



TROUT LINE

Newsletter from the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited



The 2022 Memorial Float launches on an amazing fall day. PC: B.Pfeiffer

FALL 2022



THIS ISSUE:

CSKT Compact Benefits pg.3
EPA Grant for the Clerk Fork pg. 4
MF Judith Project Update pg. 6
plus...Stewardship Spotlight, Tip of the Hat, Memorial Float, Chapter News, and more!

FALL/22

MONTANA TU'S MISSION

is to conserve, protect and restore Montana's world-class coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

Founded in 1964, Montana Trout Unlimited is a statewide grassroots organization comprised of 13 chapters and approximately 4,000 TU members.

www.montanatu.org

TROUT LINE is published quarterly by Montana Trout Unlimited.

Printed on recycled paper using eco-friendly inks.

© 2022 Montana Council of Trout Unlimited.

MONTANA TU STAFF

DAVID BROOKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
david@montanatu.org

KELLEY WILLETT
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
kelley@montanatu.org

CLAYTON ELLIOTT
CONSERVATION AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
clayton@montanatu.org

CHRIS EDGINGTON
JEFFERSON WATERSHED PROJECT MANAGER
chris@montanatu.org

BILL PFEIFFER
OUTREACH COORDINATOR
bill@montanatu.org

MAGGIE ALTHAUS
OFFICE & PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR
maggie@montanatu.org

FROM THE CHAIRMAN: Brian Neilsen

If you listen to or watch any Montana media, you know it's election season and that this November your ballot will include candidates for the 2023 Montana Legislature. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Montana Trout Unlimited won't tell you what or who to vote for. But we do encourage you to vote, and to vote with wild and native trout in mind.

As you evaluate your ballots this fall, ask trout-related questions, just like you do when you stare at your flyboxes and try to pick out the bug most likely to tempt the big fish that day. Ask candidates how they will prioritize healthy and responsible budgets for the state agencies that manage our rivers, water access, wild and native fish, water quantity and water quality. These agencies – FWP, DNRC and DEQ – need proper funding to take care of these resources, especially FWP fisheries management and enforcement. Quiz them about their support for laws that protect clean water and encourage better instream flows.

Reducing water pollution and increasing stream flows are two of the best ways Montana's laws can maintain or build resiliency in cold, clean water resources. These are Montana's most valuable resources. A recent multi-agency study just showed that trout fishing in Montana is the state's largest outdoor recreation driver of the economy and that it hinges on keeping trout



MTU State Council Chairman Brian Neilsen

waters cold, clean and flowing well, especially in the face of climate change.

As always, MTU will work at the 2023 Legislature full-time. Who shows up in Helena and what their priorities are when it comes to trout waters makes all the difference. Right now, it is your turn to make those decisions by voting! So, thanks in advance for asking hard questions of your candidates for office. It might not be as fun as thinking about whether it's a big foamy hopper day or a day to go subsurface, but whether or not there are robust, healthy trout to eat those bugs directly depends on who we send to Helena in January.

Better Days Fishing Montana's Waters Happen With onWater Because Of

MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

Explore More

A portion of every onWater MTU subscription is donated to help conserve, protect, and restore Montana fisheries.

onwaterapp.com/subscribe/mtu

Fisheries benefits from CSKT Compact realized by Clayton Elliott and Seth Makepeace



Great blue heron at sunset on a CSKT reservoir. PC Bill Pfeiffer

Sometimes it's hard to connect policy to fish in the water. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Water Compact makes that connection pretty easy these days. MTU members are well acquainted with the CSKT Compact. Over the years, MTU has asked you to take action by contacting your legislators or members of Congress to support the federal passage of the Montana Water Use Protection Act, making federal ratification of the Compact a reality. While there are still legal steps ahead for the Compact to be finalized, the fisheries benefits made possible because of the combined Compact and settlement agreement are well underway. CSKT are already investing in coldwater fishery resources in Montana.

One of the many reasons MTU supported ratification of the Compact was because of the real investment of more than \$50 million it meant for water management and fisheries restoration on and off the reservation. That is in addition to the time immemorial instream flow water rights guaranteed by the Compact. These elements of the Compact mean real benefits for populations of native fish like

Westslope cutthroat and bull trout in western Montana.

Current projects in the Jocko watershed made possible by the Compact are already improving irrigation and water management, which will benefit water users and native fish. In the middle Jocko the Tribes are constructing a significant upgrade to the Jocko K Headworks, which will improve selective fish passage for native species and provide improved data for future management decisions. In addition, a new design for a diversion structure on the North Fork of the Jocko will increase the efficiency of moving water across the divide, provide increased structural integrity to aging infrastructure, and improve fish passage that has been precluded for one hundred years in the headwaters section of the North Fork.

Furthermore, across the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) there are innovative planning and modelling efforts underway to better understand the relationship between ground and surface water. These efforts will use rigorous data to inform future water management decisions and infrastructure

investments in the FIIP. From a fishery standpoint, it will allow water managers to better balance irrigation demands with dedicated instream flows in places like the Jocko and Charlo areas. More water will be available for trout at critical times of year, such as during spawning or drought conditions. These are just a few examples of where targeted investments and innovative planning will deliver lasting benefit to fisheries conservation.

There are many more efforts underway by the Tribes made possible by the settlement. MTU and the Tribes look forward to continuing to support and partner with each other on these exciting efforts that are making a difference for wild and native trout in western Montana. For more information about the legal and legislative next steps for the Compact contact Clayton (clayton@montanatu.org).

Seth Makepeace is a hydrologist with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.



EPA grant gives hope for cleaning up the middle Clark Fork by David Brooks



Mark Huber swings a fly on the lower Clark Fork
PC: B.Pfeiffer

Two years ago, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) expanded its recommendation that people not eat any fish from the much of the Clark Fork River, including wild trout. The news was startling, including for catch-and-release trout anglers. Even if you don't keep and eat fish, you want them to be healthy rather than full of toxic substances, which was the reason for the alarming Clark Fork fish consumption advisory. FWP's revised warning was based on 2019 data showing that PCBs, dioxins and other known human carcinogens are present in high enough levels in all fish sampled to warrant a more aggressive public deterrent.

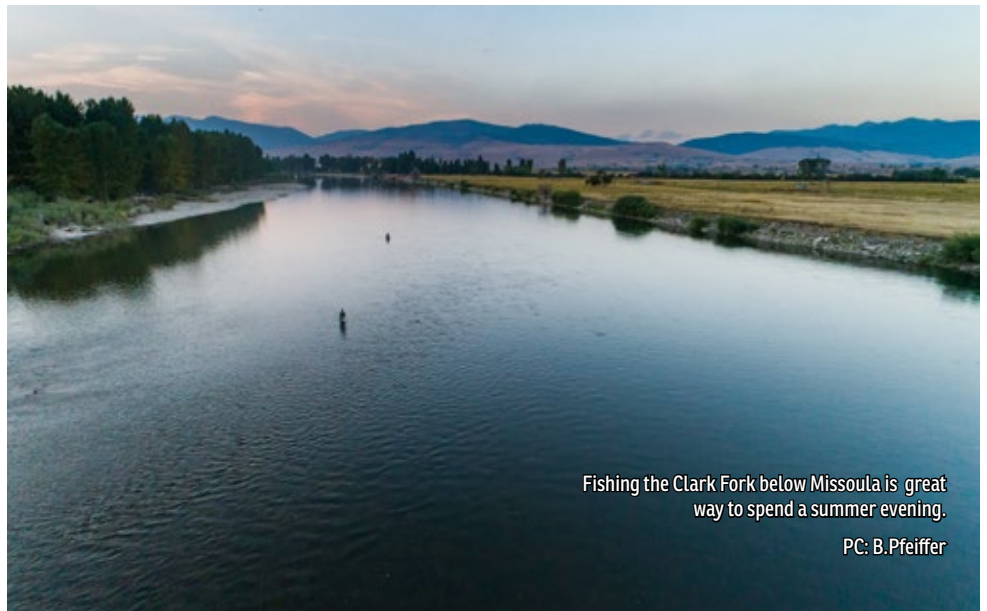
How widespread are these toxins in Clark Fork River fish, how high are the levels, and where are the toxins coming from? MTU now aims to help answer those questions as a key step toward figuring out future cleanup in the watershed and, ultimately, restoration of a healthier fishery, where some anglers rely on the fish they catch for food. We teamed up with FWP, Montana Natural Resource Damage Program, Department of Environmental Quality, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Missoula City-County Health Department, the area TU chapters and the Clark Fork Coalition to design a basin-wide fish tissue and water quality study. To help fund this research, MTU applied for and was recently approved for an Environmental Protection Agency grant. We will give matching funds, and staff and

volunteer time to augment the more than \$200k award from the EPA's Columbia River Basin Restoration Program, which got a big boost in funding from the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

This funding will allow us to sample fish and install water quality monitors at roughly 20 sites throughout the Clark Fork and its main tributaries, namely Flint/Rock Creeks, the Blackfoot River and the Bitterroot River. At each site we will target mostly rainbow trout for lab analysis of dioxins, furans and PCBs, all organic compounds, which means they are complex, carbon-based compounds, not that they are sold in health food stores.

These compounds are the byproducts of many industrial processes, including paper and pulp mills like the one that operated for decades at the Smurfit site on the Clark Fork below Missoula. They persist in the environment for generations and move up the food chain. In many species, including people, they are strongly linked to damage to the immune system, reproductive system and liver, cause birth defects, and may increase the risk of cancer. We will also be setting out passive water samplers at our study sites to detect the concentration of these dangerous compounds in the water.

Providing people who eat the fish they harvest, whether for subsistence or ceremonial purposes, with accurate information about the levels of pollutants in those fish can literally save lives. Gathering and analyzing this data will also allow us to collectively begin identifying sources of the contaminants and prioritizing future cleanup efforts. This is a great investment in the future health of western Montana trout, the Clark Fork River ecosystem and the people who live or recreate within it. As we move forward with this project in 2023, we will be calling on volunteers to help with on-water monitoring, educating the public on our findings, and encouraging the relevant agencies to act on necessary cleanup. We look forward to working with you and our partners on this latest project in our suite of work to promote water quality for fish and people across Montana.



Fishing the Clark Fork below Missoula is great way to spend a summer evening.

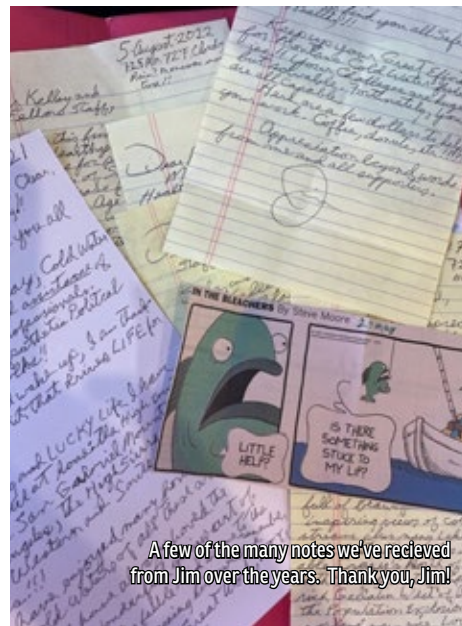
PC: B.Pfeiffer

Donors at all levels make a difference by Kelley Willett

“I am a lucky man,” are the first words Jim Willett (no relation, though I sure wish there was!) uttered to me when we visited on the phone. Montana Trout Unlimited is the lucky one – for having a friend like Jim. More than 20 times since 2016, he has sent in a check, along with a note penned in his hand and instructions like, “use this for coffee, donuts, etc.,” or “wish I had more,” or “appreciation beyond words.” The best ones have a clever comic strip enclosed, too. The last several Trout Line newsletters have featured philanthropists who have made an enormous impact in coldwater conservation. Jim Willett is proof positive that gifts of all sizes are equally important to sustaining MTU’s work. A Vietnam Veteran, who said, “fishing was the best therapy,” for me, Jim does not feel it is an exaggeration to say that the healing he found on the water saved his life. Now he pays it forward, sev-

eral times a year, with modest checks that go to work saving the places he fished. In our short conversation he recalled getting a line wet in more trout water in Montana than most will see in a lifetime. His passion for ensuring these places persist and even thrive for the next generation comes through with every letter we receive from him and inspires us to work even harder.

As you think about your year-end philanthropy, please know that all kinds of gifts to MTU are what add up to make our work possible. Regardless of size, your gift matters. On a 100+ degree day when the fish were struggling, a note from Jim arrived and reminded me that if each one of us does what we can, then the sacred places that heal all of us have a fighting chance. Thank you, Jim!



A few of the many notes we've received from Jim over the years. Thank you, Jim!

Planning your Montana Fishing trip? Consider Conservation-Minded Shops, Guides and Outfitters by Kelley Willett

Two separate events this year were led by the fishing industry community in Montana.

First, thanks to many hours from outfitter-guides, Tim Linehan and Brian Neilsen – the Tip of the Hat event raised nearly \$8,000. A generous match from the Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana topped off a day when hardworking guides handed over their tips for conservation. See the side bar for a full list of these amazing folks.

Also, this year the generous owners at Blackfoot River Outfitters (John Herzer and Terri Raugland) along with Matthew and Laura Churchman tirelessly organized another successful Memorial Float to benefit MTU. Their decision years ago to honor loved ones by bringing people together for a day of healing and fun on the river has generated big money for conservation and new friendships, too. Orange Street Food Farm donated lunches, Tommy Boyle donated shuttles and guides gave their time. One of the sweetest gestures of the day was that several of those guides passed those tips right along to MTU.

As you plan your Montana fishing, please consider patronizing these conservation-minded businesses and individuals. Find

2022 Tip of the Hat Donors

- Nick Argy
- Paul Bloch
- Billy Bran
- Jason Brininstool
- John Chaffee
- Jesse Dancer
- Russ Dobryzinski
- Josh Edwards
- Greg Falls
- Craig Fellin, Big Hole Lodge
- Wade Fellin, Big Hole Lodge
- Tim Flynn
- Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana
- Aaron Fox
- Eddie Freyn
- Tom Gagnon
- Matt Hargrave
- Hilary Hutcheson, Lary's Fly and Supply
- Carlisle Jones
- Mike Kuhnert
- Beth Langell
- Jerry Lappier, The Trout Shop
- Tim & Joanne Linehan, Linehan Outfitting Company
- Garrett Munson
- Brian Neilsen
- Nathan Plagman
- Anthony Reinhardt, Montana Trout Outfitters
- Klay Reiter
- Bruce Stewart
- Taylor Todd
- Max Valler
- Billy Vest
- Bob Warneke
- Trip Werrell
- Brian Wheeler

them online or contact MTU and we'll provide contact information.



MONTANA COUNCIL OF TROUT UNLIMITED

OFFICERS

BRIAN NEILSEN, CHAIRMAN
GREAT FALLS
brian@finfetchers.com

LYLE COURTNAGE, VICE CHAIRMAN
BILLINGS
lyle.courtamage@gmail.com

WILL TRIMBATH, TREASURER
HELENA
trimbath.will@gmail.com

MARK PETERSON, SECRETARY
BOZEMAN
markpeterson1939@gmail.com

HARRY MURPHY, NLC DIRECTOR
BOZEMAN
hamurphy3@gmail.com

SHARON SWEENEY FEE, PAST CHAIR
LIVINGSTON
ssfes123@yahoo.com

STEWARDSHIP DIRECTORS

DR. MARSHALL BLOOM
Hamilton, MT

MONTE DOLACK
Missoula, MT

PAUL MOSELEY
Missoula, MT

ROY O'CONNOR
Clinton, MT

DRS. ROBERT & PEGGY RATCHESON
Hamilton, MT

PAUL STANLEY
Bozeman, MT/Piedmont, CA

DR. IRVING WEISSMAN
Hamilton, MT/Redwood City, CA

CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE.

Middle Fork of the Judith Phase 5 Update by Chris Edgington



Before and after photos from Phase 5 of the MF of the Judith restoration project. PC: Chris Edgington

The warm September sun offered a comforting juxtaposition to the crisp, cool air as I ascended out of the Middle Fork Judith River (MFJ) corridor up Arch Coulee. MTU and our partners from the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLC) were just completing phase 4 of our MFJ Riparian Road Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Project. I stopped to enjoy the second and grander rock arch in the coulee, discovered last year while working on phase 3. The rock seemed to capture and focus sunlight on the forest floor at my feet. A sense of accomplishment and gratitude for the opportunity to restore this beautiful fishery washed over me.

The MFJ rises on the Little Belt mountains' east side to Lewistown's west. A historic jeep trail, J825, bisects the MFJ Wilderness Study Area and cuts through the riparian vegetation and stream at 27 fords with over 90 discrete entrances to those fords. Decades of sedimentation from the jeep trail have suppressed the aquatic invertebrates and wild fish population. Fish population surveys suggest the fish population is just ten percent of what should be expected. Our work here aims to restore the MFJ as a healthy trout fishery. Phases 1-3 were completed in 2020-21 to provide access for the heavy equipment necessary to restore the stream banks and reestablish more natural stream function.

After more than two years of planning, data collection, partner coordination, fundraising, and permitting, phase 4 was completed in eight days. We built nearly a mile of new jeep trail and reclaimed portions of the deteriorating course that was contributing sediment to the river. Other portions of the trail were enhanced

to be sustainable and drain into the forest without harming the stream or habitat. Sixteen discrete vehicle accesses to the stream that damaged habitat and loaded the water with sediment were rehabilitated with a combination of large woody debris, willow and dogwood clumps, sod mats, and rock to match the up and downstream bank line. Given an opportunity to heal, these areas will appear completely natural and benefit, rather than degrade the stream.

We are poised to finish this project with the completion of phase 5 in 2023. Phase 5 encompasses the most degraded reach of the river. There are over 50 entrances contributing sediment to the river at the 17 fords in just 1.5-miles of the jeep trail. MTU expects the HLC to formally close this portion of the jeep trail in the spring. The new route in Arch Coulee offers safer, more sustainable access to the watershed. We have a comprehensive plan to rehabilitate one thousand feet of raw stream bank at the entrances and reclaim the degraded jeep trail with many of the same techniques we applied in phase 4. We were awarded a Montana Department of Environmental Quality 319 Clean Water Act grant and an FWP Future Fisheries grant to fund phase 5, along with numerous contributions from our partner organizations.

One day in the not-so-distant future the emerald pools of the Middle Fork Judith will offer incredible fishing to match the impressive limestone canyon with abundant wildlife through which it flows.



Chapter News

Big Blackfoot Chapter

BBCTU completed several projects this summer and fall that will continue to improve trout habitat in the Blackfoot valley. Our work included replacing an undersized culvert with a bridge on Trail Creek, partnering with a private land owner to improve native fish passage in a spawning tributary. We also completed a bank stabilization project on the Clearwater river, and helped install new stock tanks and cross fences on grazing lands adjacent to the Blackfoot. Two fish screens were installed, one on a irrigation pump in the Monture Creek area and another on Johnson Creek, that will benefit spawning westslope cutthroat and bull trout. Finally, we began work on Nevada Creek Phase 5, a legacy restoration project that will restore a mile of stream and riparian habitat and prevent 400 tons of sediment from entering the Blackfoot. Funding partners on this project include a private land owner, MT Department of Environmental Quality, US Forest Service, TU, and MT Fish Wildlife and Parks.

George Grant Chapter

The GGTU board had a busy summer. We added 2 new members and a long time member, Jim Gleason, retired from the board. GGTU thanks Jim for his dedication over the past 25+ years. Jim was a key fundraiser for our annual banquet and could always be relied upon to follow the GGTU Mission: To conserve, protect, and restore cold water fisheries and their watersheds in Southwest Montana. The board approved funding for a Flint Creek Restoration Project as well as a lower Ruby River Restoration Project near Duncan Bridge. Board members also met multiple times with FWP to discuss the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan and the proposed 2023-24 Fishing Regulations. We provided comments supporting the regulations for lakes and streams in Southwest Montana with a few small proposed changes. The board has been active developing a project for the restoration of Lower Fifer Gulch in Anaconda and will be releasing a request for proposals for survey, feasibility study, and conceptual design in the near future.

Madison-Gallatin Chapter

Upper Yellowstone/Missouri Project Manager Ashley Brubaker had a busy

summer full of field work, project development, community outreach, and grant writing, all kicked off with the historic flooding on the Yellowstone River in June. Also that month, she began a hydrologic study of Indian Creek. In July, Ashley hosted a women's trip to Hubbard's Yellowstone Lodge organized by Orvis with proceeds benefitting TU's STREAM Girls program. In August, she assisted with a project on Rock Creek creating beaver dam analogs and log jams, using a hydraulic post pounder funded by an MTU mini grant! Chapter volunteers had a busy summer as well, and recently helped with the Lower Madison River Clean Up and a Veteran's Fishing Day. Regular chapter meetings resume on October 12. We also have some open board positions to fill so if you're looking to get more involved in conservation in the Bozeman area, email us at mgt Trout Unlimited@gmail.com.

Missouri River Fly Fishers Chapter

MRF had a great time participating in FWP's "Kids Fishing Day" on June 4 after a 2-year hiatus! MRF volunteers helped with instruction at Wadsworth Pond in Great Falls and the kids enjoyed it, too. On June 10, MRF sponsored a Great Falls Voyagers baseball game. It was a great new way to connect with more people from the community who might not know about our work in local watersheds and we hope to do it again in the future.

Westslope Trout Unlimited

In May WSCTU held a successful on-line auction instead of an annual banquet because of concern over Covid. The auction was followed by a "Thank You" fest barbecue held outdoors at the Old Fort Missoula parade grounds. Over the Summer Volunteers from the Chapter planted willows and trees for a stream restoration project in the Valley of the Moon area of Rock Creek. The chapter also participated in installing beaver dam analogs on a spring fed headwater stream outside of Drummond headed up by TU's Tess Scanlon. FWP and volunteers from Backcountry Hunters and Anglers also participated. With temperatures hitting 100 degrees not many beavers were spotted... but the dams got built. Regular in person chapter meetings will resume in November. Check our website for a full schedule.



MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

CHAPTERS & PRESIDENTS

BITTERROOT CHAPTER #080

David Ward, Hamilton
dward0451@gmail.com
www.bitterroottu.org

BIG BLACKFOOT CHAPTER #544

Jim Stutzman, Missoula
stutz292@hotmail.com
www.bbctu.org

FLATHEAD VALLEY CHAPTER #085

Dan Short, Kalispell
dan.short55@gmail.com
www.flatheadtu.org

GEORGE GRANT CHAPTER #183

Forrest Jay, Anaconda
president@ggtu.org
www.georgegranttu.org

JOE BROOKS CHAPTER #025

Matt Swann, Livingston
swannmatt@yahoo.com
www.joebrookstu.org

KOOTENAI VALLEY CHAPTER #683

Mike Rooney, Libby
kootfish@yahoo.com

CHUCK ROBBINS CHAPTER #656

Mike Geary, Twin Bridges
hwlodgemt@gmail.com
www.lctu.org

MADISON-GALLATIN CHAPTER #024

Sarah Clark, Bozeman
mgt Trout Unlimited@gmail.com
www.mgtu.org

MAGIC CITY FLY FISHERS #582

Lyle Courtneage, Billings 896-1824
lyle.courtneage@gmail.com
www.mccffonline.org

MISSOURI RIVER FLYFISHERS #406

Tracy Wendt, Great Falls
flyfishersmissouririver@gmail.com
www.mirroririverflyfishers.org

PAT BARNES-MISSOURI RIVER CHAPTER #055

Tom Caffrey, Helena
patbarnestu@gmail.com
www.patharnestu.org

SNOWY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER #610

Mike Chapman, Lewistown
bmchap@midrivers.com

WESTSLOPE CHAPTER #056

Brandon Dwyer, Missoula
westslopechaptertu@gmail.com
www.westslope-trout.org



Montana Council of Trout Unlimited
PO BOX 7186 MISSOULA, MT 59807

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MISSOULA, MT
PERMIT NO. 569

TROUT LINE FALL 2022

UPCOMING EVENTS

www.montanatu.org

12/2/22 MTU State Council Meeting
Missoula, MT

12/10/22 MRFF Holiday Party
Great Falls, MT

2/12/23 PBTU Ice Bowl
Helena, MT

2/18/23 MRFF River Fest
Great Falls, MT

2/25/23 WSCTU Annual Banquet
Missoula, MT

2/25/23 MGTU Annual Banquet
Bozeman, MT

3/3/23 GGTU Annual Banquet
Butte, MT

WANT 5,000 MONTANA TU MEMBERS TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR EVENT?

Please contact the Missoula office at 406-543-0054 or info@montanatu.org to get the word out through Montana TU.



[www.facebook.com/
montanatu](https://www.facebook.com/montanatu)



[@montanatroutunlimited](https://www.instagram.com/montanatroutunlimited)