



2008 Award of Excellence
AIA Montana Design Awards Program
Honor Award



Fish Creek Ranch Refurbishment

Just south of Whitehall and Highway 55, lies Fish Creek Ranch. As a tributary of the Jefferson River, Fish Creek is within the greater Jefferson River Watershed and thus a large contributor to the productivity of water flow in the Jefferson River. Montana Trout Unlimited's recent plans to refurbish this watershed, for the purpose of increasing fish and duck habitat, while maintaining a respect for the open spaces and traditional uses of the land, inspired the undertakings for this project.

Fish Creek Ranch itself has a rich history within the local community. Founded by the Franich family in the early 1900's, the ranch landscape has accrued numerous structures and outbuildings from over a century of evolution, telling a story of the varied means of income and production upon its grounds. From dilapidated chicken and sheep shelters, to barns, bunkhouses, root cellars to support an apple orchard, metal shops, and small bunk houses imported over the pass from Butte, the advent of restoration became much more a process of the relocation of local material as it did 'new' construction.

Through this harvesting of material from the immediate site, two structures were moved to form the new Guest House, in addition to a new 9' x 12' wet unit structure. Two existing buildings were renovated in place to form a detached Dining Room and Bunk House with wine cellar, respectively. An existing plain steel storage structure was transformed in character for use as a barn and horse stables and made use of wood planks taken from smaller buildings removed on and off site. Various shed roofs, decks and a covered outdoor pavilion were constructed to allow for greater outdoor enjoyment. Steel detailing along with various furniture pieces were designed and fabricated as part of the comprehensive house design vocabulary.

In summary, this project is representative of creative use of found objects. In addition to the owner's undertakings to increase drainage and convert the irrigation systems to a traditional, more efficient center pivot design, structures were moved, renovated, and modified with minimal new construction to facilitate a comprehensive master plan for the ranch in the spirit of an ongoing sustainable stewardship.

Architects of Record:

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