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September 24, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Lynn Palensky and Kerry Berg

SUBJECT: Follow-up for two Montana Subbasin Plans Submitted for Review - Bitterroot (Project 2007-265-00) and Blackfoot (Project 2007-235-00)

As a part of the original call for the development of subbasin plans for the Fish and Wildlife Program, in September 2009 Montana Water Trust (Bitterroot subbasin) and Trout Unlimited (Blackfoot subbasin) submitted subbasin plans to the Council for review and adoption into the program. Staff will provide an overview of the process for adopting these subbasin plans into the Program; no Council action is required at this time.

The 2009 Program Findings speak to the planning effort in three Montana subbasins: Findings on Recommendations and Responses to Comments Relating to the 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program Amendments

The Council continues to support the development of subbasin plans for areas that do not yet have an adopted subbasin plan, such as in the Bitterroot and Clark Fork subbasins. 2009 revised program, at 111-12. The Council's program provided funding for subbasin plan development in the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins in 2007-09, and these plans are scheduled for completion in 2009. If the proposed plans are ready in time, the planners in these subbasins will be able to recommend a subbasin plan for adoption into the program during the subbasin plan update process. If that is not feasible, the Council will determine how to consider and adopt these and other proposed plans into the program at an appropriate time.

The general process with anticipated dates/timeframes is outlined below. The process is consistent with that used in 2004. Should the need arise, additional dates to allow for oral testimony at Council meetings or otherwise, may be added.

1. Bitterroot and Blackfoot Subbasin Plans submitted --September 2009
2. ISRP review and public comment period begins September (Presentations to ISRP – Oct)
3. ISRP final report complete – November 20
4. Public Comment Period on ISRP report ends -- December 11
5. Council reviews comments and draft subbasin plans -- by December 31
6. Council releases draft subbasin plan amendments for public comment at January meeting
7. Public comment period on draft amendments ends -- February 19 (in time for packet)
8. Council adopts final program amendments – March 2010 Council meeting