



P.O. BOX 7792 MISSOULA, MT 59807 (406) 274-2545
www.hellgatehuntersandanglers.org

December 3rd, 2019

Sharon Rose
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, Montana 59804

RE: Rattlesnake Creek Dam Removal Project—Draft EA

Dear Ms. Rose,

Hellgate Hunters & Anglers (HHA) is a local sportsmen's conservation group dedicated to conserving Montana's wildlife, wild places, and fair-chase hunting and fishing heritage. Our organization represents over 300 members who hunt and fish throughout Western Montana. HHA would like to offer the following comments in support of the Rattlesnake Creek Dam Removal.

Rattlesnake Creek is a vital tributary for the middle Clark Fork River as it provides cold, clean water and quality fish and wildlife habitat. Many anglers in the Missoula area, including many of HHA's members, understand the importance of this habitat. The quality of spawning habitat for bull trout above the project area is significant and removing the Rattlesnake Dam will benefit bull trout by improving migratory connectivity. With monitoring showing that estimated bull trout populations in Rattlesnake Creek are reduced from historical levels, this project is important for the species.

Similarly, Rattlesnake Creek provides high quality spawning and rearing habitat for westslope cutthroat trout, a native species of concern in Montana. It was determined that fluvial cutthroat spawning in Rattlesnake Creek utilize a large portion of the Clark Fork both above and below Missoula. Removing the dam will also improve connectivity for these important game fish.

Wildlife diversity and use of the Rattlesnake Creek corridor is very high and the riparian area habitat supports numerous species, including hundreds of bird species. The Department's preferred action will enhance the riparian corridor and be beneficial to these species.

Hellgate Hunters and Anglers applauds the Department and partners on this project, and fully supports the preferred Alternative 3 which involves full removal of infrastructure and restoration of the affected habitat. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Adam M. Shaw
President
Hellgate Hunters & Anglers