

# **WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grants for Fiscal Year 2018**

**Funding Opportunity Announcement No. BOR-DO-18-F005**

Watershed Restoration Planning and Project Development  
in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed

January 31, 2018

Proposal submission from the

Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG)

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CSKT: Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes

CWMP: Cooperative Watershed Management Program

DEQ: Department of Environmental Quality (Montana)

DNRC: Department of Natural Resource Conservation

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

FWP: Fish Wildlife and Parks (Montana)

LCF: Lower Clark Fork

LCFWG: Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group

LWD: Large Woody Debris

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

TMDL: Total Maximum Daily Load

WRP: Watershed Restoration Plan

USFS: United States Forest Service

USFWS: United States Fish and Wildlife Service

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date: January 31, 2018

Applicant: Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group, Trout Creek, Sanders County, MT

Considered the “Headwaters of the Columbia River”, the Clark Fork basin of Western Montana drains an area of 25,820 sq miles, which combines to form the Clark Fork River, the largest river by volume in Montana. The lower Clark Fork (LCF) watershed, the focus of this proposal, comprises the downstream-most portion of this watershed before it enters Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho. This is a landscape typical to the West; while vast areas of forested public land provide resilience to stream ecosystems, a long history of resource extraction and damming inhibit ecosystem function but provide essential services and employment. In addition to largely impacting water quality throughout the Columbia River basin, this is a watershed of critical importance to federally threatened Bull Trout and Montana Species of Concern, Westslope Cutthroat Trout. In 2003, the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) was formed in to carry out a coordinated and collaborative ecosystem approach to watershed management. Since then, we have coordinated on-the-ground restoration projects and successfully facilitated watershed management planning conversations between the private citizens, state and federal agencies, county governments and local non-profits. This proposal aims to leverage previous planning/prioritization efforts in the basin and move priority restoration projects towards implementation. Funds will be used to **(1)** Support LCFWG staff in completing a Watershed Restoration plan for tributaries to the LCF, with an emphasis on project prioritization and stakeholder involvement, **(2)** Contract technical assistance for initial design, feasibility and scoping activities on already-identified priority projects, **(3)** Complete a survey and engineered design of up to three channel restoration projects to improve priority Bull Trout spawning habitat, and **(4)** Investigate the feasibility of making improvements to a riparian road system in priority Bull Trout habitat. The activities in this proposal represent the most impactful opportunities identified by our partners to support water quality and federally threatened species. We have worked collaboratively with the public, industry, county and biologists at the state and federal (USFWS, USFS) level to identify these projects. Because much of our watershed is on federal land, we can ensure that our restoration investments will be protected in perpetuity. We are confident that with our requested funding, we can accomplish the tasks outlined in this proposal between October 2018 and September 2020. None of the proposed activities are located on a Federal facility.

### BACKGROUND DATA

Located primarily in rural Sanders County in western Montana, the lower Clark Fork River watershed and its tributaries are characterized by extensive forest lands in the headwaters and upland areas, with rural residential development and some agricultural land use along the valley bottoms. Nearly 70% percent of the lower river watershed is public land managed by the

Kootenai National Forest, Lolo National Forest, and state agencies. Tributary sub-watersheds are largely (up to 80-90% by area) comprised of national forest land, while the remaining lands, located primarily along the valley bottoms, are privately owned (MTNHP 2018). In some areas, particularly the Thompson River sub-watershed, private timber industry is also a dominant landowner. Despite its rural and forested character, decades of human activities—including road building, logging, mining, agriculture, residential development, and the construction of dams—have impacted fisheries and water quality and impaired the beneficial uses of the lower river and its tributaries. Restoration activities, therefore, focus on improving water quality and stream habitat, and recovering native fish populations (including the federally listed Bull Trout and Montana Species of Concern Westslope Cutthroat Trout).

Three hydropower dams along the mainstem lower Clark Fork River (Thompson Falls, Noxon Rapids, and Cabinet Gorge Dams) have impacted fisheries in the watershed by blocking passage and altering habitat. Prior to the construction of dams, the Clark Fork River was the major corridor for spawning runs of trout and char from Idaho's Lake Pend Oreille into spawning, nursery and rearing tributaries in Montana. Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout were among the species traveling up the Clark Fork. Historically, many tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River were considered major spawning tributaries for Pend Oreille native migratory fish, but present-day migration corridors are severely limited. Construction of dams, starting as early as 1906 and continuing until completion of Cabinet Gorge in 1952, blocked all fish access for Pend Oreille native migratory fish into Montana waters. Mitigation agreements, primarily Avista's Clark Fork Settlement Agreement, include multifaceted approaches for protection, mitigation, and enhancement of the species affected by the construction and ongoing operation of the dams. Beyond direct mitigation (trap and transport of native trout), stream restoration and habitat enhancement are key components of the conservation of native fish populations in the lower Clark Fork.

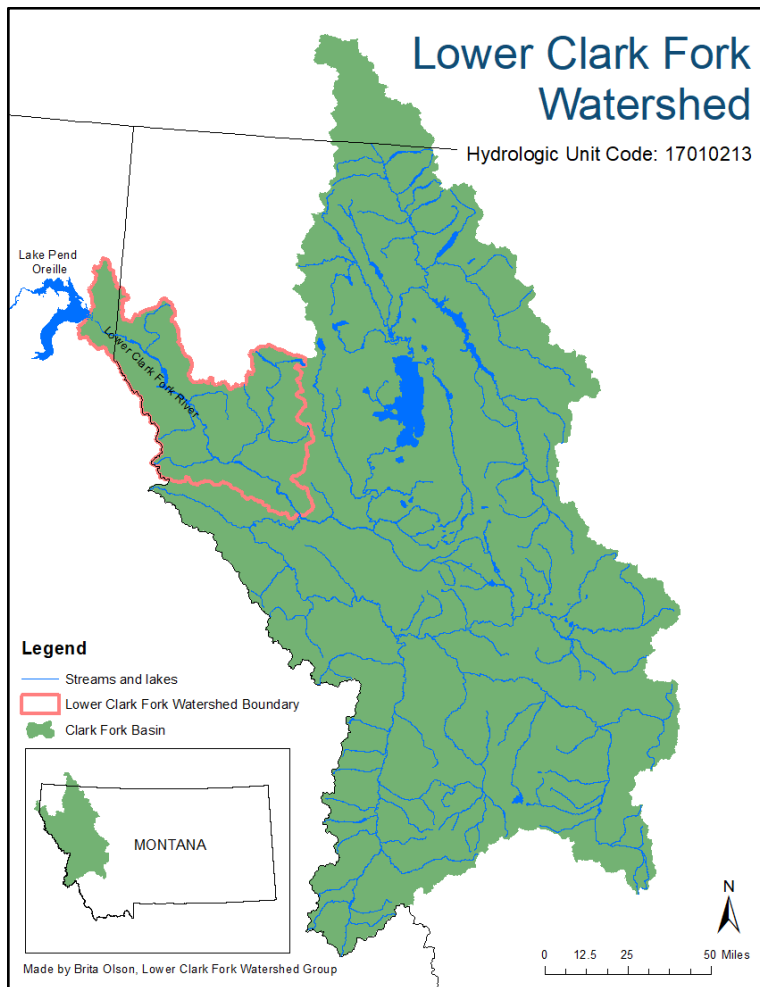
Impaired beneficial uses in the lower Clark Fork tributaries where we work include aquatic life and, in the Prospect Creek sub-watershed, drinking water. The most common causes of impairments affecting aquatic life among tributaries are sedimentation (sourced from habitat modifications, streambank modifications/destabilization, forest roads, loss of riparian habitat, grazing and silviculture in riparian areas, and natural sources); temperature (sourced from streambank modifications/destabilization, grazing in riparian areas, watershed runoff after forest fires, and natural sources); physical substrate alterations (sourced from streambank modifications/destabilization, channelization, forest roads, silviculture in riparian areas and other anthropogenic substrate modifications); and alteration in stream-side or littoral covers (sourced from placer mining, silviculture activities, grazing in riparian areas, forest roads, watershed runoff after forest fires, runoff from highways/roads/bridges, and other streambank

modifications; DEQ 2016). Additional causes of impairment found in the Prospect Creek sub-watershed include antimony, lead, and zinc (sourced from mine tailings; DEQ 2016).

## PROJECT LOCATION

The Lower Clark Fork Watershed (Hydrologic Unit Code: 17010213) is the downstream-most portion of the Clark Fork Basin, composed of all the area (2,336 sq miles) draining into the Clark Fork River between its confluence with the Flathead River downstream to Lake Pend Oreille (see Map 1 below). The watershed is located on the Montana/Idaho border, with the majority of the watershed located in Sanders County (with a small area in the northern extent of the Thompson River sub-watershed falling in Lincoln and Flathead Counties, and the most downstream extent falling in Bonner County, Idaho). Major tributaries include the Thompson River (drainage area: 634 sq miles) and Prospect Creek (drainage area: 180 sq miles).

**Map 1.** The Lower Clark Fork Watershed is the downstream-most portion of the Clark Fork Basin located on the Montana/Idaho border.



The LCFWG actively works throughout much the watershed, excluding the areas in Idaho and those upstream of the Thompson River's confluence with the Clark Fork River. A shapefile of the Lower Clark Fork watershed boundary is attached to this application submission. Maps 2 and 3 (See Evaluation Criterion A— Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope) show the LCF watershed boundary, the areas where the LCFWG is active, and the major land ownership and land management boundaries in the watershed, respectively.

## TECHNICAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### APPLICANT CATEGORY

The LCFWG is an existing watershed group with the mission to facilitate collaboration among watershed stakeholders and to coordinate efforts to maintain, enhance and restore the ecological integrity of tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River. It was formed in 2003 to carry out a coordinated and collaborative ecosystem approach to watershed management and maximize administrative, technical, and financial resources along the lower Clark Fork. The group was initially founded as an umbrella organization for eight watershed councils, composed of local landowners and interested residents, that formed in the mid-1990's. The LCFWG provides organizational and technical support to these individual watershed councils, while maintaining a basin-wide perspective to prioritize management and restoration efforts. Other key members include representatives from local, state, federal agencies, and corporations such as Avista (owner of the Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge Dams). Quarterly meetings of the LCFWG have provided a venue for coordination, and as activity and enthusiasm from individual landowners and watershed council members waxes and wanes, the continued existence of the LCFWG has allowed for consistent momentum for nearly 15 years.

The group has sponsored watershed assessments for tributaries all along the river, the Watershed Restoration Plan for the LCF Tributary TMDL Planning Area (2010), and recently has been heavily engaged in the development of the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan. For most of LCFWG's history, our work has been limited to tributaries downstream of Thompson Falls (LCF Tributary Watershed Restoration Planning Area; see Map 2). This also coincides with Avista's Clark Fork Project Area in Montana. In 2016, the group's efforts expanded to the Thompson River drainage under a new partnership with NorthWestern Energy, owner of the Thompson Falls Dam (Thompson River Watershed Restoration Planning Area; Map 2). The Thompson River is another important stronghold for threatened native fish populations in the lower Clark Fork, and a priority for our state and federal agency partners. Over the last few years the LCFWG has developed new relationships with major landowners and stakeholders in the Thompson River drainage, such as Weyerhaeuser and the Eastern Sanders County Conservation District. The planning process for the Thompson River Watershed

Restoration Plan has allowed for the valuable coordination between the three primary landowners in the Thompson River drainage (Lolo National Forest, Weyerhaeuser, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources), and for all stakeholders to meet and propose, prioritize, and develop future projects in the drainage. In 2018, the LCFWG will be finalizing the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan, and transitioning to an update of the Watershed Restoration Plan for the Lower Clark Fork Tributary TMDL Planning Area. This will provide an opportunity for LCFWG members and partners to review past projects, and reassess priorities for future watershed restoration. This planning process also will reinvigorate existing membership while attracting new opportunities for collaboration.

Throughout its history, the watershed work of the LCFWG members has been supported by a mostly part-time Watershed Coordinator. Recently, this position has grown to full-time, and the LCFWG has brought on a part-time Watershed Restoration Plan developer to assist in the development of the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan and the update of the Watershed Restoration Plan for the Lower Clark Fork Tributary TMDL Planning Area. Still, because member organizations' ability to design and implement watershed work is strained by limited staff, resources, and competing workloads, there is a growing need for the LCFWG to forge new partnerships to undertake and accomplish planning and project development work. One such partnership is with Trout Unlimited, a national nonprofit with extensive experience planning and implementing watershed restoration projects throughout the Clark Fork basin. Our partnership with TU will increase capacity and connect the LCFWG to new technical resources, allowing the collaborative work of watershed restoration to continue along the Clark Fork River.

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#### ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANT

The Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, with a board of directors elected by consensus from its watershed group members. It is a grassroots organization formed to meet the needs of local landowners, watershed councils, resources managers, and corporations in stewarding fisheries and water resources. While the LCFWG partners with government agencies that have regulatory authority, these entities do not serve on the LCFWG board and the LCFWG works only in voluntary restoration. Whenever possible, the LCFWG strives to make decisions through consensus with the full engagement of all its membership.

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#### GOALS

The mission of the LCFWG is to facilitate collaboration among watershed stakeholders and to coordinate efforts to maintain, enhance and restore the ecological integrity of tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River. Overarching goals of the group include improving the chemical,



biological and physical integrity of streams in our watershed, in order to benefit native fish populations and to protect water quality in the lower river ecosystem.

The immediate goals of our proposed activities are to:

- Develop a strategic plan for restoration project development through watershed planning;
- Pursue new partnerships in these planning efforts, with specific focus on public engagement; and
- Initiate project planning and design for priority projects through collaboration with Trout Unlimited.
- Have multiple “shovel-ready” projects on hand, ready to translate into on-the-ground implementation.

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## APPROACH

The LCFWG has a successful history of partnering with state and federal agencies, private landowners and non-profits to identify and implement projects within the watershed and develop trusting relationships with these various stakeholders. In 2017, we completed a draft Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) for the Thompson River, a major tributary for the LCF River. In addition to authoring this report, we led the stakeholder coordination effort to consolidate existing data, prioritize projects and identify a path towards implementation. In 2018, we will undertake a major update to the existing WRP for all major LCF Tributaries (originally completed in 2010), using a similar approach. Consequently, by Fall 2018, we will have completed/updated WRP's for the majority of our watershed (See Maps 2 and 3), with active participation from a wide range of partners. Our proposed activities for the CWMP Phase I grant builds upon the momentum of these efforts, moving the highest priority WRP projects towards implementation, as outlined in the Tasks below:

### ***Task A - Watershed Group Development:***

The LCFWG is not proposing any activities related to Task A.

### ***Task B - Watershed Restoration Planning:***

- ***B1. WRP completion and project planning:*** In the first quarter of 2019, the LCFWG will finalize and submit a substantially updated Lower Clark Fork Tributary WRP to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for review and approval, which will guide project development for approximately 47% of the entire Lower Clark Fork Watershed. We are requesting \$10,995 to support our WRP Developer (a temporary, part-time position currently funded through 2018) for an additional six months into 2019. This time will be used to **1)** Complete draft LCF Tributary Watershed Restoration Plan, **2)** Collect and incorporate edits and suggestions from stakeholders on draft WRP, and **3)** Finalize LCF Tributary WRP and submit to DEQ for approval. A key component of all of the above tasks will be outreach to key stakeholders in the drainage (by providing

up-to-date information on the LCFWG website and via email), as well as targeted efforts to engage diverse entities (by personal contact). Our WRP Developer has led WRP development efforts in the Clark Fork Basin since 2016, including work on three different WRPs and a critical role in stakeholder coordination. She and the LCFWG Coordinator will work closely together and are well-suited to complete these tasks.

### ***Task C: Watershed Management Project Design***

- ***C1. Technical Assistance and Project Development:*** Many of the projects identified in the two regional WRPs (Thompson River WRP and LCF Tributary WRP) will require technical services outside of the skill set of LCFWG staff to guide project development and implementation. Typically, the LCFWG relies on technical input from agency partners, however, many of these personnel are already taxed to capacity. Trout Unlimited, a new partner who has been very active in other areas of the Clark Fork Basin, will increase the technical capacity in the Watershed Group to develop restoration projects by providing low-cost services in project scoping, engineering, restoration design, environmental surveying and project management through their regional staff. We propose \$14,178, much of which will be subcontracted to TU for technical assistance in developing WRP projects, specifically:
  - Channel and floodplain construction assessments;
  - Revegetation design;
  - Identifying opportunities to reduce sediment inputs to streams from several road systems through road removal or implementing BMP's;
  - Investigations of irrigation diversion impacts on stream health, and recommendations to reduce these impacts; and
  - Mine reclamation planning.

The output of these efforts will be project-specific, ranging from data summaries and preliminary designs to final construction designs. All outputs will be aimed to support grant and permit applications for project implementation. This budget item also includes time for the LCFWG Coordinator to attend field visits with TU as a training opportunity. This exposure will help enable the LCFWG to perform basic site assessments/project scoping in the future, better recognize restoration opportunities, and create lasting capacity for the LCFWG to continue developing projects.

- ***C2. Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris:*** The U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service both identified lack of large woody debris (LWD) as a primary problem for threatened Bull Trout in our watershed. Tributaries to the LCF River are frequently deficient in LWD due to logging and road encroachment into riparian areas that historically provided a natural supply of wood to streams. This lack of wood has resulted in channel incision, increased sediment transport and substantially reduced spawning habitat for threatened fish species. In response, these agencies have recommended LWD restoration projects in select LCF tributaries to enhance spawning and rearing habitat for key Bull Trout populations, while decreasing sediment inputs downstream (USDA, 2013; USFWS 2015). The Lolo National Forest is completing a NEPA

review of LWD installation on four headwater tributaries to the LCF River (Crow Creek, Graves Creek, Fishtrap Creek and Upper Prospect Creek). However, the Forest lacks funds for project design and installation. This proposal will build upon these efforts by completing a full topographic survey, construction design and revegetation plan for up to three of these projects. The number of plans completed will depend on the scope and complexity of the projects selected, as well as the NEPA decision. We are requesting \$50,784, to be subcontracted for these construction and design services. We are aware of the cultural and environmental compliance requirements if these designs are implemented in the future. We would work closely with the Bureau of Reclamation and the USFS to ensure a compliance needs are met.

- *C3. Thompson River Road Investigation:* The Thompson River is a major tributary to the LCF River, flowing south from its headwaters in the Thompson Chain of Lakes down to its confluence with the Clark Fork River, draining 27% of our watershed area. It supports Western pearlshell mussels (federally listed species of concern) and Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Montana species of concern), as well as a migratory population of federally threatened Bull Trout, making it a high priority for USFWS. The most significant threat to the mainstem Thompson river is the road system, with two major roads running parallel to the river along most of its approximately 45-mile length (PPL Montana, 2013). This issue is most pronounced in the lower 17 miles of the drainage, where the valley is narrower with frequent bedrock outcrops and sections of steep valley walls. Here the parallel road system hugs the river banks, contributing sediment to the river, reducing riparian width, and negatively impacting habitat and stream temperature. For decades, consolidation of this redundant road system has been identified by regional agencies as an ambitious, but highly impactful project that would offer substantial benefits to the Thompson River, LCF River and migratory Bull Trout (PPL Montana, 2013; USFWS, 2015). While several assessments, plans and alternatives have been developed by the Lolo National Forest over the years, the project has not yet been implemented. A priority action proposed in the Thompson River WRP, therefore, is to evaluate existing proposals for this project, interview those involved in previous planning efforts and gather perspectives of current stakeholders, and summarize finding into a synthesis/limiting factors report to present to stakeholders. This information will be the foundation to determine the feasibility of pursuing improvements to this road system in the coming years. We are requesting \$13,211 to support the development of this report and presentation. Work will be completed by LCFWG and Trout Unlimited staff. If road consolidation is recommended, the LCFWG will play a crucial role in facilitating public input to balance natural resource needs with public access for recreation. It is imperative, therefore, that we are involved in the initial planning efforts of this project.

## EVALUATION CRITERION A— WATERSHED GROUP DIVERSITY AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE (30 POINTS)

**Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity**

Stakeholders in the LCF watershed include residents, landowners, industry and land managers, as well as those who recreate, use, and value water resources along the lower Clark Fork River. Key stakeholders include:

- **Public land managers:** In a rural area where nearly 70% of the land is public (4,226 acres), local, state, and federal agency natural resource managers are a key component in watershed management. The Lolo National Forest manages approximately 36% of the total watershed, while the Kootenai National Forest manages another approximately 31%. The Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) also manages the Thompson River State Forest; while Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) maintains a total of ten state parks, fishing access sites, and wildlife management areas throughout the drainage.
- **Hydropower:** Hydropower production plays a significant role in the lower Clark Fork. Three dams are located along the mainstem Clark Fork. NorthWestern Energy's project area for the protection, mitigation, and enhancement of Bull Trout impacted by the Thompson Falls Dam is upstream of the dam, specifically focused on the Thompson River. Avista's project area includes the entire watershed below the Thompson Falls dam.
- **Timber:** In the Thompson River watershed, Weyerhaeuser (a major timber company) is one of the primary landowners, owning close to half of the land in the drainage. Other private timber lands are common throughout the LCF watershed.
- **Agriculture:** The primary agriculture activities in the drainage are primarily cattle ranching and hay production. In the Thompson River, multiple grazing allotments are managed by the Lolo National Forest and a cooperative between the Lolo National Forest, Weyerhaeuser, and DNRC that issue joint grazing licenses, which are managed by DNRC.
- **Mining:** Beyond small mining claims owned and maintained by individuals in the lower Clark Fork tributaries such as the Vermilion River and Prospect Creek, one large mining company, Hecla, owns multiple mining claims on the Kootenai National Forest and is actively trying to develop the Rock Creek and Montanore mines.
- **Tribal partners:** The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Flathead Reservation) also borders the Thompson River drainage and the edge of the areas of the watershed where the LCFWG is active.

- **Anglers:** The Thompson River is a popular fly fishing destination for anglers in Northwest Montana and North Idaho, and other tributaries of the Clark Fork River are also important to this stakeholder group.
- **Private residents:** Landowners (who largely reside in the valley along the Clark Fork River and its tributaries) play an important role in maintaining riparian health on a local level.

Formal LCFWG membership currently includes:

- Local Watershed Councils: Bull River, Elk Creek, Little, Beaver Creek, Pilgrim Creek, Prospect Creek, Rock Creek, Trout Creek, and Whitepine Creek Watershed Councils;
- Green Mountain Conservation District;
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks;
- Kootenai National Forest - Cabinet Ranger District;
- Lolo National Forest – Plains/Thompson Falls District;
- Natural Resources Conservation Service;
- Avista; and
- Northwestern Energy.

Beyond formal membership, the LCFWG welcomes all interested parties to attend quarterly meetings and participate in watershed planning activities. Representatives from the following have all participated in watershed group meetings and activities:

- Sanders County (i.e. the county planner, a commission, etc.);
- Eastern Sanders County Conservation District;
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality;
- Montana Department of Natural Resources;
- Kaniksu Land Trust (local nonprofit);
- Clark Fork Coalition (a basin-wide nonprofit);
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (a statewide nonprofit);
- Trout Unlimited (a national nonprofit);
- Bonneville Power Administration (which maintains a powerline corridor through the Prospect Creek drainage);
- Weyerhaeuser;
- Hecla (mining company who owns multiple claims in the watershed); and
- Interested landowners and residents (not necessarily involved in local watershed councils).

While the LCFWG is represented by diverse interests, much of the involvement and participation in the group has largely come from only those entities interested in and directly engaged in on-the-ground watershed restoration, specifically agency staff. The LCFWG plays a

crucial role in casting a wider net to engage a more diverse group reflective of all interests in the watershed, to develop/strengthen non-agency partnerships, and to increase collaboration with existing participants.

One key area where the LCFWG plans to improve stakeholder outreach with the support of this grant is through increased public engagement in WRP development. While the group developed as an umbrella organization for local watershed councils, participation from landowners and the activity of these groups is very dependent on the level of restoration activity occurring on individual properties and in local watersheds. Through the development of the LCF Tributary WRP (Task B1), we plan to reinvigorate public involvement in watershed management planning, by directly engaging key landowners, and inviting public participation, review, and comment on the draft WRP.

Outside of this grant proposal, in 2018 and into the future, the LCFWG will engage the public by:

- Developing website content ([www.lcfwg.org](http://www.lcfwg.org)) and other marketing materials (press releases, mailings, etc.) to inform public about the watershed, resources concerns, and planning and restoration activities;
- Seeking public engagement and involvement in the watershed restoration planning process; and
- Actively informing and pursuing additional involvement from other community groups, clubs, and collaboratives (such as the Sanders County Flycasters).

Additionally, this funding and the proposed activities will allow the LCFWG to considerably strengthen a budding partnership with Trout Unlimited. Beyond the technical benefits that this partnership would bring to the watershed, Trout Unlimited also provides an avenue for increased coordination and collaboration with additional entities. For example, the LCFWG has had limited involvement with tribal partners, despite bordering the Flathead Reservation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). Trout Unlimited has a well-established relationship with CSKT, and could foster a stronger relationship between the CSKT and LCFWG. Trout Unlimited also has longstanding relationships with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and can engage anglers through the local TU chapter membership.

### **Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope**

The proposed activities have been selected through previous planning/prioritization processes based of their ability to address the most critical needs of the Lower Clark Fork watershed (HUC: 17010213). *Task B. Watershed Restoration Planning* will allow us to complete our assessment and prioritization efforts for the basin by finalizing our Thompson River and LCF Tributary WRP documents which encompass approximately 75% of the LCF watershed (See

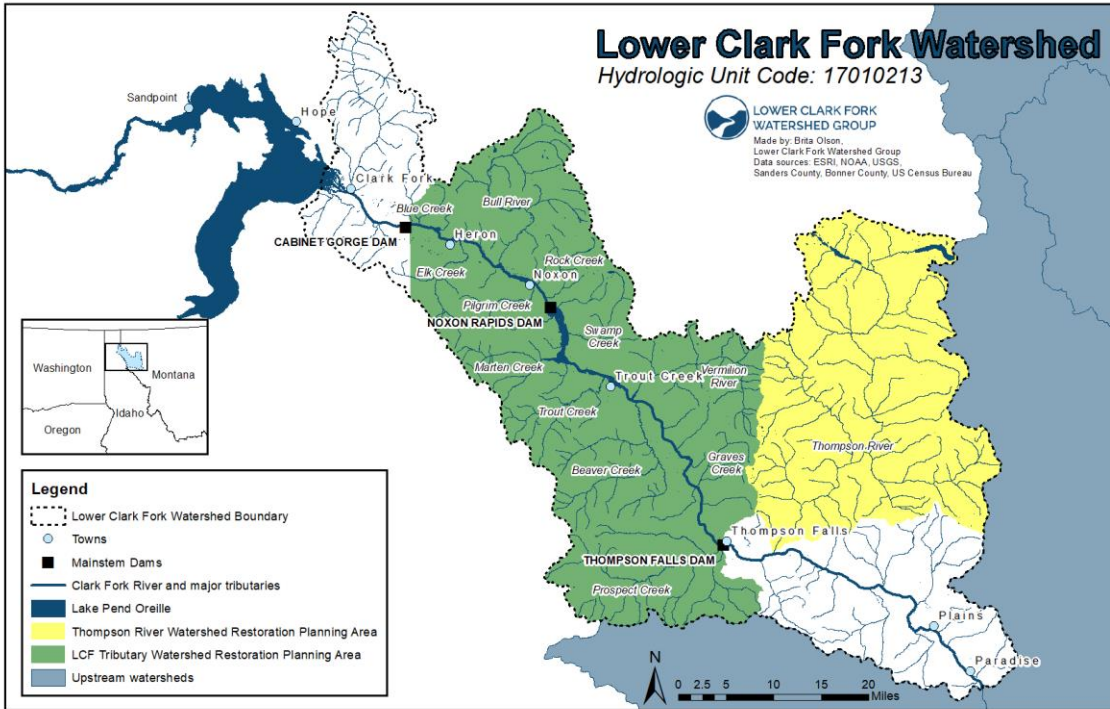
Map 2 below). These documents present a comprehensive evaluation of watershed impairments and prioritize restoration opportunities with greatest potential to impact the watershed as a whole. These priorities are based on input from stakeholders from across the geographic region (3 counties, 2 National Forests, 4 Conservation Districts, multiple state agencies, large private landowners, and other private entities; See Map 3 below). Because the majority of the watershed (and impairments) are on public land, coordination with state and federal agencies is paramount.

*Tasks C1, C2 and C3* (Watershed Management and Project Design) propose funding for technical assistance, stakeholder coordination and project planning/design to develop the highest priority projects identified in these WRP's. These projects generally occur on tributaries to the mainstem river (generally 12-digit HUC's with 150-600 sq mile drainage areas, labeled in both Maps 2 and 3) and are sources of both ecological resilience and impairment for the broader watershed. These rivers and streams provide essential spawning/rearing habitat for threatened aquatic species, natural storage to support late-season flows downstream, and natural filtration to improve the quality of water for use by humans and wildlife.

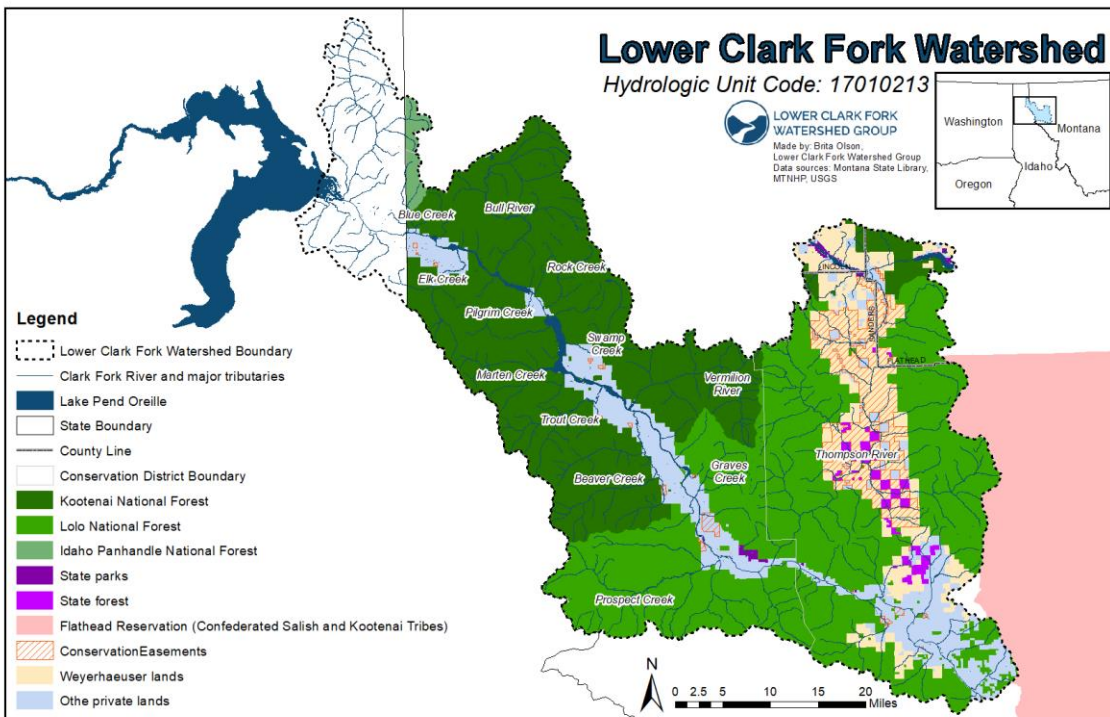
Yet, with the exception of Blue Creek and Trout Creek, all labeled tributaries to the lower Clark Fork shown on Maps 2 and 3, are not fully supporting the aquatic life beneficial use and have been identified by DEQ as the major sources of impairments in the watershed (DEQ 2016). Sediment loading from road systems, timber harvest and agriculture is the primary impairment in the LCF, with negative impacts to fish, aquatic organisms and human infrastructure (DEQ 2014; DEQ 2016; USFWS 2015). Metal loads from historic mining (lead and arsenic) also exceed state standards in some tributaries, with impacts to fish, aquatic organisms and drinking water sources (DEQ 2009). These pollutants are carried downstream and have impacts throughout the watershed.

Similarly, habitat fragmentation for threatened fish is a basin-wide problem with point-based solutions. The migratory life history of these species relies on contiguous habitat for varying needs (e.g. forage, overwintering, spawning). Bull Trout residing in Lake Pend Oreille are known to travel over 100 miles to spawn in the upper tributaries of the Thompson, Bull and Vermillion rivers and Graves Creek, with assisted transport around hydropower dams. Targeted restoration of a degraded tributary habitat can reconnect isolated populations and provide habitat for reproduction and population recovery. By strategically addressing the highest priority causes of impairment, and opportunities for recovery in tributary streams, we reduce negative impacts and improve ecological resiliency throughout the broader watershed.

**Map 2.** The LCFWG is active in approximately 75% of the Lower Clark Fork Watershed, highlighted in green and yellow.



**Map 3.** Major land ownership and land management boundaries in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed.





The LCFWG has built a network of resource specialists to ensure that our work targets science-based, critical watershed needs. Our most active partners are state and federal biologists and land managers whose previous resource investigations are the foundation of our WRP's. These partners deeply understand the intricacies of the LCF ecological landscape and offer an invaluable perspective in prioritizing our work. Our partnership with Trout Unlimited, a science-based non-profit, contributes to this perspective while enhancing our capacity to address watershed needs on the ground through technical assistance.

### **Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues**

The Lower Clark Fork faces three primary aquatic resource concerns, outlined below. These concerns were identified through planning efforts and assessments by several agencies including US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Forest Service (USFS), Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP). The WRPs written for the LCF basin are the culmination of these efforts, aimed at addressing critical watershed needs through restoration. CWMP grant funds will be used to develop the restoration opportunities listed with each resource concern:

#### *1. Water Quality*

- *Resource Concern:* The mainstem LCF and many of its tributaries exceed Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for one or many impairments, as defined by the Clean Water Act. Sediment is the most prevalent impairment, caused by dense road networks, streambank erosion, mining, agriculture and timber harvests. Excess sediment has degraded aquatic habitat and poses a threat to infrastructure (dams, irrigation diversions). TMDL exceedance for metals (antimony, lead and arsenic) have been documented in the Prospect Creek drainage, a major tributary to the LCF, due to historic mining (DEQ, 2009). These heavy metals pose a threat to aquatic life and drinking water supplies. Finally, temperature TMDL exceedance in the basin occurs primarily due to road/utility corridor encroachment on streams, limiting riparian shading.
- *Restoration Opportunities:* Prioritize projects for loads reductions (Task B1); Reduce sediment loads through road consolidation/removal, BMP's, bank stabilization and large woody debris (LWD) projects (Tasks C1 and C2, C3); Reduce metals loads through mine reclamation planning (Task C2); Reduce temperature loads through revegetation (shading) and LWD projects (creation of pools and shading) (Tasks C1 and C2, C3).

## 2. *Federal and State listed native fish*

- *Resource Concern:* The LCF and its tributaries are home to Bull Trout (federally threatened) and Westslope Cutthroat Trout (State of Montana species of concern). While select portions of this watershed maintain healthy populations of these species, they are overwhelmingly in decline due to limited habitat connectivity and habitat degradation. This presents a prime opportunity for conservation and restoration in the LCF, bolstering these present but threatened populations. Migratory Bull Trout populations have been supported by active non-native fish suppression in Lake Pend Oreille and trapping and transporting around dams. These efforts have both yielded positive responses from Bull Trout (K. Aceituno, personal communication). However, spawning and rearing habitat, essential to reproduction and long-term species survival, is severely limited due to sediment and temperature impairments in headwater streams (PPL Montana, 2013; USFWS, 2015). Road systems deliver excess sediment to streams burying spawning gravels and limiting reproduction. These same roads also reduce riparian shading and LWD recruitment, degrading habitat. Dam operators and agencies are already working together to limit dam impacts to native fish (trapping and transporting trout around dams and population and genetic monitoring to evaluate dam impacts to fisheries), and, often in partnership with the LCFWG, also engage in offsite mitigation, such as tributary habitat restoration to further bolster impacted fish populations. Our proposed activities for this grant focus on the latter activity - restoring and enhancing trout spawning habitat to support existing populations. Our work will target key stream reaches that have been identified by USFWS, FWP and others to maximize connectivity between isolated habitats.
- *Restoration Opportunities:* Habitat improvement through LWD installation and revegetation in key Bull Trout spawning tributaries (Tasks C1, C2); Road consolidation and BMP's to reduce sediment delivery to streams (Tasks C2, C3).

## 3. *Declining Ecological Resiliency*

- *Resource Concern:* Existing impairments, combined with regional population growth, and more variable climate conditions have a compounding effect on our water resources. There are 14 direct tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River that are impaired, according to the Montana DEQ, and state and federal agencies have documented a decline in threatened Bull Trout and State-listed Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Human influence on stream channel form (confinement, straightening, vegetation removal, etc.), limits a stream's ability to self-regulate. For example, straightening a channel will generally coarsen the streambed (through increased sediment transport), limit habitat complexity and encourage downcutting. Once on this trajectory, healthy stream processes of sediment sorting, and overbank flooding often cannot be re-established

without further human intervention. The ecological impacts of these changes are also cascading; increased temperature and loss of spawning gravels limit trout reproduction, with severe impact to the local food web. Dencutting lowers the water table, drying floodplain wetland habitat and reducing natural water storage to support late-season flows. A healthy channel form and riparian area is the foundation of stream ecological resiliency and is the focus of our restoration work.

- *Restoration Activities:* Our approach is to assess watershed needs and restoration potential from a watershed scale rather than a reach scale. We evaluate and prioritize work based on a comprehensive understanding of basin needs. This is evidenced in our WPR development efforts, relying on stakeholders from diverse technical backgrounds (fisheries, hydrology, transportation, timber) to prioritize projects. Completion of the WRPs (Task B1) will provide the framework for building ecological resiliency by identifying key projects with comprehensive and widespread ecological benefits. Our project planning activities (Tasks C1, C2, C3) are the first steps towards implementing already-identified priority projects that will have the largest basin-wide impact.

#### **Sub-criterion No. B2. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues**

The LCFWG exists to help establish and maintain connections between natural resource professionals working in the lower Clark Fork ecosystem and the public, bridging the gap between agency's science-based management priorities and the goals of local landowners in stewarding their own land. Key functions that the LCFWG performs in the watershed are to:

1. **Facilitate grassroots collaboration** by providing a forum for stakeholders to work together on lower Clark Fork watershed related projects.
2. **Communicate with partners** regarding ongoing, future and past projects; and any developments pertaining to watershed resources in the lower Clark Fork.
3. **Coordinate restoration projects and activities** that promote water quality, improve fish habitat, and support the ecological health of the watershed in line with multi-partner planning, prioritizing, and strategizing.
4. **Harness resources** for Lower Clark Fork watershed projects by pursuing coordinated funding from government grants, foundation grants, and corporate contributions.
5. **Maintain records** of past projects and efforts in the watershed independent of land ownership boundaries, project area, or agency jurisdiction in order to document our legacy of conservation efforts and inform future efforts.
6. **Adaptively manage** projects by providing consistent follow-through; learning from past successes and failures; guiding watershed work that complements the values of local stakeholders; and ensuring the long-term success of our projects.
7. **Engage and educate** stakeholders, landowners, and public in watershed health, the benefits of restoration, and the specific goals of present, past and potential projects.

### *Stakeholder Outreach and Partnership Building*

The activities described in this proposal will hinge on a history of partnership building in the watershed, and motivate further stakeholder outreach. Much of the LCFWG's past successes in implementing on-the-ground projects are due to collaborative project planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring. For example, the LCFWG is currently coordinating an extensive re-vegetation effort on private lands along the Bull River. While this work has long been an agency priority, the LCFWG's role has been essential in implementing the project. This has involved coordinating agency partners, funders, local organizations, contractors, and most importantly, gaining support and permission from the ten private landowners to complete restoration work on their property. The task/activities described in this proposal will be no different, helping to develop and strengthen existing partnerships, and providing opportunities to demonstrate action and success in our endeavors. Stakeholder outreach and partnership building associated with each proposed task are:

- *B1. WRP completion and project planning:* The proposed watershed restoration planning process will rely heavily on the contributions of watershed stakeholders, including long-time partners and newly engaged entities whom we will reach through targeted (direct contact and recruitment) and broad (newspaper, website, bulk mailings, etc.) outreach efforts. The planning process will identify opportunities to restore and enhance streams in the watershed for the benefit of water quality and native fisheries while meeting resident and industry needs such as recreational access and energy production. We have been engaged with many of these stakeholders through our 2017 WRP development efforts, but will actively try to reach out to new partners, specifically regional landowners.
- *C1. Technical Assistance and Project Development:* Site visits and technical investigations into proposed restoration projects will provide discrete opportunities for outreach and education to private landowners and help strengthen existing relationships with natural resource agencies through cooperative planning and project development on public lands. The LCFWG's role in facilitating planning documents into successful on-the-ground projects builds confidence in our organization and trust among stakeholders.
- *C2. Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris:* The design of channel restoration projects facilitated by this proposal will, in particular, strengthen our relationship with the Lolo National Forest by leveraging their efforts to plan these projects and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These are also projects specifically identified by the USFWS as priorities for Bull Trout recovery (USFWS 2015).
- *C3. Thompson River road investigation:* Compilation and review of past assessments and proposed activities addressing the dual road system along the Thompson River will provide the foundation for future conversations aimed at balancing conservation

priorities with public access. The Thompson River provides important native fish habitat that is heavily impacted by the existence of roads paralleling the river on either side. However, the Thompson River is also a highly valued recreational fishery (Kreiner and Terrazas *In Prep.*). The findings of the proposed investigation will be the starting point for stakeholder outreach to plan future restoration and stewardship. These efforts will need to consider the importance of fishing access along the river through transparent, inclusive planning. This includes outreach to local fishing groups, such as the Sanders County Flycasters, and land use planning interest groups, such as the newly forming Sanders County Collaborative (established to help inform the update of the Lolo National Forest Plan).

### *Watershed Restoration Planning*

LCFWG's efforts in updating the LCF Tributary WRP (*B1. WRP completion and project planning*) will be modeled after the 2017-2018 process used to develop the Thompson River WRP. Engagement from stakeholders and incorporation of their input was a top priority to ensure that the resulting plan identifies not only the highest priority projects, but also the most feasible. At the beginning of the process, LCFWG members and partners identified key stakeholders in the drainage who were not already engaged and reached out directly to those entities (e.g. Weyerhaeuser). Broader involvement was sought through an article in the local newspaper, mailed information (letter and follow-up postcard) to all Thompson River landowners, publicly accessible information on the LCFWG website, and an online survey and request for involvement distributed to local organizations, landowners, and any identified stakeholders.

Following an initial stakeholder meeting in February 2017, working groups were formed in each sub-drainage. Throughout the summer and fall of 2017 the groups identified needs and potential projects in their respective sub-drainages. A second stakeholder meeting was held in September 2017 to discuss WRP development progress and watershed-wide project prioritization based on projects identified by stakeholders over the summer. A final stakeholder meeting was held in November 2017 and stakeholders were able to collectively discuss and rank projects, using the following criteria:

- Addresses water quality impairment
- Benefits native fish
- Project sponsor and partners identified
- Landowner consent and involvement
- Cost
- Availability of resources
- Permitting and environmental compliance
- Overall potential to benefit ecological integrity of the stream/watershed

The content and projects identified in the Thompson River WRP were largely developed directly by stakeholders in the drainage and conflicts were resolved as they arose through these regular meetings. Lastly, once the draft WRP was completed it was distributed widely for further

review and input. Once finalized, it will reflect the collective effort and input gathered from nearly 20 different organizations and even more individuals. Furthermore, it will be a living document, updated annually by LCFWG staff with input from members and partners; and fully reviewed and revised every ten years.

A kick-off meeting will be held for the development and update of the LCF Tributary WRP in February 2018. At this event, LCFWG members and partners will discuss and confirm the process that will be followed in order to review the previous plan along with past restoration projects, data, reports, and assessments; identify any missing stakeholders; identify potential projects; and collectively rank priorities. The opportunity to review and update the LCF Tributary WRP will allow the LCFWG to review new research and monitoring data to evaluate the success of past projects, reflect on opportunities for improving our approach to watershed restoration, and adaptively manage with consideration for the input from local partners, natural resource managers, agency representatives, and the public. The entire process for this update will be stakeholder-driven and consensus based, reflecting the LCFWG's role as a grassroots collective of watershed stakeholders.

#### *Watershed Management Project Design*

Project design activities described in this proposal are an outgrowth of previous and ongoing watershed planning activities, including the Thompson River WRP and the LCF Tributary WRP and planning efforts completed on the Kootenai and Lolo National Forests. These activities will translate the momentum of planning efforts into project development and eventual implementation. The work will be accomplished through partnership with Trout Unlimited, under the following tasks, also described in the Technical Project Description:

- *C1. Technical Assistance and Project Development:* Trout Unlimited will be contracted to provide technical assistance for project development, including initial project scoping/feasibility, topographic surveys, conceptual design and implementation recommendations. General milestones/timelines for this process are outlined in Section C1 below, and were developed through conversations with Trout Unlimited and the LCFWG. Key stakeholders from WRP development will convene in December of each fiscal year to identify the projects that would most benefit from these services, and the project-specific milestones and deliverables. Ultimately, the deliverables will provide the necessary documents to move forward towards implementation. For example, scoping/conceptual design will determine what projects need to be contracted and provide the framework for the Request for Proposals. Topographic surveys provide the baseline data needed to develop an engineered design or develop project alternatives. Once projects are confirmed with general design concepts developed, the LCFWG will consult with local federal representatives (e.g. Lolo or Kootenai National Forest) and Reclamation's environmental and cultural resource staff to determine what type of site-specific environmental compliance will be necessary for implementation.

- *C2. Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris:* The LCFWG will contract an engineering firm to develop a final engineered design for channel restoration using large woody debris on 1-3 streams key Bull Trout streams. The specific projects designed under this task will hinge on the outcome of the Lolo National Forest’s environmental compliance work (NEPA, expected June 2018) as well as the scope and scale of each proposed restoration project. Proposed streams include Crow Creek (tributary to Prospect Creek), Fishtrap Creek (tributary to the Thompson River), Graves Creek, and Upper Prospect Creek. These are all headwater streams that, if restored, would provide spawning and rearing habitat for Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Upon the NEPA decision, WRP stakeholders will meet to determine the which projects to pursue given the funds available. Deliverables for each project design will include topographic survey of selected streams, hydrologic and geomorphic characterization, planview and cross-sectional sheets to be used for LWD restoration design, and a conceptual design and recommendations for LWD installation. The outcome of this task will be up to three “shovel-ready” designs that the LCFWG can pursue for implementation. Project timelines and milestones will be developed in coordination with the Lolo National Forest, and the LCFWG will work to confirm with Reclamation that all necessary environmental compliance has been or will be completed by the Lolo National Forest prior to project implementation.
- *C3 Thompson River road investigation:* Trout Unlimited and LCFWG will work in partnership to review past analyses and reports on the impacts and proposed consolidation of the dual road system along the Thompson River, interview diverse stakeholders (Lolo National Forest engineering and hydrology staff, fisheries biologists, county representatives, recreational users, etc.), and compile data and perspectives into a summary report that will inform stakeholders in pursuing a path forward regarding the parallel road system (Photo 1). In the past, the Lolo National Forest has committed extensive resources to develop analyses and alternatives for the consolidation of the dual road system; but efforts fell short of implementation. This project was discussed as a part of watershed restoration planning efforts in the Thompson River drainage in 2017, with the most important next step being a synthesis of available information and investigation of limiting factors that might inhibit making significant improvements to the road system, and improving water quality, habitat, and riparian and floodplain function. Right, roads along the Thompson River, contributing sediment to the river, and reducing riparian habitat and floodplain function.



**Photo 1.** View of the Thompson River with parallel road system running along its banks, reducing riparian cover, and contributing sediment.

**Sub-criterion No. C1. Understanding of and Ability to Meet Program Requirements**

The LCFWG has reviewed the program requirements and can comply with all requisite timeframes and reporting. Our budget request has been split between the two funding years as required and can be completed within the 2-year timeframe (see schedule below). For tasks C1 and C2, funding is split between the two fiscal years, but activities have been planned to ensure useable deliverables if FY2020 funding is not available. The LCFWG has experience managing large grants and has allocated funds within these budgets for grant oversight and reporting. The attached letters of support also indicate the willingness of stakeholders to support our efforts and their confidence that our proposed activities are feasible.

*B1. WRP completion and project planning (\$10,995, Oct 2018 - June 2019)*

Activities associated with B1 will take place entirely within the first funding cycle (FY19).

Task	Milestones
<p><b>Complete draft LCF Tributary Watershed Restoration Plan</b>  <i>Dates: Oct 2018 - Dec 2018</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$655</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$0</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stakeholder input on proposed projects received (Nov 2018)</li> <li>● Final stakeholder meeting (Dec 2018)</li> <li>● Draft LCF Tributary WRP completed (Dec 31, 2018)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collect and incorporate edits and suggestions from stakeholders on draft WRP</b>  <i>Dates: Jan 2019 - March 2019</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$5170</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$0</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Input from 5+ stakeholders received on draft document (Feb 2019)</li> <li>● Input incorporated and revised draft completed (Mar 2019)</li> <li>● Draft WRP submitted to DEQ for review and approval (Mar 31, 2019)</li> </ul>
<p><b>LCF Tributary WRP finalized and approved</b>  <i>Dates: Apr 2019 - May 2019</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$5170</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$0</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Edits received from DEQ on draft WRP (Apr 2019)</li> <li>● Edits incorporated from DEQ and required revisions made (May 2019)</li> <li>● LCF Tributary WRP finalized and approved by the DEQ (June 2019)</li> <li>● Final reporting to CWMP (June 2019)</li> </ul>

*C1. Technical Assistance and Project Development (\$14,178, Oct 2018-Sept 2020)*

Activities associated with C1 will be split between the 2-year funding cycle. The tasks detailed below will repeat each year with a new set of key projects. 2019 activities will focus on projects



from the Thompson River WRP, while 2020 activities will be directed by the planning efforts proposed in B1.

Task	Milestones
<p><b>Identify key projects to leverage technical assistance</b>  <i>Dates: Dec 2018-June 2019, Dec 2019-June 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$800</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$800</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stakeholder meeting with Trout Unlimited and WRP stakeholders to prioritize projects for technical assistance (Dec 2018, Dec 2019)</li> <li>● Contract and Scope of Work with TU (Jan 2019, Jan 2020)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Complete technical assistance services and reporting</b>  <i>Dates: June-Sept 2019, June-Sept 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$6,383</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$5,196</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Site visit to projects with TU, LCFWG and other stakeholders as necessary (June 2019, June 2020)</li> <li>● TU completes requested technical services and develops outputs (e.g. site survey, restoration design, data summary report) (June-Sept 2019, June-Sept 2020)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Close project</b>  <i>Dates: Sept 2019, Sept 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$500</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$500</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final deliverables from TU complete (Sept 2019, Sept 2020)</li> <li>● TU presents deliverables to LCFWG partners and board (Sept 2019, Sept 2020)</li> <li>● Final reporting to CWMP (Sept 2019, Sept 2020)</li> </ul>

**C2. Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (\$50,784, March 2019 -April 2020)**

Activities associated with C2 will be split between the 2-year funding cycle. with project planning, contracting and survey activities occurring in FY2019 with a final survey document and recommendations as a deliverable in Sept 2019. A final design will be produced in FY2020.

Task	Milestones
<p><b>Project planning &amp; contracting</b>  <i>Dates: March-May 2019, March-Aug 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$6,000</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$0</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● USFS completes NEPA analysis and decision (June 2018)</li> <li>● Stakeholder meeting to determine LWD projects to pursue for survey/design phase (Feb 2019)</li> <li>● Develop Scope of Work, request proposals in open bidding process, select contractor to complete design (March-May 2019)</li> <li>● Initial site visit with Contractor (May 2019)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Survey and conceptual design</b>  <i>Dates: May 2019-September 2019</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$19,906</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$0</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contractor completes topographic survey of selected streams, as well as hydrologic and geomorphic characterization (June-July 2019)</li> <li>● Contractor develops planview and cross-sectional sheets to be used for LWD restoration design (July-Sept 2019)</li> <li>● Contractor develops Conceptual Design and recommendations for LWD installation (July - Sept 2019)</li> <li>● Reporting to CWMP (Sept 2019)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Large Woody Debris restoration design</b>  <i>Dates: January-April 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$0</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$24,377</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review of conceptual design with Lolo National Forest, TU and LCFWG (January 2020)</li> <li>● Contractor develops final design (January-April 2020)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Close project</b>  <i>Dates: March-April 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$0</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$500</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final design due to LCFWG and USFS (March 2020)</li> <li>● Final reporting to CWMP (April 2020)</li> </ul>

*C3. Thompson River road investigation (\$13,211, Nov 2019-May 2020)*

Task	Milestones
<p><b>Project scoping</b>  <i>Dates: Nov 2019</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$0</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$1000.00</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting between LCFWG, TU and select Lolo National Forest employees to collect existing data (November 2019)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of existing resources</b>  <i>Dates: Nov 2019-Feb 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$0</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$11,211</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review existing data, plans and designs (Nov 2019-Feb 2020)</li> <li>● Conduct interviews with agency staff involved in previous planning and/or current management (Dec 2019-Jan 2020)</li> <li>● Summarize findings into draft report and presentation to Lolo National Forest, LCFWG members and partners (March 2020)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Close Project</b>  <i>Dates: April-May 2020</i>  <i>FY19 Cost: \$0</i>  <i>FY20 Cost: \$1000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final report and recommendations due to Lolo National Forest, LCFWG members and partners (June 2020)</li> <li>● Final reporting to CWMP (May 2020)</li> </ul>

**Sub-criterion No. C2. Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts**

Our work builds upon previous assessments and planning efforts conducted by the USFWS, the EPA, USFS, Montana DEQ, and Montana FWP summarized in the following reports:

<i>Planning Document</i>	<i>Relevant Recommendations</i>	<i>LCFWG proposed activities</i>
Conservation Strategy for Bull Trout on USFS lands in Western Montana (USDA, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement LWD restoration projects in Thompson and Prospect basins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (Task C2)</li> </ul>
Columbia Headwaters Recovery Implementation Plan for Bull Trout (USFWS, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove redundant road systems in the Thompson basin</li> <li>- Implement LWD restoration projects in Prospect and Thompson basins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thompson River Road Investigation (Task C3)</li> <li>- Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (Task C2)</li> </ul>
Thompson River Bull Trout Enhancement and Recovery Plan (PPL Montana, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove redundant road system to reduce sediment inputs</li> <li>- Increase vegetative cover and stabilize banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical Assistance and Project Development (Task C1)</li> <li>- Thompson River Road Investigation (Task C3)</li> </ul>
Thompson project area Metals, Nutrients, Sediment and Temperature TMDL's (MDEQ, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply BMPs on road systems to reduce sediment inputs</li> <li>- Bank/wetland revegetation to reduce sediment and temperature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical Assistance and Project Development (Task C1)</li> <li>- Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (Task C2)</li> <li>- Thompson River Road Investigation (Task C3)</li> </ul>
Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan (Bowman et al., 2018 <i>In progress</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed projects within the Thompson River drainage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical Assistance and Project Development (Task C1)</li> <li>- Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (Task C2)</li> <li>- Thompson River Road Investigation (Task C3)</li> </ul>
Prospect Creek Watershed Sediment TMDLs and Framework for Water Quality Restoration (MDEQ, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sediment load reductions through riparian management, road maintenance/ crossing improvements, road BMP's and bank stabilization and channel restoration</li> <li>- Review road removal potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WRP completion and project planning (Task B1)</li> <li>- Technical Assistance and Project Development (Task C1)</li> <li>- Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris (Task C2)</li> <li>- Thompson River Road Investigation (Task C3)</li> </ul>

Lower Clark Fork Tributaries sediment TMDLs and Framework for Water Quality Restoration (MDEQ, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sediment load reductions through riparian management, bank stabilization, road BMP's and grazing management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WRP completion and project planning (Task B1)</li> <li>- Technical assistance in riparian revegetation (Task C1)</li> </ul>
Watershed Restoration Plan for Lower Clark Fork Tributary TMDL Planning Area (Miller, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outdated summary of proposed stream restoration projects identified in LCF tributaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LCF Tributary Watershed Restoration Plan Update (Task B1)</li> </ul>

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**EVALUATION CRITERION D— NEXUS TO DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INITIATIVES (10 POINTS)**

The proposed tasks are guided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommendations for Bull Trout, a federally threatened species. Several projects are directly taken from the USFWS Columbia headwaters Bull Trout recovery unit implementation plan (USFWS, 2015) (See letter of support from Kevin Aceituno, USFWS).

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE**

The proposed planning activities do not require compliance review.

**REQUIRED PERMITS OR APPROVALS**

No permits or approvals are required for the proposed activities.

PROJECT BUDGET

BUDGET PROPOSAL

	Price per unit	Quantity	Unit	Total Request	FY2019 Request	FY2020 Request
<b>B1. WRP Completion and Project Planning</b>						
Wages, Watershed Coordinator (LCFWG)	\$ 27.21	60	hours	\$1,633		
Wages, WRP developer (LCFWG)	\$ 21.77	400	hours	\$8,708		
Travel (5 trips, LCFWG)	\$ 0.55	1200	miles	\$654		
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 10,995</b>	\$ 10,995	\$0
<b>C1. Technical Assistance and Project Development</b>						
Wages, Watershed Coordinator (LCFWG)	\$ 27.21	40	hours	\$ 1,088		
Contracted Labor, Engineer (Trout Unlimited)	\$ 50.00	60	hours	\$ 3,000		
Contracted Labor, Restoration Ecologist (Trout Unlimited)	\$ 40.00	200	hours	\$ 8,000		
Travel (5 site visits, TU staff)	\$ 0.55	1250	miles	\$ 681		
Survey equipment	\$ 50.00	4	days	\$ 200		
Lodging	\$ 80.00	8	nights	\$ 640		
Materials	\$ 568.80	1	lump	\$ 569		
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 14,178</b>	\$ 7,683	\$ 6,496
<b>C2. Project Design - Channel Restoration using Large Woody Debris</b>						
Wages, Watershed Coordinator (LCFWG)	\$ 27.21	60	hours	\$ 1,633		
Contracted Labor, project manager	\$ 150.00	130	hours	\$ 19,500		
Contracted Labor, project engineer	\$ 150.00	100	hours	\$ 15,000		
Contracted Labor, survey crew (crew of 2)	\$ 90.00	60	hours	\$ 5,400		
Contracted Labor, post-processing survey technician	\$ 90.00	65	hours	\$ 5,850		
Survey Grade GPS	\$ 300.00	6	days	\$ 1,800		
Travel	\$ 0.55	1250	miles	\$ 681		
Lodging	\$ 80.00	8	nights	\$ 640		
Per diem	\$ 35.00	8	days	\$ 280		
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 50,784</b>	\$ 25,907	\$ 24,877

	Price per unit	Quantity	Unit	Total Request	FY2019 Request	FY2020 Request
<b>C3. Thompson River Road Investigation</b>						
Wages, LCFWG coordinator	\$ 27.21	200	hours	\$ 5,442		
Travel ( 5 site visits, LCFWG staff)	\$ 0.55	1250	miles	\$ 688		
Contracted Labor, Project Manager (Trout Unlimited)	\$ 40.00	160	hours	\$ 6,400		
Travel (5 site visits, TU staff)	\$ 0.55	1250	miles	\$ 681		
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 13,211</b>	\$0	\$ 13,211
<b>Compliance with Reporting Requirements</b>						
Wages, LCFWG coordinator	\$ 27.21	64	hours	\$ 1,741		
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 1,741</b>	\$ 871	\$ 871
<b>Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Costs</b>						
Reclamation's cost to review environmental compliance documentation	\$ -	0	hours			
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b>				<b>\$ 90,909</b>	<b>\$ 45,455</b>	<b>\$ 45,455</b>
	<b>Type</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Total</b>		
<b>Indirect Costs</b>						
LCFWG Administration	de minimis	10%	90,909	\$ 9,091	\$ 4,545	\$ 4,545
<b>TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS</b>				<b>\$ 9,091</b>	<b>\$ 4,545</b>	<b>\$ 4,545</b>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>				<b>\$ 100,000</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>

## BUDGET NARRATIVE

### Salaries and Wages:

Hourly wages for LCFWG are outlined below. Hourly estimates for each task are delineated in the project budget. Brita Olson, Watershed Coordinator, will manage this grant and has included coordination/management costs for contracted tasks, as well as 8 hours/quarter to maintain compliance with grant oversight and reporting requirements.

- Brita Olson, Watershed Coordinator: \$27.21/hr
- Sarah Bowman, WRP Developer: \$21.77/hr

### Fringe Benefits:

There are no fringe benefit requests in this proposal

## Travel

Travel expenses consist of mileage reimbursement, based on the 2018 federal rate of \$0.545/mile. Proposed travel includes round trip mileage between Sandpoint, ID and the LCF watershed (LCFWG Watershed Coordinator, apx. 220 miles/trip) and Missoula and the LCF Watershed (Trout Unlimited staff, apx. 250 miles), with additional travel to project sites within the watershed. Travel will be required for stakeholder meetings, site assessments and project planning activities as outlined in the budget proposal. Lodging costs are based on rates typical in the area (\$80/person/night).

## Equipment

No equipment costs are requested in this proposal

## Materials and Supplies

Item	Price	Quantity	Unit	Total	Description
C1. Survey Equipment	\$50	4	day	\$200.00	Miscellaneous equipment needed for preliminary site assessments
C1. Field notebooks (waterproof)	\$6.95	5	notebook	\$34.75	Field notebooks for data collection
C1. Chest waders & boots	\$220.00	2	wader sets	\$440.00	Required for stream assessments and will provide a long-time benefit to the LCFWG
C1. Land ownership boundary application	\$29.99	1	App download	\$29.99	Allows for GPS navigation with a land ownership boundary layer, essential for field work near public/private land boundaries
C1. Misc.	\$64.06	1	N/A	\$64.06	Small miscellaneous expenses (batteries, measuring tape etc.)
C2. Survey Grade GPS	\$300	6	day	\$1,800.00	Required for accurate survey of restoration stream reaches
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$2,568.80</b>	

## **Contractual**

Contracted work is clearly identified in the budget proposal and includes any work performed by Trout Unlimited, as well as labor for “Project Design - Channel Enhancement Large Woody Debris” which will be contracted to an engineering firm. Trout Unlimited rates are set at \$50/hr (Engineer) and \$40/hr (Restoration Ecologist), and are well below normal contracting rates for the proposed tasks. Rates for contracted labor for “Project Design - Channel restoration using large woody debris” are based on previous contracts for similar work. This work will go through an open bid and hiring process, so exact rates are currently unknown. We will submit a request for approval if new rates are required.

## **Environmental and Regulatory Compliance**

No compliance assessments/costs will be required for the proposed activities.

## **Other expenses**

None

## **Indirect Costs**

The LCFWG is requesting 10% of the base direct costs to cover indirect expenses. This rate is comparable to other grants received.

## **REFERENCES**

Aceituno, K., US Fish and Wildlife Service, personal phone communication 1/24/2018

Bowman et al. (2018) Draft Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan, Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group. *In Review*

DEQ - Montana Department of Environmental Quality (2016) Montana 2016 Water Quality Integrated Report – Final. Helena, MT: Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

DEQ - Department of Environmental Quality (2014) Thompson project area Metals, Nutrients, Sediment and Temperature TMDL’s

DEQ - Montana Department of Environmental Quality (2010) Lower Clark Fork Tributaries sediment TMDLs and Framework for Water Quality Restoration

DEQ - Department of Environmental Quality (2009) Prospect Creek Watershed Sediment TMDLs and Framework for Water Quality Restoration



Kreiner, R., and M., Terrazas. *In Prep.* Thompson River Fisheries Investigations: A Compilation Through 2017. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Thompson Falls, MT.

Miller (2010) Watershed Restoration Plan for Lower Clark Fork Tributary TMDL Planning Area. Doc. No. 2010-0453, Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group

MTNHP -Montana Natural Heritage Program (2018) Environmental Summary Report for Latitude 47.27471 to 48.37917 and Longitude -114.77197 to -115.98167. Retrieved on 1/23/2018.

PPL Montana (2013) Thompson River Bull Trout Enhancement and Recovery Plan

USDA - US Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service (2013) Conservation Strategy for Bull Trout on USFS lands in Western Montana

USFWS - US Fish and Wildlife Service (2015) Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit Implementation Plan for Bull Trout. Montana Ecological services office, Northern Idaho field office, Eastern Washington Field office

## ATTACHMENTS

### LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Attachments below include letters of support from:

- Avista
- Eastern Sanders County Conservation District
- Green Mountain Conservation District
- Kootenai National Forest - Cabinet Ranger District
- Lolo National Forest - Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Sanders County
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana
- Trout Unlimited
- US Fish and Wildlife Service



94 Avista Power Road  
PO Box 1469  
Noxon, Montana 59853

January 26, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

Please accept this letter of support from Avista for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for a grant to fund watershed restoration planning and project design in the lower Clark Fork River Watershed.

As a non-profit "umbrella organization" coordinating and supporting local watershed councils, the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) has received annual funding from Avista under the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement (CFSA). The CFSA was jointly developed by 26 stakeholder groups during the re-licensing of Avista's two dams on the lower Clark Fork River. Watershed councils are an important cooperators in the CFSA through their commitment to protecting and enhancing stream habitat along tributaries of the lower Clark Fork River. Such tributary habitat protection and enhancement within the Avista Project Area is an important component of Avista's continuing Protection, Mitigation and Enhancement measures.

Since its inception, the LCFWG has been essential in coordinating a diverse group of private entities, state and federal agencies, and diverse funding sources, to help plan, administer, and implement a wide variety of stream restoration and habitat improvement projects in the lower Clark Fork area. Based on this experience, the potential assistance in updating the Lower Clark Fork River Watershed Restoration Plan provided by this grant would be of great importance. In addition to this component, the potential to add the technical capacity and experience of Trout Unlimited engendered by this grant would bring additional planning and design resources to bear on a variety of stream restoration projects throughout the area. Furthermore, by facilitating these necessary steps, this grant would make projects better positioned to attract additional funding that is often required for implementation.

We at Avista have been cooperatively involved with stream restoration efforts with diverse stakeholders through the CFSA. We believe that this grant would greatly add to our continued efforts in protecting and improving tributary habitat resources in the lower Clark Fork area.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Nate Hall".

Nate Hall  
Clark Fork License Manager, Avista



7487 MT Highway 200  
Plains, MT 59859  
(406) 826-3701

Jan. 26, 2018

**Chairman**  
Marvin Rehbein

**Vice Chairman**  
Lando Bras

**Supervisors**  
Doug King  
John Murrinan  
Steve Dagger  
Jerry Hamel  
Don Feist

**Administrator**  
Patsy Meredith

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

The Eastern Sanders County Conservation District (ESCCD) would like to express support for the application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for a grant to fund project design and technical assistance that includes restoration projects within the Thompson River watershed.

We have partnered with the LCFWG in the development of the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan through 2018 and are interested in seeing projects implemented that have been identified in the watershed restoration planning process. Both LCFWG and Trout Unlimited (TU) have not been active on our district until recently and the expertise and resources they are able to provide are essential to bringing many needed restoration projects to successful completion. If this grant application is funded, it will allow the two organizations to work with ESCCD and other area stakeholders to build on watershed restoration planning efforts currently underway. The funding will ensure that we have the most relevant and complete plans to use as we work collaboratively on restoration projects. The funding requested will also allow on-the-ground work to get underway as soon as possible, by initiating design work for high priority projects.

As you are well aware, watershed management and restoration work requires a comprehensive approach based on a complete watershed analysis such as has been done for the Thompson and Lower Clark Fork drainages in order to be most cost effective. LCFWG and TU are currently refining plans for high priority projects in these two drainages and would effectively use grant funds to further that work. We look forward to the successful completion of the proposed work, and the eventual on-the-ground implementation of restoration that benefits the natural resources of the district.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marvin L. Rehbein".

Eastern Sanders Conservation District Board





## **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

Jan. 26, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

As Fisheries Biologists with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), we would like to express our support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program to fund the development of stream restoration and fisheries enhancement projects in tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River, Montana.

The Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) has partnered with FWP on stream restoration projects in lower Clark Fork River tributaries since 2004, and we anticipate the further success in improving fisheries habitat as a result of our partnership over the coming years. Because we recognize the value of stakeholder coordination in the development of collaborative stream restoration and habitat enhancement projects, we supported the expansion of the LCFWG's activity to the Thompson River drainage, where they have been developing stakeholder relations and a Watershed Restoration Plan since 2016.

As state and federal resources fluctuate, the ability of the LCFWG to attract diverse resources and partners to our area is a crucial component to initiate projects and advancement of watershed restoration efforts that benefit Montana's fish and wildlife species. One limiting factor has been access to technical skills and experience in restoration design and engineering. Federal partners (Forest Hydrologists) are often stretched to capacity while outside consultants are expensive. A potential partnership with Trout Unlimited (TU) resulting from this funding opportunity would increase our ability to design and implement successful projects for the benefit of native fish. The LCFWG and TU have a proven track record for planning well-conceived projects, working well with area partners and seeing stream restoration and similar projects through to successful completion.

We are further excited to see the LCFWG and its partners transfer the momentum from watershed restoration planning efforts over the last few years toward the design and implementation of projects through the lower Clark Fork. We have been engaged in the development of project ideas for the large woody debris additions in Crow Creek, Fishtrap Creek, Graves Creek and other lower Clark Fork tributaries – and naturally support any efforts to further develop these projects. Furthermore, we support the compilation of information on

the Thompson River road system which will initiate the process for large-scale riparian habitat improvements along this important native and recreational fishery.

Thank you for your consideration,



Ryan Kreiner  
FWP Fisheries Biologist  
Thompson Falls, MT



Jason Blakney  
FWP Fisheries Biologist  
Thompson Falls, MT



Jan. 26, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

On behalf of the Green Mountain Conservation District (GMCD), I would like to express our support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant to fund watershed restoration planning and project designs in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed. The GMCD has been a member of the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG), fiscal sponsor, and project partner since the LCFWG was formed in 2004. Since then, the GMCD and LCFWG have worked together, typically with state and federal agencies and private entities, to plan, secure funding, administer, coordinate, and implement many stream restoration projects in the lower Clark Fork area.

Due to our experience with stream restoration projects in the lower Clark Fork watershed, we recognize the importance in updating the Watershed Restoration Plan for the lower Clark Fork Watershed. We realize it is important to plan strategically to bring as many resources as we can to facilitate implementation of restoration projects. For this reason, we are looking forward to having a new project partner, Trout Unlimited (whose participation would be assisted under this grant), to help increase our technical capacity for planning and providing designs for restoration projects in the lower Clark Fork area.

If this grant application was accepted, it would help ensure that we have the most relevant and complete plans to apply to our continued collaborative work on stream restoration projects. This potential funding would also be used to initiate design and associated permitting work for priority projects pertaining to identified tributary impairments. By facilitating these necessary steps, this grant would make our projects more "shovel ready" and better positioned to attract additional funding required for implementation. We have been involved with stream restoration efforts over a large area with many diverse stakeholders and cooperators and believe that this grant would greatly add to our continued efforts in protecting and improving our critical water resources in the lower Clark Fork Basin.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kent Wilby  
Chairman, GMCD Board of Supervisors



**SANDERS COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

1111 Main Street • P.O. Box 519 • Thompson Falls, Montana 59873

**Carol Brooker**, Presiding Officer  
**Glen E. Magera**, Commissioner  
**Anthony B. Cox**, Commissioner



Telephone (406) 827-6942  
Fax (406) 827-4388  
co.sanders.mt.us

January 17, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

On behalf of Sanders County, I would like to express our support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's (LCFWG) application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for a grant to fund watershed restoration planning and project design in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed.

Water resources are highly valued in Sanders County. Our clear-running rivers and streams help define the quality of life for residents in our county, and attract visitors for fishing, boating, camping and other recreational pursuits. We are fortunate to have the LCFWG in our county, dedicated to pursuing water restoration projects that improve and protect the water resources in the Lower Clark Fork Basin.

The LCFWG has a proven track record of success with stream restoration and revegetation projects in our county. Their work will be enhanced and better defined with the completion of the Water Restoration Plan. The county and its water resources will greatly benefit by having an up-to-date and complete plan, and funding to jump start priority projects identified in that plan, because it will ensure the greatest problems in our watershed are addressed as soon as possible.

We fully support this request for funding to complete the Lower Clark Fork Tributary Watershed Restoration Plan, to provide resources for technical assistance and project development, initiate project design for priority restoration projects using large woody debris, and to investigate removing a road along the Thompson River. The information gathered as a result of this funding will go a long way toward stewardship of our vital water resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol Brooker, Presiding Officer  
District No. 1

Glen E. Magera, Commissioner  
District No. 2

Anthony B. Cox, Commissioner  
District No. 3





1101 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601  
[www.swcdm.org](http://www.swcdm.org), 406-443-5711

January 26, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

On behalf of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana, I would like to express our support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for a grant to fund watershed restoration planning in the Lower Clark Fork watershed. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana is a non-profit that exists to supplement the resources of Conservation Districts across the state of Montana with additional grant funding, technical support, knowledge sharing, and other resources.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana have played a key role in the development of many watershed restoration plans in the state. In 2016 and 2017, our organization helped support the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's development of the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan. This plan has incorporated extensive feedback from a broad base of local stakeholders and has created in-depth guidance identifying priorities throughout the watershed. We support the local and comprehensive approach the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group has taken in the watershed and the future restoration made possible by the plan.

The Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group has taken their collaborative approach a step further by partnering with Trout Unlimited to initiate restoration activities in the watershed. By combining expertise and resources, these organizations will be better able to serve local communities and implement successful projects.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana supports local, commonsense conservation and the local approach the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group has taken during development of the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan will set the stage for successful future projects. Thorough planning is critical to on-the-ground restoration success and by outlining initial site visits and detailing restoration design plans, the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group will lay the framework for successful projects that will result in meaningful restoration, benefitting both water quality and communities.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Makus".

Jessica Makus  
Programs Manager  
Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Montana  
1101 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601  
406-443-5711. [jessica@macdnet.org](mailto:jessica@macdnet.org)



---

Christine Brissette  
Special Projects Manager

312 N. Higgins Ave., Suite 100  
Missoula, MT 59802  
406-541-1193  
cbrissette@tu.org

January 26, 2018

**RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant Application from the LCFWG and TU**

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee:

Trout Unlimited (TU) would like to express its full support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's (LCFWG) application to the Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant through the Bureau of Reclamation. This funding would provide an unprecedented opportunity to build a partnership between our organizations to complete high-impact restoration projects in the Lower Clark Fork.

Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries. While our work often involves project development and stakeholder coordination, we are best known regionally for our ability to implement projects on-the-ground. We have worked extensively throughout the Upper and Middle Clark Fork basins, but until recently did not have the capacity to work in the Lower Clark Fork. With the creation of a new TU project manager position, and the completion of the LCFWG's Watershed Restoration Planning efforts, there is a powerful opportunity to leverage the skills of both groups to complete restoration projects in the basin.

We've witnessed the LCFWG's excellent work coordinating stakeholders to build and prioritize efforts in the LCF. The resulting plans and relationships are the backbone of successful, comprehensive projects. The LCFWG has asked TU to join as a partner to ensure that these plans are now implemented; TU will provide technical support, project development and training to LCFWG staff, while the LCFWG will maintain stakeholder relationships and develop opportunities for project implementation. The Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant would provide dedicated funding for this effort. Without this funding, we would still pursue this partnership, but the scope of our work would be limited and opportunistic.

For Trout Unlimited, this grant represents an opportunity to expand our efforts of enhancing and restoring watersheds into a critically important area for native and threatened trout. After the extensive planning work completed by the LCFWG, project development is the logical next step. Through this partnership, and with the support of the Bureau of Reclamation, we can complete efficient, effective and impactful restoration work in the Lower Clark Fork basin.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christine Brissette  
Special Projects Manager  
Trout Unlimited



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Kootenai National Forest

Cabinet Ranger Station  
2693 Highway 200  
Trout Creek, MT 59874  
406-827-3533

**File Code:** 2530 Watershed Management

**Date:** January 18, 2018

**Subject:** Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited

**To:** CWMP Grant Review Committee,

Please accept this letter of support from the Kootenai National Forest for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for funding for watershed restoration planning and project design in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed.

The Kootenai National Forest has worked with the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) on multiple water restoration projects over the years, including recent revegetation efforts in the Bull River Valley and large channel reconstruction projects in the Vermilion River. The LCFWG has a proven track record for planning well-conceived projects, working well with area partners, and seeing stream restoration and similar projects through to successful completion. The Kootenai National Forest looks forward to partnering with them again on future efforts to improve and protect the water resources in the Lower Clark Fork Basin.

If this grant application is funded, it will build on current watershed restoration planning efforts and will ensure that we have the most relevant and complete plans to use as we develop future restoration projects. The funding requested will also accelerate implementation by initiating project development and design work for high priority projects in stream channels and floodplains, for revegetation, sediment reduction and reducing irrigation diversion impacts on Bull Trout, a threatened species. In order to secure future funding for these types of stream restoration projects, we need the best information available. This grant will fund topographic surveys, construction design and revegetation plans, making our top priority collaborative projects shovel-ready and very competitive.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information pertaining to the LCFWG and their work on the Cabinet Ranger District.

Thank you for your consideration of this worthy application.

Sincerely,

JOHN GUBEL  
District Ranger





File Code: 1950

Date: January 23, 2018

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Grant Application from the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG)

To the CWMP Grant Review Committee,

Please accept this letter of support from the Lolo National Forest for the LCFWG application to the Bureau of Reclamation's CWMP for a grant to fund watershed restoration planning and project design in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed. The LCFWG is an important and valued partner in efforts to protect and restore water resources where the watershed overlaps with the Lolo National Forest. We have participated in the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan and will be involved in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Tributaries Restoration Plan, both of which will direct important work to improve and protect the water resources of the National Forest.

This grant will help gather necessary information needed to design channel reconstruction projects that will have tangible results. This grant request is consistent and supportive of preparations we are undertaking in order to carry out these projects. In compliance with National Environmental Policy Act requirements, analysis is in progress for multiple large woody debris addition projects in tributaries streams in the Lower Clark Fork watershed. This includes, Crow Creek, Fishtrap Creek, Graves Creek, and Upper Prospect Creek. Partnerships with the LCFWG, will be instrumental in advancing watershed restoration on the forest over the coming years.

Similarly, the proposed investigation into the dual road system along the Thompson River will help us to address a major source of sedimentation into one of Northwest Montana's finest trout streams and improve its riparian habitat. The Lolo National Forest has invested significant time and resources into the analysis of alternatives for consolidating this road system. Partnership with the LCFWG in compiling information on past work and determining limiting factors will help us develop an appropriate path forward on this opportunity. Finally, we are excited that Trout Unlimited is getting involved in this watershed, and bringing their resources and expertise to these projects.

Because funding for planning and design of these projects will result in a healthier and more resilient watershed, we urge you to support this application. Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

DAVID J. HATTIS  
District Ranger







# United States Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service  
Montana Ecological Services Office  
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1  
Helena, Montana 59601-6287

Phone: (406) 449-5225; Fax: (406) 449-5339



January 24, 2018

Grant Review Committee,

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), I would like to express support for the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group's (LCFWG) application to the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Grant Program.

The Service's 2015 Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit Implementation Plan for Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confuentus*) (RUIP) identified sediment, riparian habitat degradation, and loss of large woody debris as primary habitat threats to bull trout in the Lake Pend Oreille Core Area. The LCFWG's proposal will support actions identified in the RUIP to address these habitat threats. Actions include consolidation of the Thompson River road network, restoration of large woody debris recruitment and pool formation in the Thompson River and Prospect Creek watersheds, and revegetation of deficient riparian areas. By addressing primary habitat threats to the Lake Pend Oreille Core Area, the LCFWG's proposal will contribute to bull trout recovery in the Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit. As such, the Service emphatically supports their application.

If you have questions or require clarification regarding this letter of support, please contact Kevin Aceituno of my staff at (406) 758-6871.

Sincerely,

Jodi L. Bush  
Office Supervisor

OFFICIAL RESOLUTION

Attached below is an official resolution from the LCFWG Board in support of this funding application.



## BOARD RESOLUTION

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG) on January 29, 2018, the following resolution pertaining to a funding application to the Bureau of Reclamation was proposed and approved by the board:

WHEREAS the mission of the LCFWG is to facilitate collaboration among watershed stakeholders and to coordinate efforts to maintain, enhance and restore the ecological integrity of tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River;

WHEREAS the proposed activities in the prepared application supports the mission of the LCFWG;

WHEREAS the Board of the LCFWG have reviewed the above-mentioned application;

WHEREAS the LCFWG has the staff capacity and broad support from its members and partners to carry-out the direct and indirect tasks proposed in this application;

Be it resolved:

- (1) That the LCFWG Board is in full support of the funding application, entitled "Watershed Restoration Planning and Project Development in the Lower Clark Fork Watershed", to the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grants for Fiscal Year 2018, a program of the Bureau of Reclamation;
- (2) That LCFWG Coordinator Brita Olson is authorized to submit this application (via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)) on behalf of the LCFWG; and
- (3) That LCFWG board and staff will work with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet all established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement and necessary for the completion of proposed activities.

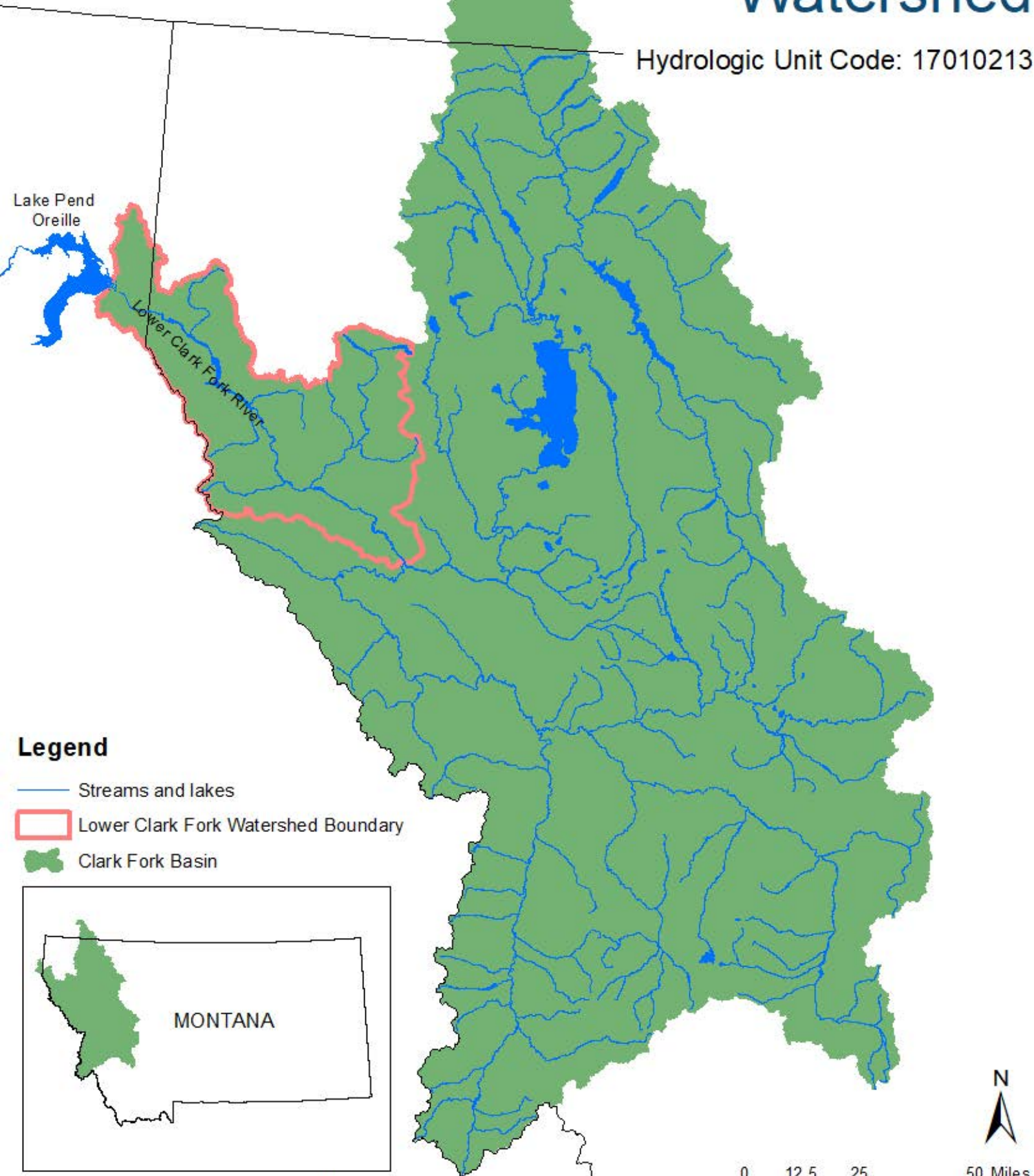
Signed:

Sean Moran  
LCFWG Board President



# Lower Clark Fork Watershed

Hydrologic Unit Code: 17010213



Lake Pend Oreille

Lower Clark Fork River

## Legend

- Streams and lakes
- Lower Clark Fork Watershed Boundary
- Clark Fork Basin

