Arrastra Creek Fish Passage Project

Project Objective: Restore a migratory corridor for populations of native trout by upgrading the undersized, twin culverts on Arrastra Creek that created a barrier to aquatic organism passage and caused channel impairments.

Project Details: Arrastra Creek is the largest tributary to the Blackfoot River between river mile 68 and 105 and enters the Blackfoot as a second-order tributary near rm 88.8 with an estimated base flow of 10-15 cfs. It is the only known stream to support bull trout reproduction in this section of the river. A radio telemetry study conducted by MTFWP identified Arrastra Creek as the primary fluvial WSCT spawning stream to the middle Blackfoot River, the genetic composition of which has been tested as genetically pure. In 2002, twin culverts at stream mile 3.3 were identified as providing a significant barrier to the upstream movement of WSCT, with velocities exceeding seven ft/sec. This project involved replacing these culverts with a free-span bridge following stream simulation guidelines and principles, allowing for aquatic organism passage, adequate hydrologic capacity for at least a 100-year flood event, and stream channel function. Fill slopes and stream banks were reclaimed using transplants, mulch and native grass seed.

Accomplishments: Restored fish passage to ~6.0 miles of instream habitat & corrected channel impairments in the project area.

Project Partners: Bureau of Reclamation, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, NorthWestern Energy, DEQ 319 Program, Blackfoot Challenge, & Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Undersized, paired culverts on Arrastra Creek near stream-mile 3.3 replaced with a free-span bridge in 2005.