



Sun Ranch LLC
C/o Buddy Drake, Drake and Associates
PO Box 4183
Bozeman, MT 59772

April 3, 2003

Dear Mr. Drake:

As you know, the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) is an organization of professional fisheries scientists and students from agencies, universities, and the private sector across Montana. Our objectives are (1) conservation, development, and wise utilization of Montana's fisheries, (2) promotion of the educational, scientific and technological development and advancement of all branches of fisheries science and practice, and (3) exchange and dissemination of knowledge about fish, fisheries, and related subjects. Of special concern to our Chapter is the protection and enhancement of Montana's native fishes, like westslope cutthroat trout.

Westslope cutthroat trout occupy only a fraction of their historic range in the headwaters of the Missouri River. The Sun Ranch's cooperative program with state and federal agencies establishing a conservation brood stock is an important step toward restoring westslope cutthroat trout to sustainable levels and reestablishing populations on public and private land in the upper Missouri basin. As with many conservation efforts, funding for native species restoration can be difficult to come by. The generosity of the Sun Ranch LLC in funding most of the program to date is admirable. The recent award we granted to Roger and Cynthia Lang is a small but sincere measure of our appreciation. However, we all acknowledge that diverse, stable funding will be required to bring this project to full fruition. While MCAFS has provided \$8,000.00 for the project in the last two years, this amount is only a small portion of what is needed. The partnership between the Sun Ranch, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, MCAFS, and PPL Montana has been sufficient to maintain base level funding to keep the project afloat, but will prove inadequate in the long term as restoration efforts advance.

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society would like to voice our support for this partnership as it seeks additional funding sources to protect and enhance westslope cutthroat trout in the upper Missouri basin. Cooperative projects such as this have proven to be more effective in preserving rare species than regulatory fixes that tend to divide communities. By working across agency boundaries, in and among landowners and local communities, fisheries professionals are much more likely to be successful in the long-term preservation of our cherished natural heritage. We offer our continued assistance as you seek funding for this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Patrick Byorth, President

[Back to Chapter Correspondence Page](#)

[Back to MCAFS Home Page](#)