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**for immediate release**

## Montana Trout Unlimited offers large reward for apprehension of bucket biologists

Missoula, July 9, 2014 – Montana Trout Unlimited is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the individuals responsible for illegally stocking northern pike in Montana’s Lake Mary Ronan, smallmouth bass in Seeley Lake and walleye in Noxon Reservoir. Montana TU’s reward offer is also available for any other significant discovery of bucket biology in the state.

“The recent discovery of illegally planted northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan is just the latest of many incidences in Montana in which vandals have taken it upon themselves to ruin popular recreational fisheries by seeding them with harmful species,” Bruce Farling, Montana TU’s executive director, says. “Fish stocking in Montana should be left to professional fishery biologists who are authorized to do the job. They understand what species can co-exist where, and how best to protect existing popular recreational fisheries from among other things harmful fish species, diseases and water-weeds. Self-styled experts with buckets and live-wells do not. They are instead ruining family-friendly fishing spots.”

The highly predacious northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan threaten one of Northwest Montana’s most popular recreational fisheries. The kokanee fishery there is also the source of eggs for stocking other popular waters. Smallmouth bass, another predacious species, threatens Seeley Lake’s popular kokanee and trout fisheries, and could spread throughout the Clearwater River system, threatening important cutthroat trout and bull trout populations. The illegally planted walleyes at Noxon Reservoir pose a serious threat to one of the state’s best legitimately established bass fisheries, which is a destination for anglers throughout the region.

“These bucket biologists don’t seem to understand that not only are they ruining someone else’s fishing, but the fishery they think they are creating might actually turn out to be not so hot,” says Farling. “That will certainly be the case at Noxon

where once the walleyes have eaten through the primary forage base, they will overpopulate and be dominated by small, skinny individuals.”

Montana TU is also urging Montana FWP to employ new actions at Lake Mary Ronan that were included in new statewide rules for dealing with illegal introductions. This includes making it a priority to soon develop a response plan on how to deal with the presence of pike.

To report information on illegal stocking of fish and be potentially eligible for a reward, contact either:

**Montana FWP at TIP-MONT 1-800-TipMont; or  
Montana Trout Unlimited at 406-543-0054.**

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