



TROUT LINE

Newsletter from the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited



Mahogany mayfly dries its wings after hatching on the Bitterroot River.
PC: Bill Pfeiffer

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Herb Ware Honored, pg. 5, plus
Home Waters book review, Chapter
news and more!



FALL 2021

FALL/21

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

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MONTANA TU STAFF

DAVID BROOKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
david@montanatu.org

KELLEY WILLET
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
kelly@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

Drought defined the summer of 2021 in Montana. Recreationalists and agricultural producers alike felt the effects of low snowpack, lack of rain, wildfire smoke, literal plagues of grasshoppers, and historically low stream and river flows. A severe lack of water caused some ranchers not to harvest a single cutting of hay, let alone two. These same ranchers then saw grasshoppers consume what little grass was available in an increasingly hot summer. Public anglers, outfitters and guides were also affected. A fishing closure was implemented on the Ruby River as early as mid-May because of low flows! The Smith River dropped to a trickle by June 18th at Eagle Creek, running at a mere 118 CFS. These historically early low flows led to an abrupt halt for commercial and non-commercial permit holders hoping to run the popular canyon into what would normally be the peak season for floaters and anglers. Hoot Owl restrictions spread across Montana's coldwater streams along with the smoke-filled skies. Many people expected sections of the Jefferson and Big Hole to go bone dry. As I type, the Beaverhead is flowing at a mere 30 CFS threatening the historic fishery and I just saw a recent photo of one of my home waters, Belt Creek, that showed nothing but bleached white river rocks. Not a drop flowing.

As we put one of the driest summers in memory in the rearview mirror and Fall provides us with cooler temperatures, we must remember the challenges this drought brought and be diligent in helping to create ways to reduce its effects in the future. This summer's conditions have energized MTU to do just that. The statewide drought management plan will be getting



MTU State Council Chairman Brian Neilsen

its first update since 1995. As anglers, TU members and water stewards, we should be looking for ways to make the revised statewide drought plan have real, positive impacts at the local level through shared sacrifice. The revised plan can't just be about monitoring drought better. It needs to encourage, support or improve ways that water users of all stripes can help keep our coldwater streams and rivers healthy, even when the summer is at its hottest and driest. This will take collaboration. As anglers and conservationists, we should also be prepared to do our part to angle in fish-friendly ways when trout are stressed by warming water, such as keeping them wet or giving them a break during the heat of the day. We should also be ready to thank water users who make sacrifices or improvements to their water use to keep our rivers flowing through periods of drought, especially as the effects of climate change continue to alter Montana. Every drop of water counts, just as every effort you make to help TU and Montana's coldwater resources counts. Keep it up.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BN4".



David Brooks discusses drought planning at the September 2021 State Council retreat. PC: B. Pfeiffer

Why MTU Youth Programs Are More Important Than Ever by Bill Pfeiffer

When we talk about Montana Trout Unlimited youth conservation programs, and those of our local chapters, we say we are creating the next generation of river stewards. So what does that really mean? It means knowing about and acting on the measurable threats our fisheries face from things like changing climate, management decisions or invasive species. It also means tackling intangibles like apathy and complacency in the angling community. MTU's youth education efforts go to the heart of both physical threats and building a conservation ethic. The only way our trout stand a chance in an uncertain future is through their many friends above the water's surface and we can't start those introductions too soon.

While COVID-19 changed how we connect with young people, putting our overnight Youth Conservation Camp at Georgetown Lake on hiatus, our commitment to outdoor education was unwavering. In the spring of 2020, we quickly put together a study-at-home course in river ecology, Montana River Life, for parents and kids stuck at home. This summer our new Youth Conservation Day Clinics, organized by local chapter coordinators and taught by MTU and volunteer mentors, reached over 30 kids in 6 different communities, including our first ever program in Lewistown, MT. The response was overwhelming and we're planning even more programs for 2022, including the return of overnight camp.

Our day clinic program is a fun crash-course in river ecology and fly-fishing instruction for 9-14 year olds. Attendees begin by learning about the 4 C's of trout habitat: Clean, Cold, Complex, and Connected waterways. This presentation not only provides a conservation background for young anglers, it also helps them learn how to read water and where to look for trout. After a bankside biology lesson, students get into the stream to sample aquatic insects. Kids who claim to "hate bugs" inevitably discover that they're the coolest thing since Fortnite. After a quick lunch with a knot-tying lesson, students learn how to rig their rods, cast, and fight fish. The day ends with a few hours of one-on-one water time with mentors before everyone gets a prize, from cool MTU swag to a new fly rod. Flushed and smiling faces



Bill instructs a young angler in casting at the Youth Clinic at Rock Creek Ranch last summer PC: Laurie Lane

confirm the power of this experience.

One of the most inspiring moments of the summer came in Hamilton when I realized that one of our mentor volunteers, now 35 years old and donating his Saturday to young people, got his start with TU in his 7th grade class through the Bitterroot Chapter TU's Buggers program! The class, operating annually since 1998, introduces young people to fly tying, fly fishing, and conservation. To see a conservation-minded angler giving back was inspiring and a reminder of why these initiatives are so important to the future of our mission. That's why we aim to help expand these and similar programs, like Watershed Warriors by our Joe Brooks Chapter in Livingston and Magic City Fly Fishers kids fishing days in Billings.

Similarly, Trout In the Classroom (TIC) programs have been a great success for chapters across the state. TIC gives students the opportunity to raise trout in a classroom before releasing them into a nearby lake or pond, thanks to partnerships with Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks. In a state like Montana, where river fish are wild, observing the trout life cycle helps children develop a personal bond to their natural heritage and local streams. Our Madison Gallatin chapter will have two tanks at Sacajewea Middle School this year and the

Bitterroot Chapter expanded their program to 4 classrooms in just its second year. Bitterroot high school programs even add a technology component, using the WiseH2O Phone App to test and track water quality. The Pat Barnes Chapter in Helena has also gained wide recognition for the success of its TIC program, which has been a success in area schools for many years.

When teaching kids the value of fly fishing, we emphasize quality over quantity. Catching fish is secondary. Our primary goal is to have fun, to make the outdoors a place kids want to return to often, not another place to compete. Every child who has a life-changing experience is one more advocate for wild trout and healthy rivers. That moment of satori requires committed mentorship and a desire to serve from all of us. As our rivers continue to face a sometimes frightening future, one by one, we are educating those that will take the torch from us into the future. Volunteer for your local chapter program or create a new one: our young anglers and our trout will thank you for it!



DEQ Makes Bad Call, Backs Out of Bad Actor by David Brooks

Montana's Bad Actor law says that if a mining company leaves the state with unpaid reclamation costs, neither that company nor any of its principle decision-makers can mine in the state again, unless they reimburse the state for cleanup costs (mostly taxpayer money). The law was passed with near unanimous support by the Legislature, the conservation community and the MT mining industry after Pegasus Mining – under the direction of Phillips Baker - declared bankruptcy and left us with three major mining messes to clean up that all include ongoing pollution of coldwater trout streams. The cleanup has cost Montana tens of millions of dollars.

A few years ago, Baker showed up in Montana as CEO of Hecla Mining Company, the company applying for permits to mine silver and copper from within and under the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Area in NW MT. These potential mines threaten to dewater and pollute bull trout streams. Governor Bullock directed the DEQ to use the Bad Actor law to prevent Hecla and Baker from getting a permit. That case spent three



Ongoing acid mine pollution at Zortman Mine left behind by Pegasus Mining under Baker's direction. PC: D. Brooks

years working its way through the court process. While awaiting a decision from the judge, DEQ and Governor Gianforte recently did an about-face and dropped its case against Hecla and Baker, illogically saying that there's no hope of getting reimbursed from the Pegasus plundering and that DEQ has other ways to pursue bad actors. In fact, the Bad Actor law is the only legal tool to do so AND, as important as getting paid back, enforcing the law

is about promoting responsible mining and discouraging people like Baker from shafting Montana in the future. That's why MTU has joined other conservation organizations and Tribes in a mandamus action to compel DEQ to resume its Bad Actor suit, to do its job, to uphold a decent law that protects Montanans and our natural resources. As the mining city's own hometown newspaper has said, anything less is "outrageous."

Loving the Blackfoot River...but not to death

John Maclean's *Home Waters*, reviewed by by David Brooks

If you're looking for a kiss-and-tell book unlocking secrets of the Blackfoot River in Montana, or a book to inspire more people to come ply its waters, John Maclean's new memoir of his family and this famous river - *Home Waters* - is not it. Instead John treats us to a very personal story of how his family came to Montana and fell in love with the haunting waters of the Blackfoot valley. He shares stories of learning to fish, write, and love the outdoors alongside his father Norman, mythical uncle Paul, and grandfather, THE Father Maclean. Those of us who have returned to the "Little Blue Book" or the film version of "A River Runs Through It," as if they are pilgrimage destinations, will enjoy John's filling in of detail that builds rather than busts the legends the printed and filmed stories have created for us.

John's story of the Blackfoot reminds us that



this river is not THE Home Waters. Rather, Home Waters is wherever we, as anglers, outdoorsmen and women, came to love and learn about place, play, and the people we call family or close friends. In this view, John's writing is a wonderful reflection on how a sense of place and shared activity, especially sport, defines our lives, our families, and the meaning we find in them.

More than trips to the Blackfoot, Home Water will (or at least ought) to inspire readers to consider the intergenerational importance of their own home waters, home mountains, home forests, home prairies, backyard woodlots or home towns. And in finding that importance, we might find the will to protect those places so that future generations have the same opportunities to intertwine home places into their lives. Caring for places starts with loving them.

As more people come to enjoy the Blackfoot, John recognizes the need to NOT love this place to death. This book reveals the deep debt he owes this place and his hope to give back to it. In short, a fine read for lovers of rivers and all the outdoor places that shape our lives. Find it at <https://johnmacleanbooks.com/new-book-home-waters>.

ACTION ALERT

Sign the "Bad Actor" Petition!
Visit linktr.ee/montanatroutunlimited

STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Family Honors Herb by Protecting the Smith by Kelley Willett

"He erred on the side of kindness." Leave it to perhaps the most well-read outfitter around, Mike Geary (of Lewis and Clark Expeditions/Healing Waters Lodge) to describe Herb Ware, III, so aptly and beautifully. Mike's affection for his dear friend is what moved him to encourage Herb's family to honor his memory by protecting a place he loved - Montana's Smith River.

Herb's children, Seth and Alicia Hudson, and Wesley and Jenny Ware, established the *Herb Ware Fund to Protect the Smith* in 2017 and have steadily grown the fund each year. The money has been used to fight a copper mine that could leave the Smith forever polluted with acid mine drainage. In the future, the Fund will also help with efforts like a much-needed drought management plan for the Smith, which nearly ran dry in 2021.



Herb Ware III on his beloved Smith River

Seth shared that the family has been going down the Smith since the 1980's and that inevitably at the takeout Herb would remark, "I wish I could just go right back to Camp Baker and do it again." One year he did - but not as a client, instead rowing the gear boat for a group

of Wounded Warriors that Mike Geary was taking down the river. Seth said this exemplifies just how humble Herb was; despite being an incredibly successful businessman, he had no qualms rolling up his sleeves and volunteering to help others... especially if it meant another float down those magic 59 miles.

Guides fight for the chance to be part of the "Ware Trip" which continues each year, almost 40 years after Herb and his Dad hosted the first crew. And thanks to the family's foresight and generosity, the Smith River has a fighting chance to stay cold, clean and fishy for our families too.

If you would like to establish a memorial fund, please contact Kelley Willett (406.543.0054)

Roger's Last Fly by Kelley Willett

More fun than writing an article about fishing etiquette... is being inspired by top-notch etiquette out on the River. The following anecdote is true, though names, places, and flies have been changed to protect the innocent.

Somewhere in Montana, September 2021 Roger opened his pack and began snapping open every single one of his boxes. "I've got one more in here somewhere; I tied them myself," he said, digging to the very bottom of his bag. He handed me a fly that looked like a throw-away, already munched by several trout. I tied it on with skepticism. Because the place was new to me, Roger generously told me where to cast, how to retrieve, and then... I caught the fish of a lifetime. I had just met Roger about an hour before so his willingness to share knowledge, his last special fly and enthusiasm for my fish, well, it reminded me of ~~who I want to meet~~ who I want to be on the river.



Montana Trout Unlimited

CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE.

Big Sky Watershed Corps Recap by James Nash

As a Big Sky Watershed Corp member for MTU and the USFS, improving the health and resiliency of our native fish species has been the focus of my job for the past year. I've spent much of my time assembling applications for water rights for the US Forest Service, so that more cold, clean water remains in the stream on public land for the benefit of fish populations in Montana.

In order for our native fish to survive they need two things — habitat and food. The benefits of leaving water in the streams are two fold: to maintain a certain amount of wetted area that serves as reproductive habitat for invertebrates (food) and to maintain healthy environments for the fish (habitat).

The process of applying for instream water rights is labor intensive - each application is for a specific stream, at a specific reach, for a specific amount of water. Knowing how much water to apply for as instream flow entails gaging annual flows through repeated monitoring of the stream during runoff, at a moderate flow after runoff, and at low or base flow. It also entails calculating the stream's physical qualities, such as its gradient, bed and bank characteristics and, ultimately, how much invertebrate habitat it supports (how much fish food there is!).

Using data collected by field crews, it's possible to model the minimum amount of water necessary for the survival of healthy fish populations. That minimum flow becomes the basis of a USFS instream flow right. This work is essential for MTU's future work safeguarding adequate streamflows.

In my term working with MTU and the USFS I submitted 22 applications for a total 545.7 cubic feet per second of cold, clean water flowing through 40.56 miles of streams in 5 National Forests. That means we've added more than 40 miles of healthy, resilient trout habitat on our public lands in Montana for generations to come. It felt especially good to help keep more water in streams during a summer of epic drought.

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
ssfee123@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

K.C. WALSH
Bozeman, MT

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

A Summer We Won't Soon Forget

Photos by Chris Edgington and Bill Pfeiffer



This summer had an historic impact on our trout fisheries. With the snow starting to fall, it's easy to look at our past season in the rearview mirror. But we can't afford to do that if we want a brighter future for our fish. Droughts like this one will be longer and more frequent in the coming years. Our response must be to plan, not simply react. That's why we're focusing this fall and winter on Hoot Owl reform and promoting Drought Management Plans for more watersheds in Montana. Visit mtwildtrout.org to learn more!

Chapter News

Bitterroot Chapter

The Chapter will be expanding our Trout In the Classroom program this fall in four highschools throughout the Bitterroot Valley. We are now up to four high schools in the Bitterroot Valley. We have been successful in getting grants to provide each classroom with a 55 gal aquarium and all the equipment needed to raise trout from fertilized eggs to a releasable size. MT FTP has provided the eggs form the Jocko River Hatchery. Students participate in monitoring the water temperature and chemistry. At the end of the school year the fish are released into a pond that is permitted by FTP. The students have found this program to be very rewarding and some students are interested in a career in fisheries. Learn more in Bill Pfeiffer's story on page 3.

George Grant Chapter

GGTU will be resuming in-person board meetings beginning Oct. 21. Masks are required for those attending. Microsoft Teams is also available for board and chapter members who would like to attend remotely. Contact Forrest for more info at president@ggtu.org.

Madison-Gallatin Chapter

MGTU would like to thank all those who supported out 2021 Veterans Outing on DuPuy's Spring Creek on September 19th, 2021. Our nine veterans from the Montana State University Veteran's Club and Bozeman's Project Healing Waters enjoyed a productive day on the creek under the watchful and guiding eyes of our river helpers. MGTU is also looking to fill TWO very important positions on our board. We are seeking a Banquet Chair with a passion for furthering MGTU's mission by helping to organize our annual fundraiser. We are also looking for a Tech Support Hero, skilled with Zoom, computers, projectors, and weird cords! Do either of theser positions sound like you? Email mgtroutunlimited@gmail.com.

Missouri River Fly Fishers

Last month, Missouri River Flyfishers once again partnered with the Sun River Watershed group and Montana Fish Wildlife &

Parks to rescue grayling stranded fish in a ditch west of Fairfield, taking measurements and genetic samples, and releasing them in Tunnel Lake. Thanks to FWP and to volunteer Morgan Marks from Montana Wildlife Federation for making this happen! If you would like to volunteer to help next year, contact tracy@sunriverwatershed.org.

Westslope Chapter

With an abundance of caution, the the WestSlope Chapter board has decided to resume in-person chapter meetings starting on January 12, 2022. Our monthly meetings are part of the glue that holds the chapter together and are vitally important to our mission of fly fishing education and cold water conservation. But with the delta variant menacing, we will follow CDC and TU guidelines and do our part to not become part of the problem. Please check with us on Facebook or <https://westslope-trout.org> for more info. We're also raffling off a Watermaster Kodiak raft. Deadline to enter is Oct. 31, 2021.



MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED CHAPTERS & PRESIDENTS

BITTERROOT CHAPTER #080

David Ward, Hamilton
dward451@comcast.net
www.bitterroottu.org

BIG BLACKFOOT CHAPTER #544

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

FLATHEAD VALLEY CHAPTER #085

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

Brian Wheeler, Dillon
bweel00@gmail.com
www.lctu.org

MADISON-GALLATIN CHAPTER #024

Mark Peterson, Bozeman
mgtroutunlimited@gmail.com
www.mgtu.org

MAGIC CITY FLY FISHERS #582

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

MISSOURI RIVER FLYFISHERS

Bob Warneke, Great Falls
www.mirrorriverflyfishers.org

PAT BARNES-MISSOURI RIVER CHAPTER #055

Shalon Hastings, Helena
patbarnestu@gmail.com
www.patbarnestu.org

SNOWY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER #610

Mike Chapman, Lewistown
bmchap@midrivers.com

WESTSLOPE CHAPTER #056

Mark Kuipers, Missoula
westslopechaptertu@gmail.com
www.westslope-trout.org



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

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TROUT LINE FALL 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

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12/4/21

MTU State Council Meeting
Bozeman, MT

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