
MEETING RESOURCE NEEDS FOR WHITEWATER RECREATION AND STREAM FISHERIES AT THE MYSTIC LAKE HYDRO PROJECT

Frank J. Pickett and Brent Mabbott, Aquatic Ecologist, PPL Montana, 45 Basin Creek Road, Butte, Montana 59701 fjpickett@pplweb.com

West Rosebud Creek is a valuable resource to both fishery and whitewater interests. It provides about 25 mi of trout habitat and several miles of late season, Class IV and Class V whitewater boating. Located approximately 90 mi from Billings and 150 mi from Bozeman, it is available to large populations of fishermen and boaters. Flow enhancement for whitewater recreation was identified as an issue early in the public relicensing process for the Mystic Lake Hydro Project. PPL Montana (PPLM) initiated a collaborative whitewater study and planning process with five stakeholder entities in 2004. In 2007 test flows and a paddler survey were used to identify desired flows, and in 2008 and 2009, test flows were used to develop the mechanics of providing the flows and investigate the effects of the whitewater flows on fish resources. In 2009 a flow protocol was developed that specifies the hydrologic conditions required for whitewater flow augmentation. PPLM plans to file the Final Whitewater Plan with the FERC in December 2009. A key to reaching agreement from all parties was the setting of a relatively high minimum flow to protect fish habitat. We will present the setting, constraints, methods, results, and initial experience of developing, testing, and implementing the whitewater flow plan.