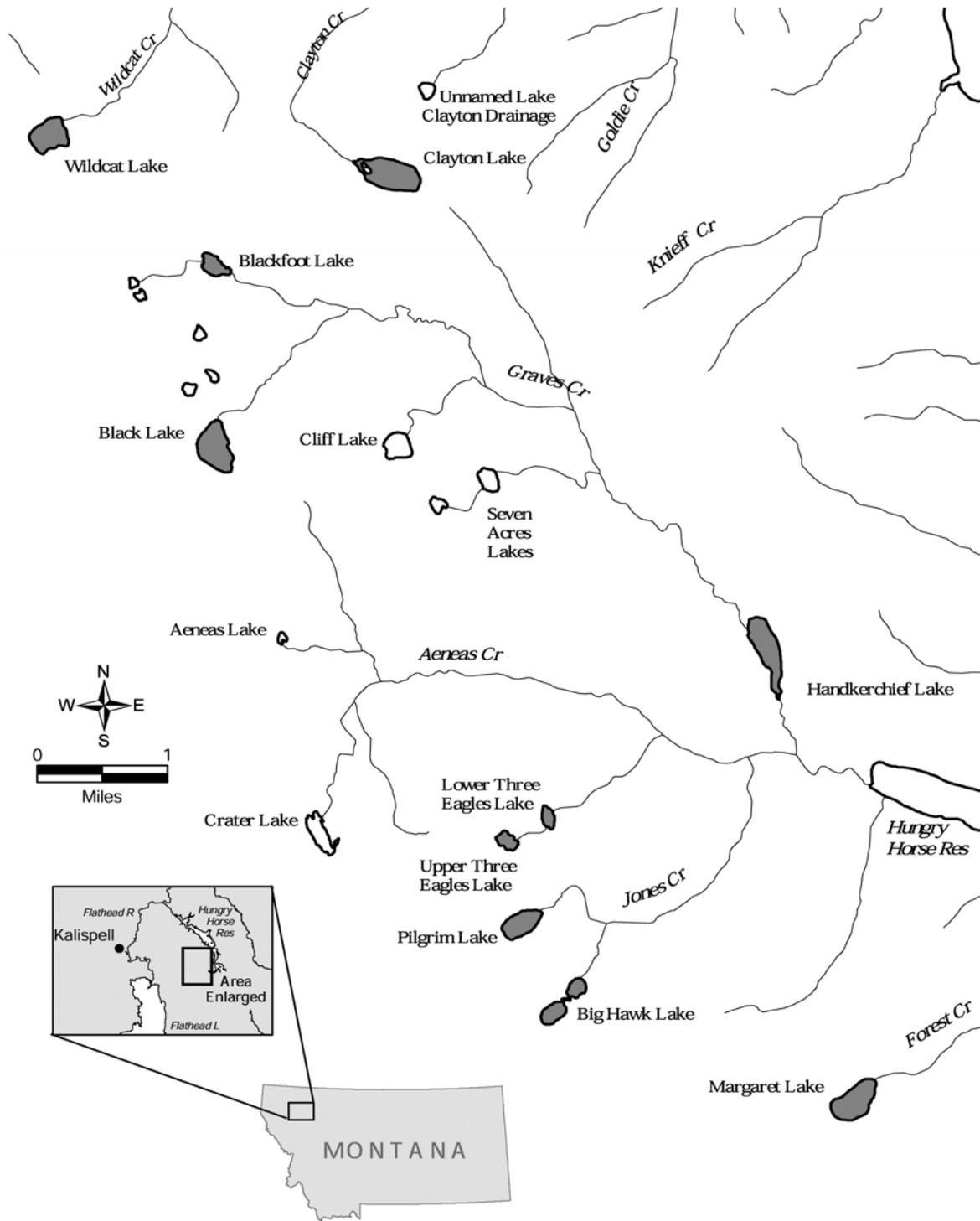


Figure 1-2. Map of non-wilderness lakes in South Fork Flathead River drainage that contain hybrid trout populations. Shaded lakes contain hybrid trout.

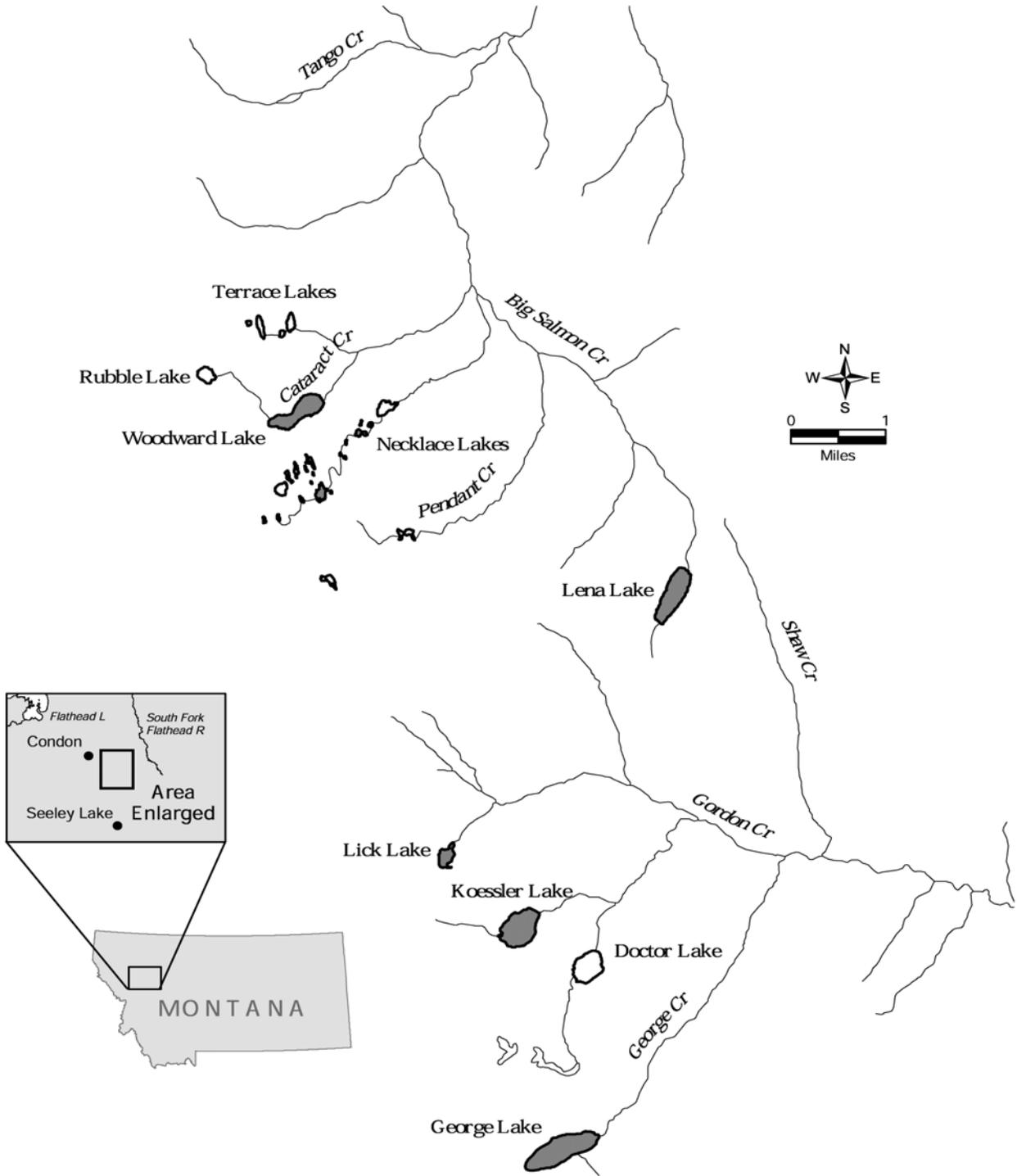


Figure 1-3. Map of wilderness lakes in the South Fork Flathead River drainage that contain hybrid trout populations. Shaded lakes contain hybrid trout.

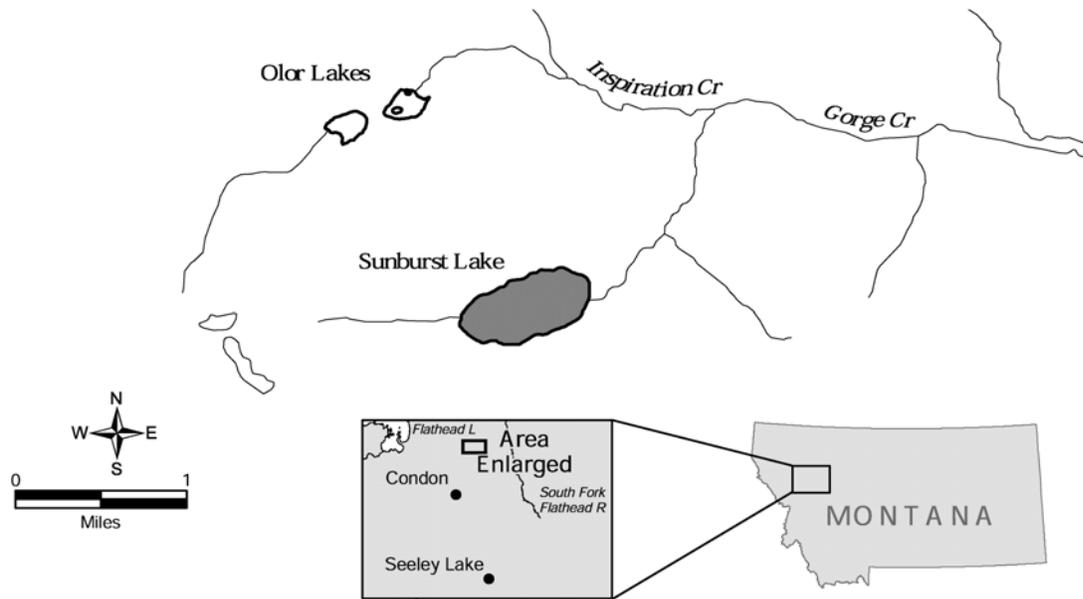


Figure 1-4. Map of Sunburst Lake, which contains a hybrid trout population located on the Bob Marshall Wilderness, South Fork Flathead River drainage.

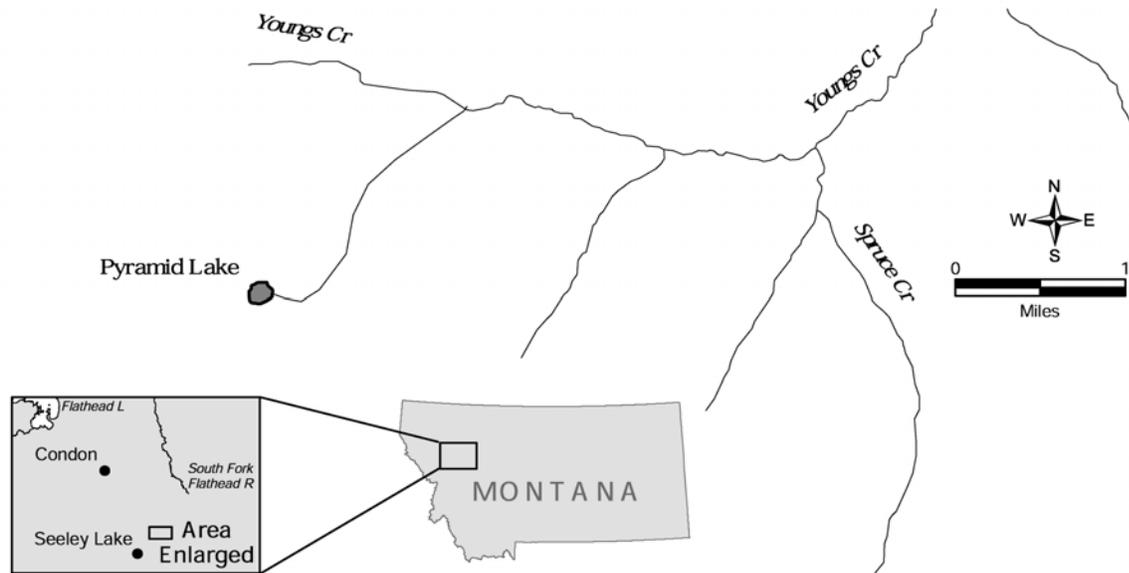


Figure 1-5. Map of Pyramid Lake, which contains a hybrid trout population located on the Bob Marshall Wilderness, South Fork Flathead River drainage.

populations in the South Fork Flathead River drainage. Historical records provide little detail regarding the stocking of rainbow trout in these areas; however, based on the practices of the times, it is believed that these lakes received unrecorded stocks of fish from the 1920's through the 1940's during public fish distribution programs. In Montana, around 1980, conservation efforts to protect the Westslope cutthroat trout increased; and in 1983, MFWP commissioned a status review of westslope cutthroat trout west of the Continental Divide. The South Fork Flathead River drainage was described as the largest and most secure stronghold for the species in Montana (Liknes 1984). The status review determined that hybridization was the primary threat to the South Fork Flathead populations. This threat was especially predictable in drainages that had a lake in the headwaters because many of the water bodies had, historically, been stocked with non-native trout that were escaping downstream.

In Montana, westslope cutthroat trout occur over a range of 19,588 square miles. Genetically pure populations exist in 3,333 square miles of the state. The South Fork Flathead is a critical stronghold of this species, representing 50 percent of the statewide range for genetically pure large, interconnected populations. In the northwestern United States, genetically unaltered westslope cutthroat trout occupy between 8 to 20 percent of historical habitat (Shepard, et al. 2003).

In the early days of trout identification, biologists used morphological features (e.g., spotting patterns, red slashes under the jaw, and color) to visually determine if fish were westslope cutthroat, Yellowstone cutthroat, rainbow, or a mixture of these trout species. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, technological advances allowed for the cost effective use of electrophoresis testing on small amounts of fish tissue. Through this procedure, proteins unique to individual species could be identified. These proteins are also manifested in hybrid fish that, when tested, provide an accurate determination of the level of hybridization at the population level. This technology has been utilized throughout the South Fork Flathead drainage. MFWP file data indicate that since 1983, nearly 130 genetic tests have been conducted by the University of Montana's Wild Trout and Salmon Genetics Lab on fish from lakes and streams in the South Fork Flathead drainage. From these tests, Leary (2002) identified 38 separate populations as pure westslope cutthroat trout residing in both lakes and streams. These tests have determined that 20 of the lakes listed in this proposal, and their outflow streams, contain hybrid populations. Lower Three Eagles Lake is suspected to contain hybrid trout because the lake immediately upstream contains hybrid trout, as does the stream immediately below it. An analysis of this lake population is pending. Most populations have been tested multiple times, measuring the progression of hybridization.

In 1983, MFWP began development of a genetically diverse hatchery brood stock of westslope cutthroat trout that could be used in conservation and restoration programs throughout the state. This was done by gathering wild cutthroat from the South Fork Flathead and lower Clark Fork drainages. In 1984, a second group of wild fish from the South Fork Flathead was added to the broodstock. By 1985, the first offspring were stocked. In 2003, a third group of wild male fish collected from the South Fork Flathead was added to maintain the fitness of this stock. Beginning in 1984-85, a management concept was developed and implemented whereby the newly developed genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout stock were introduced into the South Fork Flathead and area lakes containing hybrid trout on a "frequent or annual" basis in an effort to "replace" the hybrid trout with pure westslope cutthroat (Huston 1988). This concept later became known as the genetic "swamp out" theory. The theoretical time estimate for this management concept to reduce non-native genes to undetectable levels was 20 to 40

years (Huston 1998). Evaluation of the success of this management concept began in 1988 (Huston 1988) and has continued to the present (Leary 2002).

In 1999, eight state and federal agencies (excluding BPA) developed and signed the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) in Montana (MFWP 1999a) (hereafter referred to as the Conservation Agreement), which provides a framework for cutthroat conservation strategies in Montana. The overarching goal in the Conservation Agreement states:

“The management goal for westslope cutthroat trout in Montana is to ensure the long-term, self-sustaining persistence of the subspecies within each of the five major river drainages they historically inhabited in Montana . . .”

In 1999, MFWP stepped up its commitment to westslope cutthroat conservation in the South Fork Flathead. Changing issues surrounding the future of westslope cutthroat trout throughout its historic range have required changing management strategies to favor more conclusive measures of safeguarding, restoring, and conserving the remaining westslope cutthroat trout populations. The present measure of “genetic swamping” is not a decisive measure of eliminating non-native trout due primarily to the extended time frame estimated for this concept to work. Some of the changes in management strategy have included restoring habitat, isolating pure westslope cutthroat populations from non-native fish, and removing non-natives that threaten westslope cutthroats. In the South Fork Flathead, these changing management practices have included the decisive removal of hybrid trout populations that threaten the pure westslope cutthroat trout populations.

From 1999 to 2002, MFWP developed a plan to remove from lakes and streams hybrid trout populations that threaten to expand and hybridize with pure populations throughout the South Fork drainage.

Including the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout, there are four mandates or plans that provide the foundation for the proposed action on the behalf of westslope cutthroat trout:

- 1) Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks is mandated by *state law* (MCA 87-1-201[9ai]) to manage wildlife, fish, game and non-game animals in a manner that prevents the need for listing under by the state (87-5-107) or under the federal Endangered Species Act, and [ii] manage listed species, sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing by the state (87-5-107) or under the federal Endangered Species Act in a manner that assists in the maintenance or recovery of those species.
- 2) Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana (1999) was developed to expedite implementation and conservation measures for westslope cutthroat trout in Montana as a collaborative and cooperative effort among resource agencies, conservation and industry organizations, resource users, and private landowners. The basic premise of the management goal for westslope cutthroat trout is to protect existing populations, and ensure the long term persistence of the species within its historic range in Montana. Primary among the objectives of this agreement is to protect all genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout populations.
- 3) Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Framework document for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (1995) provides guidelines for the conservation and recovery of Threatened or Endangered species and to protect sensitive species. The principal guideline for this type of activity states to

manage the wilderness to conserve and recover known populations of federally listed Threatened and Endangered species and to protect the habitats on which they depend. Provide habitat for sensitive species to avoid a trend toward federal listing as Threatened or endangered. A myriad of options for executing this type of activity is covered in this framework document including the use of chemical treatments to control exotic fish.

4) Fisheries Management Plan for the South Fork Flathead River Drainage including Hungry Horse Reservoir, and the South Fork Flathead River upstream from Hungry Horse Reservoir (MFWP 1991a), developed by the MFWP, Forest Service and a Citizens Committee lists the drainage wide management goals as (1) maintaining self sustaining fish populations; (2) maintain and improve genetic integrity of westslope cutthroat trout; (3) emphasize a quality fishery over quantity of harvest; and (4) manage the fishery consistent with wilderness management guidelines.

1.3 Purposes

The purpose statement includes goals to be achieved while meeting the need for the project. These goals are used to evaluate alternatives proposed to meet the need. BPA and the FS will consider the following stated purposes in the alternative selection process:

- In a manner consistent with the goals and objectives of the Council's Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, help BPA fulfill its obligation to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the development of Hungry Horse Dam.
- Enhance administrative efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Avoids or minimize, adverse environmental impacts.
- Provide the potential to achieve the following biological objectives:
 - Preserve genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout populations in the South Fork drainage (including fluvial, adfluvial and resident life history forms).
 - Eliminate from headwater lakes and their outflow streams, to the extent possible and in a timely manner, the non-native trout that threaten genetically pure stocks of westslope cutthroat trout.

Though not a decision criterion for selecting an alternative, it is important to note that one of MFWP's purposes is to maintain recreational opportunities in the South Fork cutthroat fishery.

1.4 Public Process and Relevant Issues

1.4.1 Westslope Cutthroat Trout Listing Process

In June of 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was petitioned by American Wildlands, Clearwater Biodiversity Project, Inc., Montana Environmental Information Center, The Pacific Rivers Council, Trout Unlimited's Madison-Gallatin Chapter, and Mr. Bud Lilly to list the westslope cutthroat trout as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (65 FR 20120-20123). On August 8, 2003, the FWS determined that the westslope cutthroat trout should not be listed as a threatened species under the ESA. One of the key reasons cited for this determination was the ongoing conservation efforts, such as the proposed project considered in this document, and their

contribution to the viability of these indigenous species in Montana. However, the petitioners may reserve the right to appeal this decision and/or the court response to the agency's decision. For a complete chronology of this action from 1997 to 2003, see Appendix B.

1.4.2 Public Scoping

Scoping refers to a time, early in a project, when the action agency consults the public on what issues should be considered in an EIS. The scoping process helps BPA ensure that the full range of issues and alternatives related to this proposal are addressed in the EIS. The process also identifies significant or potentially significant impacts that may result from the proposed project.

As part of the scoping process, on May 5, 2003, BPA published in the Federal Register a "Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement". The NOI described the proposed action and invited affected landowners, tribes, concerned citizens, special interest groups, local governments, and any other interested parties to comment on the scope of the proposed action. On April 30, 2003, BPA mailed a scoping letter, additional detailed information, answers to frequently asked questions, a project area map, and comment sheet to agencies, tribes, and over 200 potentially interested parties. BPA also held a public scoping meeting on May 22, 2003 in Kalispell, Montana to provide a forum for discussion of the proposed action. At each of these times, BPA requested comments and suggestions defining the issues to be covered in this DEIS. During the scoping process, BPA received 71 comments in the form of letters, e-mails, comment forms, and phone conversations. Comments were received from individuals, organizations, and agencies. This information was used to focus the DEIS. Public scoping comments provided substantial input to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. BPA received comments that both favored and opposed the proposed action. Commenters recommended some additional alternatives for consideration and discussed many issues of concern. In order to facilitate analysis, these comments were synthesized into several broad issue categories. BPA and the cooperating agencies determined which of these issues were to be addressed in detail in the EIS; these issues are discussed in the sections below.

During the scoping period, MFWP also met with several sporting groups in the area, Professional Wilderness Outfitters Association, two Backcountry Horseman Association groups, Polson Outdoors, and the Flathead Chapter of Trout Unlimited; college groups; and other interested and affected publics. MFWP also coordinated several radio spots, a radio call-in show, and newspaper articles.

1.4.2.1 Summary of Issues Proposed During Scoping

Comments generated during the scoping process suggested several alternatives to the proposed method of using fish toxins to address the need for this project, including installing outlet barriers, screening spawning areas, gill-netting, increasing or removing catch limits, and continuing management concepts like the genetic swamping theory. These alternatives are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Fish—As expected, BPA received more comments on fish and the condition of the fishery than on any other resource topic. Commenters discussed their concerns for impacts on non-target species (particularly bull trout populations), and questioned the need to preserve the westslope cutthroat at the risk of losing other fish and angling opportunities. There were also several comments regarding the conclusions drawn from

genetics research and testing. Of particular note were commenters that questioned using the M012 brood stock for restocking and swamping purposes. These commenters suggested that the brood stock itself may actually dilute the genetic uniqueness exhibited in the adaptations and phenotypic variations of local pure westslope cutthroat populations. Along this line, several commenters mentioned that with the removal of all hybrids and other non-natives and the use of the M012 genetic stock, the South Fork would become a virtual monoculture, exhibiting little genetic diversity among populations. MFWP is conducting ongoing research to develop so called “nearest neighbor” stocks. Nearest neighbors are the progeny of fish from wild populations that are genetically similar to the population being restored. This strategy is being developed in order to provide additional diversity to the westslope gene pool. If federal funds are utilized for the development of this stock, additional NEPA environmental review will be completed before this stock is **outplanted**.

There were also a number of comments questioning whether or not the decision to restock lakes after fish removal should be part of the proposed action. Commenters expressed that, “In keeping with the Wilderness Act, the lakes should be restored to their historic fishless condition.” Several commenters suggested keeping a few lakes fishless and restocking the rest for angling.

Wildlife—Commenters expressed considerable interest in the effects of fish removal on local wildlife. Aquatic-dependent organisms such as plankton, insects, and amphibians were mentioned as non-target species. Threatened, endangered, and sensitive terrestrial species were also mentioned. Commenters expressed concern about potential impacts to wildlife habitat from the implementation of treatment options as well as from the transportation of equipment and materials to and from treatment sites. Commenters also expressed that they needed information regarding the impact additional dead fish would have on the environment.

Water—Commenters voiced concern about the impact of fish toxins on water quality in the watershed. Comments included discussions about the safety of drinking water for humans and animals, and the potential for nutrient loading in lakes and streams caused by dead fish. The rate and extent of detoxification of treated waters was also a concern for many. Some commenters urged the careful avoidance of implementation measures within sensitive environments such as wetlands and springs.

Soil and Vegetation—Though not mentioned directly by many commenters, BPA will assess impacts to both soil and vegetation resources. These resources may be impacted by access to remote treatment sites, as well as by the use of **piscicides**.

Land Use and Wilderness—BPA received many comments regarding the implementation of the proposed action within a designated wilderness area. Many commenters voiced opposition to the use of aircraft, outboard motors, or any other motorized/mechanized equipment in designated wilderness areas, while others recommended using motorized equipment exclusively, as authorized under the administrative exemption clause, in order to expedite procedures. Several commenters expressed concern that the use of fish toxins was not appropriate in the management of wilderness areas, and urged the development of a minimum tool analysis.

Recreation—Many commenters expressed concern for the loss of angling opportunities at treated lakes due to the length of time it would take for fish stock to recover, the initial limited size of fish, and the remaining monoculture of fish. Commenters questioned the validity of protecting genetic purity and native species versus providing quality fisheries. Other commenters discussed the visual and auditory impacts treatment activities would

have on recreationists. Commenters claimed that these intrusions would result in a lost potential for solitude and a quality wilderness experience.

Socioeconomics—Several commenters expressed concern about the economic impacts that may be sustained by commercial outfitters if lakes were treated, as well as the short- and long-term effects to the local tourism industry.

Methods of Access—As was mentioned above, many commenters were keenly interested in the methods used to convey personnel, materials, and equipment to remote locations, particularly to lakes located within wilderness areas. Some commenters supported the use of aircraft to access wilderness sites in order to expedite the work and to shorten the length of disturbance, and reduce livestock and human impacts to trails, campsites, and lake access areas potentially affected by the project. Others claimed that the use of any motorized or mechanized conveyance in wilderness areas was in direct conflict with the intent of the Wilderness Act. Similar conveyance activity in Jewel Basin was also questioned as it is a designated hiking area, and managed as semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation area. A few commenters pointed out that pack stock should be used in the summer when the trails are dry to avoid excessive impact. Commenters said that pack animals should not be held overnight within wilderness areas.

1.4.2.2 Issues Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis

BPA looked at many issues and resource concerns when determining the scope of this study. Several of these were eliminated from further analyses.

Air Quality—It was determined that none of the alternatives being considered would impact air quality in any significant way, and would have no short or long-term effects.

Cultural / Tribal—The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Blackfeet Nation, and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho have been contacted regarding this project and its potential to disturb cultural resources, including religious sites; or hunting, fishing, or gathering sites. None of the tribes have indicated any specific concerns.

Geophysical—Since no ground-disturbing activities are proposed, none of the proposed alternatives would affect geophysical resources or geomorphic (e.g., erosion and sedimentation) processes in the watershed. It is recognized that livestock may have some impact to soils, but this activity is proposed in areas where trail networks are designed to accommodate livestock. The amount of livestock use being considered is not unusually high compared to some other administrative livestock uses in the area.

Restocking—As stated above, comments were received during the scoping period regarding the restocking of lakes after treatment. Commenters felt that lakes in and out of wilderness areas should not be restocked, but left fishless. Other commenters felt that all lakes should be restocked with fish. Since all of the lakes listed in this proposal have been stocked for many years prior to the area's designation as wilderness, fish stocking is considered a preexisting activity for those lakes that are in the wilderness. As proposed, there would be no change to the fish stocking program.

Further, it is recognized that not restocking the lakes would create impacts to both the environment and the socioeconomics of the area. Angling opportunities would be eliminated, affecting outfitter business. This would also disperse anglers to the remaining fisheries, placing an additional burden on land and fishery resources through concentrated use.

MFWP is proposing to continue historical practices of stocking fish in order to maintain the current recreational and socioeconomic standards, and to increase biological integrity by providing genetically pure westslope cutthroat to seed downstream areas.

1.5 Decisions to be Made

Several decisions are to be made, based on information contained in this DEIS and comments from the public. As the funding agency, BPA is the lead agency for this federal action. MFWP and FS have decision-making authority for this project and are signatories of the Conservation Agreement (MFWP 1999a). The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and FWS are regulatory agencies that also have considerable input into the final decision.

An analysis was conducted for each lake to determine which of the possible alternatives would best meet the goals of the project. The issues considered included method and extent of fish removal at lakes and streams; seasonal and long-term timing of the action; method of transport for materials, equipment, and personnel; and whether to restock each lake following the removal of fish. Because some lakes occur within wilderness and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area, methodologies and activities selected for implementation would conform to special land use restrictions as much as possible. Each of the agencies involved would contribute their respective expertise, along with public comments, which would be used in the decision making process.

1.5.1 Bonneville Power Administration

BPA is the lead Federal agency for this EIS. MFWP and FS are cooperating agencies. BPA is responsible for protecting, mitigating, and enhancing fish and wildlife affected by the development, and operation of federal hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and its tributaries (see Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 839 *et seq.*, Section 4(h)(10)(A)). BPA meets this responsibility, in part, by funding projects identified through a regional process led by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. The South Fork Flathead Watershed/Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Program, a portion of the Hungry Horse Dam Mitigation Program, was proposed by MFWP through the regional review process. The Council has recommended that BPA fund this project. This draft EIS has been prepared according to NEPA (42 USC 4321 *et seq.*). NEPA is a federal law requiring federal agencies to undergo certain procedures to ensure that the decision maker and the public are informed about environmental consequences of agency actions. Following the environmental review process documented in this EIS, BPA will decide whether to fund the implementation of the proposed action and will issue a **Record of Decision (ROD)**.

1.5.2 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

MFWP is a cooperating agency and has jurisdiction and responsibility to manage all fish and wildlife resources that occur on the state, federal, and private lands of Montana. Pursuant to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), MFWP has the option of either issuing a separate environmental assessment for this project, or participating in a joint NEPA EIS. The Administrative Rules of Montana govern MFWP actions under Title 12 and provide the basis for conducting joint agency EISs (including MEPA and NEPA) under article 12.2.443. MFWP will issue a ROD on this project as a cooperating agency.

1.5.3 United States Forest Service

The FS is a cooperating agency and has jurisdiction and responsibility for the use and management of National Forest lands, including the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Jewel Basin Hiking Area, all of which occur on the Flathead National Forest. For this project, the Flathead National Forest Supervisor will decide: 1) whether to approve the use of piscicides within wilderness areas for the purpose of eliminating hybrid trout populations from lakes and streams, and 2) whether to approve the short-term use of aircraft, outboard motors, pumps, and mixers within wilderness areas and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area to transport equipment, materials, and personnel needed to accomplish the goals of this proposed project. FS will issue its own ROD on the project, separate from the BPA ROD.

1.5.4 Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Before treating a lake, MFWP must apply for, and secure, a 308 Permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). This permit allows for a short-term exemption from surface water quality standards. MDEQ issues provisions to the permits that ensure the standards of the Water Quality Act will be observed.

1.6 Organization of the DEIS

This DEIS includes information necessary for agency officials to make decisions based on the environmental consequences of proposed actions. Federal regulations specify the kind of information to be provided in order for decision-makers to make informed decisions. This document follows those specifications.

Chapter 1 states the purpose and need for the project. The purposes and need are used to define the range of alternatives and to distinguish between alternatives.

Chapter 2 describes the proposed action and alternatives, including the alternative of taking no action. This chapter summarizes the differences of each alternative, especially each alternative's potential impact to the environment.

Chapter 3 describes the existing environment that could be affected by the project, and includes both social and natural considerations. This chapter also describes the possible environmental consequences of the proposed action and alternatives on each resource or issue of concern. Impacts can range from no or low impact, to high impact.

Chapter 4 discusses applicable permits and reviews, agency guidance, and legal requirements pertaining to each alternative.

Chapters 5 through 9 list individuals who helped prepare the EIS; individuals, agencies, and groups that were consulted; references used; a glossary of technical terms, and an index.

Supporting technical information is included in the appendices.