

WILD FISH HABITAT INITIATIVE

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Habitat degradation is one of the principal reasons for the listing of wild fish as “threatened” or “endangered” under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Habitat degradation can exacerbate the detrimental effects of fish predators, exotic competitors, and diseases such as whirling disease. In addition, land values are diminished by habitat degradation and the subsequent loss of wild fish populations. A critical national effort towards the restoration of important fish and wildlife habitat is the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, administered by the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service. This voluntary program provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners interested in restoring habitat on their lands. The Wild Fish Habitat Initiative seeks to augment the Partners Program and other programs by conducting targeted research related to habitat restoration techniques, by implementing a technology transfer program to provide technical information to land owners and project managers, and by collating information on habitat restoration projects completed within the intermountain west. The Wild Fish Habitat Initiative began in summer 2002 with a grant from the US USDI Fish and Wildlife Service to the Montana Water Center. It is being carried out by Montana State University biologists in collaboration with several private- and public-agency biologists.