

MONTANA'S FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM^{AFS}

Mark Lere
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620
mlere@state.mt.us

The Future Fisheries Improvement Act, passed by the 1995 legislature, established a funding program for voluntary habitat projects that protect and enhance Montana's wild and native fishes. The legislature expanded this program by passing the Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Enhancement Act in 1999, directing a portion of the program funding towards projects that enhance native bull trout and cutthroat trout. Funding for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (Program) comes from the re-direction of River Restoration program funds, sale of Montana fishing licenses and expenditures from Montana's resource indemnity trust fund. Anyone or any entity proposing a good habitat project designed to enhance wild and native fishes will be considered for funding. To date, the Program has committed approximately \$6.8 million to 353 habitat projects. Cost sharing with other funding partners has extended these committed funds by an additional \$15 million. In general, projects funded to date fall into one of the following categories: channel re-naturalization (21%); riparian enhancement (21%); fish passage (19%); bank stabilization (15%); in-stream flow enhancement (9%); lake and reservoir enhancement (9%); and miscellaneous (6%). About 55 percent of the habitat projects completed under the Program have been monitored for their effectiveness in enhancing wild fish populations. Fish populations have responded positively in 42 percent of the monitored projects, while populations displayed no response in 8 percent of the projects. It remains premature to draw conclusions for the remaining 50 percent of the projects primarily due to the short time frames for populations to respond following project completion.