



## LOWER CLARK FORK WATERSHED GROUP

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US Fish and Wildlife Service  
2900 4<sup>th</sup> Ave North, Room 301  
Billings, MT 59101

Subject: Final performance report F17AC00002

Over the course of 2016 and 2017, the Miners Gulch Stream and Riparian Restoration Project was completed successfully. This project reconstructed 1,600 feet of stream channel on the Vermilion River along with the surrounding floodplain, and also featured an extensive revegetation effort. The goals of this project were to restore a degraded segment of stream and floodplain in order to improve habitat for native Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

In 2016, the “dirtwork” of channel and floodplain reconstruction was completed. A local contracting firm, Elk Creek Contracting, was awarded the construction and materials contract for the completion of this project and completed all in-channel construction work between July 15 and August 23. The Miners Gulch reach of the Vermilion River was reconstructed according to project designs as described in our funding proposal. Channel work was completed under the supervision of Forest Service Hydrologist Craig Neesvig and met the Forest Service’s specifications. Figures 1-3 show the result of this channel reconstruction work.

Remaining work on the Miners Gulch Stream and Riparian Restoration Project was completed over the 2017 field season, with the implementation of an extensive re-vegetation effort along the newly constructed channel and throughout the surrounding floodplain. All materials were flown into the project site via helicopter. This included all plants (400 cottonwoods), 1600 t-posts and about 1 mile of fencing. Cages were installed around new plantings and naturally sprouting trees. Irrigation was installed throughout, and the area was watered once a week in 2017 and will continue to be watered each summer for the next two years. Figure 4 pictures this re-vegetation effort.

Preliminary results from post-implementation monitoring indicate that the channel is functioning according to design, and that revegetation is surviving well. A complete post-runoff monitoring report is expected from the Kootenai National Forest in 2018. Additionally, a film documenting this project is under development and is expected to be completed in April 2018. Upon its completion, this film will be shared with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, other funders and project partners, and the public.



Figure 1. A section of the Miners Gulch Reach of the Vermilion River pictured prior to channel reconstruction is shown on left and excavator reconstructing the same section is on the right.



Figure 2. Pointing upstream from the same location where photos were taken in Figure 1, the left shows the stream channel and floodplain prior to channel reconstruction work and the right shows the stream channel and floodplain during the middle of implementation.



Figure 3. Completed channel reconstructed with rock and log structures and newly created pool habitat in the Miners Gulch reach of the Vermilion River.



Figure 4. Extensive re-vegetation effort through the riparian area and disturbed floodplain is irrigated during summer 2017. Photo credit: Erich Pflzer, Kootenai National Forest - Cabinet Ranger District

Please accept this letter as a final performance report for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's obligations under the Western Native Trout Initiative Cooperative Agreement Award F17AC00002. Additional photos are available upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brita Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Brita Olson, Coordinator  
Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group