

Flathead River Focus Watershed Coordinator

Annual Report 2004 - 2005

May 2006

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Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208

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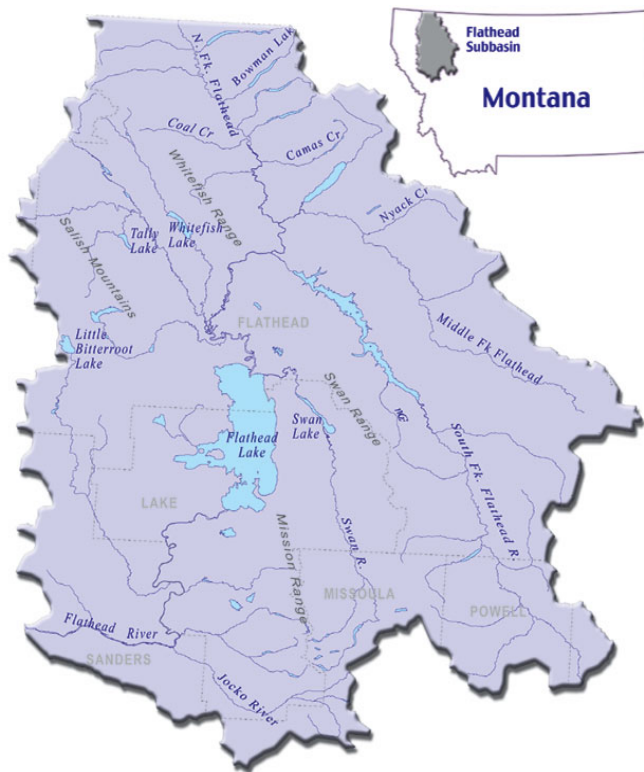
Flathead River Focus Watershed Coordinator

Annual Report 2004

Project 1996-087-01

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by:

Lynn DuCharme

Watershed Coordinator

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

May 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has long been involved with funding of the Cooperative Habitat Protection and Improvement with Private Landowners program in accordance with the Northwest Power Planning Council's (NPPC) Fish & Wildlife Program (Section 7.7). Section 7.7B.1 requires the establishment of "at least one model watershed coordinator selected by each representative state". This project was initiated in 1997 with the purpose of fulfilling the NWPPC's watershed program within the Flathead River basin in western Montana.

Currently, the Flathead watershed has been radically altered by hydropower and other land uses. With the construction of Hungry Horse, Bigfork and Kerr dams, the Flathead River system has been divided into isolated populations. Bull trout have been listed as threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and westslope cutthroat trout have been petitioned for listing. Many streams in the drainage have been destabilized during recent decades. Past legal and illegal species introductions are also causing problems. This project fosters in-kind, out-of-place mitigation to offset the impacts of hydroelectric power to 72 miles of the South Fork of the Flathead River and its tributaries upstream of Hungry Horse Dam.

Key subbasins within the Flathead drainage, which are critical to native species restoration, are experiencing rapid changes in land ownership and management direction. Subdivision and residential development of agricultural and timber lands adjacent to waterways in the drainage pose one of the greatest threats to weak but recoverable stocks of trout species. Plum Creek Timber Company, a major landholder in the Flathead drainage is currently divesting itself of large tracks of its lakeshore and streamside holdings. Growth of small tract development throughout the area and its tributaries is occurring at a record rate. Immediate to short-term action is required to protect stream corridors through many of these areas if cost-effective recovery efforts are to be implemented.

In order to adequately address the issues, other segments of society and other (non-BPA) funding sources must be incorporated into the solution. As stated in the 1994 Fish and Wildlife Program (section 7.7), "Comprehensive watershed management should enhance and expedite implementation of actions by clearly identifying gaps in programs and knowledge, by striving over time to resolve conflicts, and by keying on activities that address priorities." A watershed coordinator helps to initiate and facilitate efforts for addressing the issues mentioned above and pulling together a plan for mitigation. Local support is essential before local governments and individual citizens are going to allow government initiatives to be implemented.

Summary of significant activities

Objective 1: Continue to identify watershed entities

No new formal entities have been created that I am aware of.

Objective 2: Enhance communication network

I continue to participate in many local and regional meetings including meetings held by the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC), Critical Lands Working Group, USDA/Tribal coordination meetings, local groups, Tribal inter-disciplinary meetings, and Conservation District meetings. I continue to track the Ashley Creek Watershed Group and efforts to build a watershed group in Stoner Creek. I also am involved and continue to participate in the Kerr mitigation and Jocko River restoration and planning processes with private stakeholders, Tribal personnel, state and federal representatives.

I continue to work with private landowners, USFWS, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Plum Creek, the Tribes, FBC, etc. in the Dayton Creek drainage. We also continue to work with the Montana Water Trust more aggressively to lease water for instream flows in Ronan Creek and lower Dayton Creek. Interdisciplinary efforts also continue in Ashley Creek, Valley Creek, DuCharme Creek, Mission/Post Creek, Marsh Creek and the Jocko River watershed.

The Tribes and the State are leading the process of developing a subbasin plan for the Flathead River watershed. This process has enhanced communication and information sharing throughout the basin by involving multiple agencies, entities and the public. More detail may be found under Objective 4.

Objective 3: Establish watershed forum. Meet with landowners one-on-one.

I continue to track the Ashley Creek and Stoner Creek watershed groups. The Ashley Creek group has been on hold most of this year due to some organizational issues. The group is starting to gain momentum again however, and has received grant money approval to implement a road relocation project and maintenance of a needed fish barrier. The Stoner Creek watershed assessment has been completed and the University of Montana is now working on completing a watershed conservation action plan to identify potential ways to correct and prevent problems. The citizen council can then make decisions on what types of actions they wish to take.

I continue to work with project 9101901 and residents of the DuCharme/Moss/Centipede drainages. Although a watershed "forum" has not been established as of yet, we are working with individual landowners throughout the drainage and have visited with several other stakeholders. We are also working with the BIA, Flathead Agency Irrigation Division to stabilize and mitigate an irrigation canal break, which introduced additional sediment into the drainage.

The Dayton Creek Watershed restoration project is active and we continue to identify and plan projects. The people owning property around Lake Mary Ronan have also exhibited more interest and are participating in the process. I also continue to work with

landowners in the Dayton Creek drainage on more of a one-on-one basis. NRCS monies continue to be implemented with a few landowners with existing contracts. We are still evaluating different methods available to insure stream flows for fish including the option of water leasing through the Montana Water Trust. The Water Trust is negotiating its first leasing agreement on Ronan Creek and possibly one on Dayton Creek this coming contract year. The Montana Water Trust will potentially fund the temporary water right lease and BPA funds will be used to continue to monitor stream flows.

I am working with Lake County Conservation District, NRCS, Flathead Agency Irrigation Division and Tribal personnel toward watershed restoration in the Post Creek drainage. We continue to work with landowners on a one-on-one basis since this seems to be more effective in this area. We will work toward establishing a watershed group or committee upon achieving more landowner support and cooperation. Several projects will potentially be cost shared with NRCS next fiscal year including riparian fencing and revegetation.

Landowner interest in participating in watershed improvements in the Valley Creek drainage is picking up momentum again. This project completed several on-the-ground activities in 1998 and 1999 and one in this contract year. Valley Creek is a tributary to the Jocko River. Of the lower tributaries to the Jocko River, an area designated as a core recovery area for bull trout, Valley Creek has the highest potential for restoration to provide spawning and rearing habitat for native trout. Valley Creek historically provided spawning and rearing habitat for native, migratory bull trout. The objective for Valley Creek is to restore to the greatest extent practical the water quality, channel quality, and fish community that was present historically. At this point, we are working with landowners and lessees on more of a one-on-one basis and restoration/protection efforts are gaining momentum. Partners include the USFWS, private landowners, NRCS and the local grazing association.

Workings with landowners in a group format and one-on-one has really helped identify limiting factors and problems within each drainage. It seems like an overall picture is developed in the group setting and becomes further pinpointed when visiting with landowners one-on-one on their property. The group setting has helped establish goals and objectives as well as recognize rules and regulations that must be considered.

Objective 4: Cooperative implementation and funding

NRCS continued to have contracts to fund projects in the Dayton Creek drainage during fiscal year 2004. The USFWS has also committed to cost sharing a livestock water well at the mouth of Dayton Creek. This project has been indefinitely postponed however, due to the current state/Tribal water rights issues on the Reservation. CSKT personnel are continuing to measure stream and irrigation flows in Dayton and Ronan Creeks. BPA funds are being used to compensate them for their time. MFWP continues to be a vital partner in identifying and implementing projects in the Dayton Creek watershed.

We cost-shared a bank stabilization project with a landowner on Dayton Creek in May 2003. The landowner's backyard encroached on the stream and the replacement of riparian vegetation with lawn resulted in chronic bank erosion (Figure 1). The landowner agreed to forgo some space in her backyard and to accept and maintain woody



Figure 1: Eroding vertical bank on Dayton Creek prior to reshaping.



Figure 2: Bank of Dayton Creek after reshaping and armoring.

shrubs on the streambank. We excavated the vertical bank, reshaped it to a gradual slope, and planted it with wood rose, serviceberry, red osier dogwood, and willow. Because of the heightened concern of the landowner, we also buried boulders and logs along the water's edge to provide additional armoring to the bank (Figure 2).

Restoration efforts continue in the Marsh Creek drainage and Post Creek drainages. Numerous landowners have been contacted this past year and I am working with several private landowners to continue the implementation of projects. We completed a riparian fencing/grazing management project on private land along Post Creek (Figure 3). The landowner has historically fed his livestock throughout the winter and calved along the east side of Post Creek. Livestock had unlimited access to the stream several times throughout the year. We fenced the east side of the stream and initiated a grazing management plan on the west side of the stream. Irrigation water will be used for livestock water. Due to its proximity to Marsh Creek, the grazing management will also

have benefits to Marsh Creek which joins Post Creek on the west side of the stream. Cooperators on this project include the landowner, the USFWS, and CSKT.



Figure 3: Riparian fence along Post Creek

We continue to make strides toward implementing the Mission B-C canal connection to improve the quality of Post Creek. The final paperwork is near completion for placing an easement across the neighboring property for installation of an underground pipeline. Partners in this project include the Tribes, USFWS, Flathead Agency Irrigation Division, NRCS, and several private landowners.

We continue to work with the Flathead Agency Irrigation Division and the USFWS to implement and cost share several fish screen projects in the Post Creek and Jocko River drainages under the FRIMA (Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act). Two of four fish screens have been fabricated and powder coated and will go in after irrigation season. A third screen still awaits one component from the manufacturer. The Kicking Horse screen will be up and running prior to irrigation season. These actions will prevent native cutthroat and bull trout from being entrained in irrigation canals in these systems.

As mentioned above, landowner interest in the Valley Creek drainage is picking up momentum again. This year we completed ½ mile of riparian fence to protect the South Fork of Valley Creek. Livestock water was provided through the installation of a water gap. Cooperators include the private landowner, the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and BPA. We are also working with this landowner and several others to implement several other projects next year.

I continue to work with the Flathead County Conservation District to do a stream stabilization project on the Stillwater River. This project will involve sloping back and stabilizing the banks, constructing a floodplain bank and revegetation. This project has been postponed until fall 2004 due to the need to secure funding to move a barn an adequate distance away from the river. The movement of the barn is necessary in order to re-contour the stream bank and also to reduce the amount of nutrients entering the Stillwater River. Partners in this project include the Flathead Lakers, MFWP, Flathead County Vo-Ag School, Flathead High School, National Park Service, Critical Lands

Working Group, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the Audubon Society.

Objective 6: Transfer information

Information transfer is occurring CSKT staff and myself through IDT meetings. The many local, regional and watershed group meetings I attend also provide ample opportunity for information exchange.

The subbasin planning process in the Flathead drainage has and will continue to provide ample opportunity to transfer and share information. The many agencies and groups participating in this process have greatly enhanced the flow of data and information from both a technical and process standpoint. Attending local and regional meetings allows for information exchange in terms of project coordination, updates, etc.

I am also continue to participate in the Kerr and Jocko River Restoration and planning process that CSKT has undertaken. Entities involved in this process include CSKT programs, USFWS, FERC, Department of Interior, and the State of Montana.

Objective 7: Project coordination

This project has assisted in coordinating multiple projects this year (see objective 5). Project coordination includes agency and landowner contacts, materials assessment, funding sources, ordering and purchasing, contracting, etc.

Coordination continues toward the rerouting of the FAID Mission B canal to eliminate its wastewater from dumping into Post Creek. At this time, paperwork needed to complete the filing of easements continues. Cooperators include Flathead Agency Irrigation Division (FAID), CSKT, NRCS and private landowners.

We continue to coordinate with the Flathead Agency Irrigation Division and the USFWS to implement and cost share several fish screen projects in the Post Creek and Jocko River drainages. We are working closely with the BIA to implement the projects on the ground and provide cost share. All projects will be completed in fall of 2004.

We continue to work with multiple agencies to assess the feasibility of increasing water storage in either Big Meadow or Lake Mary Ronan to supplement late season flows in lower Dayton Creek. Our relationship with the Montana Water Trust has been fruitful in recent months as they have been negotiating the leasing of water rights in the Dayton Creek drainage to insure instream flows throughout the year. If successful, this program will run on a trial basis of one year (July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005) with the possibility of long term purchase pending the success of this first year.

I continue to participate in the Kerr and ARCO mitigation processes. These mitigation activities dovetail well with BPA mitigation activities and with potential BPA resident fish acquisition. Coordination includes prioritizing and guiding the land acquisition process for mitigation properties.

Objective 8: Establish watershed monitoring & evaluation

Cooperative monitoring is occurring in the DuCharme and Dayton drainages through project 9101901, MFWP, NRCS and Plum Creek on completed passive restoration projects. Additional monitoring in the Dayton Creek drainage is being coordinated between CSKT and MFWP Fisheries biologists. The Tribal Fisheries and Water Quality programs monitor Marsh Creek and Post Creek. The EPA funded non-point source coordinator will continue to monitor and implement irrigation return flow issues and dairy farm issues in the Post Creek drainage. Monitoring plans for the Valley Creek drainage are being developed as part of the Jocko River restoration process between Tribal wildlife, agriculture, and water administration, and fisheries programs and baseline data is being gathered.

The continual implementation of on the ground projects evaluates the success of the coordinator's efforts. Stakeholder cooperation and involvement is an essential element to project implementation and a direct gauge of a coordinator's efforts.

Brief discussion of major problems encountered, changes in workplan, or schedule deviations

No major problems as of yet.

Short description of planned activities for the following year.

I will continue to participate in the many regional, local and interdisciplinary meetings and activities that I am currently involved with. New opportunities may also become available.

Planning and project identification will continue in the DuCharme Creek drainage. Planning will continue with BPA project 9101901 and a private landowner to remove a second in-stream pond and restore a more natural channel dimension, pattern and profile in Moss Creek. Implementation of this project is contingent upon the stabilization (through natural processes) of the effects of the irrigation canal break earlier this year. We will continue to work with the BPA, landowners and other agencies to facilitate land purchases/exchange in both the Dayton, DuCharme, Post Creek and Flathead Lake drainages. We will also continue to work with landowners to facilitate watershed restoration.

I am also working with Tribal personnel, NRCS and the Lake County Conservation District to begin watershed restoration in the Post Creek drainage. We will continue to visit with landowners on an individual basis next spring and summer since group meetings weren't effective. Project identification will also continue in the Marsh Creek drainage, a tributary to Post Creek. Several additional landowners have approached the Tribes interested in improving stream condition.

Fish screen projects funded by the FRIMA program will be completed in the Post Creek and Jocko drainages (see section 5) in the fall of 2004. Although these projects were supposed to have been completed in 2003, delays were experienced in receiving needed components. Additional projects are being considered for submittal pending the outcome of 2005 funding for FRIMA.

Watershed restoration efforts will continue in the Post Creek drainage. Landowners will continually be contacted to determine their interest in conducting restoration/protection projects. Completion of the rerouting of the Mission B canal away from Post Creek will hopefully commence this fall pending completion of survey work and easements. Delays have resulted due to changing needs of the landowner. The Mission B canal currently dumps wastewater directly into Post Creek, contributing to increased water temperatures, fine sediment and nutrient levels in the stream. The Mission C canal is siphoned under Post Creek approximately ½ mile away, opening the door to converging the two canals and relieving Post Creek of this nutrient source. Water will be routed into the Mission C canal where it would then be siphoned under Post Creek to the Post F canal. This will, except for unusually high flows, eliminate wastewater from the B canal. The possibility of this solution has been limited in the past due to lack of funding and the fact that the proposed canal, which would connect Mission B to Mission C canal, would have to cross private land (Keith Cable's). This project will be funded with Tribal dollars and Flathead Agency Irrigation Project dollars. BPA funds are being used to fund the coordinator to participate in this project.

We also plan to protect a reach of Matt Creek, a tributary to Post Creek by constructing approximately one mile of riparian fence. Livestock water will be supplied by a hardened water gap. This project will be cost shared between CSKT, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife and BPA. With the same funding sources, we also hope to construct riparian fence and a water gap along Thorne Creek to establish a buffer and protect the stream from intense livestock grazing. Both Thorne and Post Creeks flow into Mission Creek prior to its confluence with the Flathead River.

Project identification will continue in the Valley Creek drainage. As mentioned above, landowner interest in the Valley Creek drainage is picking up momentum again. We implement several more projects next contract year. Potential projects include: a) the piping of a leaky irrigation canal (Figure 4); b) two potential fish screens; c) additional riparian fencing on several different sites; and d) several off-channel stock water developments.



Figure 4: Leaking irrigation canal in Valley Creek drainage

Watershed restoration efforts will continue in the Dayton Creek drainage. The drilling of a livestock water well to eliminate livestock access to Dayton Creek has been postponed indefinitely based upon water rights issues on the Reservation. Other potential Dayton Creek projects include: culvert replacement; restoration of several sites to a more natural stream shape, pattern and profile; more stream-friendly irrigation diversion structures. We also plan to continue to work with the Montana Water Trust and irrigators to improve instream flows in both Dayton and Ronan Creeks.

I will continue to participate in the Jocko River Restoration and planning process that CSKT has undertaken. Entities involved in this process include CSKT programs, USFWS, Department of Interior, the State of Montana and potentially the Army Corps of Engineers. A channel restoration project near the Arlee Fish Hatchery is scheduled to commence this coming fall.

Project Name	Project Completed	Project Purpose	Total Project Cost	BPA Cost	Cost Share
E. Fork Valley Creek Fencing	April-00	a,b,e,f,h	\$13,037	\$2,753	\$10,284
Mainstem Valley Riparian Fencing	November-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$11,502	\$11,502	In-Kind
S. Fork Valley Cr. Road	October-98	e,h	\$21,839	\$736	\$21,103
Sauer Riparian Fence	November-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$13,360	\$12,784	\$576 in-kind
Carpenter livestock water	September-00	a,b,e,f,h,l	\$11,709	\$4,329	\$7380
Carpenter Corrals	December-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$7,377	\$7,152	\$225
Carpenter/Sauer Reveg	June-01	a,b,e,f,h	\$1,050	\$600	\$450
Plum Creek Riparian	August-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$9,076	\$4,538	\$4,538
McDonald Riparian	November-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$3,671	\$2,925	\$746 in-Kind
Marsh Creek Restoration	September-01	a,d,f,g,h	\$22,676	\$5,480	\$13,612 \$3,584 in-kind
Dark Riparian Restoration	February-99	a,b,e,f	\$1,385	\$650	\$735
Duffy Riparian Restoration	February-99	a,b,e,f	\$2,212	\$1,064	\$1,148
Stone boundary fence	June-99	a,b,e,f,h	\$925	\$245	\$680 in-kind
Hawkins Fencing	February-01	a,b,e,f,h	\$24,332	\$15,735	\$8,597
Pomajevich Fencing	October-01	a,b,e,f,h	\$928	\$696	\$232
Ronan Creek Crossing	December-00	d,e,h,j	\$19,531	\$ 4,899	\$14,632
Dayton Creek Crossing (Carpenter)	January-01	d,e,h	\$13,730	\$4,680	\$9,050
Dayton Creek Crossing (Welch)	January-00	e,h	\$14,581	\$3,541	\$11,040
Meuli Center Pivot	September-01	g	\$51,000	\$8000	\$43,000
Wall Fence & Water Development	Sept-02	a,b,e,f,h,l	\$4,948	\$3,505	\$1,443
Laudermilk Pond Removal	August-02	a,b,d,e,f,h	\$7,746	\$7,746	\$0
Centipede Culvert Removal	May-02	a,b,d,e,f,h	\$1530	\$340	\$1,190
Adams Riparian Fence	February 04	a,b,e,f,h	\$8,013	\$5,239	\$2774
Burke Stabilization	May 04	a,b,c,e,f,h	\$1,875	\$1,085	\$800
Dayton Revegetation	April 04	a,b,e,f,h	\$900	\$900	
DuCharme Reveg	April 04	a,b,e,f,h	\$1,850	\$1,650	\$200
Cable Rip. Fence	February 04	a,b,e,f,h	\$2172	\$1,420	\$752
TOTAL			\$282,472	\$119,273	\$163,199

a = Restore riparian function & veg.
 b = Reduce channel width:depth ratio
 c = Provide access to floodplain
 d = Improve fish passage

e = Reduce sedimentation
 f = Reduce stream temperatures
 g = Increase stream flows
 h = Improve fisheries habitat
 I = Provide off-stream water