

A Conservation Alert from Montana Trout Unlimited

29 September 2015

Help manage your favorite fisheries. Weigh in by October 3 on Montana FWP's proposed changes to fishing regulations

FWP is proposing numerous significant changes to Montana's fishing regulations. In the name of "simplification" the agency is recommending changes affecting seasons and harvest on many key trout waters. Montana TU supports many of the proposed changes, but is opposed to some proposals that represent major departures from long-standing regulations affecting the Madison River, the angling season in the Central District and cutthroat trout.

TU members should contact FWP and tell the agency you:

- 1. Support maintaining the current seasons for rivers, lakes and streams in the Central District.** FWP is proposing that all waters there, as a rule be open to angling and standard daily and possession limits, year-round. There would be some exceptions. We believe the current approach of instead having a standard season of May 15 to Nov. 30 for all waters, with exceptions for year-round catch and release angling and some harvest, should be maintained. Anglers are used to it and there is no compelling reason to change.
- 2. Do not support FWP's proposal to open the Madison River above Lyons Bridge and below Ennis Bridge to year-round angling.** The current season for these reaches starting May 15 into Nov. 30 has served anglers well. Further, it ensures areas where concentrated spawning occurs early in spring will not be vulnerable to angling pressure from guided and non-guided anglers.
- 3. Support the proposal advanced by Western District FWP Commissioner Gary Wolfe to require single-point barbless hooks on certain waters in the Flathead, Clark Fork and Blackfoot watersheds dominated by cutthroats and currently limited to catch and release angling.** However, ask FWP to expand this regulation to include the whole South Fork Flathead drainage above Hungry Horse Reservoir. Angling pressure on all these waters has skyrocketed in recent years, and hooking scars on cutthroats are common. Further, all these waters hold bull trout. Requiring pinched-down barbs on single hooks will help reduce hooking damage and mortality.
- 4. Support the department's proposal to allow a single cutthroat to be part of the daily limit on streams in the Central District, but maintain catch and release for all Yellowstone cutthroats in the Yellowstone River and**

its tributaries, including the Shields River, downstream of Yellowstone National Park.

E-mail your comments **BY OCTOBER 3** to FWP at fwpfsh@mt.gov. or, mail them to Joel Tohtz, FWP, Fishery Division , P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620.

You can review FWP's complete package of proposed regulation changes at:
http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/publicComments/2015/2016_19fishingRegs.html

Montana TU's comments on the proposed regulations are available at
www.montanatu.org.