Cost-Share Proposal Form for NorthWestern Energy Project 2188 TAC Funds

Project 2188 (Madison-Missouri River) License proposed Protection, Mitigation and Enhancement (PM&E) projects should relate to an effect from the continued operation of one or more of NorthWestern Energy's (NorthWestern) nine hydro developments (Hebgen, Madison, Hauser, Holter, Black Eagle, Rainbow, Cochrane, Ryan and Morony Dams). PM&E projects are required to reduce or offset impacts to river resources from the continued operation of the hydro developments. PM&E projects need to be prioritized toward in-river or on-the-ground measures that directly benefit fisheries and/or wildlife populations and their habitats:

Priority 1: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats within the main stem Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir)

Priority 2: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats in primary tributaries or on adjacent lands and, in doing so, provide PM&E for Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir) resources.

Priority 3: 2188 License PM&E projects which meet License Article requirements by providing scientific or other tangible PM&E benefits to Madison-Missouri River fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats. These projects must be located in the greater Missouri River drainage upstream from Fort Peck Reservoir, but not necessarily located on the main stem Madison River or Missouri River or their adjacent lands or primary tributaries.

All TAC project proposals must include the following information:

Project Title: North Central Montana Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration

Date: 09/02/2026

Explain how this Project addresses a specific Project 2188 License Article(s): Project addresses Article 417, #4. Protect and provide for the recovery of threatened and endangered fish species and other aquatic species of special concern in the Great Falls reservoirs and below Morony Dam.

Provide justification for Priority 1, 2 or 3 (above) that you selected: Priority 3 whereas the project will be located in the greater Missouri River drainage upstream of Fort Peck Reservoir.

Project Sponsor (submitted by): Alex Poole, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

Location of Proposed Project: Majority of work is focused in the drainages of Highwood and Belt Creek. Other work may occur on headwater tributary drainages such as but not limited to Dearborn, Smith, Sun, Teton, Marias, and Judith rivers.

Narrative

Geocode (in decimal degrees ex 46.89743) Lat; _____ Long: _____
NA

Total Project Cost: $75,940 per year

TAC Funds (Cost-Share) Requested for Project: $33,280

I. Introduction; brief statement of project to be completed with pertinent background information.

Native westslope cutthroat trout were historically the most widely distributed and only native trout species in the Great Falls Area. Significant population reductions have occurred, and it is estimated that westslope cutthroat trout currently occupy less than 5% of their historic range in the Missouri River drainage. The reduction in populations has been attributed to nonnative species introductions, habitat degradation, fragmentation, and overexploitation.

This project will fund a fisheries technician that will work directly with the FWP native species biologist. FWP contributes FTE and operations to the project to complete field work implemented to maintain, protect, enhance, recover and monitor native westslope cutthroat trout. The FTE and operations contribution by FWP are estimated at $42,660.

II. Objectives; explicit statement(s) of what is intended to be accomplished.

The FWP native species biologist will develop a work plan that has objectives including maintaining, protecting, recovering and monitoring native westslope cutthroat trout. Majority of work will be focused in the drainages of Highwood and Belt Creek. Other work may occur on headwater tributary drainages such as but not limited to Dearborn, Smith, Sun, Teton, Marias, and Judith rivers.

This fisheries technician will utilize the FTE and operations budget to work directly with the native species biologist to carry out the field based workplan.

III. Methods; description of how Project objectives will be accomplished.

Work and methods of data collection will include various fisheries sampling gears including but not limited to electrofishing, environmental collection equipment, and other gear as necessary.

IV. Schedule; when the Project work will begin and end.

Contribution will supplement full-time year-round fisheries technician.

V. Personnel who will do the work? Identify Project leader or principal investigator.

Fisheries technician; position is currently filled by Lillian Strong. Project lead/principal investigator is FWP native species biologist; position is currently filled by Alex Poole.

VI. Project budget with line items including amounts for the following:

Direct Labor	$29,208
Travel and Living	$250
Materials	$250
Other Direct Expenses	$0
Direct Overhead	$3,572

All contribution sources and amounts

	Item	FTE	Hours	Pay rate including benefits	Amount
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration (34037/3403700)					
Lillian Strong	F&W Tech	0.38	800	$36.51	$29,208
	Overhead (12.23%)				$3,572
	Subtotal				**$32,780**
	Operations (travel, fuel, equip)				$500
	Total	0.38	800		**$33,280**

***NorthWestern Energy TAC funds will not be used for agency overhead on projects that do not fund personnel. Applications for materials and equipment should not contain overhead.**

VII. Deliverables; describe work product (reports, habitat restoration, etc.) which will result from this Project. How will "success" for this project be monitored or demonstrated?

An annual report will be submitted to NWE November 2027.

VIII. Cultural Resources. Cultural Resource Management (CRM) requirements for any activity related to this Project must be completed and documented to NorthWestern as a condition of any TAC grant. TAC funds may not be used for any land-disturbing activity, or the modification, renovation, or removal of any buildings or structures until the CRM consultation process has been completed. Agency applicants must submit a copy of the proposed project to a designated Cultural Resource Specialist for their agency. Private parties or non-governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a copy of their proposed project to a CRM consultant they may have employed. Private parties and non-governmental organizations may also contact the NorthWestern representative for further information or assistance from NorthWestern's staff archeologist. Applications submitted without this section completed, will be held by the TAC, without any action, until the information has been submitted.

Summarize here how you will complete requirements for Cultural Resource Management:

No ground disturbance associated with this project.

IX. Water Rights. For projects that involve development, restoration or enhancement of streams or wetlands, please describe how the project will comply with the Montana DNRC's "Guidance for Landowners and Practitioners Engaged in Stream and Wetland Restoration Activities", issued by the Water Resources Division on 9 March 2016.

Summarize here how you will comply with Montana water rights laws, policies and guidelines:

No wetland development is associated with this project.

All TAC Project proposals should be 7 pages or less and emailed (as a WORD file) to each of:

- Andrew.Welch@NorthWestern.com
- Jon.Hanson@Northwestern.com

Further questions about TAC proposals or Project 2188 license requirements or related issues may be addressed to:

Andy Welch
Manager, Hydro License Compliance
Andrew.Welch@NorthWestern.com
O 406-444-8115
C 406-565-7549