Report by the Haskill Basin Watershed Council concerning threats to Haskill Creek and its tributaries, and proposed solutions.

June 8, 2026

This report is submitted to the Whitefish City Council prior to its consideration of the Public Works Department's proposed draft Water Facility Plan for the city's water system (the "Draft Plan")[1]. While there is much good information and analysis in the Draft Plan, the Haskill Basin Watershed Council (the "HBWC" or the "Haskill Council") believes that there are several key portions that will perpetuate harmful practices that have affected Haskill Creek for many years. This report provides an Executive Summary, followed by a detailed Presentation of Issues that are of greatest concern to the Haskill Council. Finally, our Conclusion expresses how we believe the city should deal with all identified issues in the future.

Executive Summary

The Haskill Basin Watershed Council is a five-member organization created by the Flathead Conservation District in 2001 and tasked with protecting and improving Haskill Creek. One of its projects has been to investigate the low flows of water in the creek during the summer and early fall. The City of Whitefish uses Haskill Creek as its primary source of water for its municipal water system.

The city takes water from two tributaries of Haskill Creek, called Second Creek and Third Creek. The city diverts water from the creeks at two locations in Haskill Basin, both of which are a substantial distance from the city water treatment plant. The city has no way to electronically measure, in real time, how much water it is taking from each creek and how much remains. To make that determination, a city employee must travel to and from both creek diversions, a 60-90-minute round trip. While there the employee can observe the respective flows and make manual adjustments.

[1] This report will refer to the Draft Plan by chapter and section. For instance, 2.1 refers to chapter 2, section 1.

The Haskill Council has urged the city to install a modern radio telemetry or SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system, which would allow the city to easily and remotely monitor and adjust the respective flows in real time, without sending an employee to the diversions. To date, the city has declined to do so.

The city often takes much more water from Second and Third Creeks than it needs to serve its customers. The excess water flows out of the city reservoir and down into the Viking Creek drainage. The difficulty of monitoring the creek diversions and adjusting the flows causes, in part, the city's practice of taking excess water. The city also believes that the excess water flowing through the reservoir improves the water quality, although the city acknowledges it has no facts or data to support that conclusion.

The Haskill Council has urged the city to stop taking more water from the creeks than it needs to serve its customers unless and until it finds evidence that the practice is necessary. The only practical way for the city to do so is to install a radio telemetry system of the type referenced above. Both of these proposals would result in the city acting as a responsible steward of Haskill Creek and Haskill Basin.

During summer and early fall the flow in both creeks is much lower, while the city's water needs increase. At some point city takes all of the water flowing in the creeks, leaving them completely dry. This condition may last for several months. The aquatic life in the creeks dies and the natural riparian vegetation suffers.

The city can draw virtually unlimited quantities of water from Whitefish Lake, and it currently takes a significant amount from the lake as Second and Third Creeks provide less. The Haskill Council has urged the city to take a greater proportion of water from Whitefish Lake so that a reasonable flow will always remain in both creeks. These steps would also reflect the city's positive stewardship of the creek and the basin. To date the city has declined to do so on any consistent basis.

The city's main reservoir, which receives only Haskill Creek water, was excavated out of native glacial till, and is unlined. The Haskill Council believes that the reservoir likely leaks substantial amounts of water. We have urged the city to develop a method to measure the amount of leakage, if any. If it is leaking significantly, the city should take steps to stop the leaks, thereby conserving Haskill Creek water. To date, the city has declined to do so, although the draft Water Facility Plan recommends that it be done.

Proposed Council Actions — Haskill Basin Water Management

To improve operational efficiency, reduce water loss, and strengthen long-term watershed stewardship, the Haskill Council recommends that the City Council approve amendments to the Water Facility Plan directing staff to implement the following actions:

1. **Install a radio telemetry diversion management system** that enables real-time monitoring and adjustment of water withdrawals from Second and Third Creeks. The system should include instrumentation capable of measuring both diversion volumes and remaining instream flows.

2. **Use telemetry data to immediately reduce unnecessary diversions** and prevent excess water from flowing through the reservoir system and into the Viking Creek drainage when not required to meet municipal demand.

3. **In coordination with the Haskill Basin Watershed Council and Flathead Conservation District, determine science-based minimum instream flow targets** necessary to support aquatic habitat, riparian vegetation, and overall watershed function in Second and Third Creeks.

4. **Once instream flow targets are established, operate diversion infrastructure to maintain those flows consistently**, using telemetry to guide adaptive, real-time management.

5. **Offset reduced tributary diversions by increasing use of the City's existing Whitefish Lake pumping system**, thereby balancing municipal supply reliability with watershed protection objectives.

6. **Investigate potential leakage within the reservoir system in the near term and implement corrective actions as needed** to improve water system efficiency and reduce avoidable losses.

These actions represent practical, near-term steps the City can take to enhance water system resilience, protect tributary health in the Haskill Basin, and make more effective use of existing infrastructure investments.

I

Background

1. Our Organization

The Haskill Basin Watershed Council was created by the Flathead Conservation District ("FCD") in 2001 in order to establish a citizens panel that would work to "maintain and enhance the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of Haskill Creek by a voluntary and cooperative effort." Several specific goals were identified, including:

- Improve water quality and improve fish populations.
- Protect the watershed by developing a comprehensive water quality plan based on objective, scientific input from all stakeholders.

The FCD created a five-member council consisting of a representative from Winter Sports, Inc. and one from F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co. ("Stoltze"), the two largest private landowners in Haskill Basin [2]. Three members were chosen from private landowners living near or beside Haskill Creek. Representatives from the FCD and Flathead National Forest have attended many of the Haskill Council's meetings over the years, and both organizations have kept in touch on a regular basis. The council has

[2] Both FCD and Stoltze have submitted letters supporting the Haskill Council's positions taken in this report.

conducted (with assistance from the FCD) several Haskill Creek restoration projects over the years that improved the creek banks, the creek bed and flood plain, restored vegetation, reduced sedimentation, and improved water quality.

About 15 years ago, the Haskill Council began to focus on Haskill Creek's seasonal flow levels, after observing very little water in the mainstem of the creek during warm summer and fall weather. As the council learned more about the city's use of the creek water for its domestic water supply, it approached the city and initiated discussions about how to maintain a minimum flow that would support the aquatic biota and fisheries in Haskill. These discussions included the possibility of taking less water during the period July 15 to October 15 of each year. The Haskill Council determined that those 3 months resulted in the lowest water in Haskill Creek. The Haskill Council was aware that the city could reduce the amount of water taken from Haskill Creek and replace it with water taken from Whitefish Lake. We were aware that the city's pump system on Whitefish Lake was already being used to augment, and for short periods completely replace, the city's use of Haskill Creek water.

Over the last 15 years the Haskill Council has made numerous approaches to the city with different proposals to reduce its withdrawal of Haskill Creek water. Approaches were in personal meetings, letters, and emails. City employees have been courteous and generous in meeting with us and providing information that we requested. They have given us tours of the city reservoir, the creeks and the locations where the water is drawn. The city cooperated with us in installing equipment to measure the excess Haskill Creek water that flowed over the reservoir spillway, and to measure the creek's flow at Monegan Road [3]. However, in 15 years of numerous requests, the city has declined to consistently adopt any of our **policy proposals** regarding maintaining minimum flows within Haskill Creek by reducing water diversion under dry conditions.

During the last three summers, the city has, at our request, allowed some additional water to remain in Second and Third Creeks over a relatively short period of time. Our council appreciates that cooperation. We made the request because of the very low flows and high temperatures in the mainstem of Haskill Creek at the Monegan Road measuring station. At times the temperature was in a critical lethal range for trout. Fortunately, heavy rains in August and September added water to the creek each of the last three years, which significantly reduced the volume of water needed from the city. But the city has not made any commitments to **regularly** augment the creeks' flow during the dry summer months.

The provisions of the Draft Plan which the Haskill Council disagrees with are 3.1 (declining to increase use of lake water), 4.1.2 (planning to release into First Creek unneeded water it takes from Second and

[3] Prior to these installations the city had no means to measure the excess water lost over the reservoir spillway or measure the volume of water remaining in the mainstem of the creek.

Third Creeks), and 4.1.3 (declining to install a radio telemetry system to monitor Second and Third Creeks).

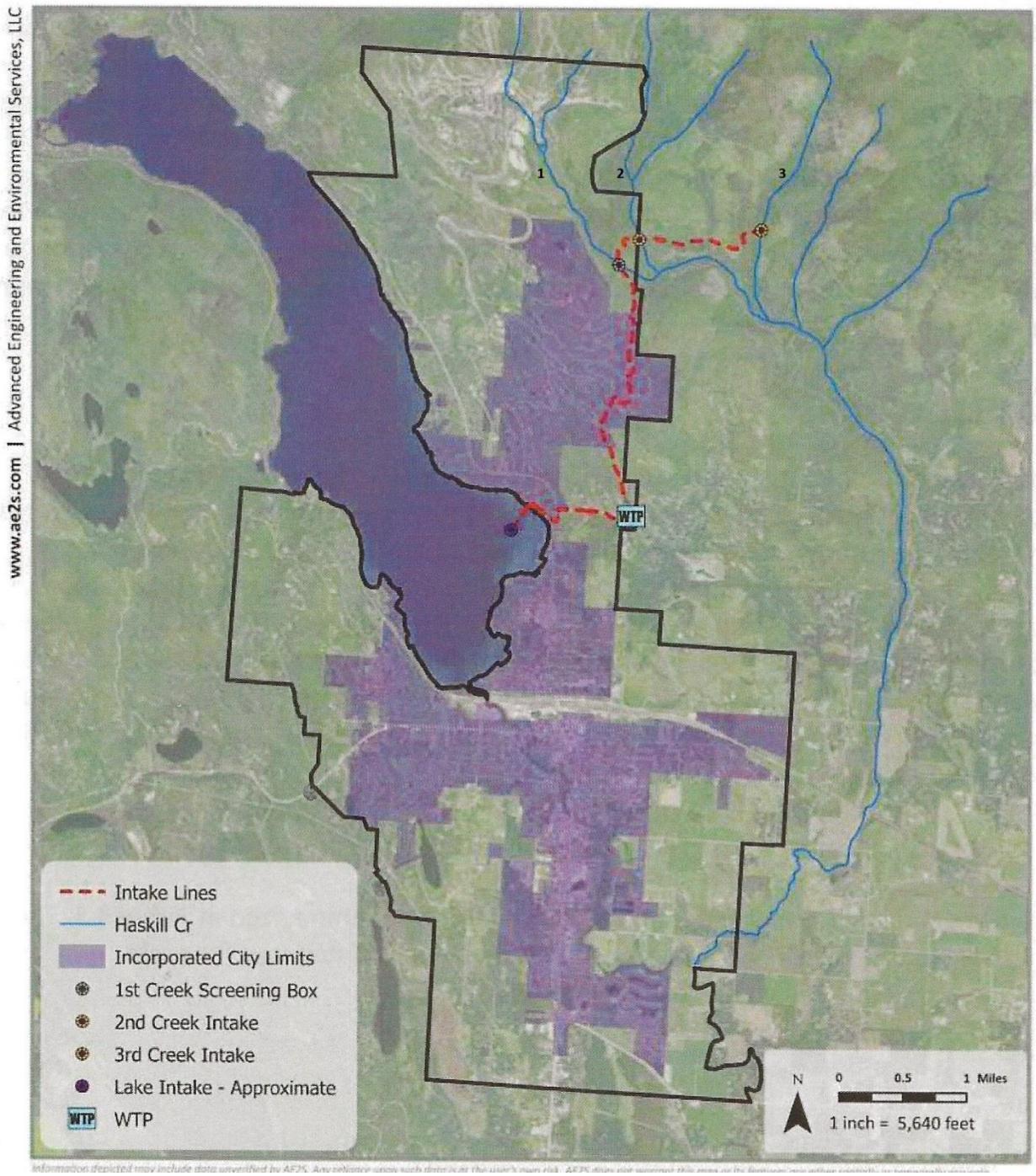
The Public Works Department's Draft Plan, if adopted, will reject our most important proposals, without adequate consideration for the impacts on Haskill Creek. We believe it will perpetuate existing city water system operating procedures that seriously harm the creek, its tributaries, fishery, banks, vegetation, and floodplain.

2. The Creek; and the city's overall system of using it.

Haskill Creek consists of three main tributaries that drain the south face of the southern terminus of the Whitefish Range. They are First Creek, Second Creek, and Third Creek. First Creek drains the western area of the watershed. Second Creak drains the central area, and Third Creek drains the eastern area. A map of the creeks and surrounding area is set out on the following page [4]. The three creeks flow together as shown on the map, forming the mainstem, which then flows southward to the valley floor, and joins the Whitefish River just south of Monegan Road.

The creek is fed by snowmelt, rain and natural springs. During the spring snowmelt it carries a great deal of water and occasionally floods when it reaches the valley floor. Once the snow has melted, however, it is fed only by rainfall and natural springs. When rainfall diminishes in early July, natural springs are the only source until fall rains begin. The flow in the mainstem drops precipitously around July 15 and remains very low until approximately October 15.

[4] The red dotted line on the map shows the location of the 12-inch pipeline that runs from Second and Third Creeks to the water treatment plant (WTP). It also shows the route of the pipeline connecting the pumps at Mountain Harbor to the water treatment plant.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1 inch = 5,640 feet

The city's takes water only from Second and Third Creeks. First Creek's water is of a lower quality and the city discontinued using it many years ago. To divert creek water to its treatment plant, the city has small diversion dams on Second and Third Creeks. The dams pool water behind them, and the pooled water flows into a 12-inch pipeline that travels downhill for approximately 11,180 feet to the water treatment plant. When the water in the pipeline reaches the treatment plant, it passes through a small hydroelectric plant, generating power, and then spills into the city's open-air unlined reservoir, a large pool excavated out of native soils. It is drawn into the treatment plant as needed. Draft Plan 3.1.

The Second Creek diversion dam. The water is backed up behind it to the left.

The Third Creek diversion dam. The water is backed up behind it to the right

During the winter and early spring, there is enough natural flow to supply the city and to maintain a healthy flow in Second and Third Creeks below the diversion dams. As weather warms, however, and water demand increases, the city takes more and more water from both tributaries, until it eventually takes all of the surface flow from Second and Third Creeks. No water flows over the diversion dams, and both creeks become completely dry, remaining that way for months. The term used to describe their condition is that they have been "dewatered." All aquatic life (if any remains) in them dies. As the weather cools in the fall the city's water use is gradually reduced, and fall rains resupply the creek, to a point that both tributaries again have some flow, until the following spring. This process repeats itself year after year, with Second and Third Creek bone-dry for four months or more every year.

The city's pump station on Whitefish Lake is located at Mountain Harbor. It contains several pumps that send lake water uphill along Reservoir Road to the treatment plant. The pump system is powerful enough to supply all of the city's water needs without the use of any Haskill Creek water. This happens occasionally, when due to significant runoff or other factors Second and Third Creeks experience considerable turbidity, and their water is unusable by the city. When this happens the pumps at Mountain Harbor continue supplying the city's entire needs until the water in the tributaries clears up and is once again usable. Draft Plan 3.2.

More often, the lake pumps are used primarily to supplement Haskill Creek water, when its flow is inadequate to fully supply the city, usually mid-July to mid-October.

Whitefish Lake's water quality is very high. Water from Second and Third Creeks is of an even higher quality, and the city prefers it to lake water. Draft Plan 3.2. Haskill Creek's water flows downhill to the treatment plant, whereas lake water has to be pumped upward, creating an electricity expense for the city. Lake water requires more filtering and other treatment than creek water. The city's Draft Plan estimates that the cost to transport and treat lake water is 130% of the cost of using Haskill Creek water. Draft Plan 3.5.2.

II

The issues that concern the HBWC.

1. The city needs a better way to manage and adjust the volume of water diverted from each of the creeks.

Currently, the only way that the city can change the volume of water diverted or even monitor creek flow levels and percentage of water diverted is by having an employee drive to each diversion dam. There are devices measuring the quantity of water from each creek going toward the treatment plant, although the measurements are only available by reading them at the diversions. There are no measuring devices that record the flows, if any, **remaining** in the creeks. The employee can observe the flows remaining in the creeks, but trying to estimate the flows by simply looking at them can produce inaccurate results. The employee can at that time manually adjust the flows. Later, if there is a need to increase or decrease the amount of water used by the city, it takes another trip to the diversions. The round-trip takes approximately 60-90 minutes. In winter, the diversions are accessible only by snowmobile. Consequently, the diversions are rarely visited, adjustments to flows are only made periodically and no active management of the diversions is possible.

Flows can change abruptly, as when spring snowmelt begins or heavy rainfall occurs. But the water department is unaware of the size and type of changes. It takes another vehicle trip to observe any change. Similarly, water use changes dramatically, even diurnally, yet diversion flows remain consistent until manually adjusted, with excess water wasted as overflow from the reservoir.

Every fall there is a point where the city doesn't need all of Second and Third Creeks' water, and an adjustment could be made at the two diversions to begin allowing some water to enter the two creeks from the diversion. Bear in mind that at that time both tributaries have been **completely dry** for several months. In the past the inconvenience of making the vehicle trip meant that adjustments to the diversions were rarely made, and the creeks remained dewatered, even when the water was not needed by the city. The excess water that flowed into the city's reservoir then flowed out over the reservoir's spillway into the Viking creek drainage. In effect, Viking Creek was supercharged with Haskill Creek water while Second and Third Creeks remained bone dry.

The city sorely needs a radio telemetry system that allows the water department to monitor remotely in real time the volume of water being diverted from each creek and the volume of water remaining in each creek, with the ability to adjust flows remotely. Radio telemetry systems have been in use for decades and were first used by water utilities in the 1980s. The systems allowed a water utility's office to observe and adjust flows in real time at multiple locations. A water well's level of production can be determined from a distance and then increased or decreased immediately. A water utility can know the level in each water tank, to avoid an overflow or to eliminate a deficit, all in real time. The Haskill Basin Watershed Council has asked the city repeatedly over the last fifteen years to make this change, rather than continue to rely on its primitive system. The city went so far as to have an engineering study done, a preliminary design prepared, and a cost estimate (approximately $250,000) obtained. We were told at that time that the cost would be included in the city's budget. The completion date of the installation, we were told, was to be the summer of 2024. Nothing happened.

The city's Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2018, states, at page 62, that in order to implement strategies to optimize the efficient use of water, energy and money, and protect beneficial uses and water quality in Haskill Creek, the city should install radio telemetry to control the headgates at the Haskill Basin diversion structures. Eight years later, the Water Department has no plan to do so.

2. With active management, the city can stop the decades-old waste of excess Haskill Creek water.

Creek flows vary, often daily. Since the city must maintain sufficient water in its reservoir to serve its customers at all times, it prefers to keep its reservoir full. But adjusting the flow at the diversion using the current methodology of driving to each diversion is awkward, time-consuming, expensive and

unreliable. The city's default method is to constantly take more water than it needs, with the excess simply flowing over the reservoir spillway, and down into Viking Creek. The city has acknowledged to the HBWC that approximately 30% of the water that the city takes from Haskill Creek is not supplied to city customers but instead goes over the spillway and down into Viking Creek.

In our discussions with the Public Works department, we learned that the city believes that this steady stream of excess water flowing through the reservoir and over the spillway increases the quality of the water in the reservoir. The city has acknowledged to us in writing, however, that it has no evidence or empirical data that shows there is any actual benefit to the water quality in the reservoir. The excuse of "we've always done it that way" is simply unacceptable when those practices come at the expense of the ecological health and viability of Haskill Creek downstream from the diversions.

As will be explained in more detail later in this report, the city wastes over the spillway, on average, throughout the year, 415 gallons per **minute**, or 597,600 gallons of Haskill Creek water **per day**. This figure was obtained from the city and is several years old, but the city hasn't provided any more recent measurement. The amount of water wasted in this manner is roughly enough to supply the daily domestic water needs of a city the size of Columbia Falls.[5]

A good and affordable option exists to this waste of water. The city should budget for installation of a remote monitoring and diversion control system and in the meantime, increase visits to the intakes to at least twice a week to actively manage the diversions to balance needs for municipal water and keeping as much water in the streams as possible.

3. The City must stop dewatering Second and Third Creeks and develop a protocol that maintains significant water in those tributaries. This action also will depend on the city installing a modern radio telemetry system.

As stated earlier, the city routinely dewaters Second and Third creeks over weeks or months, every summer and fall. It has done so for many years. Roughly 2,900 feet of Third Creek are dewatered, and roughly 1,500 feet of Second Creek are dewatered[6]. As one would expect, the effect on those two tributaries is devastating. All aquatic life dies. We will describe later in his report other harm that occurs. It also seriously reduces the quantity of water in the mainstem of Haskill Creek. Rather than benefiting from its three tributaries, the mainstem, which makes up most of the stream's length, receives water only from First Creek, which contains the least favorable water of the three tributaries. And as we will document later in this report, the mainstem contains a reproducing population of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout.

[5] If one divides the figure of 597,600 gallons per day by 82 gallons, the amount that the EPA estimates a single person uses per day, the result is that 597,600 gallons would provide the water needs of 7,287 people, year in and year out.

[6] These distance estimates were provided by Paul McKenzie, the General Manager of Stoltze.

We have asked the city for at least 15 years to **adopt a policy** to continually augment the flows in Second and Third Creeks in order to restore life to them, and to help the mainstem support the fishery and all of the other aquatic life that depends on the creek. The city has declined to adopt any such policy. Recently, for the last three summers, the city has, on an ad hoc basis, allowed some water to remain in Second and Third creeks, which augmented the mainstem. We don't know how much water was released for how long. We don't know whether it was enough to benefit the aquatic life in the mainstream (there can be no aquatic life in the dewatered tributaries), or whether the city will do it again in future years. Each of the last three years, we asked the city to **adopt a policy or protocol**, but the city never responded to our request.

Later in this report, we will discuss all of the reasons why the city should adopt a policy to regularly leave a significant amount of water in the tributaries and the main stem. For now we must point out that because of its primitive system, the city can't consistently maintain an adequate flow day after day. Even with a 60-90-minute trip by an employee, the city can't know the actual volume of water flowing into Second and Third creeks (if any), or the mainstem. When the city leaves water (per our request) in Second and Third Creeks, the city does not know how much it has augmented those creeks. Nor does it know what effect it will have on those tributaries and the mainstem. The city has no way to measure any of these actions. If an employee drives to the two diversions, he or she can only look at the water flowing. It is impossible to accurately measure the quantity of water in the two creeks.

As with the other issues discussed, the city sorely needs a modern and well-designed telemetry system if it intends to actively manage diversions to keep as much water as possible in the natural streambeds.

4. The city should conduct such tests as necessary to determine if its reservoir is leaking water. If there is a substantial leak, the city should take steps to stop it.

As mentioned earlier, the city's main reservoir, which only receives Haskill Creek water, was excavated out of native soils, and is unlined. The soils in the area are typically porous glacier till. F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company has conducted a logging operation in Haskill Basin since 1912, and its personnel are familiar with all aspects of the basin. Ron Buntemeier was the General Manager of Stoltze for many years. He was also the HBWC's main contact with the Flathead Conservation District and attended many of our meetings. He told us consistently that he believed that the reservoir was leaking, and that the leaks contributed to many of the seeps that exist below the reservoir.

In discussions with others familiar with the reservoir area, including Paul McKenzie, current general manager of F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber, the Whitefish Lake Institute staff, past operators of the water plant and others, the general consensus is there is a high likelihood of leakage from the reservoir.

Given the glacial till underneath the reservoir and a lack of lining, and based on the opinions of many familiar with the area, we believe it would be prudent for the city to test the reservoir for leaks, and to take appropriate measures if substantial leaks are discovered.

The city's reservoir located near the water treatment plant.

III

Additional information and facts supporting the Haskill Basin Watershed Council's Position

1. Haskill Creek supports a population of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout, which deserves protection, and yet remains threatened by the city's extensive summer use of Haskill Creek water.

Shortly after our organization's formation in 2001, we realized that in order to understand Haskill Creek and make any decisions regarding it, we needed a professional watershed assessment. Our parent organization, the Flathead Conservation District, assisted us in obtaining grant funds. John Muhlfeld, then working for Water Consulting, Inc., was engaged to conduct an extensive investigation and to prepare an assessment of the entire length of the creek[7], including its tributaries. The 76-page assessment, completed in 2003, was extremely helpful. It analyzed such items as potential pollutant sources, channel and fish habitat conditions, water quality, etc. We rely on it today.[8]

We knew that Haskill Creek contained trout, primarily non-native eastern brook trout, and we hoped that the assessment would determine that native trout also lived in the creek. We were not disappointed. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) conducted a basin-wide fisheries population survey, which included Haskill Creek, on November 1, 2001, using a backpack electrofishing device. Using the FWP results, John Muhlfeld's report revealed that a genetically pure population of westslope cutthroat trout lived in the upper reaches of the mainstem of the creek. The assessment pointed out that native trout species, such as bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, had inhabited the upper Flathead River system for over 13,000 years, surviving major climatic and human-caused changes in the environment. Later, non-native trout, such as eastern brook trout and rainbow trout, were introduced. Watershed Assessment p. 18.

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[7] One consultant report said the entire length of the creek is 11 miles. Another reported the length as 24 miles. We declined to attempt to state its length in this report.

[8] We have only a hard copy of John Muhlfeld's 2003 "Haskill Creek Watershed Assessment Final Report." We will refer to it as the "Watershed Assessment." Upon request we will make it available so that the accuracy of our quotes and citations can be verified.

Results of the fish survey showed that eastern brook trout dominated the trout species community throughout the Haskill Creek system. At a number of sampling locations, brook trout were found. Multiple age classes were represented in the samples. Several brook trout spawning nests (redds) and spawning individuals were observed at each site. It is clear that brook trout are widely distributed, abundant, and well-established in the Haskill Creek system. Watershed Assessment p. 19.

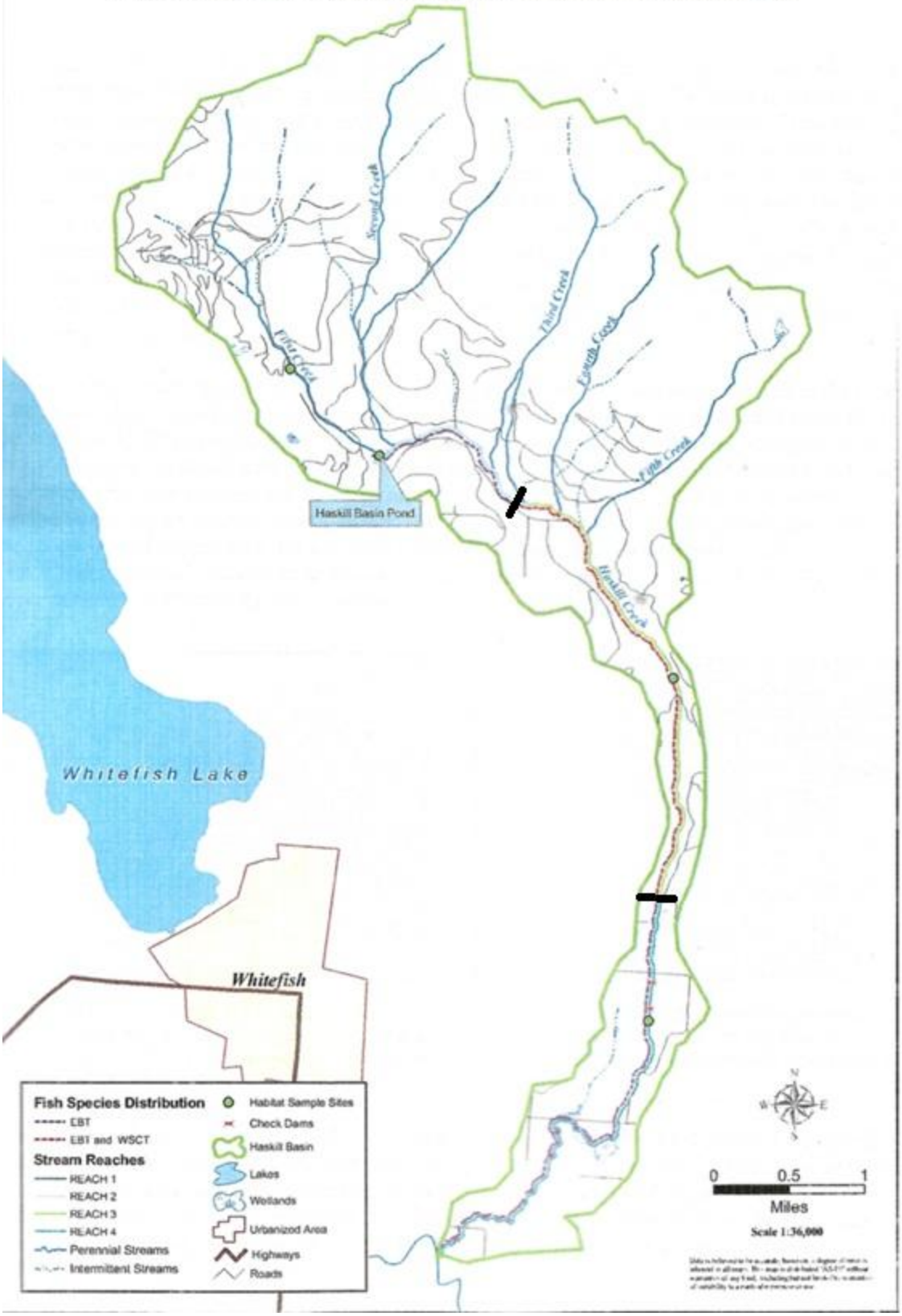
The cutthroat trout discovered by FWP are located downstream from where First Creek, Second Creek and Third Creek join to form the mainstem. They are established in a lengthy stretch (over 3 miles) of the mainstem. The map on the following page shows, in a dark red color, where only eastern brook trout (EBT), are found, and in a bright red color where both brook trout and cutthroat trout (EBT and WSCT) are found. We have added two dark lines across the mainstem to delineate where the cutthroat trout are found. The cutthroat population appears to be reproducing as evidence by the multiple age-classes of fish. However, the cutthroat trout were outnumbered four or five to one by brook trout at the sites where they were discovered. See the map on the following page, which is found at Watershed Assessment p. 22.

Westslope cutthroat trout are recognized as a "Species of Concern" in Montana, according to the Natural Heritage Program and American Fisheries Society, and classified as a "Species of Management Concern" by the National Park Service. This unique subspecies of inland native trout has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Research has shown that cutthroat trout are far more susceptible to harm from high water temperatures than brook trout, which can tolerate much warmer temperatures. Watershed Assessment pp. 17, 19, 24.

Because of the location of the cutthroat trout population, they may be at risk from the city's use of water from Second and Third Creeks. Since the population is located immediately downstream from Second and Third Creeks, when both creeks are dewatered, in the hottest summer months, the trout experience only water from First Creek. That means that they receive significantly less water than they otherwise would. Low flows typically mean warmer water temperatures. However, at this time we have no direct evidence of how cutthroat trout are affected by summer water temperatures.

John Muhlfeld's assessment pointed out that the dewatering of Second and Third Creeks during the summer months acts as a fish barrier to all trout in the upper reaches of the creek. Watershed Assessment pp. 17, 24. They cannot move up into those tributaries, which historically they were able to do. While the diversion dams, since their installation, have constituted barriers to fish, the dewatering means that 1,500 feet of Second Creek and 2,900 feet of Third Creek below the diversion dams are now unavailable to the trout in the summer months.

Figure 5: Channel Reach Delineation and Fish Species Distribution



To our knowledge no studies of the westslope cutthroat trout have been conducted since FWP's 2001 fisheries population survey. If there were extensive observation of these fish, we would have information about their ability to survive under the current circumstances, with only a fraction of the creek's water reaching them in the warm summer months. Water temperatures in the mainstem, near its confluence with the Whitefish River, have produced temperatures that would be harmful, and perhaps lethal, to cutthroat trout. We can only hope at this point that the cutthroat trout located in Haskill Creek have not experienced lethal temperatures. Global warming will only exacerbate the risk.

Two articles by Clint Muhlfeld, Ph.D., who holds a doctorate in Fish and Wildlife Biology from Montana State University, emphasize the importance of westslope cutthroat trout to the ecology of Northwest Montana. The first article, entitled "The Flathead Watershed-A Bull and Cutthroat Stronghold," contains the following information:

> "The Flathead River and Lake System is cold, clear, complex, and connected, making it ideal for sensitive species such as bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. These fish require the coldest water temperatures of any native northwest salmonid; clean stream bottoms for spawning and rearing; and complex habitats built from the connections between river, lake, and headwaters streams which support annual spawning and feeding migrations."
>
> "Despite being recognized as one of the last remaining strongholds for native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, major changes in the Flathead River and Lake System such as **habitat destruction**, introduction of non-native invasive aquatic species, overfishing, and **flow disruption by dam operations are threatening fish populations**."

Of the four threats to cutthroat trout mentioned in Dr. Muhlfeld's article, the city is responsible for two. The city has destroyed the habitat needed by cutthroat trout by dewatering Second and Third Creeks, and the city has disrupted the flow of Second and Third Creeks, as well as the mainstem, through its diversion dams.

Dr. Muhlfeld's article also provides:

> "Biologists are working diligently to address the challenges facing native fish species within the Flathead River and Lake System to maintain and restore critical populations and habitats for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Conservation and recovery programs aim to sustain natural habitats that provide the ideal setting for strong, robust native fish populations."

The full article is found here .

The second article by Dr. Muhlfeld concentrates on Glacier National Park's cutthroat fishery. It is entitled "Genetic Status and Distribution of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Glacier National Park." It contains the following statements:

> "After 14,000 years of surviving extreme environmental events, such as flood, fires and glaciations, Glacier's greatest native trout is at high risk of disappearing from several streams and lakes east and west of the Continental Divide."
>
> "Westslope cutthroat trout have been evolutionarily isolated from other cutthroat taxa for 1-2 million years and are all genetically related in this region."
>
> "Westslope cutthroat trout have long been considered an integral component of biodiversity, culture and economy in GNP. They are part of a historic fishery that is a fundamental part of the biodiversity of the Park. As such, protecting native fish resources is a high priority for conservation and management programs in GNP."

The full article is found here.

Our organization is certainly concerned with the survival of the existing population of Haskill's cutthroat trout. We believe the city, with its commitment to water quality and the protection of local water bodies and aquatic life, should also be interested in the health and survival of the existing population. It is somewhat contradictory that a government which publicly prides itself on its commitment to the environment would also be in a position to threaten the survival of an already threatened population of native fish. We hope that the city will decrease its use of Second and Third Creek water in the warm summer months, thereby helping to ensure that fish will remain in residence in the mainstem and all tributaries of Haskill Creek.

2. An investigation by the city's engineers shows that remote telemetry is technically possible and affordable.

We have been told repeatedly that lack of electrical power at the diversions coupled with lack of radio telemetry infrastructure has been an impediment to installing a remote control diversion system. More recently, the city discovered that there is an existing tower which the city could use to facilitate communication between the water treatment plant and the diversions. In addition, the Haskill Council informed the city that there is an existing natural gas pipeline in the road leading to the diversions, only a short distance from them. As a result, a natural gas-powered generator could supply all of the electricity needed at the diversions.

The city commissioned a study by its engineers, AE2S, "to develop alternatives that would allow WTP (Whitefish Treatment Plant's) operations staff to monitor and control flow coming from each diversion structure and be able to adjust the flow remotely, to maximize the water flowing within Haskill Creek." They were describing a radio telemetry system of the type recommended by the Haskill Council. AE2S pointed out that it was an arduous and time-consuming task to travel to the diversions in order to alter the flow. They recommended that the city install a radio telemetry system and provided a preliminary design and estimated cost. The most expensive of their two alternatives would cost $245,172. The

system proposed by AE2S used solar power at the two diversions. A copy of AE2S's recommendation and cost estimate is attached to this report.

AE2S repeated its recommendation in the Draft Water Facility Plan that they prepared for the city, stating:

> "The first place the City should look when trying to conserve water is its water diversion and intake infrastructure. Currently, water diversions from Haskill Creek are poorly controlled, and excess water is spilled into Viking Creek near the water treatment plant." Draft Plan 3.5.3.

In a meeting of the Haskill Council on November 8, 2023, Craig Workman told us that he had budgeted for the installation of a system similar to that proposed by AE2S, but that he wanted to use natural gas power rather than solar power. He stated that the city would proceed with construction and that it should be completed during the summer of 2024. Minutes of this meeting are attached.

At about the same time, Craig Workman made a similar presentation at a meeting sponsored by the Whitefish Lake Institute that included Craig Workman, AE2S representatives, Mike Kopal, John Phelps, and others. He stated that a decision had been made to install and construct the same system that he described at the Haskill Council meeting.

Our council believed that it had finally accomplished the one objective that would allow the city to exercise substantial control over the diversion flows. Unfortunately, the telemetry system was never constructed.

More recently, Craig Workman proposed a different method, which he described in an email as follows:

> "The idea is to have an actuated valve just in front of the Hydro plant that will talk to the water meter on the effluent side of the water plant. Having this should allow us to synchronize the two numbers so we're only taking the amount of water that we need, plus a little bit extra for water quality in the reservoir. The **excess water will then back up at First Creek** and make its way into the main stem of Haskill."

This new system would be less expensive. It obviously would not benefit Second and Third Creeks, as water would continue to be taken from those streams, but any excess water would flow into First Creek. Second and Third Creeks would experience the same demands on their water that they currently experience, including at times the loss of all their water. There would be no communication between the water plant and the diversions. The city would still be unaware of how much water, if any, remained in those creeks. There would be no ability to remotely adjust the amount of water taken from Second and

Third Creeks. The city would need to rely on its existing system of having an employee drive to the diversions, observe the flows, and then make a manual adjustment.

While this system could result in beneficial impacts to the mainstem of Haskill Creek, by reducing the waste of water in the reservoir, we are not aware of any feasibility study that verifies this process would work. What would be the impact on First Creek, which would receive random but potentially significant influxes of water? "Forever chemicals" have recently been discovered in First Creek, but not in Second Creek or Third Creek. Would it be wise to take exceedingly pure water from those creeks and mix it with chemically polluted water of First Creek? Would the increased pressure from backing water up in the pipeline for thousands of feet lead to increased leakage, and perhaps cause other problems? Similarly, it would not increase the flows in either Second Creek or Third Creek downstream of the diversions. Significant feasibility review would need to be undertaken before embracing this potential solution.

As a result, at this time, it appears that the city has no plans to install a radio telemetry system of the type proposed by the Haskill Council, designed and recommended by the city's engineers, and called for by the city's Climate Action Plan.

3. The city council and the community have historically placed a high value on water quality and the protection of Whitefish area lakes, rivers and streams. The city must stop dewatering portions of Haskill Creek and ensure that all tributaries retain sufficient water at all times.

The city council and surrounding community place a high value on protecting area lakes, rivers and streams. Their respect for natural water bodies is set forth in countless studies, ordinances, and agreements to which the city is a party. Similar statements are made time and again. The following summary of relevant documents is not exclusive. There are more where they came from. And nowhere in any of the documents has Haskill Creek been identified as a stream that is **not** entitled to the same protection as other rivers and streams.

The city recently adopted a new Community Plan to supersede its former Growth Policy. The first few sentences of the Environmental, Natural Resources and Hazards section are significant to the issues raised in this report. They state:

"**LEADING** IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY FROM HAZARDS.

> We will demonstrate **environmental stewardship and maintain and improve our natural resources** while managing, preventing, and mitigating impacts from natural hazards. . . . Article IX of the 1972 Montana Constitution guarantees its citizens 'the right to a clean and healthful environment.' **Whitefish is defined by its natural environment**. At community visioning sessions, Whitefish residents repeatedly expressed their desire for clean air, **clean water,** scenic vistas, **and protection of wildlife habitat**, open space, and forest lands."

The new Community Plan contains additional direction regarding water quality in lakes, rivers and streams. It states:

> "WATER QUALITY GOAL 2. Maintain and improve water quality of the Whitefish area's lakes, rivers, groundwater, and streams….
>
> During the visioning process, the community overwhelmingly responded the top three most important features to protect were the Whitefish River, Whitefish Lake, and overall water quality. Much work has been accomplished concerning water quality since the 2007 Growth Policy….
>
> Despite this progress, threats to Whitefish water quality remain…."

The city's primary water quality protection ordinance, found at section 11 – 3 –29 of the City Code, states that one of its purposes is to, "protect and improve the quality of the Whitefish area's water bodies, including lakes, streams, and the Whitefish River**, which are central to the community's identity and values."**

The city's Climate Action Plan provides that one of its goals is to:

> "Develop and implement strategies to address-climate related risks, ensure adequate water supplies for a growing population, optimize efficient use of water, energy, and money, and **protect beneficial uses and water quality in HaskIll Creek,** Viking Creek, and Whitefish Lake."

It further provides that, "water conservation keeps water in creeks and lakes for fish and other species."

Finally, the Climate Action Plan states, as a strategy: "**protect municipal watersheds** and Whitefish Lake water quality."

In 2008 a Critical Lands Report was prepared for the city of Whitefish and adopted by the city council. Its purpose was to "serve as the technical and scientific basis" for the adoption of the city's Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). The CAO was later named the Water Quality Protection Ordinance. The Critical Lands

Report is 63 pages in length, with 12 pages devoted to the heading, “Streams, Wetlands, and Lakes.” A cover page and the 12 pages referred to are attached to this report.

The Critical Lands Report’s section on Streams, Wetlands, and Lakes contains the following sub-headings, among others: Riparian Functions and Values; Wetland Functions and Values; and Lake Functions and Values. Relevant to this report is the document’s discussion of the importance of healthy riparian corridors along natural streams. It provides as follows:

> “Riparian areas form a transition between aquatic and upland habitats and perform a broad array of functions due to unique habitats they offer species that occupy the interface of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.”

The Critical Lands Report’s discussion of riparian areas describes the benefits they provide:

a. Filtering and uptake of nutrients and pollutants.
b. Streambank stabilization.
c. Reduction of sediment from upland areas.
d. Providing habitat for terrestrial, avian, amphibian and aquatic animals.
e. Deposition of insects and organic debris for the food web.
f. Wildlife habitat.
g. Protection of instream habitat conditions.
h. Shade, which reduces thermal stress for a variety of aquatic animals, including trout common in Montana streams.
i. Maintaining soil moisture.
j. Nutrients for aquatic organisms.

Concerning wildlife, the Critical Lands Report states:

> “Many animals (amphibians in particular) **reside almost exclusively within the riparian corridor . . .** Continuous riparian corridors provide migratory pathways for many **avian and terrestrial species, including some large mammals (e.g., deer). For fish, riparian areas provide a refuge** from high flows as well as low-energy backwaters, oxbows and side-channels **for juvenile rearing.”**

It goes without saying that a stream that has been completely dewatered for months at a time, year after year, cannot maintain a healthy riparian area, and cannot provide the benefits listed above.

In January of 2016, the city entered into a Conservation Easement with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company. The easement lists the various obligations of the parties and contains prohibitions.

The preamble to the Conservation Easement provides:

> "The people of the State of Montana and the City of Whitefish recognize **the benefits of protecting forestland, watersheds, riparian corridors** and conserving open space that provides clean water quality and supply for the City municipal water system and **clean water and habitat for native fish, wildlife and plant communities . . ."**

As an initial matter, the Conservation Easement identifies certain listed benefits as "Conservation Values."

One of those values is described as:

> "**Outstanding fisheries habitat and spawning grounds** (provided by Haskill Creek, 1st Creek, **2nd Creek**, **3rd Creek,** 4th Creek and 5th Creek) **for a variety of fish species,** including, but not limited to, **westslope cutthroat trout."**

How can Second Creek and Third Creek provide fisheries habitat and spawning grounds if they are dewatered their entire length below the diversion dams?

The Conservation Easement prohibits the following activities:

> "Water Use, and Water Rights. **The use or withdrawal of surface or groundwater in any manner that would adversely affect the Conservation Values is prohibited."**

The city's withdrawal of surface water to the point that it completely dewaters Second and Third Creeks certainly adversely affects the Conservation Values described above.

The quoted statements above are only a portion of the protections described in the Conservation Easement for water quality, river, streams, lakes, fisheries, and other aquatic and terrestrial animals. The Conservation Easement refers to the protection of fish and fish habitat 10 different times throughout its text. The Environmental Assessment prepared by FWP concerning the Conservation Easement refers to protecting fish and fish habitat 12 times. Everyone of those 22 references to protecting fish and fish habitat is referring to Haskill Creek. Haskill Creek is the only body of water located in the area of the Conservation Easement.

Finally, the Environmental Assessment prepared by FWP for the Conservation Easement rates Haskill Creek as very important. It states:

"The Haskill Basin property is located within the highest priority watershed for forestland protection in the state… The property includes portions of five headwater tributaries, including First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Creeks…

Curiously, although these documents repeatedly call for the protection of clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, and spawning grounds, specifically mentioning all of the tributaries of Haskill Creek, there is no mention in the document regarding the city's dewatering of Second and Third Creeks. It raises the question whether, at the time that the Conservation Easement was signed, the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks was aware that the city dewatered those tributaries.

An article that appears in the July – August 2017 issue of Montana Outdoors, published by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, describes a study which found that the water that we observe in a river or stream is only a small part of the active and productive floodplain. Beds of gravel typically underly floodplains, and water travels laterally through the gravel.

The scientists who produced the study stated:

> "They were surprised to find that a large number of species rely heavily on the biodiversity generated by ecosystems, not just fish and other aquatic animals. These gravel-bed river systems are where the magic happens**. Two-thirds of species spend part of their lives in the floodplain. River floodplains are among the most ecologically important habitats on the continent."**

Describing the importance of the floodplains and the water that they carry, the researchers observed:

> "But the vast majority of water in a river system is moving far more slowly through the labyrinth of underground cobble, gravel, and sand networks that make up the entire valley bottom, from the base of one mountain range to the other. This subterranean habitat is home to microbes and aquatic insects, such as stoneflies, which are critical to a river's food chain. Water flowing through the matrix of rock and sand filters out organic material and releases, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients that well up through the entire system. These nutrients are

> then made available to plants and insects on the surface – a jolt of biological adrenaline. This in turn draws birds and beavers, elk and moose. The plant eaters then attract predators."

The researchers had this to say about human-caused interference with a river or stream:

> "The environmental damage is hidden-at first. Channels feeding the underground habitats are sealed off as the river is confined. Then the populations of species that depend on the hidden flows , including trout and other fish, begin to falter."

This article is found here. We recommend that it be read in its entirety. It's not lengthy. It is a remarkable study and reveals much more than was formerly known about the importance of riparian areas and floodplains.

It is important to recognize the effect that dewatering of Second and Third Creeks has on the entire riparian system, including the floodplain. When the creeks are dewatered, virtually all life in the streambed comes to an end. There are no fish, no frogs, no crawdads, no place for birds to hunt for aquatic prey, no place for any animal to drink water, no beavers, no muskrats or otters. Dewatering lowers the water table in the area, which affects vegetation along the creeks as well as vegetation some distance away in the floodplain. Unseen microbes and aquatic insects are eliminated from the creeks and the surrounding land. A dead zone is created, which spreads out from the actual creek bed a considerable distance. Restoring water, briefly, for a portion of a year, does not recreate the natural aquatic habitat

There are many ways that a river or stream can be harmed. Complete dewatering causes the greatest harm. Nothing else compares. Nothing survives. There can be no water quality when there is no water.

If the city's admirable goals about protecting water quality and water courses are to mean anything, the city needs to acknowledge the harm that it is causing to Haskill Creek, which it has committed (in several of the cited documents) to protect. It needs to stop dewatering Second and Third Creeks, and it needs to adopt a protocol which ensures that sufficient water remains in those tributaries to continue to support the life that would be found in any healthy perennial stream. And as with almost all the steps that the Haskill Council asks the city to take, this step can be taken only if the city first installs a modern radio telemetry system of the type that we have described.

4. The city has invested an enormous amount of public funds into its lake water pumping system, allowing the regular withdrawal of millions of gallons of water from Whitefish Lake. It should use that system to prevent the dewatering of Second and Third Creeks.

In 2000 the city substantially expanded and improved its water treatment plant on Reservoir Road. It also installed three pumps at Mountain Harbor, which pump water from the lake (through a new water line) to the water treatment plant. The total budget for this project, including associated construction as well as engineering/finance/administration, was approximately $6,239,000.

In 2020 the city undertook a new expansion to its water treatment plant. The capacity of the plant was substantially expanded. A 24-inch diameter finished water pipeline was constructed from the water treatment plant down to Wisconsin. An 8-inch diameter gravity sewer line was installed to take the backwash from the treatment plant filters and deliver it to the city's wastewater treatment plant. The construction contract for this work came to $9,327,000. This figure does not include other typical costs, such as engineering/administration/finance, so that the total cost of the project is likely 20–25% greater than the construction cost.

The total investment by the city in all of the water treatment facilities constructed in 2000 and 2020 is probably more than $18 million. Clearly the city has made a substantial investment in its ability to use Whitefish Lake water. As the following charts will show, over time the city has drawn more and more water from Whitefish Lake, and now uses millions of gallons of lake water, not only in the summer months but in 11 months of the year. Since the city already takes all of the water in Second and Third Creeks during the summer months, leading to the dewatering of both, any additional water needed by a growing population will have to come from Whitefish Lake.

For 15 years, the city has resisted all efforts by the Haskill Basin Watershed Council to persuade it to rely on Whitefish Lake water to a greater degree, so that Second and Third Creeks can continue to flow throughout the entire year, as natural perennial streams.

The city has apparently weighed the environmental harm to the two creeks from being completely dewatered for months at a time and determined that the harm does not justify any additional pumping and treatment expense. But the city doesn't hesitate to use Whitefish Lake water, whatever the additional expense, when it is in the city's interest to do so. As the chart set forth below indicates, the city draws water from Whitefish Lake 11 out of 12 months of the year. During the four summer months of June through September for the years 2020–2024, the city withdrew **62,351,735 gallons** of Whitefish Lake water each year (**311,758,675 gallons** over the five years) in order to supplement Haskill Creek

water.[9] If the city can afford to pump that quantity of water from Whitefish Lake on a regular basis to supply its water customers, it can surely afford to pump a much smaller quantity to keep Second and Third Creeks flowing.

Table 3.4 – Average Daily Water Production by Source, 2020 - 2024 (GPD)

Month	Haskill Cr	% of Production Total	Whitefish Lake	% of Production Total	Total
Jan	897,925	100%	0	0%	897,925
Feb	865,363	90%	101,240	10%	966,603
Mar	849,800	91%	87,854	9%	937,654
Apr	812,221	85%	147,765	15%	959,986
May	1,122,007	88%	150,194	12%	1,272,202
Jun	1,776,595	83%	376,436	17%	2,153,030
Jul	2,215,764	79%	577,221	21%	2,792,985
Aug	2,024,309	74%	724,604	26%	2,748,913
Sep	1,602,973	82%	356,736	18%	1,959,709
Oct	951,923	98%	23,225	2%	975,149
Nov	821,213	99.6%	3,819	0.4%	825,033
Dec	876,063	99.6%	3,549	0.4%	879,612

In the Draft Plan the city states that pumping lake water to replace Second and Third Creek water not used by the city would accelerate wear and tear on the Mountain Harbor pumps, on the Water Treatment Plant, and on its Wastewater Treatment Plant. Draft Plan 3.1. Considering the hundreds of millions of gallons of lake water the city already withdraws and treats, it's difficult to understand how withdrawing some additional water to protect Second and Third Creeks would cause measurable wear and tear on the city's system.

[9] The chart shows the average **daily** gallons of water withdrawn from the lake in each month, averaged over the years 2020-2024. By multiplying the average daily use by the number of days in each month, the average **monthly** use can be determined. By adding the average monthly use for the months June -September, the amount of 62,351,735 gallons is derived, representing the average **summer** use of lake water for each of the five years. By multiplying that figure by five, the total summer use for all five years combined is 311,758,675 gallons.

In summary, the city has invested over $18 million to enable it to withdraw lake water, transport it to the treatment plant, and provide the necessary treatment, but is unwilling to use any of that investment to keep Second and Third creeks flowing.

The city's overall water budget in fiscal year 2025–2026 shows revenues of $10,081,375. Its budgeted expenses includes $100,000 in capital improvement expense for a remote telemetry system to allow it to determine the flows of Second and Third Creeks, and manipulate those flows. That amount was carried forward from the prior fiscal year, and perhaps from another earlier fiscal year. It remains in the budget, but with no apparent intention of being used.

The Haskill Council is unable to calculate what the additional cost to the city would be if it used Whitefish Lake water to keep Second and Third Creeks flowing during the warm summer months. The city is able to make that calculation, but we're not aware that it has done so. If that calculation were made, the city could then make an informed judgment concerning whether the additional expense justifies protecting Second and Third Creeks. Given that it's the city whose methods and procedures have dewatered the two creeks (and destroyed nearly all life within them) it's difficult to imagine that the city would not take responsibility to protect them in the future. The Public Works department currently operates as if the additional expense would be prohibitive, but that determination places little value on the health of the two tributaries, and the health of the wildlife and riparian vegetation that depend on them.

The 2025 Draft Water Facility Plan provides that as the city's population grows the city will have to increase the amount of water it pumps from Whitefish Lake. The Draft Plan acknowledges that the water in Whitefish Lake is of a very high quality. It explains that although the city uses 100% of its water rights on Haskill Creek, it uses only 3% of its water rights on Whitefish Lake. Draft Plan 3.4.3. It further admits that the city could do a better job of conserving creek water at the two diversions and admits that those diversions are poorly controlled. Draft Plan 3.5.3. It is difficult to understand how a city that prides itself on its respect for water quality and the protection of local water bodies can at the same time cause tremendous harm to Second and Third Creeks. And it's difficult to fathom how the city can justify its unwillingness to take those telemetry-associated steps that would allow it to ensure that both creeks continue to flow throughout the summer.

As stated earlier in this report, the city allows its reservoir, which consists solely of Haskill Creek water, to overflow throughout the year, to the point that 30% of the water it draws from HaskIll Creek is wasted over the reservoir's spillway and into the Viking Creek drainage. The Draft Plan establishes that of all of the water it distributes in its water system (80 to 90% of which is Haskill Creek water), its leaking water pipes have been estimated to lose roughly 40% of the total volume. Draft Plan 3.5.3. Wasting 30% of the Haskill Creek water over its reservoir's spillway, and another 40% through leaks in its pipes, shows that the city is not effectively conserving Haskill Creek water. If it continues to waste water to that extent, it

would be far better to waste Whitefish Lake water, of which there is virtually an unlimited quantity, and thereby allow Second and Third Creeks to flow throughout the summer.

Conclusion

For at least 100 years the city water department viewed Haskill Creek primarily as a pipeline providing an endless flow of pure water, rather than a natural, free-flowing stream, with significant consideration of the habitat for aquatic and other wildlife this watershed provides.

In recent years the community and the city council have become more sensitive to the importance of protecting the environment, including local water bodies. That sensitivity, however, has not fully extended to the use and management of the Haskill Creek watershed.

It is important that the city exercise conservation in how it manages the municipal water system of Haskill Basin. It should be a goal of the city to only divert as much water from Second Creek and Third Creek as is required to meet its citizens' needs, thereby preventing the diversion of excess water and wasting it into another drainage. It should also be a goal to maintain a reasonable minimum flow in both creeks throughout the year to preserve the ecological function of the natural watershed. This requires balancing of the two goals, but the time for an informed decision is now. With the option of drawing additional water from Whitefish Lake being both technologically proven and financially affordable, it should not be a difficult decision. Dewatering either of the two creeks is simply not necessary, is harmful to the watershed and should not be an acceptable choice. If the City of Whitefish truly values environmental conservation, it cannot continue to follow its current course.

Installing remote control devices at both intakes that allow for real time monitoring of streamflow, rate of diversion and the ability to modify diversion rates is key to better conservation of Haskill Basin water.

Examining operations, including examining the rate of leakage from the reservoir is essential to better stewarding the scarce water resources of Haskill Basin.

The time is now to become active stewards of the water resources in Haskill Basin. Haskill Creek has been and will continue to be an incredible asset to the city. It provides not only pure, plentiful and affordable municipal water, but also supports the visual backdrop in the recreational backyard of Whitefish. Conservation is not always the easiest or cheapest choice, but in the long term, implementing the concept of Stewardship into the city's decision-making is fully within the charge given to you by your constituents. Please consider our input as you make important and long-standing decisions that will affect current and future generations. Now is the chance to chart a path of improvement rather than one of the status quo.