



TROUT LINE

Newsletter from the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited



Spring on the Bitterroot River,
PC: Bill Pfeiffer

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more!



SPRING 2021

SPRING/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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FROM THE CHAIRMAN: Brian Neilsen

Three missed fish or three fish to the net and it's your turn to row. Compromise amongst friendly anglers is generally that easy. Each angler hopes to have the same opportunity to catch fish on any given day, so we give and take. Recently my local TU chapter in Great Falls was approved for a mini grant by MTU. The grant helps restore spawning habitat between two reservoirs in Central, MT. MTU, Missouri River Flyfishers and The Sun River Watershed Group collaborated to make the project a reality. Without this collaboration the stream bed would remain in the same poor condition.

Similarly, MTU is proud to have a track record of successful collaboration and compromise in both the organization's project work and advocacy efforts. Unfortunately, compromise does not come easy in all scenarios. The ability and willingness to compromise seems lost these days as division continues to grow. While giving up a portion of a plan, policy or idea can be viewed as weakness, it is often a smart, effective tool to move our mission forward. So too with collaboration. It sometimes means working with people



MTU State Council Chairman Brian Neilsen

or groups that we oppose at other times. In this addition of Trout Line, there are great examples of how MTU puts the values of compromise and collaboration to work in both on-the-ground projects and advocating for our mission during the 2021 Montana Legislature.

On occasion, you have to be willing to give up time in front of the boat, even if you just missed your third big eat or your fishing partners are not able to put three fish in the net.

MTU Youth Conservation Day Clinics

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MTU will be using a day camp format in 2021 in lieu of an overnight camp. We are working with local chapters to host a series of one-day clinics in various communities around Montana. Visit montanatu.org/conservation-youth-camp/daycamp for a full schedule and info. Contact your local chapter or Outreach Coordinator Bill Pfeiffer (bill@montanatu.org) to apply.



June 11 - Wolf Creek - Pat Barnes TU/Missouri River Fly Fishers

June 12 - Billings - Magic City Fly Fishers

June 13 - Lewistown - Snowy Mtn. TU

July 9 - Kalispell - Flathead Valley TU

July 10 - Hamilton - Bitterroot TU

July 11 - Phillipsburg - George Grant TU and Westslope TU

July 16 - Bozeman - MadGal TU and Joe Brooks TU

For more info, visit
montanatu.org/conservation-youth-camp/daycamp!

The 2021 MT Legislature: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly by David Brooks & Clayton Elliott

Going into the 2021 Montana legislative session the new Helena order filled many in the sportsman and conservation community with a sense of dread. Yet, MTU approached the session optimistic in the knowledge that the majority of Montanans value clean water and all the benefits it provides, including healthy wild and native trout. So, as we always do, MTU prepared to promote and defend our mission in Helena.

Of the more than 3000 bills that Montana legislators sponsored this session, the vast majority died. Of the ones that passed, nearly all did so as the result of debates, disagreements, amendments, counter-amendments and such. In short, due to compromises. By sticking tight to our mission and working with all stakeholders on every bill or issue that touched fisheries management, water quality and quantity, and access to our prized rivers and streams MTU helped defeat some of the session's biggest threats. Sometimes that meant helping to kill bills. At others, it meant negotiating deals that kept trout out of harm's way, even if they weren't coldwater fisheries wins we set out for. And, in a few cases, we moved the needle unequivocally in the right direction for water, fish and their advocates.

We helped kill legislation that would have negatively impacted wild and native trout fishery management. In its original form, SB153 would have shifted authority away from the Fish & Wildlife Commission in favor of the State Parks Board, including over fishing access sites, river use rules, wildlife management areas, and, possibly, some fishery management. The bill also would have raised more than \$1.5 million annually for FWP by requiring all fishing access site users to purchase a Conservation License while reducing the price of the license for anglers and hunters. While MTU saw great merit in expanding the Conservation License, we opposed many of the other changes in the bill and successfully worked with the sponsor of the bill to have them all amended out. Although SB153 passed the Senate with bipartisan support, it died on the House floor due to concern over how FWP would spend the new money generated by additional license sales. Further, SB360 grabbed our attention

early because it would have undone more than half a century of science-based wild and native trout management in Montana, the gold-standard of fishery management in the nation, if not the world. It would have made it nearly impossible to eliminate nonnative, even invasive fish from a stream in favor of restoring native or wild trout. This would have threatened ESA recovery efforts, landowner-supported endeavors to conserve wild and native trout along with their agricultural operations, and the world-class angling economy that brings people to Montana to fish our sustainable trout streams. Our work led to a new version of this bill passing that directs FWP to review the statewide fishery management plan every two years, a process we aim to be involved in to ensure the continued wise management of one of our state's most valuable resources.

Unfortunately, the legislature passed and Governor Gianforte signed a bill that changes the makeup of the Fish & Wildlife Commission. HB163 adds two new members to the Commission and aligns each of the seven members with an existing FWP region. The historically favored and successful setup of having five Commissioners NOT aligned with FWP regions pushed Commissioners to think across regions and make decisions based on the good of fish and wildlife statewide, rather than being constrained by regional outlooks. However, we were able to get the most egregious changes to the Commission in SB306 vetoed by the Governor.

We also notched wins for protecting our water quantity laws. Bills that we helped kill included SB352, which would have barred many stakeholders in Montana from challenging water right claims or changes, even when those water rights appear to be adverse. Our organization has a long history of helping ensure that water rights in Montana are accurate through a fair and public adjudication and change of use process. We aim to maintain that track record. Similarly, we helped kill SB371, the ill-conceived notion of withdrawing Montana from the CSKT Water Compact.

Our success in protecting water quality was mixed. Because trout depend

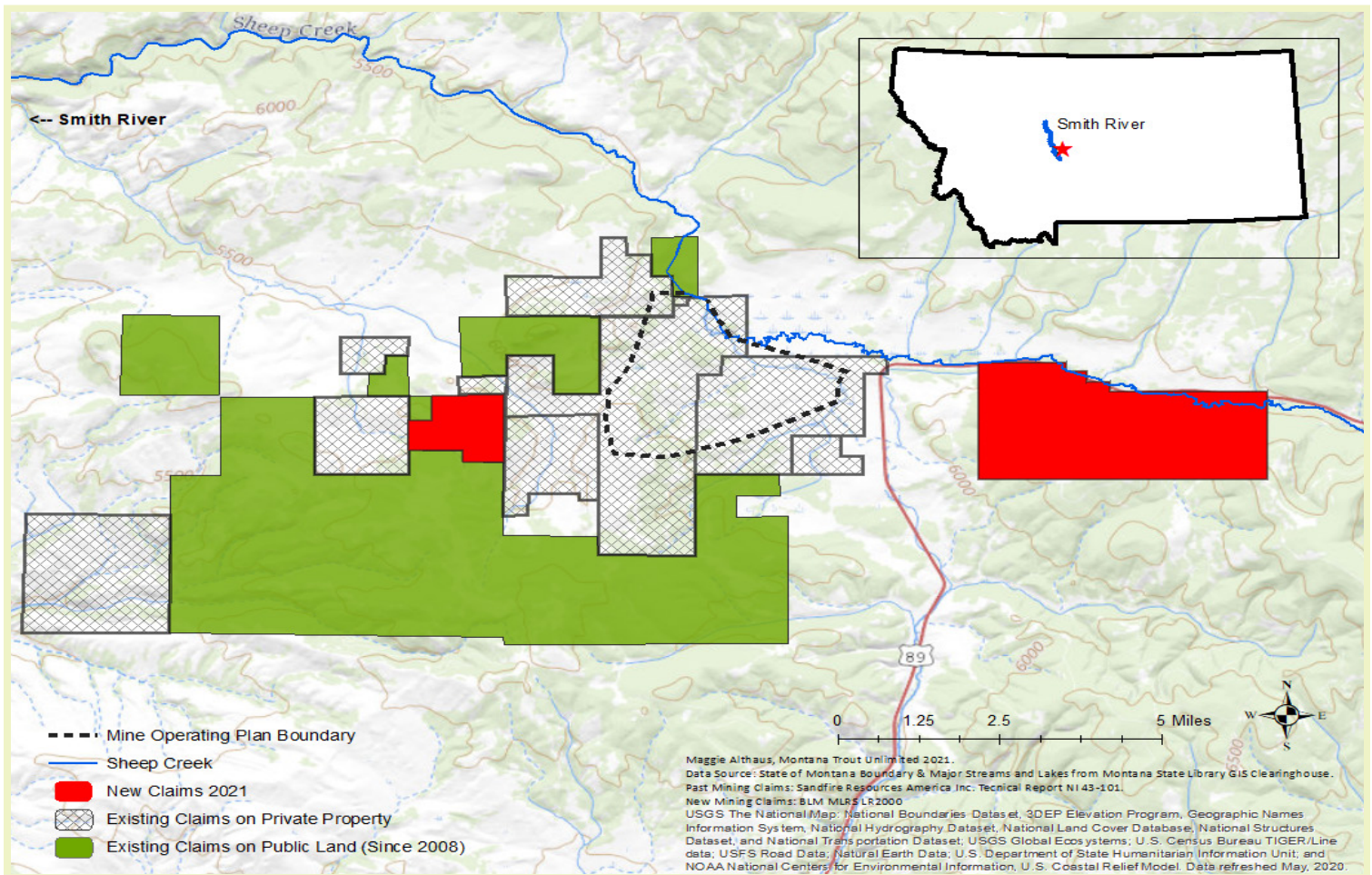
on clean water, we strongly opposed and helped defeat SB164 that would have eliminated nitrate standards for surface water and, hence, risked polluting our rivers and increasing harmful algae blooms. Meanwhile, SB358 repeals numeric nutrient standards for streams and rivers. Industries and municipal water treatment facilities discharging directly into our streams and rivers will now be evaluated on a highly subjected "narrative" standard of what constitutes too much pollution and there will no longer be a timeline for those polluters to reduce the waste they dump into our water. When it came to site specific pollution, we successfully defended the new Selenium standard for Lake Koocanusa and the Kootenai River from repeal, along with the much-appreciated strong defense by the DEQ, including the new Director, Chris Dorrington, and his staff. Finally, we promoted and helped garner the votes to reauthorize Montana's top-notch aquatic invasive species program and kept the program's budget whole.

We again spent ample time ensuring that state agencies and key water or fishery programs were properly funded. FWP's Fishery Division came out of the 2021 session with roughly three-quarters of a million dollars MORE than it had in the last biennial budget. Additionally, we worked with legislators to add \$500,000 to the fishing access site acquisition budget (in HB5) and another \$750,000 above base budget for fishing access site and river recreation management (in HB2). We look forward to FWP spending this windfall wisely on some of Montana's most well-loved river access sites in the state that need some attention. HB5 also kept the Future Fisheries Improvement Program funding whole, which will allow TU and many partners to move forward with wild and native trout restoration projects that provide increased angling opportunity, cleaner water, and improve agricultural operations. And, we added important resources to DNRC to implement the CSKT Water Compact.

This session saw unprecedented attacks on nonprofit organization's ability to defend the public's interests, such

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What is the True Scope of the Black Butte Mine Project? Map by Maggie Althaus



Tintina Resources, Inc. continues to try to fool Montanans about its plans for building a copper mine in the headwaters of the Smith River. Locally, their representatives say it's a small footprint, short-term (10 to 14 years) mine on private land that will provide big benefits for the local community. Meanwhile, Tintina tells shareholders in Australia, who stand to reap the real profits, that this is the start of a massive, 50-year mining complex that will include mining on public land. The company has already traced copper under the surrounding National Forest. **In early 2021, it quietly staked another 148 mining claims on public land, to add to the 525 it previously claimed.** They have already paid more than \$1 million in fees over the last decade for these claims, a clear investment beyond the scope they are telling the public. Montanans who love the outdoors, the Smith River, and public lands know how to read a map. Please read this map, and help us continue our fight to protect this Montana treasure!

2021 Legislative Roundup from page 3

as conservation. We joined many other nonprofits in opposition to an amendment to SB693 that would have funded Montana's Department of Justice to investigate environmental nonprofits' finances, including fundraising and tax reporting. MTU files that information with the IRS in the form of publicly accessible 990 reports, as well as produces an annual report on our income and expenses, not to mention being overseen at quarterly meetings by our dedicated and scrupulous volunteer State Council leadership. Fortunately, legislators saw fit to scrap that witch hunt amendment. They

were right back to it though with SB278, which would have made any expenditures on a nonprofit's legal challenges to state or local laws, such as an inadequate mine permit or water right, non-tax deductible. If in any way your generous contribution to MTU was used to fund staff time, legal counsel or any other activities related to, say, defend the Smith River in court, this bill would make those contributions and expenses taxable, as if MTU were a for-profit corporation. We appreciate that logic won out in the end when the bill was vetoed by Governor Gianforte.

These are snapshots of a long, hard

legislative session. Thank you to all our members and supporters who followed our legislative work, offered valuable perspectives, and responded to our calls for action. For a full view of how the bills we followed throughout the session fared, check our legislative webpage (<https://montanatu.org/legislature>) or contact us directly.



Stewardship Spotlight: Paul Moseley, MTU Champion by Kelley Willett

Chain reactions are powerful. Ecosystems provide examples of how damaging these reactions can be - algae choking a system or the cascading consequences of invasive species. One action can set into motion changes that are enormous and permanent. Thankfully chain reactions can also be a force for good, and Stewardship Director, Paul Moseley is proof. His greatest contribution to our work is that he intentionally uses his gifts to motivate and inspire others to give too. He's funded challenge matches and once talked an Academy-award nominee into filming a short video to inspire others to dig deep and give to MTU. He is creative and willing to spend his time growing support for MTU's mission.

Paul is also a master of donor stewardship. He recognizes that MTU won't use donor funds to host lavish thank-you parties, but that has not stopped him from hosting parties to thank the friends and donors who make MTU's work possible. From an intimate dinner at his home to nights and fishing at his Ruby Springs Lodge, Paul has made it



possible for MTU to thank donors without spending any conservation dollars. The results... well, it's that chain reaction again. Paul's stellar stewardship has resulted in people giving more.

Though Paul's support of MTU has ranged from underwriting the Youth Fly Fishing and Conservation Camp (for three years!), to underwriting a statewide guide briefing, what grabs his attention are on-the-ground projects. His challenge match for the recent stream channel habitat improvement on Willow Springs, the middle Jefferson's most critical rainbow trout spawning tributary, helped take this project across the finish line.

"Paul is very clear that his livelihood depends on healthy watersheds and he consistently encourages other guides and outfitters to get involved in conservation and support their home waters," said David Brooks, MTU Executive Director. "We are grateful that Paul brings the same passion to MTU's work and well-being as he does to sight-fishing for Montana's wild and native trout."

One of Paul's first moves when he and partners purchased the Complete Fly Fisher on the Big Hole River, was to ensure CCF's rich history of conservation stewardship continued. Since 1968 the owners have prioritized protecting the resource, and to honor and broaden that tradition CCF is offering to donate 10% of any booking that references MTU back to MTU for the entire season (promo code CCF MTU 2021).

At a moment in time when many philanthropists have gone quiet about giving, in hopes of stemming the tide of letters, emails, and phone calls that come from their names on donor rolls, Paul isn't

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CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE.

Conservation Takes Collaboration by Chris Edgington

To place a Pale Morning Dun on the nose of the rising Westslope cutthroat at the head of the pool you hiked two hours to reach, many elements have to come together. A quiet approach and delicate cast with a 5-weight rod, a reel with compatible fly line, tapered leader, tippet, and a Sparkle Dun should do the trick. This is a good analogy of how our small staff at MTU takes on a wide breadth of coldwater conservation concerns. We collaborate amongst each other, our grassroots members, TU-National, other non-profits, industry consultants and experts, and agencies. Each person or entity we partner with brings unique skills and perspectives that help us accomplish our mission.

Stream restoration and native-species enhancement projects involve Montana

Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), benefitting the resource, fishermen, visitors, and landowners alike. One of the greatest examples of collaboration in Southwest Montana is the recovery of the Arctic grayling. Since its inception in 1987, the Arctic Grayling Recovery Program's (AGRP) conservation efforts have progressed dramatically to save Montana's most iconic salmonid and has kept it off the endangered species list. A win-win for conservation and landowners who share the landscape with grayling. MTU continues to play a key role in the success of this program. Currently, we are focusing on grayling recovery efforts with partners in Upper Red Rock Lake and hired an intern to collect riparian data in the Big Hole Valley.

Landowners are a primary partner in all



of our on-the-ground projects. Many of our projects in the valley bottoms occur on high-value coldwater habitats on private land. The landowners we work with are good stewards and tend to share the value we place on improving habitat and clean water. They come from diverse backgrounds and know the history of the land and water around them. We sit across

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Conservation Takes Collaboration from page 5



Restoration projects rely on collaboration between diverse partners. A multiagency meeting on the Rattlesnake Dam removal, July 2020 PC:Bill Pfeiffer

the table from many of these landowners in local collaboratives such as the Blackfoot Challenge, Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance, and the High Divide Collaborative.

Moving up the valleys and into tributary streams, much of the land transitions to public ownership with the BLM and US Forest Service. Combined, these two agencies manage over 25 million acres or 27% of the federal land in Montana. These areas are critical to preserving the cold, clean water native and wild trout need to survive. As MTU's project manager, I regularly coordinate with public land management agencies. I am a member of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG), a diverse suite of stakeholders working towards solutions with multiple uses in mind. I chair the BDWG Recreation Committee where we exchange information with FS staff and monitor the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act funding on the B-D National Forest.

Just recently, we were awarded a State grant for phase 3 of our Middle Fork Judith restoration project (see Winter 2020 Trout Line). This project is another excellent example of collaboration driving conservation. The Helena-Lewis and Clark's (HLC) 2007 Forest Travel Management Plan first identified the need for this project. In fall 2019, Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) enlisted MTU to encourage the Forest Service to move forward on the project because it has water quality implications that are severely affecting the wild trout population.

Since that time, we have assumed project management in partnership with HLC, FWP, MWA, MT-DEQ, Snowy Mountain TU Chapter, Missouri River Fly Fishers, and local landowners. It is robust, regular partnerships like this that get and keep our work moving in the right direction. So, whether you work for an agency or fellow conservation organization, are a volunteer, member, or friend, thank you!



Paul Moseley from page 5

opting for what might be easier for him. He continues to stand up, without hubris, and say, 'I care about cold, clean water and I give, won't you join me?'

Paul has made a five-year commitment to the Jefferson Watershed Project, enabling MTU to make significant strides in that watershed - including a basin-wide assessment and the planning and execution of seven conservation projects. The stability provided by Paul's multi-year gift is critical to success in the region.

Science drives MTU's work. And the data is in; the chain reaction set in motion by Paul Moseley's generosity has grown MTU's reach and impact. MTU exceeding budgeted income goals during the year of Covid is a direct result of Paul giving, and thanking, and encouraging others to give too.

Chapter News

Bitterroot Chapter

The Chapter recently welcomed Dave Ward as their new chapter president. Dave has been involved with BRTU for the past two years. He retired from a career in mapping and remote sensing technology mainly in the private sector. He and his wife live in Hamilton. In addition to fly fishing Dave is an avid bird hunter. Congratulations, Dave!

Chuck Robbins Chapter

On April 24th we sponsored our 5th Annual (once removed) Beaverhead River Clean-up. About 20 volunteers met at Anderson & Platt Outfitters in the morning to divy up sections and head out to pick up trash from Clark Canyon Dam all the way north to Dillon. The Chapter is also grateful to the cadets & supervisors at the Montana Youth Challenge Academy, who cleaned up several FAS sites on our behalf that morning. This event also coincided with a great effort by the Beaverhead Trails Coalition, Montana Running Company, and Barretts Minerals to clean up the road from the Beaverhead Brewery all the way to the town overlook trailhead, which runs along the Beaverhead River. We were thrilled to collaborate with great folks in and around Dillon to care for our local resources!

Madison-Gallatin Chapter

Each spring, MGTU partners with Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance to clean up your favorite fishing and recreation sites along the Gallatin River. Join us Sat. June 12, 9am-11am and help pull noxious weeds at popular sites in the Gallatin Canyon. All volunteers should meet at 9:00 AM at Portal Creek Flats in the Canyon - at the pullouts on both sides of 191 between mile marker 53 & 54, just north of Portal Creek Road. Gloves, sun protection and long sleeves are recommended for all volunteers. Enjoy cinnamon rolls from The Coffee Pot Bakery Cafe and win prizes from Mystery Ranch Backpacks and Bridger Brewing. For more information please contact us at mgtroutunlimited@gmail.com

Westslope Chapter

The WestSlope Chapter's online UnBanquet 2021 was a huge success beating our

\$100,000 gross objective by about \$1,000. All funds raised will go toward cold water conservation and fly fishing education. The chapter's annual Tie-A-Thon supporting Warriors and Quiet Waters set a new record of flies contributed at 4,824 beating the old record by 1,300 flies. Twenty-six tiers contributed to the effort. To-date the chapter has donated over 35,000 flies to this outstanding organization. In April the chapter teamed up with the Ranch at Rock Creek for a Clark Fork clean up float below Drummond and filled 11 rafts and drift boat with trash and metal. Thank you to all those who helped.

Missouri River Fly Fishers

Missouri River Flyfishers are partnering with the Sun River Watershed Group and FWP for a trout spawning habitat project at Nilan Reservoir later this year. We were recently awarded a MTU minigrant to help support this project. Also in 2021, MRF and several local organizations are organizing a Missouri River Cleanup – Bashin' Trash for August 21 to remove trash from the river, parks, and trails from Helena to Great Falls and at the Missouri Breaks Monument. Sign up to volunteer, sponsor, or adopt a reach at www.sunriverwatershed.org/bashin-trash. Finally, the Muddy Creek Crossing and Habitat project is closer to being complete! The bridge was installed; riparian fencing and plantings will occur later this year. MRF will have volunteer opportunities to help with all of these projects, so be sure to follow us on Facebook.

Big Blackfoot Chapter

BBCTU continues to prepare for a major restoration project on Poorman Creek in the upper Blackfoot Watershed. Lewis and Clark County recently agreed to contribute \$60,000 to install a new bridge on Poorman. We are thankful to our many other funding partners on this \$360,000 project. This new structure will provide critical fish passage to spawning and rearing habitat in the upper reaches of Poorman Creek. We were gratified by the response to our latest funding appeal. BBCTU raised nearly \$100,000 from about 95 individual donors. In other fundraising news, BBCTU will hold its first online auction in late June. Several excellent auction items have been secured and we continue to work on gifts and sponsors.

MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

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TROUT LINE SPRING 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

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6/11/21 **Missouri River Kids Day Clinic**
Wolf Creek, MT - contact PBTU or MRFF for info

6/12/21 **Annual Gallatin River Weed Pull**
Bozeman, MT - meet at 9am at Portal Creek Flats

6/12/21 **Billings Kids Day Camp**
Billings, MT - Contact Magic City FF for info

6/13/21 **Lewistown Kids Day Clinic**
Lewistown, MT - contact Snowy Mtn. Chapter for info

7/10/21 **Bitterroot Kids Day Clinic**
Hamilton, MT - Contact Bitterroot TU for info

7/11/21 **Rock Creek Kids Day Clinic**
Phillipsburg, MT - Contact Westslope or George Grant TU for info

7/16/21 **Bozeman Kids Day Clinic**
Glen Lake - Contact Madison Gallatin TU or Joe Brooks TU for info

WANT 4,000 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.



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Spring 2021