

CAN CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS SAVE MONTANA'S FLUVIAL ARCTIC GRAYLING?

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A Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) is an agreement between the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and any non Federal entity whereby non Federal property owners who voluntarily agree to manage their lands or waters to remove threats to species at risk of becoming threatened or endangered receive assurances against additional regulatory requirements should that species be subsequently listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The goal of the Big Hole CCAA is to secure and enhance a population of fluvial Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*) within the upper reaches of their historic range in the Big Hole River drainage. Under this Agreement, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) holds an ESA Enhancement of Survival Permit issued to it by USFWS and will issue Certificates of Inclusion to non Federal property owners within the project area who agree to comply with all of the stipulations of the Agreement and develop an approved site specific plan. Site specific conservation plans will be developed with each landowner by an interdisciplinary technical team made up of individuals representing MFWP, USFWS, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The conservation guidelines of the Big Hole CCAA will be met by implementing conservation measures that 1) improve streamflows, 2) improve and protect the function of riparian habitats, 3) identify and reduce or eliminate entrainment threats for grayling, and 4) remove barriers to grayling migration. We believe this program represents the best opportunity to conserve the Big Hole River grayling population.