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**Upper Clark Fork River Basin Restoration Fund  
Project and Fiscal 2017 Status Report  
November 2017**

**Status of Aquatic and Terrestrial Restoration and Recreation Projects**

**Group 1 Aquatic Flow Projects (Section 3.2.1)**

The *Restoration Plans* identified nine potential flow augmentation projects as the highest priority for project development and due diligence work by the State and Project Sponsors. Work on these Group 1 projects to date has mainly involved water rights, flow assessment, and coordination tasks needed to determine the likely flow benefits and viability of the projects, and completing the needed contractual agreements with Project Sponsors for this project development work. The NRDP has executed master contracts with the Clark Fork Coalition (CFC) and Trout Unlimited (TU) to assist in the management and development tasks. Currently, six (6) Group 1 projects are being pursued: Helen Johnson, Westside/Whalen Ditch, Harvey Creek, Clark Fork River above Deer Lodge, Silver Lake, and Flint Creek flow improvement projects. The Pauley Ranch and the Clark Fork Meadows proposals, which were discussed in the *2012 Restoration Plan* are no longer under consideration due to landowner decisions. The following descriptions provide updates specific to these six projects, all of which have proceeded with the involvement of NRDP. No funding decisions will be made until after the projects have progressed through the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) process. Also NRDP is continuing to monitor flows in the CFR to obtain flow data and to fill the gaps in the USGS monitoring stations.

- **Helen Johnson Ditch:** In 2013, the Dry Cottonwood Ranch eliminated the use of one of their diversions/ditches known as the Helen Johnson, installed a pump system closer to the irrigated acres, and converted a portion of acres from flood to pivot irrigation, which conserves up to 9 cfs of CFR flow. As required by DNRC, the water rights were split from other water rights holders that were not involved in the change process, which involved the Water Court. This process took over a year to complete.

In 2016, DNRC determined the application to be correct and complete, but they raised some issues in their technical report that are cause for concern for NRDP. The primary concern with the DNRC technical report is their determination of a volume for the instream flow that is much less than what the application proposed. NRDP believes the application provided all the information necessary to justify the proposed instream flow volume, ditch measurements, and affidavits from long time irrigators confirming the historic use of the water rights. The Clark Fork Coalition supplied additional information and waived the statutory review timelines in 2016 to further substantiate some of the water use measurement data in hopes that DNRC would reconsider some of the information in the technical report.

DNRC communicated in September of 2017 that the preliminary determinations for the applications are almost done, although indications are that a much smaller volume than proposed will be approved. As a result, we have shortened the period of use that the

instream flow rates will be in effect to maximize the flow restoration benefit, given the limited volume. We expect to see the Preliminary Determination any day from DNRC to grant the application and, at that point, we will decide whether or not to accept or challenge the Preliminary Determinations.

- **West Side and Whalen Ditch:** The project is proposing to consolidate the leaky West Side and Whalen ditches into a single pipe for 3.8 miles and complete some additional piping (.5 miles) of some of the highest seepage loss sections of the West Side Ditch. In total, the project could conserve up to 19.2 cfs of flow, which could be converted to instream flow below the headgate. A ground and surface water modeling study of the ditch seepage water was completed in the fall of 2016 to better inform the protected reaches for the instream flow and impacts to ground and surface water sources from piping.

In 2016, an award of \$950,000 in matching funds for the West Side/Whalen Ditch project was obtained through the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to assist with this effort. This federal program is part of a larger award being administered through the Watershed Restoration Coalition (WRC) in Deer Lodge. The details of how these matching funds could contribute toward the roughly \$6.5 million project are still being worked out. Additional matching funds are also being sought by the Clark Fork Coalition through a variety of sources.

In 2017, the Clark Fork Coalition, in coordination with the water users, completed a draft change of use application, which we hope to present to the water users for review. During the summer of 2017, a major shareholder in the ditch company changed hands as a result of a property sale. This new shareholder appears to have some concerns about the project, which could impact the ability to move it forward. We plan to participate in a ditch meeting with the water users this fall to discuss the future direction of the project.

- **Harvey Creek:** NRDP has been working with TU and Harvey Creek Ranch by installing irrigation infrastructure improvements on the eastern side of Harvey Creek Ranch, consolidating three ditches to one, which was fitted with a fish screen in 2014. After a change of diversion is approved for three more diversions to furnish water to the western side of Harvey Creek Ranch, additional irrigation infrastructure will be installed to consolidate all points of diversions on the ranch to the diversion with a fish screen. Upon completion, the project will have eliminated six diversions that precluded upstream fish migration and fish entrainment in these ditches. Currently, NRDP is working with TU to change the irrigation water use to instream flow use by going through the Change Authorization Process. (Also see Aquatic Non-flow projects for other Harvey Creek restoration actions.)
- **Clark Fork Above Deer Lodge:** The Clark Fork Coalition is continuing to conduct efforts to identify potential flow projects that would augment instream flow in the dewatered sections of the Upper Clark Fork River between Warm Springs and Deer Lodge. Four potential flow projects have been identified on the mainstem. Landowner meetings, flow monitoring, and water rights due diligence are in progress. As a result of some of these activities, NRDP has entering into two short-term leases in Lower Lost Creek area that will

be supply instream flow to the Clark Fork River. Activities are continuing in hopes of working out longer term or permanent water deals.

- **Silver Lake Water System:** NRDP, in cooperation and coordination with Butte-Silver Bow (BSB), conducted a short-term lease of Silver Lake water for instream flow. The lease involved pumping of up to 32 cfs from Silver Lake and discharging the water to Warm Springs Creek where it was monitored for a two-week time period from late August to early September 2017. The monitoring, which was done with assistance from TU and CFC, occurred at the USGS monitoring sites and other temporary monitoring stations, such as select irrigation diversions, in Warm Springs and the Clark Fork River. The monitoring revealed that, though there was some diminishment in flow on route to the river, about 20 cfs made it as far as Galen. NRDP considers the release to be successful and will be working with BSB on terms for a long-term water lease of Silver Lake water for instream flow in the coming months. Since these Silver Lake water rights have already been designated for instream flow use, a water lease is not required to go through the DNRC's change authorization process.
- **Flint Creek:** This pilot project sought to lease up to 1.8 cfs of flow in Flint Creek for five years. A change of use application was prepared, but not submitted due to ongoing adjudication of the rights. Instead, we tried a temporary leasing application to DNRC, which received a preliminary determination to approve the application in the spring of 2017, but was denied after receiving multiple objections. Rather than request a hearing to try to contest these objections, it was decided it would be a better use of limited resources to put the project on hold.
- **Flow Monitoring:** CFC has continued to monitor flows for NRDP at four locations on the mainstem Clark Fork River between Deer Lodge and Warm Springs for the purpose of better understanding the timing and magnitude of dewatering at points between the USGS gauges. The CFC gauges were pulled just a few weeks ago and the data is currently being processed. The lowest observed flow of 2017 was 7.5 cfs below West Side Ditch near the Gemback Bridge. CFC is also gaging flows at three locations on Racetrack Creek and has conducted spot measurements of seepage along the West Side Ditch.

### **Aquatic Non-Flow Projects: (Section 3.2.2)**

Work on the non-flow aquatic projects in priority watershed areas has involved continued landowner contacts, evaluation of current riparian habitat conditions and fish passage/entrainment problems, prioritization of restoration actions, the development of restoration project designs, and implementation of restoration projects in the eight watersheds targeted for work. The development and implementation of projects include protect/enhance riparian habitat, improve fish passage, reduce fish entrainment, and/or improve in-stream habitat actions. These projects are being accomplished through contracts and task orders between NRDP and two project sponsors/partners, Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Watershed Restoration Coalition (WRC).

Task orders with TU have been executed for project management, fish passage and entrainment assessments, related prioritization of restoration work, and project development/implementation

in the Browns Gulch, Blacktail Creek, Little Blackfoot River (and tributaries), Warm Springs Creek, Flint Creek, and Harvey Creek watersheds.

Task orders with the WRC have been executed for project management, riparian and instream habitat assessments, related prioritization tasks, project development/design, and implementation for restoration work being considered in the Browns Gulch, Blacktail Creek, Little Blackfoot River (and tributaries), Cottonwood Creek, and Flint Creek watersheds.

Summaries of activities within each of the targeted watersheds are described below.

- **Browns Gulch:** Fish passage, entrainment, riparian assessments, and the prioritization for restoration projects have been completed. Prioritization for riparian habitat enhancement projects identified projects upstream of Hail Columbia Gulch as a higher priority than projects in lower Browns Gulch because of the presence of cutthroat trout residing in this reach.

NRDP and partners WRC and TU are actively developing and implementing fish passage, riparian habitat protection and enhancement, bank stabilization, beaver mimicry, and other projects in Browns Gulch. Below is a summary of projects that are being developed or have been developed and are moving toward implementation:

- **Heavens Valley Ranch:** Beaver mimicry and riparian protection via downed trees has been completed.
  - **Woods Ranch:** Riparian fencing (~3,100 feet) along Browns Gulch and a hardened water gap for cattle watering were installed in August 2016 to reduce grazing on streambanks.
  - **Myers Ranch:** Design for stream and riparian zone restoration are complete. Stream restoration bid will be out mid-November 2017. Construction to be completed in spring 2018.
  - **Liva Ranch:** Implementation of previously completed fish-friendly diversion design and off stream water tanks were installed during the fall of 2017. Riparian plantings to be installed late fall 2017 or spring 2018, weather dependent.
  - **Ueland Ranch:** Survey and design for fish passage at three diversions on Lower Browns Gulch was completed in 2016. Two diversions will be retrofitted or upgraded to improve fish passage in the fall of 2017, with the third slated for construction in 2018.
- **Warm Springs Creek:**
    - **Anaconda Diversion:** Installation of a fish screen and diversion improvements for the “Anaconda Diversion” southwest of Anaconda was completed in fall of 2016.

- **Gardiner Diversion:** Below Anaconda, design is underway for a fish screen and a rock ramp to reduce entrainment and improve upstream fish migration. Pending water user agreements construction is scheduled for 2018.
  - **Twin Lakes and Storm Lake Creeks:** The NRDP, in coordination with Butte-Silver Bow, FWP, and TU will be evaluating the Silver Lake infrastructure for fish passage and entrainment winter of 2017-2018.
  - **Upper Warm Springs Creek:** NRDP provided funding to TU as a cost share for fish passage improvements in the Upper Warm Springs Drainage. NRDP funds helped replace a failing culvert that was a known passage barrier with a clear span bridge. The project was completed in the summer of 2017.
- **Little Blackfoot River Watershed:**
    - **Snowshoe Creek:** A fish screen and fish-friendly diversion was installed to address entrainment and fish passage issues.
    - **Lower Spotted Dog Creek:** The lower section of Spotted Dog Creek has been identified as a location to complete irrigation efficiency projects that will reduce the number of instream diversions, thus reducing passage and entrainment issues while realizing incidental instream flow. The potential exists to relocate or restore several sections of lower Spotted Dog Creek from its current degraded condition.
    - **Mainstem Little Blackfoot River:** A riparian fence and riparian pasture lease were executed on the Janke property in 2017. Approximately 60 acres of riparian area have been protected. Additional fish passage and entrainment issues are currently being evaluated and addressed.
    - **Mainstem Little Blackfoot River:** A thorough geomorphic assessment was completed evaluating floodplain connectivity, stream function, and habitat-limiting processes on the mainstem Little Blackfoot River between Elliston and Snowshoe Creek. Conceptual level restoration projects are being developed and evaluated for potential implementation.
    - **Mainstem Little Blackfoot River:** Fish entrainment and passage issues are being evaluated on a side channel of the mainstem Little Blackfoot River for fish screens and improved diversions for passage.
- **Flint Creek Watershed:**
    - **Flint Creek:** NRDP, TU, and DNRC are working cooperatively to design a fish screen and diversion for the Allendale Ditch, a large State-owned irrigation canal that is known to entrain up to 50% fish that encounter the diversion. An MOU between NRDP and DNRC was executed in September 2016 and DNRC is leading the design and

construction of this project. DNRC is also working with stakeholders associated with this project. A preliminary engineering report has been completed.

- **Flint Creek:** Four properties and about six miles of Flint Creek have been evaluated for floodplain connectivity, diminished natural stream function (and associated habitat reduction), and fish passage and entrainment issues. Alternatives to address the limiting factors on these stream reaches are being evaluated based on their cost/benefit to the fishery.
- **Flint Creek:** Final negotiations are underway for a riparian fencing and revegetation project on a highly productive spring creek that produces cold water and provides spawning and rearing habitat for mainstem fish. The project is slated for funding out of the terrestrial dollars allocated to Flint Creek riparian protection and restoration.
- **Boulder Creek – Lundgren Property:** A riparian restoration and in-stream habitat project was completed on Boulder Creek. Five sites were addressed where tall vertical soil banks were present with no vegetation and/or Boulder Creek was over widened. Fabric encapsulated soil lifts, large woody debris jams, and riparian plantings and stakes were installed.
- **Boulder Creek – Olson Pond:** Boulder Creek was returned to its pre-2011 channel, thus relocating it away from the pond. In 2011, Boulder Creek avulsed through a field and captured the Olson Pond. In 2017, high flows created further damage to the pond outlet dam and to the channel upstream. Fish were being targeted in the pond by avian predators, and passage from downstream reaches upstream was severely limited. Fish now have improved habitat and a reliable migration corridor for upstream and downstream movement.
- **Harvey Creek:** Most of the identified fisheries improvement projects have been completed on Harvey Creek, as discussed in previous updates: the failing culvert and manmade fish barrier on Mullan Road that crosses Harvey Creek were replaced by a new concrete box culvert and eight foot concrete vertical fish barrier in April 2016, irrigation improvements mentioned in the aquatics flow section, a 100-foot bioengineered bank stabilization project was completed to protect corrals on the Harvey Creek Ranch from erosion, and to provide a natural vegetative buffer between the corrals and Harvey Creek and riparian fencing. Pending a successful point of diversion change with DNRC, final steps will be taken to consolidate all irrigation diversions into a single screened diversion. All other diversions will be removed from the stream channel and ditches blocked. This will allow for unrestricted upstream and downstream movement of native fish from the Mullan Trail to the headwaters of Harvey Creek.

**Mainstem Clark Fork River – Flint Creek to Rock Creek (Section 3.2.2.1) – Fish Population Evaluation and Follow-up Actions:** Beginning in July 2015, the University of Montana (UM) gathered and organized background information on the reach, began an extensive field data collection campaign, and evaluated the findings during the winter. The UM study was extended for a second year beginning in July 2016, to expand on the preliminary findings in 2015. Following

evaluation of the data collected from July 2016 through June 2017, UM is developing restoration alternatives to address limiting factors for fish populations in this reach. A final report with recommendations is expected in December 2017.

### **Terrestrial Projects: (Section 4.0)**

#### **Land Projects:**

Work in 2017 has involved land transaction development, along with due diligence steps on several acquisition projects. Other efforts revolved around wildlife habitat improvement projects.

#### **Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch:**

NRDP, the Clark Fork Coalition, and landowners agreed to pursue placing the 2,363-acre Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch (DCCR) into State ownership. The property is located in Deer Lodge County approximately 13 miles northwest of Anaconda. Access to the property is via Interstate 90 to the Galen Road exit and along other roads to the east of the property. The UCFRB Advisory Council toured this ranch in June 2017.

This project is located in the Deerlodge South Priority Landscape Area, as identified in the January 2016 Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans (“Final Restoration Plans”). This purchase would significantly meet the goals set out in the Final Restoration Plans by protecting 4.3 miles of the Clark Fork River and 1,635 acres of upland wildlife habitat. As discussed below, NRDP is also working on procuring the adjacent ranch to the south of this property, which will further enhance the Final Restoration Plans’ goals.

The needed land transaction due diligence has been completed to date. This includes an appraisal, environmental site assessment, water rights evaluation, the warranty deed, and title insurance commitment guarantee. NRDP has found all these land transaction documents to be acceptable.

The environmental site assessment commissioned by NRDP and completed in March 2017 concluded that the property does not appear to present an environmental liability. The title work of the property did not indicate any unacceptable encumbrances on the property. The appraisal of the property commissioned by NRDP and completed in April 2017 concluded a fair market value of \$4,175,000 for 2,363 acres, or \$1,766/acre. This value will be reduced because the landowner will retain the existing house and 3.3 acres surrounding the house.

#### **Deer Lodge River Ranch:**

In 2016, NRDP and the owners of the Deer Lodge River Ranch agreed to pursue placing the 1,051-acre ranch into State ownership. The property is located in Deer Lodge County approximately 13 miles northwest of Anaconda and shares the southern border of the DCCR, as discussed above. Access to the property is via Interstate 90 to the Galen Road exit and along other roads to the east of the property. This ranch was also visited by the UCFRB Advisory Council in June 2017.

This project is located in the Deerlodge South Priority Landscape Area, as identified in the January 2016 Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans (“Final Restoration Plans”). This purchase would significantly meet the goals set out in the Final Restoration Plans by protecting over a mile of the Clark Fork River and 800 acres of upland wildlife habitat. Both the Clark Fork River and upland grasslands are designated as Priority One areas in the Final Restoration Plans. Since both the uplands and riparian areas are adjacent to the DCCR, State ownership of both ranches will greatly increase the public and wildlife benefits.

The needed land transaction due diligence has been completed to date. This includes an appraisal, environmental site assessment, water rights evaluation, the warranty deed, and title insurance commitment guarantee. The NRDP has found all these land transaction documents to be acceptable.

The environmental site assessment commissioned by NRDP and completed in March 2017 concluded that the property does not appear to present an environmental liability. The title work of the property did not indicate any unacceptable encumbrances on the property. The appraisal of the property commissioned by the NRDP and completed in April of 2017 concluded a fair market value of \$1,080,000 for 1,051 acres, or \$1,027/acre. NRDP is presently engaged in assessing the best process of transferring this property into public ownership.

If approved for State ownership, these properties (Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch and Clark Fork River Ranch) will add 3,414 acres into public ownership. These properties’ primary feature is almost 5.3 miles of the Clark Fork River. Having this river corridor available for public use will be a benefit that Montana citizens can enjoy in perpetuity. Other riparian benefits from this project will be public use and enjoyment of 1.5 miles of Dry Cottonwood Creek and 1.2 miles of Modesty Creek. The 2,425 acres of uplands areas surrounding the east end of the property is primarily native intermountain grasslands and conifer forests that provide habitat for a variety of game and non-game species. This area is a heavily utilized Block Management area that will continue to be available to hunting in perpetuity. Much of the property is important big game winter range, primarily for elk, mule deer, and antelope. NRDP is presently engaged in assessing the best process of transferring this property into public ownership.

### **Buxbaum Easement:**

Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) is working with private landowners to protect 1,193 acres of grassland, wetland, and forest habitat near Maxville with a permanent conservation easement. FVLT is also working with Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to secure public hunting opportunities on the property and to USFS lands east of the property. The property is owned by the Buxbaum family and is located east of Highway 1 in the foothills of the Flint Creek Range.

The property’s grasslands, forestlands, wetlands, and aspen groves are connected to the other wildlife habitat areas to the east and south. Most of the property is underdeveloped, providing rangeland and wildlife habitat. A conservation easement on the property will provide an effective and cost-efficient way to permanently protect the properties conservation values, while keeping the land in private ownership and management. No residential development would be permitted, thereby protecting in perpetuity the wildlife habitat and open space values the property offers

today. NRDP hired WESTECH Environmental Services to prepare a terrestrial resource evaluation. This evaluation states the property contains a diversity of wildlife habitat and is mapped as winter range for mule deer, elk, and moose. Public hunting opportunities will also be granted through the conservation easement and assigned to FWP. FVLT will hold the conservation easement and assume perpetual responsibility for protecting the land and conservation values, while FWP will hold and manage the public access component.

FVLT will be requesting funding from the Restoration Fund to support the purchase of this conservation easement on the entire 1,193-acre property and allow for public hunting access. The majority of the \$537,000 for this easement will be paid by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. FVLT has requested Restoration Funds of up to \$250,000, or up to 25% of the Conservation Easement Value, whichever is less.

**Beavertail to Bearmouth (B2B) USFS purchase:** The 6,148-acre B2B property is owned by Stimson Lumber and located thirty miles east of Missoula in Granite County. Eleven checkerboard parcels of timber land are interspersed with the Lolo National Forest stretching between Beavertail State Park and Bearmouth on the south side of I-90. In 2017, Stimson and Trust for Public Lands (TPL) entered into an option agreement giving TPL the opportunity to acquire the B2B property in fee. The option will expire in 2020. The appraised value is \$4,230,000 and each parcel was assigned a value in order to allow for a multi-phased and multi-year purchase.

TPL is working with the USFS to apply for Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) and Sportsmen Recreation Access Funds. In 2017, \$500,000 of LWC funds was awarded to the project and this funding will go towards acquiring some of the property in November 2017. A \$3.47 million LWCF proposal for FY 19 has been submitted. The goal of the project is to consolidate public ownership, ensure permanent public access to the USFS, protect important fish and wildlife habitat, and improve water quality and connectivity. Acquisition would secure 56 miles of public road access. These goals correspond with Final Restoration Plans' terrestrial goals. Harvey Creek, a Priority 2 stream, crosses through one of the eight parcels. NRDP is in discussions with TPL about possibly expending Restoration Funds for some or all of the Harvey Creek section (valued by the USFS appraisal at \$432,520), which could serve as a match for the LWCF funding.

**Northside Garrity Land Purchase:** FWP is assessing its interest in purchasing a 135-acre, privately owned land parcel to the north of Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area. FWP and NRDP are discussing if this transaction is one where NRD assistance is necessary.

#### **Habitat restoration projects on Private Lands:**

- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):** In September 2016, the Governor formally submitted to the US Department of Agriculture an application for a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for the UCFRB. The CREP will be administered by the Farm Service Agency and targets high-priority conservation issues identified by local, state, or tribal governments by removing environmentally-sensitive land from production and/or introducing conservation practices in which farmers, ranchers, and agricultural land owners are paid an annual rental rate. Landowner participation is voluntary and the contract period is typically ten to fifteen years. The focus of the

estimated \$11 million UCFRB CREP will be to protect wetlands, riparian, and grassland areas, and to enhance aquatic and wildlife habitat and values in the UCFRB. The restoration action expenditures, as proposed in the UCFRB Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans, will serve as the major source of the required 20% State match to the CREP. The NRDP believes the aquatic and terrestrial restoration actions being designed and implemented will be significantly enhanced by the establishment of this CREP in the UCFRB. Launching of the program for the UCFRB is expected in early 2018.

- **Wildlife Habitat Enhancements of Private Lands in the UCFRB:** NRDP has contracted with WRC to assist in assessing potential terrestrial restoration projects on private lands in the Deerlodge South and Philipsburg Landscape area.
  - **Deer Lodge South Landscape Area:** This effort started in spring 2015 with the WRC working with local landowners on projects that will enhance wildlife and wildlife habitat in the landscape areas. The types of projects being evaluated are: aspen regeneration and conifer encroachment removals, off stream watering, riparian fencing, biological and chemical weed control, and other riparian enhancement work. Project implementation began in fall 2016 and will continue through 2019.
  - **Philipsburg Landscape Area:** The WRC has been working with landowners on planning efforts. Work is expected to focus on conifer encroachment removals, off stream watering, riparian fencing, biological weed control, and beaver mimicry. Project implementation in 2018.

#### **Other Terrestrial Efforts:**

- NRDP is also working on other potential land acquisition prospects, although this work is more at the conceptual planning stage and has not yet involved any due diligence tasks, such as title and appraisal work. One project that was not successful was the acquisition of the 751-acre R Bar N ranch located a few miles south of Deer Lodge. This ranch was being considered for state ownership in order to transfer the property's extensive water rights from irrigation into instream flow. NRDP performed the appraisal and made an offer to the landowner in the summer of 2017. The landowner considered the State's offer, however, accepted an offer to sell the ranch to another party.
- NRDP and FWP have entered into an MOU, per the *Restoration Plans*, which allocates \$2 million in Restoration Funds for habitat protection and enhancement for existing FWP Wildlife Management Areas, or other lands already acquired with NRD funds in the UCFRB. These areas include the following WMAs: Spotted Dog, Garrity, Blue-eyed Nellie, Stucky Ridge, Warm Springs, Mount Haggin, and Lost Creek. The proposed actions for these areas are those beyond the routine operation and maintenance activities for which FWP is normally funded through its biennial funding. These activities include riparian fencing, riparian restoration, acquisition of key private in holdings, biological and other weed control, road removal, wetland restoration, and enhancement.

## **Recreation Projects: (Section 5.0)**

NRDP has been working with Project Sponsors on needed project development and due diligence tasks on the six recreation projects included in the *Restoration Plans*. These projects are funded with the proportionate allocations of aquatic and terrestrial priority funds identified in the *Restoration Plans*.

- **Drummond Kiwanis Riverside Park:** Following public comment and a favorable funding recommendation from the Advisory Council and Trustee Restoration Council, the Governor approved the project for funding in November 2013, subject to several funding conditions. The land acquisition was completed December 2014. Improvements to the site continue.
- **Deer Lodge Trestle Park:** NRDP and Powell County finalized a phased contract that has enabled the County to conduct some initial outreach and design tasks. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, Powell County was not able to implement the Trestle Park project. In the 2015 Update to the Restoration Plans, Powell County submitted a project abstract, proposing to compose a Master Plan to create linkage between existing recreational opportunities in and around the City of Deer Lodge, along the Clark Fork River, and connect to the trail system at the Grant-Kohrs National Park. This planning proposal was integral to the Deer Lodge Trestle Park project being funded through the Restoration Plans. Rather than include this project as a separate recreational project, NRDP worked with Powell County to integrate this project into Powell County's current Trestle Park project, as there were funds available. Powell County completed their Trails Master Plan in October 2016 and requested NRDP and UCFRB Advisory Council approval to proceed with development of the Branning Trail purchase and development.
- **Branning Trail Purchase:** Powell County, on behalf of the Powell County Parks Board, is proposing to purchase 107 acres, 7.5-miles, of the Old Milwaukee right-of-way from a single private landowner to convert it into a recreational trail for public use. Funding would come from the Natural Resource Damage Program of the Department of Justice and their Upper Clark Fork River Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans, 2016, Section 5.2.1 Recreational Enhancements in Injured Areas. Based on an appraisal commissioned by NRDP, the appraised value is \$160,000. The State included this project as a potential recreational project to be considered for further review and subsequent funding decision in the January 2016 *Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin (UCFRB) Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans ("Restoration Plans")*. If purchased using UCFRB Restoration Funds, the property would become Powell County property and be developed for recreational purposes, as described below, and be protected for recreational opportunities for the general public.

Powell County has managed the public comment process which occurred in October 2017. The response to these comments were prepared and summarized with NRDP input in early November 2017. As stated in the Restoration Plans, the acquisition component of this project will require the Advisory Council and the Trustee Restoration Council recommendation and approval by the Governor.

The proposed purchase of a 7.5-mile rail bed would stretch from Garrison to Deer Lodge with several river crossings of the Clark Fork River. In 2016, the Powell County Parks Board, with assistance from the Trails Sub-Committee, developed and finalized the Trails Master Plan (Trails Plan) that was approved by the County Commissioners in October 2016. The Trails Plan was inspired by the overwhelming support indicated by the general public during the development of the Arrowstone Master Plan (2014-15) as well as a survey conducted by the Deer Lodge Medical Center. Through the Arrowstone Master Plan and subsequent Trails Plan, the public expressed a strong desire to establish a trail system throughout the Deer Lodge Valley. In particular, the Trails Plan discussed public desire for a trail near the Clark Fork River and noted the trail potential for the Old Milwaukee rail bed north of Deer Lodge to be purchased and converted into a trail. If purchased, the goal is to have the trail connect to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch trail system that is maintained by the National Park Service. (See public comment from Grant-Kohrs Ranch supporting the trail and its connection to NPS trails.) Once that is done, this will be an 11-mile trail system from Garrison to Deer Lodge.

- **Washoe/Hafner Dam Parks:** NRDP and Anaconda Deer Lodge County (ADLC) executed a contract in December 2013 for the second phase of work that mainly entails project management, engineering, and design work for recreational improvements, based on Phase I 2013 LIDAR results and Phase III implementation. ADLC entered into a contract with Jordan Construction and began construction in spring 2015. Work at Washoe/Hafner Park was completed in 2017. ADLC held a dedication ceremony in the summer of 2017 and the UCFRB Advisory Council was given a tour of the park in June 2017 by Advisory Council member and project manager Mark Sweeney.
- **Milltown State Park:** FWP and NRDP signed a memorandum of agreement for the Milltown State Park project work covered in the *Restoration Plans*. Most of the recreational trail and access feature development work at the Park conducted in 2013 is being done pursuant to the 2009 Milltown State Park grant. FWP developed and implemented a trail plan to establish trails on the south side of the river upstream of the former dam site in 2015. The trails on the south side provide public access to the former reservoir area.

In the spring of 2017, FWP finalized an access agreement with International Paper for the Confluence Area. Construction work began on the Milltown Park design for the Confluence Area during the summer of 2017. FWP's contractor made excellent progress and FWP is planning for a grand opening spring of 2018. A majority of the work completed this past summer was funded with a HUD grant FWP received for this project and the 2009 Restoration Fund grant.

- **Bonner Dam Removal:** This work was completed in January 2014.
- **Clark Fork River Fishing Access Sites:** FWP and NRDP have established a memorandum of agreement for FWP to begin the scoping process on certain Upper Clark Fork River department-owned properties, which are currently undeveloped fishing access

sites, to determine the feasibility of developing these fishing access sites to include improvements, such as boat launches, latrines, and designated parking. Currently, FWP is coordinating with NRDP to build a fishing access site at Racetrack Pond (Paracini Pond) on the Clark Fork River. At the site, both pond access and river access will be constructed. In another project area, FWP is purchasing approximately 6 acres of property near Gold Creek, MT and plans on constructing the site in 2018. Bearmouth FAS (a non-developed FWP owned site) is also in the planning stages. Private property near this location is being considered to serve as a possible launch site. Kohr's Bend FAS (a non-developed FWP owned site) will likely be developed in 2018 as well. Further, FWP and Powell County are in discussions and are scoping possible new FAS sites throughout the county.