



TROUT LINE

Newsletter from the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited

Middle Fork of the Judith River
Photo Courtesy of Stonefly Studio



WINTER 2020

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WINTER/20

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

Perhaps one of the best parts of serving as the Chair of MTU's State Council is seeing the incredible work of volunteers across the state. One of the most difficult tasks is selecting individuals and chapters for awards, simply because there is so much hard work and dedication in watershed after watershed. This year, MTU presented four awards to exceptional volunteers:

The Outstanding Chapter Award went to the Bitterroot Chapter for their outstanding on-the-ground projects, volunteer engagement and continued chapter growth as well as their strong commitment to increasing diversity, especially with young people and women, and their support of a new project manager for the Bitterroot watershed.

Champion of Montana Trout Unlimited Award went to Paul Moseley for his steadfast philanthropic support of Montana Trout Unlimited's conservation work in Southwest Montana and Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp. Paul also encourages others to support our mission by sharing his story and even opening his home for a thank you event.

The Outstanding Volunteer Award went to Brian Neilsen for his efforts to create renewed interest in and new conservation opportunities for the Missouri River Flyfishers and for his engagement of anglers and the angling businesses in MTU's mission.

The Outstanding Volunteer Award went to Fred Lurie for his countless volunteer hours, generous philanthropic support, and steady leadership as a member of the State Council for more than three decades.

To all of the volunteers who spend time away from family, friends, other good causes and even fishing, to help Montana Trout Unlimited work toward colder, cleaner, fishier water: Thank you. You are our lifeblood, and we couldn't do what we do without you.

SS Fee



Sharon Sweeney Fee



Outstanding Chapter Award Bitterroot Chapter

Jeremy Anderson receives the award on behalf of the Chapter from State Council Chair Sharon Sweeney Fee.



Champion of MTU Award Paul Moseley

Paul Moseley receives the award from Executive Director David Brooks at a recent WestSlope Chapter meeting.

Stan Bradshaw Leaves Heroic Legacy Of Trout Conservation by Bruce Farling

In September Stan Bradshaw retired from Trout Unlimited's Montana Water project. Stan's legacy on behalf of river and trout conservation is remarkable, spanning some 40 years in Montana.

As a lawyer with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, (FWP) in the early 1980s, Stan was the first person to stake a legal claim under the new Superfund law. Stan's incredible foresight eventually resulted in a partial settlement of \$215 million in 1998 for restoring habitat and fisheries, above and beyond the pollution cleanup under Superfund. The money he helped secure has dramatically restored habitat, water quality, fisheries and recreation from Silver Bow Creek to Milltown. Newspaper giant Lee Enterprises named Stan one of the 100 most influential Montanans of the 20th Century.

As chief legal counsel for FWP, Stan provided crucial support for progressive fishing regulations, while also objecting to

small hydro projects, as well as a proposed dam at Kootenai Falls. He and his staff also provided crucial aid in developing the statute and regulations that evolved into Montana's best-in-the-nation Stream Access Law. Every one of us who values public access to Montana's rivers owes Stan a debt of gratitude (if not a beer the next time you see him).

In 1989, Stan went to work for Montana TU as a part-time conservation director and lobbyist. He was instrumental in closing the upper Missouri River basin to new consumptive water rights and establishing FWP's ability to hold instream flow rights for fish. His work also resulted in legal protections for stream habitat from logging and crucially, passage of the first statute in Montana history allowing water rights to be leased for instream flows.

Stan joined Laura Ziemer of TU national and John Wilson of MTU, and built the legal

case that led to MTU's historic win in the Montana Supreme Court over water use in the Smith River drainage. The upshot: The State was forced to recognize that groundwater that recharges streams is the same as surface water, barring permits for connected groundwater in a closed basin. This was a huge victory for fish.

Most recently Stan has established instream flow protections that have improved fisheries in the Blackfoot and Clark Fork watersheds, including securing over 20 water right leases (likely a state record!). The bridges he has built with landowners, and the mentoring he has provided to TU restoration and water policy staff are legendary. Much of TU's work in Montana rests on his shoulders. Thank you, Stan.

MTU secures victories for trout at the Fish and Wildlife Commission by Clayton Elliott

As much as we love to be in trout country, not all efforts to conserve, protect, and restore Montana's cold-water fisheries happen on our rivers, streams, and their habitats. Off the water and behind the scenes, our staff is busy doing all we can for our fisheries. One place that work gets done is the Fish and Wildlife Commission, which oversees the mission and direction of the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). MTU works closely with FWP and the Commission year-round to provide critical information, local knowledge and documentation, and to communicate the concerns of our members and partners. Victories for trout in 2019 include:

The Commission adopted revisions to the 2020 Montana Fishing Regulations, many of which directly benefit the management of wild and native fish. These changes to the way anglers use our resource are designed to better protect our fisheries for future generations. Members of the Flathead Valley TU Chapter helped codify single-point hook restrictions in the Flathead River system to reduce wild fish mortality. MTU also advocated for targeted increases to harvest limits throughout western Montana to combat illegally introduced fish species that are out-competing native fish populations. And, we secured protections for spring spawning fish in the tributaries of the Smith River. All of these changes align with MTU's

mission to care for wild and native trout.

In addition, we supported simplification of "hoot owl" restrictions that protect fish from high water temperatures, creating a permanent restriction on the Lower Madison River during the warmest months – a decision based on decades of data. Hot and dry summers are predicted to become even more frequent due to a warming climate, so we will continue to look for ways to protect our fish while providing more clarity for anglers.

We have continued to push back on the misguided notion that we reward the illegal introduction of non-native invasive species

(continued on next page)

MTU SECURES VICTORIES from page 3

like walleye. Unfortunately, we lost some ground on the Missouri River system. The Commission removed unlimited harvest on walleye below Holter Dam for the first time in years. We strongly opposed this because it sends a dangerous message that illegal introductions of fish will be accommodated when a small, loud constituency demands it, even in the face of good science and management. We stand firmly in support of treating all illegally introduced aquatic species as an inherent threat to wild and native ecosystems and believe the Department should take action as such.

Thanks to the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP), the Commission is investing tens of thousands of dollars towards state and non-governmental projects to improve and sustain native fish habitat across the state via on-the-ground projects – working with diverse partners like irrigators and power generators – to make a real difference by improving diversions, restoring native streamside plants, and preventing fish from being trapped and perishing in ditches. MTU

and TU are partners in a number of those projects, and we thank the Commission and FWP for their vision and investment in our wild fish with the FFIP.

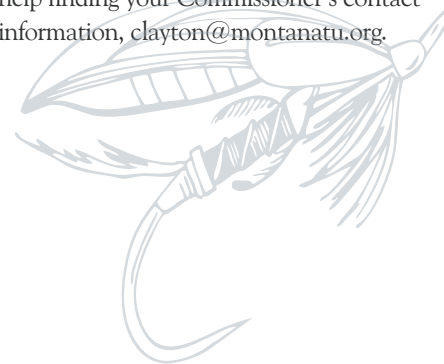
Acquiring new public access to waterways is another function of the Commission. We continue to advocate for land acquisitions that improve access and the quality of aquatic habitat.

For example, the recent purchase of forty acres on the Thompson River, an important tributary on the lower Clark Fork, will provide public access to a new FAS, protect critical bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout habitat, and safeguard this land from further residential development.

Along with the leadership of the Bitterroot Chapter, we were able to stop a radical proposal to open the Bitterroot and Lower Clark Fork rivers to hovercraft use. This exception to current rules would have undermined a hard-fought agreement

reached in 2011 and allowed these loud and destructive machines on some of the most renowned stretches of these rivers. The Commission smartly rejected the petition unanimously, which is good for anglers and river users, landowners, fish, and riparian habitat.

Please reach out to your Commissioner in the months ahead or thank them now for their work on behalf of wild and native trout! MTU's work with the Commission is made stronger by your conversations because of your unique knowledge and experience with the issues that are facing your home waters. Please reach out to me if you need help finding your Commissioner's contact information, clayton@montanatu.org.



CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE

MTU champions LWCF for FAS by David Brooks

If you enjoy floating Montana rivers, you have likely benefitted from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). For over 50 years the LWCF has turned royalties from offshore oil & gas development into funding for projects like those that have purchased or improved more than three-quarters of the state's Fishing Access Sites (FAS). LWCF also helped secure large tracts of land with critical streams and their habitat by putting them into public hands, like those on Tenderfoot Creek drainage in the Smith River watershed and last year's addition of portions of the Falls Creek tributary to the Dearborn River. Our system of stream access would look a lot different if not for the LWCF.

That's why MTU is still advocating for dedicated, permanent, full funding for LWCF. We recently released a new, interactive map showing current and potential new water access locations, to illustrate how this important funding source could continue to benefit Montana anglers, water users, and aquatic resources. Full and permanent funding for LWCF at \$900M/year, a portion of which would be dedicated to Montana, would help secure new access points, improve existing sites, protect critical habitat, and continue our heritage of public access and protecting water.

Both of Montana's US Senators have helped us get closer to full LWCF funding and both are committed to reaching that goal in 2020.

MTU will continue working with them to make this happens. To view the map and get more information about LWCF, visit: <https://montanatu.org/fas-map-shows-lwcf-dollars-in-action-on-montana-rivers/>.

ACTION ALERT

We're still looking for your input on areas in need of additional access points across the state, so feel free to share your ideas with us directly via email at info@montanatu.org. We'll make sure you're informed and ready when it's time for action on this important policy.

Chapter News

WestSlope Chapter

The WestSlope Chapter is expecting a 400 person turnout for our Feb. 29 banquet and it is promising to be the biggest and best ever. Still time to get tickets or buy Big Fish Tickets at <http://www.tubanquet2020.givesmart.com/>. The Warriors and Quiet Waters Fly-A-Thon Challenge is going strong and we have a strong lineup of prizes to individual tiers to entice even more flies for this great organization. On February 13 we are sponsoring the Orvis 50/50 Film Festival at the Wilma in Missoula and hope to welcome all new members to the chapter. And skwala fishing is just around the corner.

Magic City Fly Fishers

The Magic City Fly Fishers are offering a series of fly fishing skills workshops and coaching sessions to help members improve the skills they need to better enjoy the sport of fly fishing. The January session focused on the primary knots needed in fly fishing. In February the club held a two-hour coaching clinic on key fly casting skills ranging from beginners to experienced fly fishermen. The club plans to add more workshops and clinics throughout the year. MCFF continues to reach a significant number of Billings area young people with their middle school fly tying classes. A cadre of volunteers spends up to three days in a school working with kids on how to tie flies

Pat Barnes Chapter

The Pat Barnes Chapter continues to work with the US Forest Service on the Beaver Creek Restoration Project below Hauser Dam. Securing funding is an ongoing effort. Chapter members can help by attending the 38th Annual Pat Barnes Banquet on April 25th at the Great Northern Hotel. Great new prizes will be offered this year, including a chance to win a 14' AIRE Tributary raft package with a brand new trailer! Stay tuned to Facebook and pbtu.org for details.

Joe Brooks Chapter

Joe Brooks 2020 Fly Fishing Film Tour Fundraiser

March 28th Shane Lalani Center for the Arts, Livingston, MT
Doors open @ 5:30 pm, film starts promptly 6:30 pm.

Come join Joe Brooks Chapter of Trout Unlimited for our Annual Fund Raiser! Enjoy great films, good beer and the chance to win some amazing auction and raffle items! All proceeds go to continuing JBTU's mission of protecting fisheries in the Yellowstone River drainage! Tickets available online on Joe Brooks Trout Unlimited Facebook page. Cost is \$15.00 advanced purchased. \$18.00 day of showing and FREE for children 7 and under.

Joe Brooks Annual Yellowstone River Clean-Up

April 18th @ The Livingston Civic Center - 229 River Dr., Livingston, MT 59047

Sign-up for sections of the river starts promptly at 9:30 am. Come and join Joe Brooks Chapter for the Annual Yellowstone River Clean-up! Each year members of the community join us in picking up trash in and around the Yellowstone River. Hundreds of tons of trash have been removed in the last ten years and we need your help again this year! Rain or shine! Lunch and snacks provided! Bring a pair of gloves, a boat if you've got one and your friends and help keep the Yellowstone beautiful!

Bitterroot Chapter

The Bitterroot Chapter is gearing up for another class of our Bugger's program. In addition to fly tying and casting, there will be speakers presenting aquatic invasive species, riparian restoration and fish health, entomology, river safety, basic knots and fish identification. For our youth program we will also be participating with the Mid-Winter Conservation Expo teaching kids about the importance of habitat in our rivers and fly rod casting. Our Reel Women of the 'Root is ready for the next event on April 7 featuring

our talented local artist Cynthia Fisher teaching scratchboard art of your favorite flies. Attendance will be limited so contact our chapter if you are interested. At our last board meeting we welcomed the addition of new board members: Gavin Marston, Keith Mullan, Marisa Sowles, and David Ward.

Madison Gallatin Chapter

The Madison Gallatin Chapter will be holding their annual Trout Fest banquet Sat., Feb. 22, 2020 at the Best Western Gran Tree Inn in Bozeman, MT. Silent auctions and social hour begin at 5pm, dinner and live auction begin at 7pm. Tickets are \$75/person and are available at <https://givergy.us/mgtu>.



Outstanding Volunteer Award Fred Lurie

Fred Lurie receives the award from Executive Director, David Brooks.



Outstanding Volunteer Award Brian Neilsen

Brian Neilsen receives the award from State Council Chair, Sharon Sweeny Fee.

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CONSERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE

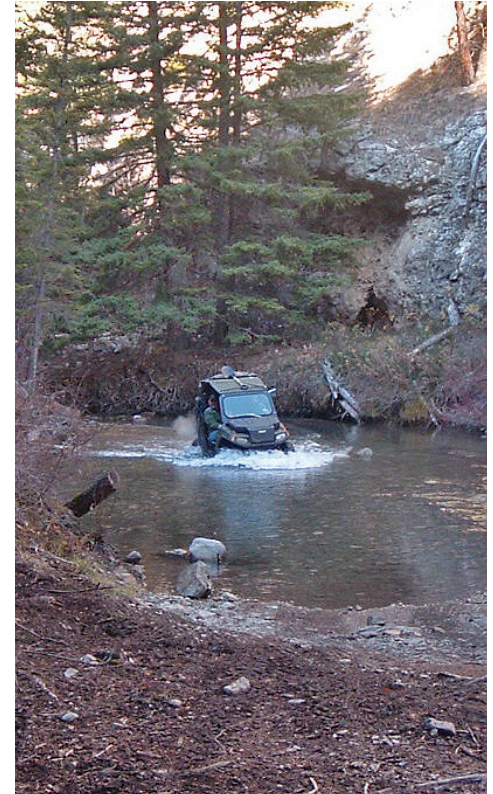
Wild Trout need tributaries and tributaries need TU

by Chris Edgington

Out in Central Montana's big sky country, where the plains begin to break free from the mountains, there are little-known, hidden trout streams shining like the Yogo sapphires that drew prospectors to the area. The shattered jewel-like Middle Fork of the Judith River (MFJ) was one of those productive trout streams. This once high-caliber stream meanders through miles of a scenic, Smith River-like limestone canyon. The MFJ is no longer fishy, holding only remnants of wild and native trout that used to attract anglers and made it a productive fishery.

Twenty-five stream crossings on a 10-mile reach of forest road #825 have degraded riparian and riverain habitat to the extent that the stream has lost the ability to function and repair itself through natural processes. The stream condition is perpetually worsening as motorists continually pioneer new routes throughout the floodplain when old routes become dangerous or unusable. Driving off-road vehicles through the MFJ with such frequency damages streamside vegetation, crushes streambed habitat critical to fish spawning, rearing and, well, life, and churns up an overabundance of sediment. Excess sediment has severely reduced water quality and, thus, the fishery. This river is on the brink of destruction.

The MFJ is not unique, or perpetually doomed. An untold number of tributaries in Montana have faced abuses of the past and present. Tributaries are the lifeblood of our prized trout streams. Wild trout need the 4-Cs: Cold, Clean, Clear, and Connected water to survive and reproduce. Connected tributaries are the primary spawning grounds for Montana's fall and spring spawning wild trout. Once trout hatch, they need sufficient water to feed, grow, and make their way to the mainstem. In the summer months, tributaries provide mainstem rivers with an injection of cold water. Fed by snowfall and spring water from previous winters, tributary water can be up to 10°F cooler than the mainstem in



ORV crossing the Middle Fork of the Judith River,
Photo Courtesy of Mark Good

the heat of the summer. This water, often flowing down ephemeral streams or filtering through wetlands, tends to be cleaner and clearer than the rivers they feed, which are impacted by various cumulative impairments throughout their length.

These are some of the reasons why TU has and aims to continue repairing tributaries. We have a toolbox that helps us accomplish restoration of streams like the MFJ. We work with agencies, private landowners and water-users to perform habitat restoration and instream flow leases to mitigate chronic dewatering issues. We install fish screens that prevent fish from getting trapped and dying in irrigation ditches, especially for spring spawning cutthroat and rainbow trout, which make their way to the mainstem as irrigation withdrawal is at its peak. We selectively build fish barriers to protect sensitive conservation populations of native cutthroat. Trout Unlimited has completed scores of stream restoration

projects in Montana using these tools. The vast majority of them are on tributary streams.

Currently, MTU and TU are collaborating with the USFS Region 1 Headquarters and Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest to begin a four-phase process to restore natural stream functions in the most severely degraded miles of the Middle Fork of the Judith River. Phase 1 of restoration is moving the road away from and, literally, out of the MFJ. MTU has provided a letter of support encouraging the Forest Service to execute their Forest Plan and re-route the forest road out of the riparian zone. The

Snowy Mountain chapter in Lewistown has committed funding to apply for an MTU mini-grant this spring, which will help leverage state and federal funds, and likely get phase 1 of the project on the ground this summer. MTU project manager Chris Edgington plans to continue to provide technical and grant-writing assistance to restore the 4-Cs and wild trout to this once thriving trout stream. It's exciting to take the first steps on a major restoration project like this that will culminate in restoring a quality wild and native trout fishery in the Middle Fork of the Judith River.



Our friends at Patagonia continue to lead the way with conservation-minded business practices. At the end of 2019, they doubled the power of your philanthropy by matching every dollar donated to environmental organizations, up to \$10 million, including Montana Trout Unlimited. In total, 934 organizations received 33,395 donations for over \$11.6 million, for a grand total of \$21.6 million with the match. A big thank you to Patagonia and an extra thanks to all of those who donated to the campaign. You're helping us achieve our mission to conserve, protect, and restore Montana's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

Welcome Bill Pfeiffer, Outreach Coordinator

Bill Pfeiffer joined the MTU staff at the beginning of 2020 as our new Outreach Coordinator, specializing in chapter engagement and communications, as well as directing our Youth Conservation Camp. Before joining MTU, Bill served as Community Outreach Coordinator for Mountain Line, Missoula's quickly-growing public transit agency. Bill's passion for fishing began in central Pennsylvania when he was 3 years old, culminating in a blind cross-country move to Missoula in 2001 to find meaning in life by chasing trout. After arriving in Montana, Bill returned to school to earn a B.S. with Honors in Aquatic Wildlife Biology and a law degree with an emphasis in Natural Resources and Environmental Law at the University of Montana. He's been a long-serving volunteer and former employee for a number of nonprofit organizations and causes, including as a member of the WestSlope Chapter Board of Directors for the past 3 years. Bill has also been a licensed fly-fishing guide and instructor



since 2006, getting his start with Casey Hackathorn, now TU's Upper Clark Fork Restoration Manager. He spends his spare time chasing steelhead and trout with a two-handed fly rod and getting outside with his wife Colleen and two pups, Kona and Lefty.

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TROUT LINE WINTER 2020

UPCOMING EVENTS

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2/22/20 **Madison-Gallatin Chapter Annual Banquet**
Bozeman, MT

2/22/20 **Missouri River Fly Fishers Annual Banquet**
Great Falls, MT

2/29/20 **WestSlope Chapter Annual Banquet**
Missoula, MT

3/13/20 **George Grant Chapter Annual Banquet**
Butte, America

3/21/20 **MTU State Council Meeting**
Helena, MT

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.



[www.facebook.com/
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Winter 2020