What about the habitat?

Alex Leone (CFC) & Nathan Cook (FWP)
Major Limiting Factors in the UCF

- Low flows
- High water temperatures
- Ongoing heavy metals contamination

Fish Habitat

Three Basic Components of Fish Habitat
- Water
- Riparian Habitat
- Structure
“The agencies are creating a fish desert”

“All of the fish habitat is being destroyed, that’s why the fish aren’t coming back”

“This isn’t Silver Bow Creek, the upper Clark Fork had a viable fishery before the cleanup”
A loss of habitat complexity???
Fish Habitat Characterization Study

Two major components of the study

1. Fish habitat assessment
   • What habitat is available for fish to utilize in the UCF?

2. Fish habitat preference evaluation
   • What types of habitat are fish actually using in the UCF?
Three Basic Components of Fish Habitat

- Water
- Riparian Habitat
- Structure

- Undercut Banks
- Weeds
- Rocks
- Woody Debris

Riparian Habitat

Structure

Water
Fish Habitat Assessment

Undercut banks
Fish Habitat Assessment

Riparian Vegetation
Fish Habitat Characterization Study

Instream habitat
Fish Habitat Preference Evaluation

Snorkel survey

Figure 3—Two snorkelers counting fish in a unit while moving upstream. Observer 1 counts all fish to the left of center and observer 2 counts the remainder.
Study Limitations

- Piecemeal approach
- We need more data
- Lack of capacity

*****Habitat study data is publicly available on the UCFWG web portal
Management Implications

- How fast is fish habitat recovering?
- Which treatments result in the best fish habitat?
- Do fish prefer certain types of bank treatments?
MT Tech and NRDP to the rescue!

Floodplain Vegetation Monitoring

Bank Assessment
What’s the point????

“It’s all about the restoration trajectory”
– Amy Sacry
What’s the point????

Partners

MontanaTech

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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Questions?

alex@clarkfork.org