

# MONTANA CURRENTS



Spring 2008

## Thompson Falls fish ladder will help rare trout species

PPL Montana plans to build a permanent fish ladder at its hydroelectric dam at Thompson Falls, giving two rare species of trout safe passage into their native spawning waters upstream on the Clark Fork River.

“As part of our federal operating license and our commitment to fisheries and river resources, PPL Montana has filed formal plans for a permanent fish ladder at Thompson Falls,” said Jon Jourdonnais, PPL Montana’s director of hydro licensing and environmental compliance.

“This project is significant because it will reopen hundreds of miles of the upstream Clark Fork River and its tributaries for bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout and other fish,” Jourdonnais said.

Pending approval of the proposal by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, construction on the \$6 million project is expected to begin in spring of 2009 and be completed in 2010. The project will be funded entirely by PPL Montana.

The fish ladder — which will replace an experimental, temporary fish passage system used since 2003 — will have 47 individual step pools, each filled with water, that will gradually ascend about 75 feet to the top of the dam. Fish will swim their way through the individual pools until they get over the dam.

PPL Montana will place the new system on the north side of the main channel, where years of fish behavior and tracking studies have determined fish congregate below the dam.

“This innovative design will attract the fish by having water cascade down the ladder at the dam, causing them



Artist's rendering of the proposed Thompson Falls fish ladder (background) in the main channel of the dam.

to move instinctively toward and into the fish passage system,” he said. “Our goal will be recovery of bull trout, which is endangered, and westslope cutthroat trout, a species of special concern.”

There will be a mechanical lift that can be used as needed as part of the ladder operation, where biologists can radio tag and examine the fish, near a spot where the public may view the ladder operations.

The Clark Fork River at Thompson Falls was originally a natural river falls, and fish would instinctively jump the rock cascade to get upstream.

“PPL Montana’s leadership and commitment to protect the endangered bull trout and other species are commendable,” said Chris Hunter, chief of fisheries with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. “This project will provide so many benefits to the state of Montana with regards to healthy fish conservation and helping manage healthy native and sport fishing within the Clark Fork River Basin.”

# Get to know your PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board members

Montana Currents is introducing the 18 members of the PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board, a group dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Montana families and their communities.

Twice a year, PPL Montana's Community Fund awards grants to nonprofit groups to address quality-of-life issues related to education, the environment and economic development.

As a major corporation with 500 employees in Montana, PPL Montana is committed to working with Montana communities and this board to improve the quality of life for today and tomorrow.

## Meet Richard Henson

Richard Henson is a Supply Chain support specialist at PPL Montana's Corette power plant in Billings. A Montana native, he joined the advisory board in 2007.

### *How do you see the role of the advisory board?*

This has been a great opportunity to get involved locally and across the state. Even in smaller rural communities, providing financial assistance to worthwhile organizations enables them to achieve success. It makes me proud to be part of this worthwhile endeavor sponsored by PPL. It has always been important to me to give back in some way to others who are less fortunate. I am proud to serve on this board.

### *What do you hope to accomplish during your term on the advisory board?*

It's my hope that my input on this board will help steer funds to the less fortunate, as well as toward the preservation of our historical culture here in Montana.



### *What are your interests when you're not working with Community Fund grants?*

Spending time with my wife and kids is my favorite, of course. My hobbies include bicycling, woodworking, and attending high school football and basketball games. And, naturally, spending time in the Montana countryside.

## PPL Montana employee discusses challenges of technology to capture carbon dioxide

Several major challenges must be resolved before carbon capture systems reach widespread use, a PPL Montana representative told two U.S. senators at a hearing in North Dakota recently.

"National standards are needed to provide consistency and regulatory certainty for energy companies, and uniform environmental protection for the public," Gordon Criswell, environmental manager at the Colstrip plant for PPL Montana, told Sens. Jon Tester (D-Montana) and

Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota).

He noted that no carbon-capture technologies have been proven yet on a commercial scale, and pilot studies have found that carbon-capture equipment could consume up to 30 percent of the electricity generated by units on which it is installed.

Criswell's comments were part of a field hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Energy. The hearing, held in Bismarck,

focused on challenges associated with large-scale carbon capture technology.

Criswell told the senators that PPL is active in the search for technologies that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and allow for the continued use of coal, because coal should remain part of the country's energy future.

PPL Montana has been involved in efforts such as the Big Sky Carbon Sequestration Partnership and the Montana Governor's Climate Change Advisory Committee.

# In rain, snow or 20 below, Mystic Lake Dam shines for National Weather Service



An enclosed box holds a thermometer used to collect data for the National Weather Service.

PPL Montana’s Mystic Lake Dam, a source of clean, renewable energy for more than 80 years, is also valued for its reliability as a weather observer for the National Weather Service.

Since Aug. 1, 1924, Mystic has been supplying daily weather information — precipitation, temperature, snow depths and river levels — to the National Weather Service office in Billings. It’s the oldest of 86 official weather data collection sites in southern Montana and Sheridan County, Wyo.

“Every day at 4 in the afternoon, I log on to a secure Web site and input the weather data measured by the gauges supplied by the National Weather Service,” said Ryan Olson, hydro foreman at the Mystic Lake plant.

“Generating electricity is the main thing we do here, but our weather data help a lot of people who come to the region to fish, camp and hike,” Olson said. “Weather can be extreme

here — we measured as much as 8 feet of snow this winter and temperatures nearly 20 below zero in January. It can also change very quickly.”

Sally Springer, observing program leader for the National Weather Service in Billings, said Mystic is an important spot for collecting weather

data in southern Montana.

“Mystic is right on the edge of the Beartooth Mountains and provides us with extensive coverage of weather conditions in Stillwater County,” she said. “It gives a good representation of the area and is the last outpost in a remarkably expansive wilderness area. Ryan also includes unusual or interesting wildlife sightings, which we record as well.”

Mystic’s weather data are sent to Billings, where they are checked and entered into a computer system that can be accessed by the general public at [www.weather.gov/billings](http://www.weather.gov/billings). The data are then archived at the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C.

“By faithfully gathering weather information, the staff at Mystic Lake provides an important service for the public and for meteorologists at the National Weather Service,” Springer said.



Ryan Olson, hydro foreman at Mystic Lake hydroelectric plant, watches the sky above the rugged mountains.



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## PPL Montana tunes up for National Folk Festival

The 70<sup>th</sup> National Folk Festival will be in Butte this summer, and PPL Montana will be helping guests enjoy the music, dance and cultural programs.

PPL Montana is sponsoring transportation shuttles during the festival, July 11-13, to help the elderly or others needing a lift get to the festival grounds.

“We’re doing what we can to help people make the most of their visit to the festival, one of the largest of its kind in the United States,” said Lisa Perry, community affairs manager for PPL Montana. “The festival is expected to have a huge economic impact on Butte, and we’re proud to be part of that.”

For more information about the festival, visit [www.nationalfolkfestival.com](http://www.nationalfolkfestival.com).



*Montana Currents* is your source of information about PPL Montana's commitment to the environment and our communities. It's just one more way we're putting our energy into Montana communities.

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