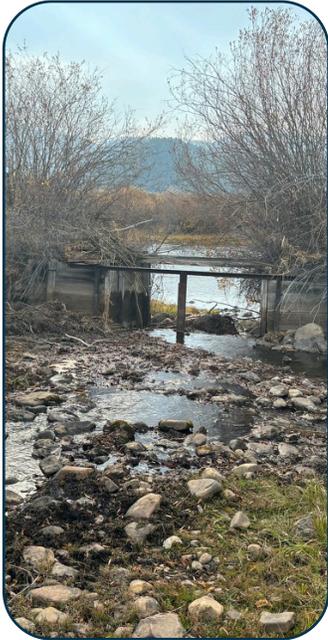


Reconnecting Big Hole Tributaries - Johnson and Alder Creeks

Two Phase Project, Wise River, MT



Across the Upper Missouri River Basin, low stream flows and elevated water temperatures, a result of land-use practices and persistent drought, have led to declining native and wild salmonid populations. The Upper Big Hole River is home to the last aboriginal population of fluvial Arctic grayling. It also is one of the most chronically dewatered rivers in Montana. Furthermore, the Big Hole has experienced a well-documented and publicized decline in wild trout populations in the West. Montana Trout Unlimited (MTU) has prioritized the Big Hole for investment in critical drought adaptation strategies to address streamflow, temperature, and fish health issues.



CHALLENGE & PROJECT SOLUTION

JOHNSON & ALDER CREEKS

Johnson Creek flows south out of Fleecer Mountain. It has an average peak flow of 25 cfs in June and a base flow of 2 cfs in August. Just 400 yards downstream, Alder Creek flows north out of the West Pioneers. It has an average peak flow of 52 cfs in June and a base flow of 5.6 cfs in September. Both creeks are 5+ degrees colder than the main river during the summer, but are entirely captured seasonally by active irrigation ditches less than 50 feet from their confluences.

The project goal is to build resiliency by reconnecting these tributaries, increasing coldwater for thermal refugia and spawning access, while keeping the irrigator whole. The objective is to redesign the irrigation infrastructure to allow fish passage to the upstream watershed by siphoning the ditches under Alder Creek and over Johnson Creek. Additionally, we are working with FWP on water rights changes to maximize instream flow in both creeks during critical low-flow periods. These are the type of win-win projects that exemplify MTU's work.

Fish are currently impeded from accessing Johnson and Alder creeks throughout much of the season due to flow and barriers.

PROJECT MAP



BUILDING COMMUNITY

MTU is working with the Big Hole River Preserve, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and two TU Chapters, to reconnect two coldwater tributaries in the middle reaches of the Big Hole, 5 miles upstream of Wise River Montana near Dickie Bridge - the current downstream boundary of the Arctic Grayling Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) recovery program.



5+ PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



PROJECT PARTNERS



“This is a win-win solution for wild Big Hole trout and the landowner. This restoration project will aid agriculture and help ensure a healthy and thriving fishery for future generations.”

**-- Chris Edgington,
Project Manager**



OUTCOMES WE CAN ACHIEVE TOGETHER



RECONNECT TWO TRIBUTARIES TO THE BIG HOLE RIVER



RESTORE THERMAL REFUGE AND SPAWNING ACCESS



IMPROVE ONSITE HABITAT FOR RESIDENT AND MIGRATORY FISH



MAINTAIN LOCAL IRRIGATION AND PROVIDE COLD INSTREAM FLOW TO THE BIG HOLE RIVER

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

Your donations help make our work possible. We would be happy to discuss how we can best acknowledge your contribution. Thank you for partnering with MTU to improve water quantity and quality, reconnect streams, protect native species, and provide economic and educational benefits to local communities, now and for future generations.

MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED'S MISSION

Our mission is to conserve, protect, and restore Montana's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.



To learn more about this project how to support it, contact:

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