



## Final Fishing Regulation Proposals for 2016

### Proposal Summary

Between August 12 and October 3, 2015, public comment was solicited on 71 recommended changes to the 2015 Montana Fishing Regulations as approved for public review by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on August 6, 2015. These changes and the remaining regulations carried forward from 2015 will potentially constitute the Montana Fishing Regulations for 2016. FWP revisits comprehensive regulation reform once every four years, including during 2015. The new regulations for 2016 are therefore intended to remain largely in effect through 2019.

After incorporating public comment with further internal review, 65 of the 71 proposals initially brought forward are recommended to be adopted as initially proposed. Four proposals have been significantly modified in response to public comment:

- Proposal 8- Add single point barbless hook restriction to streams in the Western Fishing District currently designated catch and release and artificial lures only, where Cutthroat Trout are the primary species meant to be protected by the restrictions. (page 17)
- Proposal 42- Proposal Reduce harvest limit and set a length requirement to harvest Brook Trout from Georgetown Lake. (page 53)
- Proposal 44- Add artificial lures only restriction to Silver Bow Creek and its tributaries. (page 55)
- Proposal 45- Madison River regulation modifications. (page 56)

Two proposals are now recommended to be entirely withdrawn, defaulting instead to the existing 2015 regulations:

- Proposal 12- Prohibit bow fishing for gar in Eastern Fishing District. (Page 28)
- Proposal 33- Eliminate the existing Loon Lake regulation exception and revert to Western District standard limits. (Page 43)

All 71 fishing regulation recommendations with rationale are presented below, including a summary of public comment for each.

## Table of Contents

Proposal Summary.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
STATEWIDE –Multiple Fishing Districts .....	12
<b>Proposal 1-</b> Live bait use clarifications: Specify fish species that can be used as live bait, rather than list those that cannot. [Survey ref: Q4] .....	12
Public Comment (80 total): .....	13
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	13
<b>Proposal 2-</b> Specify Catfish species in both Central and Eastern Fishing District standard regulations. [Survey ref: Q5] .....	14
Public Comment (75 total): .....	14
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	14
<b>Proposal 3-</b> Reduce harvest limits for Channel Catfish in the Musselshell River. [Survey ref: Q6] .....	14
Public Comment (79 total): .....	14
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	15
<b>Proposal 4-</b> Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limit for the Yellowstone River. [Survey ref: Q7] .....	15
Public Comment (82 total): .....	15
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	15
WESTERN DISTRICT –District Standard Regulation .....	16
<b>Proposal 5-</b> Reduce Western District standard harvest limit for Burbot from 5 to 2 daily and in possession. [Survey ref: Q9] .....	16
Public Comment. ....	16
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	16
<b>Proposal 6-</b> Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest length limit for Cutthroat Trout in rivers and streams. [Survey ref: Q10].....	16
Public Comment (62 total): .....	16
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> ....	16
<b>Proposal 7-</b> Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest limits for Lake Trout. [Survey ref: Q11] .....	17
Public Comment (70 total): .....	17

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	17
<b>Proposal 8-</b> Add single point barbless hook restriction to streams in the Western Fishing District currently designated catch and release and artificial lures only, where Cutthroat Trout are the primary species meant to be protected by the restrictions. [Survey ref: Q12].	17
Public Comment (126 total):	18
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Modify the proposal.</b>	18
<b>CENTRAL DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Proposal 9-</b> Add 1 Cutthroat Trout to the combined trout limit. Many exceptions eliminated. [Survey ref: Q14].	19
Public Comment (90 total):	21
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	21
<b>Proposal 10-</b> Rivers and Streams to remain open all year; Many exceptions to be eliminated. [Survey ref: Q15].	22
Public Comment (100 total):	27
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	27
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Proposal 11-</b> Add Tongue River Reservoir Dam to Eastern District Dam Closures and Restrictions. [Survey ref: Q17].	27
Public Comment (23 total):	28
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	28
<b>Proposal 12-</b> Prohibit bow fishing for gar in Eastern Fishing District. [Survey ref: Q18]	28
Public Comment (25 total):	29
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Withdraw the proposal.</b>	29
<b>Proposal 13-</b> Adjustment to list: Live Bait - Lakes, Reservoirs, Ponds, and Impoundments (listed by County): [Survey ref: Q19]	29
Public Comment (30 total):	30
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	30
<b>Proposal 14-</b> Re-word bait collection prohibition in Eurasian watermilfoil infested waters. [Survey ref: Q20].	30
Public Comment (27 total):	31
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b>	31

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 15-</b> Require mandatory Paddlefish harvest reporting. Unlawful to sell portions of Paddlefish. [Survey ref: Q21] .....	31
Public Comment (33 total): .....	32
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	32
<b>Proposal 16-</b> Increase Lake Trout possession limit in Eastern Fishing District Standard regulations. [Survey ref: Q22] .....	32
Public Comment (35 total): .....	32
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	32
<b>WESTERN DISTRICT –Region 1 .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Proposal 17-</b> Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Northern Pike harvest at Bull Lake (near Troy). [Survey ref: Q24] .....	33
Public Comment (47 total): .....	33
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	33
<b>Proposal 18-</b> Adjusting bass fishing season at Cabinet Gorge Reservoir to agree with Noxon Rapids Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q25] .....	33
Public Comment (47 total): .....	33
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	34
<b>Proposal 19-</b> New regulations: Libby Pond [Survey ref: Q26] .....	34
Public Comment (47 total): .....	34
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	34
<b>Proposal 20-</b> Change regulations in one section of the Clark Fork River to agree with nearby sections. [Survey ref: Q27] .....	34
Public Comment (51 total): .....	35
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	35
<b>Proposal 21-</b> Change Cutthroat Trout regulations in Flathead River sloughs to match the Flathead River. [Survey ref: Q28] .....	35
Public Comment (55 total): .....	35
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	35
<b>Proposal 22-</b> Change Flathead River bass harvest regulations to agree with Flathead River Sloughs. Eliminate Lake Trout exception for the Flathead River. [Survey ref: Q29] .....	36
Public Comment (52 total): .....	36
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	36

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 23-</b> Eliminate the existing daily and possession limit for Lake Trout in Flathead River, to be replaced by more liberal Western Fishing District limits. [Survey ref: Q30] .....	37
Public Comment (54 total): .....	37
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	37
<b>Proposal 24-</b> Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Flathead Lake. [Survey ref: Q31].....	38
Public Comment (58 total): .....	38
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	38
<b>Proposal 25-</b> Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch and increase harvest limits for Northern Pike in Smith Lake. [Survey ref: Q32] .....	38
Public Comment (55 total): .....	39
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	39
<b>Proposal 26-</b> Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Lower Stillwater Lake. [Survey ref: Q33] .....	39
Public Comment (51 total): .....	39
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	39
<b>Proposal 27-</b> Delete an unnecessary regulation exception for Frank Lake. [Survey ref: Q34] ....	40
Public Comment (48 total).....	40
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	40
<b>Proposal 28-</b> Increasing protections for adult Bull Trout in key spawning streams tributary to the Kootenai River. [Survey ref: Q35] .....	40
Public Comment (53 total): .....	40
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	40
<b>Proposal 29-</b> Add catch-and release for Burbot to portions of the Kootenai River; Delete Lake Koocanusa exception. [Survey ref: Q36] .....	41
Public Comment (50 total): .....	41
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	41
<b>Proposal 30-</b> Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest in the Kootenai River from Highway 37 Bridge downstream to the Idaho border. [Survey ref: Q37].....	42
Public Comment (54 total): .....	42
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	42

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 31-</b> Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest Lake Creek (near Troy). [Survey ref: Q38] .....	42
Public Comment (55 total): .....	42
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed .....	43
<b>Proposal 32-</b> Expanding protection for Bull Trout at the mouth of Lion Creek. [Survey ref: Q39] .....	43
Public Comment (58 total): .....	43
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	43
<b>Proposal 33-</b> Eliminate the existing Loon Lake regulation exception and revert to Western District standard limits. [Survey ref: Q40] .....	43
Public Comment (52 total): .....	43
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Withdraw the proposal</b> .....	44
<b>Proposal 34-</b> Standardize stream angling closures in Bull Trout streams in the Kootenai River drainage. [Survey ref: Q41] .....	44
Public Comment (53 total): .....	44
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	45
<b>Proposal 35-</b> Allow Bull Trout harvest again in Lake Koocanusa. [Survey ref: Q42] .....	45
Public Comment (58 total): .....	45
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	45
<b>Proposal 36-</b> Remove an unneeded seasonal angling closure from Lake Mary Ronan. [Survey ref: Q43] .....	46
Public Comment (52 total): .....	46
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	46
<b>WESTERN DISTRICT – Region 2</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Proposal 37-</b> New regulations, Skyline Pond in Butte. [Survey ref: Q45] .....	47
Public Comment (25 total).....	47
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	47
<b>Proposal 38-</b> Remove Northern Pike from the extended season list for the Blackfoot River Mainstem. Standardize trout harvest length exception within Region 2. [Survey ref: Q46] .....	47
Public Comment (24 total).....	48
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	48

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 39-</b> Increase Kokanee snagging opportunity between Lakes Alva and Inez. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass in Clearwater River, from Salmon Lake outlet to river mouth. Standardize Combined Trout limit. [Survey ref: Q47] .....	48
Public Comment (27 total).....	49
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	49
<b>Proposal 40-</b> Standardize Combined Trout limit exception for the Clark Fork River with others in Region 2. [Survey ref: Q48].....	49
Public Comment (28 total): .....	49
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	50
<b>Proposal 41-</b> Standardize many trout harvest exceptions throughout Region 2. [Survey ref: Q49] .....	50
Public Comment (31 total): .....	52
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	52
<b>Proposal 42-</b> Proposal Reduce harvest limit and set a length requirement to harvest Brook Trout from Georgetown Lake. [Survey ref: Q50] .....	53
Public Comment (30 total): .....	53
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Modify the proposal</b> .....	53
<b>Proposal 43-</b> Increase kokanee harvest limits at Lakes Alva, Inez, Placid, Salmon, and Seeley. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass at Lakes Alva, Inez, and Salmon. [Survey ref: Q51] .....	54
Public Comment (27 total): .....	54
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed.</b> .....	54
<b>Proposal 44-</b> Add artificial lures only restriction to Silver Bow Creek and its tributaries. [Survey ref: Q52].....	55
Public Comment (32 total): .....	55
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Modify the proposal</b> .....	55
<b>CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 3</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>Proposal 45-</b> Madison River regulation modifications. [Survey ref: Q54] .....	56
Public Comment (520 total): .....	56
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Modify the proposal</b> :.....	57
<b>Proposal 46-</b> Delete Darlington Spring Creek and Poindexter Slough exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. [Survey ref: Q55] .....	57

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Public Comment (155 total).....	58
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	58
<b>Proposal 47-</b> Delete five mountain lake exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. [Survey ref: Q56].....	58
Public Comment (156 total).....	58
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	59
<b>Proposal 48-</b> Allow Cutthroat Trout harvest in Hyalite Creek section Below Hyalite Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q57].....	59
Public Comment (169 total).....	59
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	59
<b>Proposal 49-</b> Allow some Rainbow Trout harvest in the Jefferson River. [Survey ref: Q58] .....	60
Public Comment (185 total).....	60
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	60
<b>CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 4 .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Proposal 50-</b> New regulations: East Fork Reservoir spearing opportunity. [Survey ref: Q60].....	61
Public Comment (57 total): .....	61
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	61
<b>Proposal 51-</b> New regulations: Willow Creek Reservoir near Augusta. [Survey ref: Q61].....	61
Public Comment (59 total): .....	61
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	61
<b>Proposal 52-</b> Remove Sunrise-Sunset shelter removal requirement on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. [Survey ref: Q62] .....	62
Public Comment (62 total): .....	62
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	62
<b>Proposal 53-</b> Eliminate Bean Lake regulation exception. [Survey ref: Q63] .....	62
Public Comment (63 total): .....	62
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	62
<b>Proposal 54-</b> Modify Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. [Survey ref: Q64] .....	63
Public Comment (84 total): .....	63
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	63

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



<b>Proposal 55-</b> Modify East Fork Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. [Survey ref: Q65].....	63
Public Comment (79 total): .....	64
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	64
<b>Proposal 56-</b> Walleye limit correction for Hauser Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q66] .....	64
Public Comment (73 total): .....	64
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	65
<b>Proposal 57-</b> Remove Sauger from species lists for spearing in regulation exceptions for Lake Elwell aka Tiber Reservoir, Tiber Reservoir aka Lake Elwell, and Lake Frances. [Survey ref: Q67] .....	65
Public Comment (67 total): .....	65
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	65
<b>Proposal 58-</b> Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limits on the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton. [Survey ref: Q68] .....	66
Public Comment (73total): .....	66
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	66
<b>Proposal 59-</b> Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton – Central Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q69].....	66
Public Comment (74total): .....	67
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	67
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 4</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b>Proposal 60-</b> Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Judith River - Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q70] .....	67
Public Comment (71total): .....	67
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	67
<b>Proposal 61-</b> Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837 – Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q71] .....	68
Public Comment (70 total): .....	68
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	68

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 62-</b> Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton – Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q72]	68
Public Comment (74 total):	69
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	69
<b>CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 5</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Proposal 63-</b> Change bait specifications: Allow minnow collection in tributaries of the Clarks Fork. [Survey ref: Q74]	69
Public Comment (22 total):	70
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	70
<b>Proposal 64-</b> Increase Bass harvest limit at Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir. Specify catfish. [Survey ref: Q75]	70
Public Comment (24 total):	70
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	70
<b>Proposal 65-</b> Change Kokanee Salmon snagging season description for Deadmans Basin Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q76]	71
Public Comment (25 total):	71
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	71
<b>Proposal 66-</b> Eliminate Lightning Creek exception. [Survey ref: Q77]	71
Public Comment (26 total):	71
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	71
<b>Proposal 67-</b> Reduce number of Sauger allowed in the Sauger/Walleye combined harvest limit in portions of the Yellowstone River. Revert to 2 new Central Fishing District Standards: Open all year and Combined Trout Limit to include 1 cutthroat. [Survey ref: Q78]	72
Public Comment (26 total):	72
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	72
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 5</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Proposal 68-</b> Reduce harvest limits for Sauger/Walleye Combined limits in the Musselshell River. [Survey ref: Q79]	72
Public Comment (29 total):	72
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b>	73
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 6</b>	<b>73</b>

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

<b>Proposal 69-</b> Delete exceptions for Bearpaw Lake and Beaver Creek Reservoir. Revert to Eastern Fishing District standard. [Survey ref: Q81].....	73
Public Comment (9 total):.....	73
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	73
<b>Proposal 70-</b> Paddlefish harvest lottery draw. [Survey ref: Q82] .....	74
Public Comment (11 total): .....	74
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	75
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 7</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Proposal 71-</b> Live bait specifications: Tongue River and Tongue River Reservoir [Survey ref: Q83] .....	75
Public Comment (17 total): .....	75
Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): <b>Approve as proposed</b> .....	75

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## STATEWIDE –Multiple Fishing Districts

### Proposal 1- Live bait use clarifications: Specify fish species that can be used as live bait, rather than list those that cannot. [Survey ref: Q4]

Page 17

#### Definitions

**LIVE BAIT:** *Live bait are animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects, which may be used as live bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Live bait includes fish only as specified in Live Bait sections for the Central and Eastern Fishing Districts. No live fish can be used as live bait in the Western Fishing District.* Sculpins may not be used as bait live or dead in the Western Fishing District.

#### WESTERN DISTRICT

Page 23

#### Bait Regulations

##### Live Bait

- \*Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana without authorization from FWP.
- \*Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- \* *No Fish species may be used as live bait in the Western Fishing District.*

#### CENTRAL DISTRICT

Page 49

#### Bait Regulations

##### Live Bait

- \*Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana, except by permit for use in Bighorn Lake and Afterbay reservoir. Bait fish collected in the Bighorn River drainage of Wyoming may be imported under a permit issued by FWP. For a permit, contact the FWP Fisheries Division at 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings, MT 59105 or call (406) 247-2940.
- \*Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- \**Fish species* ~~Non-game fish~~ that may be *collected and* used as live bait in the Central *Fishing District include only the following: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker. ~~all non-game species except black bullheads, bluegill, carp, goldfish, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt, sculpins, stonecats, yellow bullheads.~~*
- \*~~Live non-game fish~~ These species may be used as live bait only in the following waters:

(CONTINUES ...)

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## EASTERN DISTRICT

Page 77

### Bait Regulations

#### Live Bait

- \*Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana.
- \*Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial lures only. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale (*a receipt*) from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-444-6181.
- \****Fish species*** ~~Non-game fish that may be collected and used as live bait in the Eastern Fishing District include all non-game species except black bullheads, bluegill, carp, goldfish, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt, sculpins, stonecats, yellow bullheads, shortnose gar, sturgeon chub, sicklefin chub, Northern redbelly dace, blue sucker, and pearl dace.~~ ***only the following: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker***
- \*~~Live non-game fish~~ These species may be used as live bait only in the following waters:  
(CONTINUES ...)

**Public Comment (80 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 77 survey responses to this proposal including 7 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically and 1 comment by mail. Thirty-eight respondents (48%) supported the proposal, 9 respondents (11%) opposed, and 33 respondents (41%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support included some that mentioned advantages to AIS prevention. Some comments in opposition mentioned no need for a change, and others suggested the contrary position that no bait should be used anywhere in the state. Two comments in opposition mentioned there was no evidence that an invasive minnow has been introduced in Montana

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Designating the species allowed to be used as live bait encourages proper fish identification, helps limit harm to non-target non-game species, and encourages the use of the more abundant bait species. This is also a proactive way to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species while respecting the desire of most people to use live bait fish. To facilitate implementation, brochures and identification keys will be generated and distributed to interested anglers and commercial bait seiners.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**CENTRAL DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation**

**EASTERN DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation**

**Proposal 2- Specify Catfish species in both Central and Eastern Fishing District standard regulations. [Survey ref: Q5]**

Page 51

Central District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Species

***Channel*** Catfish

Page 82

Eastern District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Species

***Channel*** Catfish

**Public Comment (75 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 73 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Twenty-nine respondents (39%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (3%) opposed, and 44 respondents (58%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support primarily confirmed support; one mentioned the specific benefit in distinguishing Channel Catfish from other members of the catfish family. No comments elaborated on reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change is an easy, non-controversial, and effective way to eliminate species ambiguity.

**CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 5**

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 4 and Region 5**

**Proposal 3- Reduce harvest limits for Channel Catfish in the Musselshell River. [Survey ref: Q6]**

Page 66

MUSSELSHELL RIVER

Downstream from where North and South forks meet

~~Open entire year.~~

***Channel catfish: 10 daily and in possession.***

**Public Comment (79 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 78 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Thirty-four respondents (43%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 45 respondents (57%) expressed no opinion. Some comments in support of the proposal recommended that changes to Channel Catfish harvest limits should be

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

made statewide or applied to other drainages as well. One comment stated we have too many regulations.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Active fisheries conservation efforts, including improving fish passage, enhancing habitat, increasing monitoring, and potentially restocking native fish such as Sauger and Channel Catfish in the upper river, are ongoing now to reestablish native fish runs in the Musselshell River. The proposed regulation changes reduce harvest limits slightly for both species, to protect and support fish production during the rebuilding process

**CENTRAL DISTRICT – REGIONS 3 AND 5**

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 7**

**Proposal 4- Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limit for the Yellowstone River.  
[Survey ref: Q7]**

New Exception

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Entire River

Smallmouth Bass: 10 daily and in possession

**Public Comment (82 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 82 survey responses to this proposal including 7 that were expanded with additional written comments. Thirty-five respondents (43%) supported the proposal, 18 respondents (22) opposed, and 29 respondents (35%) expressed no opinion. Some comments in support of the proposal also mentioned the abundance of small mouth bass in the Yellowstone River. One comment in opposition stated there was no data supporting this proposal and questioned the need for this change. One comment recommended letting the small mouth bass population expand to provide something to fish for if global warming is happening.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The proposal increases angler opportunity. It is also intended to help reduce Smallmouth Bass abundance, relieve competition with other species, and to reduce the rate of Smallmouth Bass expansion upstream. This new exception would replace the Central and Eastern Fishing District standard: 5 daily and in possession.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## WESTERN DISTRICT –District Standard Regulation

### Proposal 5- Reduce Western District standard harvest limit for Burbot from 5 to 2 daily and in possession. [Survey ref: Q9]

#### SPECIES

**Burbot (Ling):** *2 daily and in possession* ~~5 daily and in possession~~

**Public Comment.** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 60 survey responses to this proposal including 5 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Thirty respondents (48%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (5%) opposed, and 29 respondents (47%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support also recommended stocking more burbot and stocking them in additional locations. No comments elaborated on reasons for opposition.

#### Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Burbot populations in the Western Fishing District are generally lower in abundance now compared to historic levels. Reduced harvest will potentially increase spawner numbers. Our goal is to further protect these populations now so that a strong spawning population may again provide improved harvest opportunities.

### Proposal 6- Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest length limit for Cutthroat Trout in rivers and streams. [Survey ref: Q10]

#### Cutthroat Trout

Rivers and Streams

3 daily and in possession, none over *12* ~~10~~ inches

**Public Comment (62 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 59 survey responses to this proposal including 10 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comment electronically. Thirty-two respondents (52%) supported the proposal, 16 respondents (26%) opposed, and 14 respondents (22%) expressed no opinion. Many comments in support also recommended alternative size limits, slot limits, allowing use of cutthroat trout (and by implication, other game fish) as bait, and stocking more fish. One comment in opposition also recommended that Cutthroat Trout not be harvested anywhere except in wilderness areas.

#### Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The length limit for Cutthroat Trout in current regulations is 12 inches in the Wilderness and 10 inches otherwise. This proposal would use 12 inches as the standard length limit for Cutthroat Trout in all rivers and streams in the Western Fishing District. Uniformity of regulations where feasible and appropriate aids angler understanding and compliance. This change results in simplification of regulations without negatively affecting Westslope Cutthroat trout populations.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



## Proposal 7- Increase Western Fishing District standard harvest limits for Lake Trout. [Survey ref: Q11]

Page 24

Lake Trout

**20 daily and 40 in possession** ~~10 daily and in possession~~

**Public Comment (70 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 66 survey responses to this proposal including 5 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comments electronically, and 1 comment written down at a public meeting. Forty-five respondents (64%) supported the proposal, 8 respondents (11%) opposed, and 17 respondents (25%) expressed no opinion. Many comments in support also mentioned unspecified potential benefits to native fish. Among other things, comments in opposition recommended no change to current regulations, that the proposed new limit was too generous, and that we stock more lake trout instead.

### Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. FWP Lake Trout management goals include providing harvest opportunity and reducing their numbers where appropriate to benefit other fish species. By increasing the Western Fishing District standard limit for lake trout, FWP can avoid the need to add multiple new exceptions in cases where greater harvest is desired than allowed by the current limit. With an increased harvest limit, FWP can also remove some current exceptions, reducing the total number of regulations. The 20 fish daily harvest level proposed here is the same as is currently allowed for other game fish including whitefish, salmon, and brook trout in the Western Fishing District standard harvest limits. Adding to regulation uniformity should also aid angler understanding and compliance. This change results in simplification of regulations and removes the need for additional exceptions to allow increased harvest on abundant lake trout populations. Existing Lake Trout populations affected by this regulation appear capable of sustaining the potential additional harvest.

## Proposal 8- Add single point barbless hook restriction to streams in the Western Fishing District currently designated catch and release and artificial lures only, where Cutthroat Trout are the primary species meant to be protected by the restrictions. [Survey ref: Q12].

### New Exception

~~COPPER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)~~

~~———— Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

~~———— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

~~DUNHAM CREEK (tributary to Monture Creek, Blackfoot drainage)~~

~~———— Catch and release for all trout.~~

~~———— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

~~FISH CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (Clark Fork River Drainage)~~

~~———— Mainstem downstream of the confluence of the South and West forks~~

~~———— Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

~~———— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only~~

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

~~GOLD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)~~

~~— Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

~~— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

~~MONTURE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)~~

~~— Catch and release for all trout.~~

~~— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

**NORTH FORK BLACKFOOT RIVER (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

**Entire River**

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

**Downstream from the North Fork Falls to the Highway 200 bridge**

*Artificial, single point, barbless hook lures only.*

~~RATTLESNAKE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (near Missoula)~~

~~— Entire River~~

~~— Catch and release for all trout.~~

~~— Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, none over 15 inches.~~

~~— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

~~SOUTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER DRAINAGE~~

~~— Meadow Creek Bridge to Spotted Bear foot bridge and tributaries~~

~~— Catch and release only.~~

~~— Artificial, single point barbless hook lures only.~~

---

**Public Comment (126 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 81 survey responses to this proposal including 17 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 41 other comments electronically, and 4 that were written down at public meetings. Ninety-one respondents (72%) supported the proposal, 23 respondents (18%) opposed, and 12 respondents (10%) expressed no opinion. Among other things, comments in support mentioned potential benefits to fish including less stress and less injury, offered additional terminal gear ideas, or recommended that the idea be expanded to other rivers. Several comments in opposition mentioned the proposal had no scientific basis, the proposal was elitist and pandered to certain values and perspectives to the exclusion of others, or that the proposal was simply a disingenuous attempt to make these streams fly-fishing only.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Modify the proposal.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed with the following modifications: Reduce the list of proposed streams to include only the North Fork Blackfoot River, and delay implementation of the regulation for 2 years. This regulation is intended primarily to reduce hook scarring on Cutthroat Trout. The efficacy of such a regulation to achieve this goal is ambiguous in the scientific literature, and untested in Montana waters. We therefore wish to introduce this restriction on a very limited basis, and to allow time to first gather baseline information on hook scar severity, hook scar rates, and current angler behaviors, including tackle choices. Fish population assessments and angler surveys conducted prior to implementation of the regulation will be used to help assess post-implementation differences, if any. Assessment of the efficacy of the regulation to achieve a measurable result is essential to understand its potential value as a fish management tool. The regulation would still allow up to 2 hooks per line. Cutting off points and flattening barbs would be permitted to match lures to the regulation requirement.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## CENTRAL DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation

### Proposal 9- Add 1 Cutthroat Trout to the combined trout limit. Many exceptions eliminated. [Survey ref: Q14]

~~2016~~ 2015 General Fishing Season

#### Central District Standard Daily and Possession Limits

Combined Trout - includes Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Golden Trout, *Cutthroat Trout*, and Grayling

Rivers and Streams: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches, *only 1 can be a Cutthroat Trout.*

If Combined Trout Limit is adopted, these exceptions could be eliminated:

Page 52

#### ~~BAD CANYON CREEK~~

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

#### ~~BADGER CREEK DRAINAGE (near Heart Butte)~~

~~Downstream from confluence of North Badger and South Badger creeks within National Forest~~

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 54

#### ~~BIG HOLE RIVER~~ TRIBUTARIES

~~Tributaries upstream from Divide Bridge (Divide FAS)~~

~~Brook trout: Open entire year.~~

~~Catch and release for Grayling and Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 57

#### ~~CLARKS FORK YELLOWSTONE RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES~~

~~Entire river and tributaries~~

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Combined Trout: Includes cutthroat Trout.~~

#### ~~CROOKED CREEK (Pryor Mountains)~~

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 58

#### ~~DEARBORN RIVER~~

~~Open third Saturday in May through November 30.~~

~~Upstream from highway 434 Bridge in T18N, R6W, Section 29~~

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 58

#### ~~EAST BOULDER RIVER (Yellowstone River Drainage)~~

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

#### ~~EAST FORK BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)~~

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 59

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

#### EAST ROSEBUD CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

#### FISHTAIL CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 66

#### ~~PINEY CREEK (Pryor Mountains)~~

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 68

#### SHIELDS RIVER

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch and release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

#### SOUTH FORK SUN RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

Upstream from the point where the North and South forks of the Sun River meet, regardless of reservoir level

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 71

#### WEST BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

#### WEST FORK STILLWATER RIVER

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

#### WEST ROSEBUD CREEK

Open entire year.

~~Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

Page 72

#### YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. ~~Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

#### YELLOWSTONE RIVER TRIBUTARIES

All tributaries between YNP Boundary and Springdale

~~Catch and Release for Cutthroat Trout~~——

All tributaries downstream from Springdale

Open entire year.

~~Combine Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout (unless indicated otherwise in tributary exceptions).~~

NOTE: If the new Combined Trout Limit is adopted, we also propose these modifications to existing exceptions (deleting some language, adding new):

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 56

**BOULDER RIVER and Tributaries (near Big Timber)**

**Entire river and tributaries**

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: ~~2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

**River and Tributaries from the mouth upstream to Hawley Creek**

Combined Trout: *Only 1 fish over 14 inches.*

**River and Tributaries upstream of Hawley Creek**

Combined Trout: *Only 1 fish over 14 inches; may include 3 Cutthroat Trout.*

Page 66

**NORTH FORK TETON RIVER DRAINAGE (near Choteau)**

**Within the National Forest**

*Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout. Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, none over 12 inches.*

New Exception

**SOUTH FORK TETON RIVER DRAINAGE (near Choteau)**

*Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout*

Page 67

**SAGE CREEK (Pryor Mountains)**

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: *May include 5 Cutthroat Trout.* ~~includes Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 70

**STILLWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (Yellowstone River Drainage)**

**Entire river and tributaries**

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: *Only 1 fish over 14 inches* ~~2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout~~

NOTE: Most of the exceptions listed above would change further if the Central Fishing District standard proposal to leave Rivers and Streams open all year is also adopted. The effect would be to further reduce the number of regulation exceptions.

**Public Comment (90 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 73 survey responses to this proposal including 17 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 17 other comments electronically. Twenty-nine respondents (32%) supported the proposal, 49 respondents (54%) opposed, and 12 respondents (13%) expressed no opinion. Many comments in support mentioned angler benefits but also that catch and release exceptions should be retained. Some suggested that, although supportive, changing a regulation for human benefit should be secondary to protecting the fisheries, and that the need to protect Cutthroat Trout remains. Comments in opposition often mentioned protecting Cutthroat Trout, that not allowing Cutthroat in the harvest is easier to enforce, that the regulation may further confuse people about hybrid and non-hybridized fish and, in one case, that no one should ever kill a fish.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change acknowledges successful conservation that supports cutthroat trout harvest opportunities again in many rivers and streams without

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

threat to the persistence of these populations, and also a shift in trout angler behaviors over time with most now practicing catch and release techniques, regardless of harvest opportunities. Conserving Cutthroat Trout is a goal we all share in common. Allowing light harvest has several benefits: Permitting one cutthroat in the daily harvest can simplify issues of hybrid fish identification and certainly provides a harvest opportunity in many smaller streams where alternative species may not be available. Increasing angler opportunity this way optimizes access to these public resources without harming cutthroat populations. An added benefit is that many regulation exceptions in the current regulations could be eliminated. Fewer number and more uniform regulations aid angler understanding and compliance. Nothing in this proposed regulation change prevents fish from being released at angler discretion.

### Proposal 10- Rivers and Streams to remain open all year; Many exceptions to be eliminated. [Survey ref: Q15]

Page 51

*2016* ~~2015~~ General Fishing Season

Central District : Rivers and Streams

*Open entire year.* ~~Open third Saturday in May through November 30, unless otherwise specified in Exceptions to Standard Regulations.~~

If adopted we propose the following modifications as well:

Page 52

*ALDER GULCH CREEK AND DREDGE PONDS*

~~Virginia City to mouth~~

~~Open Entire Year.~~

*ARMSTRONG SPRING CREEK—*

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Catch-and-release only.~~

~~Artificial lures only.~~

Page 53

*BEAVERHEAD RIVER*

~~Downstream from Pipe Organ Bridge~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 54

*BELT CREEK*

~~Downstream from the Riceville Bridge~~

~~Open entire year.~~

*BIG HOLE RIVER TRIBUTARIES*

~~Tributaries upstream from Divide Bridge (Divide FAS)~~

~~Brook Trout: Open entire year.~~

~~Catch-and-release for Grayling and Cutthroat Trout.~~

Page 55

*BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)*

~~Entire creek~~

~~Open entire year.~~

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 56

**BIGHORN RIVER**

**Entire River**

~~Open entire year.~~

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 1 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 2 may be Sauger.

A State of Montana fishing license is required for all anglers to fish on the Bighorn River within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation. A tribal permit is not required.

**BLUEWATER CREEK**

~~Open entire year.~~

**BOULDER RIVER and Tributaries (near Big Timber)**

**Entire river and tributaries**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

*Mouth upstream to the bridge on Boulder Cut-Off Road (mile 14.4)*

*Closed September 30 through December 31.*

Page 57

**CLARKS FORK YELLOWSTONE RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES**

**Entire river and tributaries**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout.

**CUT BANK CREEK**

~~Open entire year downstream of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation boundary in T33N, R6W, S2.~~

Page 58

**DARLINGTON SPRING CREEK aka Darlington Ditch (near Three Forks)**

**On Cobblestone FAS**

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for trout.

Artificial lures only.

**Outside of Cobblestone FAS boundaries—**

~~Open entire year.~~

*Central Fishing District* standard limits apply.

**EAST BOULDER RIVER (Yellowstone River Drainage)**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

**EAST FORK BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

**EAST GALLATIN RIVER**

~~Open entire year downstream from the mouth of Bozeman (Sourdough) Creek.~~

Northern Pike: No limit.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 59

**EAST ROSEBUD CREEK**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

**FISHTAIL CREEK**

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

**GALLATIN RIVER**

**Entire river**

~~Open entire year downstream from the mouth of Bozeman (Sourdough) Creek.~~

Northern Pike: No limit

New Exception

**Hells Canyon Creek (Jefferson River Drainage)**

*Catch-and-Release for Rainbow Trout*

*Open June 15 Through September 30.*

Page 60

**HYALITE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES**

**Below Hyalite Reservoir**

~~Open third Saturday in May through November 30.~~

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Page 62

**MADISON RIVER**

**Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake**

~~Open entire year.~~

**Quake Lake outlet to Lyons Bridge**

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels.

**Lyons Bridge to McAtee Bridge**

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

**McAtee Bridge to Varney Bridge**

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

**Varney Bridge to Ennis Bridge**

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release for Rainbow Trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, any size.

**Ennis Bridge to Ennis Lake**

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February.~~

Catch-and-release for Rainbow Trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* ~~and~~ younger may take 1 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, any size.

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels

Ennis Dam to the mouth

~~Open entire year.~~

Northern Pike: No limit.

Page 62

*MILL CREEK (near Sheridan)*

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 66

*MUSSELSHELL RIVER*

Downstream from where North and South Forks meet

~~Open entire year.~~

*NELSON SPRING CREEK*

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release only.

Artificial lures only.

New Exception

*Parsons Slough (Mouth upstream to Loomont Lane)*

*Open June 15 Through September 30.*

Page 67

*Poindexter slough*

~~Open entire year.~~

Catch-and-release December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures only.

~~*PRIOR CREEK—*~~

Downstream from the Reservation line

~~Open entire year.~~

New Exception

*RED ROCK RIVER*

Lima Dam to Clark Canyon Reservoir

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

*Open third Saturday in May through November 30.*

*ROCK CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (tributary to Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River)*

West Fork Rock Creek is closed to fishing from the Red Lodge water intake to 1,000 feet upstream.

~~Open entire year.~~

*RUBY RIVER*

Downstream from Ruby Dam

Closed entire year just below Ruby Dam (that portion of the Ruby River from its confluence with the Ruby Dam outlet channel upstream to the dam, including the outlet channel).

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

SAGE CREEK (Pryor Mountains)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined trout include Cutthroat Trout.

New Exception

*SHEEP CREEK (tributary to Missouri River south of Cascade)*

*Open third Saturday in May through Labor Day.*

Page 68

SHIELDS RIVER

~~Extended season for whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.~~

~~Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.~~

SMITH RIVER

Downstream from confluence of North and South Forks

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 70

STILLWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (Yellowstone River Drainage)

Entire River and tributaries

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

Page 70

SUN RIVER

~~Open entire year downstream from Gibson Dam.~~

TETON RIVER

Downstream from Highway 89 Bridge

~~Open entire year.~~

~~WARM SPRINGS CREEK (near Lewistown)~~

~~Open entire year.~~

Page 71

WEST BOULDER RIVER (near Big Timber)

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

WEST FORK STILLWATER RIVER

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

WEST ROSEBUD CREEK

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 2 daily and in possession, only 1 over 13 inches, includes Cutthroat Trout.

New Exception

*WILLOW SPRINGS CREEK (tributary to Jefferson River)*

*Open June 15 Through September 30.*

Page 72

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Yellowstone National Park (YNP) Boundary to I-90 Bridge at Billings

~~Open entire year.~~

Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

18 inches, catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.  
 All tributaries downstream from Springdale  
~~Open entire year.~~  
 Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout (unless indicated otherwise in tributary exceptions).

**Public Comment (100 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 76 survey responses to this proposal including 18 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 24 other comments electronically. Thirty-one respondents (31%) supported the proposal, 57 respondents (57%) opposed, and 12 respondents (12%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support mentioned regulation uniformity, reduction in number of regulation exceptions, and increased angling opportunity. Comments in opposition often mentioned giving fish a break, protecting spawning fish and spawning areas for trout, and concern that this proposals lacked proper consideration of its potential biological consequences. Several comments in opposition referenced specific rivers instead of the Central Fishing District.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change matches the Central Fishing District standard to the current Eastern Fishing District standard, aiding regulation uniformity, including the consequence that many current regulation exceptions in Regions 3, 4, and 5 can be eliminated. A majority of the streams in the Central Fishing District are already open the entire year – by regulation exception. This change simply reverses the situation, reducing the number of exceptions to a single District Wide standard. Where necessary to protect fisheries, exceptions for season closures are already in place; these exceptions would not be affected, although we do identify closure exceptions now in this recommendation ( Red Rock River, Hells Canyon Creek, Parsons Creek, and Willow Springs Creek) necessary to state explicitly in 2016 if the proposal is approved. Most of these exceptions were established by the old Central District Standard seasonal regulation in the past, but would require an explicit regulation exception in 2016 to maintain that status quo.

**EASTERN DISTRICT – District Standard Regulation**

**Proposal 11- Add Tongue River Reservoir Dam to Eastern District Dam Closures and Restrictions. [Survey ref: Q17]**

Page 74

**Eastern District Standard Regulations**

**Dam Closures and Restrictions**

The following dams are closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, fishing or other recreational activity as marked by boat restraining systems or as posted to restrict access. Other dams not listed here may also be posted for restricted access. For more information

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

call the FWP Fishing Access Coordinator at 406-444-7885, or contact the Bureau of Reclamation(BOR) at 406-247-7296 or the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) 406-293-7751.

- Anita Dam (BOR, Yellowstone County)
- Fort Peck Dam (ACOE, Valley County)
- Fresno Dam (BOR, Hill County)
- *Tongue River Reservoir Dam (DNRC, Big Horn County)*

**Public Comment (23 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 23 survey responses to this proposal, including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. Four survey respondents (17%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (9%) opposed, and 17 respondents (74%) expressed no opinion. No comments expanded on reasons for support. Comments in opposition misunderstood that the closure was for public safety near the dam only, and would not restrict recreational activities on most of the Tongue River Reservoir.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Adding Tongue River Reservoir to the list improves specificity and is an effective way to help advice anglers of potential hazards near the dam.

**Proposal 12- Prohibit bow fishing for gar in Eastern Fishing District. [Survey ref: Q18]**

Page 76

Eastern District Standard Regulations

**Methods of Taking Fish**

**Bow and Arrow**

All waters open to angling are open to taking Paddlefish and non-game fish by bow and arrow unless otherwise noted in the exceptions to the standard regulations.

*Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.*

Page 83

**FORT PECK DREDGE CUTS (west of Park Grove Bridge and Nelson Dredge)**

Bow and Arrow: open July 1 through August 31 for Paddlefish, 1 per season and in possession. An unused blue Paddlefish tag is required to fish for Paddlefish.

Combined Trout: 2 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession.

Hook and Line/Setlines 2 lines with 2 hooks per line on open water and 6 lines with 6 hooks per line through the ice.

Snagging: No snagging allowed.

*Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.*

Page 84

**MISSOURI RIVER**

**Entire River**

Snagging: it is illegal to snag for fish other than Paddlefish on the Missouri River downstream from Fort Benton; any fish other than Paddlefish must be immediately released alive.

*Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.*

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Downstream from Fort Peck Dam**

Paddlefish snagging: open for harvesting paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to 9 PM. MST, daily unless closed earlier by FWP.

Catch-and-release snagging for Paddlefish is not permitted.

*Fishing for Shortnose Gar with bow and arrow is not allowed.*

**Public Comment (25 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 23 survey responses to this proposal, none were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Sixteen respondents (67%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (4%) opposed, and 8 respondents (33%) expressed no opinion. The single comment received was supportive, suggested methods other than using bow and arrow were more appropriate to take sport fish, and that it was otherwise proper to protect species of low abundance such as Shortnose Gar.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Withdraw the proposal.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation proposal be entirely withdrawn. During this public process we examined our understanding of Shortnose Gar demographics internally, and feel more information is required to assess whether the prohibition is really necessary. Rather than single out a specific user type now, we recommend further study to better determine if harvest by bow fishing is truly problematic for this fish.

**Proposal 13- Adjustment to list: Live Bait - Lakes, Reservoirs, Ponds, and Impoundments (listed by County): [Survey ref: Q19]**

Page 78

**Lakes, Reservoirs, Ponds and Impoundments (listed by County):**

Big Horn Co – Tongue River Reservoir (*see exceptions to standard regulations*)  
 Blaine Co – Cow Creek Reservoir, Dry Fork Reservoir, *Anita Reservoir, Reser Reservoir* and ~~all BLM reservoirs~~  
 Carter Co. – Doug Gardner #2 Reservoir, Talcott Pond  
 Custer Co. – Spotted Eagle Pond, Haughian Pond  
 Daniels Co. – Whitetail Reservoir  
 Dawson Co. – *Hollecker Pond*, Johnson Reservoir, Lindsey Reservoir  
 Fallon Co. - Baker Lake, South Sandstone Reservoir,  
 Fort Peck Reservoir  
 Garfield Co. – Whiteside Reservoir  
 Hill Co. – Beaver Creek Reservoir, Bailey Reservoir  
 McCone Co. – Flat Lake, Hedstrom Reservation  
~~Milk River impoundments downstream of Fresno Dam~~  
 Petroleum Co. – Petrolia Reservoir  
*Prairie Co. – Grants Reservoir, Homestead Reservoir*  
 Phillips Co. – *Bison Bone Reservoir, Big McNeil Slough*, Cole Ponds, Ester Reservoir, Frenchman Reservoir, Little Warm Reservoir, McChesney Reservoir, Nelson reservoir,

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

*Wildhorse Reservoir* and all BLM reservoirs

Richland Co. – Buxbaum West Reservoir, Gartside Reservoir, Kuester Reservoir  
 Roosevelt Co. – Bainville Railroad Ponds  
 Rosebud Co. – Castle Rock Lake, *Lee Pond*  
 Sheridan Co. – Box Elder Reservoir, Engstrom Reservoir, Medicine Lake Nat. Wildlife Refuge,  
 Raymond Reservoir  
 Valley Co. – Fort Peck Dredge Cut Trout Pond, Grub Reservoir, Gut Shot Reservoir, Shoot  
 Reservoir, Triple Crossing Reservoir, Valley Reservoir, VR2 Reservoir, Wards Res.,  
 and all BLM reservoirs in the Willow Creek Drainage  
 Wibaux Co. – Wibaux Pond  
 Yellowstone Co. – Anita Reservoir

**Public Comment (30 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 29 survey responses to this proposal, none were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 comment by mail. Thirteen respondents (43%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (7%) opposed, and 15 respondents (50%) expressed no opinion. No comments expanded on reasons for support. The comment in opposition specifically questioned the claim that certain unwanted minnow species were not already present in the Tongue River Reservoir.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. These changes help to specify water bodies where live bait including live fish bait use is allowed. Over the years, release and establishment of undesirable baitfish has negatively affected several impoundments managed as trout fisheries. Better specificity concerning where live bait may be used may help reduce the spread of undesirable species to other waters managed for trout, or various pan-fish. This change is an easy, non-controversial, and effective way to support a diversity of angling opportunity in Montana.

**Proposal 14- Re-word bait collection prohibition in Eurasian watermilfoil infested waters. [Survey ref: Q20]**

Page 78

**Bait Regulations**

Bait restrictions in Eurasian watermilfoil contaminated areas

Eurasian watermilfoil is an aquatic invasive plant species that has become established in some Montana waters. This water weed is easily spread from one body of water to another primarily by plant fragments. Areas in the Eastern Fishing District that have been identified as contaminated with Eurasian watermilfoil are:

1. Fort Peck Reservoir
2. Fort Peck Dredge Cut Ponds
3. Missouri River from Fort Peck Dam to the mouth of the Milk River.

The additional bait restrictions within the contaminated areas are:

*\* Commercial collection of bait animals is not permitted.* ~~The collection of bait animals, including commercial seining is not permitted.~~

\*Transport of live aquatic bait animals to and from these contaminated areas is allowed

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

only in clean water (e.g., transport minnows and leeches in well water). Anglers are asked to inspect all bait buckets and live wells to ensure that NO PLANT FRAGMENTS are present when leaving a body of water. It takes only a small fragment of Eurasian watermilfoil (less than 2 inches) to start a new plant and infest a body of water.

**Public Comment (27 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that were expanded with additional written comments. Sixteen survey respondents (59%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 11 respondents (41%) expressed no opinion. The single comment confirmed respondent's agreement with the proposal.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change helps avoid ambiguity, which aids angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 15- Require mandatory Paddlefish harvest reporting. Unlawful to sell portions of Paddlefish. [Survey ref: Q21]**

Page 79

**General Paddlefish regulations for ALL areas**

*\*Anglers harvesting a paddlefish anywhere in Montana (Yellowstone River, Missouri River or Ft Peck Dredge Cuts) are required to report harvested paddlefish within 48 hours of harvest.*

*\* Reporting options include: on-site where fish was harvested (in some instances fisheries staff will set up check points to assist with reporting) and the phone hotline 1-877-FWP-WILD (877-397-9453).*

*\*Anglers reporting a harvested paddlefish will be required to provide the following information: Angler tag number, jaw tag number (if present), length (eye to tail-fork), sex (if known), date of harvest and harvest location. Additional information that may be collected on-site includes: weight and age (a section of the lower jaw is required to age fish).*

*\*Instructions for reporting will be included when the paddlefish tag is sold.*

*\*Anglers not reporting a harvested paddlefish will not be eligible to purchase a paddlefish tag the following year.*

*\*All waters open to angling are open to snagging paddlefish during the open paddlefish season by anglers with a valid tag, except the Ft Peck Dredge Cuts Archery section.*

*\*Snagging non-game fish is allowed on all open waters in the Eastern District except on the*

*\*Missouri River downstream from Fort Benton to the North Dakota border and on the*

*\*Yellowstone River downstream from the mouth of the Bighorn River.*

*\*Each angler must cast for, hook and reel in his or her own paddlefish. It is unlawful for another person to do so. It is illegal to loan tags or use another angler's tag.*

*\*Hook size is limited to 8/0 and smaller for all paddlefish snagging.*

*\*Gaffs, no longer than 4.5 feet in length, may be used to land a paddlefish that will be tagged.*

*\*Gaffs may not be used to land a paddlefish that will be released.*

*\*Any tag locked shut prior to attachment to a paddlefish shall be void and is no replaceable. Any altered or modified tag shall be void. **Voided or lost tags are not replaceable.***

*\*Paddlefish must be tagged immediately upon harvest.*

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



\*It is unlawful to possess an untagged paddlefish or part of one. If anglers cut up a paddlefish, they must keep the part of the *fish* back and dorsal fin (back fin) where the tag is attached and sealed to the fish.

\*Tags must remain with processed fish until consumption.

\*When a paddlefish is captured and tagged, the fish must be removed from the river by the end of the day (9:00 PM, MST).

*\*It is unlawful for an individual to sell any portion of a paddlefish including eggs (processed or unprocessed) as prescribed by the F&W Commission.*

**Public Comment (33 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 30 survey responses to this proposal, 1 was expanded with additional written comments. We also received 3 other comments electronically. Twenty-four respondents (73%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (3%) opposed, and 8 respondents (24%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal acknowledged the regulation's utility in gathering important information from which to better manage the paddlefish population; one also asked how we would know if someone does not report the harvest? No comment expanded on reasons for opposition. No comment mentioned the clarification concerning selling portions of Paddlefish, including eggs.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Mandatory reporting will provide more precise Paddlefish harvest data, allowing better harvest season management (closure dates) and structure on an annual basis. Mandatory reporting will also enhance FWP's ability to better track the age of Paddlefish harvested. This information is essential to ensure sustainable management of the populations. The prohibition on selling portions of Paddlefish, including eggs, is language included to clarify what is not allowed, aiding angler compliance.

**Proposal 16- Increase Lake Trout possession limit in Eastern Fishing District Standard regulations. [Survey ref: Q22]**

Page 82  
**Lake Trout**  
 3 daily and **6** in possession

**Public Comment (35 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 32 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comments electronically. Twenty-one respondents (60%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (3%) opposed, and 13 respondents (37%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal; one mentioned that larger possession limits for anglers, in conjunction with other management tools, might help control lake trout abundance to the benefit of other species. No comment expanded on reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change allows additional harvest of Lake Trout on Fort Peck Reservoir and brings Lake Trout harvest limits into agreement with most sport fish limits

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



in the Eastern Fishing District. Uniformity of regulations, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

## WESTERN DISTRICT –Region 1

### Proposal 17- Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Northern Pike harvest at Bull Lake (near Troy). [Survey ref: Q24]

New Exception

*Bull Lake (near Troy)*

*Northern Pike: no limit.*

**Public Comment (47 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 44 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically and 1 that was written down at a public meeting. Thirty-one respondents (66%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (11%) opposed, and 11 respondents (23%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support mentioned the existing abundance of pike for anglers and preventing pike dominance in certain lakes. Comments in opposition also mentioned people's enjoyment fishing for pike, and economic benefits when people buy gear to fish for something other than trout.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of this species in Bull Lake, and the desire to see Northern Pike substantially controlled or eradicated at this location. Northern Pike introductions often result in harm to other fish populations. Pike are top-level predators with the potential to reduce Kokanee Salmon and Bull Trout population abundance in Bull Lake. The existing salmon fishery makes Bull Lake a popular Region One fishing destination for both winter and summer use. Bull trout are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Both facts motivate our management response. This regulation allows anglers to participate in lake fishery conservation. Increasing or removing daily harvest limits is among many management actions identified in ARM 12.7.1503 to respond to unauthorized placement of fish; Allowing anglers to reduce unwanted fish numbers is among the relatively low cost ways to help meet desired management objectives while providing additional angling opportunity.

### Proposal 18- Adjusting bass fishing season at Cabinet Gorge Reservoir to agree with Noxon Rapids Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q25]

New Exception

**CABINET GORGE RESERVOIR**

*Bass: 5 daily and in possession except from June 15 to July 15 only 1 daily and in possession, 22-inch minimum.*

**Public Comment (47 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 46 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

received 1 other comment electronically. Thirty-five respondents (74%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 12 respondents (26%) expressed no opinion. A single comment in support confirmed agreement with the proposal. No comments elaborated reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Cabinet Gorge Reservoir and Noxon Rapids Reservoir are similar water bodies. Both are run-of-the-river dams with short water retention times. They are located near each other on the Clark Fork River. Because of these similarities the bass spawning and rearing conditions are similar. At this time, FWP has two different bass spawning closures on the two reservoirs. This regulation would bring both into agreement with each other.

**Proposal 19- New regulations: Libby Pond [Survey ref: Q26]**

New Exception

**LIBBY POND**

*Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age or younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession.*

**Public Comment (47 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 48 survey responses to this proposal, two were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Thirty-three respondents (67%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (2%) opposed, and 15 respondents (31%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal also mentioned the family benefit of this fishing amenity. No comment elaborated reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This is a newly created family fishing pond that requires regulations to provide opportunity for youth and family angling. The proposed regulation makes this pond consistent with other family fishing pond regulations in Region 1. Maintaining regulation uniformity adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 20- Change regulations in one section of the Clark Fork River to agree with nearby sections. [Survey ref: Q27]**

Page 30

**CLARK FORK RIVER**

The Region 1 portions

Mouth of Flathead River to mouth of Thompson River

*Open entire year.*

Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout.

~~Whitefish: open entire year with maggots or lures~~

~~Northern Pike: open entire year with bait or lures~~

Mouth of Thompson River to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and 10 in possession, only 1 over 22 inches.  
 Cutthroat Trout: 3 daily and in possession, no size limit.  
 Hook and line: 2 lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

**Public Comment (51 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 48 survey responses to this proposal and 1 additional comment attached to the survey instrument. We received 2 other comments electronically. Thirty-seven respondents (73%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (2%) opposed, and 13 respondents (25%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support in many cases also recognized the similarity of river sections, and the value of similar regulations. The single comment attached to the survey stated opposition to the proposal without elaborating reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Currently, anglers can fish the entire year for some species but not all, which complicates enforcement. River reaches upstream and downstream of this reach are open the entire year for trout, pike and whitefish fishing. This river reach is similar to those upstream and downstream, and all are part of the larger river system. There is no reason to maintain a fishing regulation distinction for these fish species. The proposed changes increase angler opportunity, and add regulation uniformity to the continuous reach that will simplify regulations, aid enforcement, and benefit angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 21- Change Cutthroat Trout regulations in Flathead River sloughs to match the Flathead River. [Survey ref: Q28]**

Page 33

**FLATHEAD RIVER SLOUGHS**

Brenneman, Church, Egan, Fennon, Half Moon, McWenneger, *Mill Creek*, and Rose Creek

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, no size limit.

*Catch and Release for cutthroat trout* ~~Cutthroat trout: 3 daily and in possession, no size limit~~

Hook and Line: 2 rods and/or lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

**Public Comment (55 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 50 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 5 other comments electronically. Thirty-four respondents (62%) supported the proposal, 6 respondents (11%) opposed, and 15 respondents (27) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal; some requested expansion of the catch and release regulation to other water bodies. Some comments in opposition also mentioned that few Cutthroat Trout occur in the sloughs; the Western District standard combined trout limit should provide sufficient protection, and that a new regulation exception is not needed.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change places the same regulation on the

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

connected river sloughs as is currently in place for the river and lake. The change also removes the enforcement concern that an angler could legally harvest a Westslope Cutthroat trout in the slough and then boat into the river and be in violation of river regulations.

**Proposal 22- Change Flathead River bass harvest regulations to agree with Flathead River Sloughs. Eliminate Lake Trout exception for the Flathead River. [Survey ref: Q29]**

Page 33

**FLATHEAD RIVER**

**Confluence of the North and Middle forks (near Blankenship Bridge) downstream to Flathead Lake**

Extended season for Whitefish and Lake Trout, and catch-and-release for other game fish, except Northern Pike, from December 1 through the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only. From the mouth of the Stillwater River downstream to Flathead Lake, no maggots and no scented artificial lures (infused, saturated or applied).

Northern Pike: extended season for Northern Pike from December 1 through February 28, artificial lures only.

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession.

~~Lake trout: 15 daily and in possession—~~

*Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to June 30, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.*

**FLATHEAD RIVER SLOUGHS**

**Brenneman, Church, Egan, Fennon, Half Moon, McWennegar, ~~Mill~~, and Rose Creek**

*Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to June 30, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.*

**Church and Fennon**

~~Bass: 1 daily and in possession from third Saturday in May to July 1, must be over 22 inches. 5 daily and in possession from July1 to the third Saturday in May, only 1 over 12 inches.~~

**Public Comment (52 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 30 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Forty-two respondents (81%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (2%) opposed, and 9 respondents (17%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal. No comment expanded on reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change places the same regulation on the river and connected sloughs that is currently in place on Church and Fennon sloughs. Egan Slough is not

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

directly connected to the river. The change also removes the enforcement concern that an angler could legally harvest bass in the river and connected sloughs and then boat into Church and Fennon sloughs and be in violation of fishing regulations. This proposal provides uniformity of regulation across the river sloughs, which should also aid angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 23- Eliminate the existing daily and possession limit for Lake Trout in Flathead River, to be replaced by more liberal Western Fishing District limits.**  
**[Survey ref: Q30]**

<p>Page 33</p> <p>FLATHEAD RIVER</p> <p>Confluence of the North and Middle forks (near Blankenship Bridge) downstream to Flathead Lake</p> <p>Extended season for Whitefish and Lake Trout, and catch-and-release for other game fish, except Northern Pike, from December 1 through the third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only. From the mouth of the Stillwater River downstream to Flathead Lake, no maggots and no scented artificial lures (infused, saturated or applied). Northern Pike: extended season for Northern Pike from December 1 through February 28, artificial lures only.</p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession.</p> <p><del>Lake trout: 15 daily and in possession</del></p>
--

**Public Comment (54 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 48 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 6 other comments electronically. Forty-one respondents (76%) supported the proposal, 4 respondents (7%) opposed, and 9 respondents (17%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal. One comment in opposition requested that lake trout be left alone.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. If the Western Fishing District Lake Trout limit is increased as proposed elsewhere to 20 daily and 40 in possession, this Flathead River exception is no longer needed.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## Proposal 24- Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Flathead Lake. [Survey ref: Q31]

Page 33

### FLATHEAD LAKE

Flathead Lake north of Flathead Indian Reservation boundary

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

*Lake* Whitefish: 100 daily and in possession.

Lake Trout: 100 daily and in possession, only 1 over 36 inches, and all fish 30 to 36 inches must be released.

*Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.*

NOTE: Flathead Indian Reservation Tribal Permit is required to fish on the southern portion of the lake. Check Tribal Fishing regulations for the south portion of *the* lake.

**Public Comment (58 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 50 survey responses to this proposal including 9 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 7 other comments electronically and 1 that was written down at a public meeting. Forty-one respondents (71%) supported the proposal, 8 respondents (14%) opposed, and 9 respondents (15%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal. Among other things, comments in opposition expressed concern that the proposed limit on larger fish is too restrictive (should be increased) or alternatively that it allowed too many larger fish to be harvested each day. Alternative management strategies were also mentioned that involved increasing Yellow Perch spawning habitat.

### Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The Yellow Perch fishery on Flathead Lake is very popular among anglers and receives substantial fishing pressure annually. This is primarily a harvest fishery during the spring spawning period. The public has expressed concern that larger perch (greater than 10 inches) are declining and reproduction is consequently reduced. Large perch are particularly vulnerable to angling during the spring spawning season. This regulation would ease angler exploitation of the larger fish, helping to preserve their reproductive contributions. This change also places the same regulation on the northern half of Flathead Lake as that proposed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on the south half.

## Proposal 25- Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch and increase harvest limits for Northern Pike in Smith Lake. [Survey ref: Q32]

New Exception

### SMITH LAKE (near Kalispell)

*Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.*

*Northern Pike: 50 daily and 100 in possession*

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Public Comment (55 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 29 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 5 other comments electronically and 1 that were written down at a public meeting. Thirty-two respondents (58%) supported the proposal, 9 respondents (16%) opposed, and 14 respondents (26%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support often confirmed agreement with the proposal; some suggested a lower limit on the number of larger fish in the harvest limit each day, or that species illegally introduced should have no harvest limit at all. Some comments in opposition mentioned generally that the proposals would not achieve the desired results, to leave existing conditions alone, or to consider alternative management strategies instead that might improve Yellow Perch spawning habitat.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend these regulations be adopted as initially proposed. Increasing harvest opportunity for pike from the Western Fishing District standard 15 daily to 50 daily will allow anglers to harvest more small pike, possibly helping to reduce their abundance and improve size structure of the population. Establishing a size limit and protecting more of the larger perch is intended to improve the number of mature large fish, benefitting subsequent reproductive production.

**Proposal 26- Establish a length limit on Yellow Perch in Lower Stillwater Lake.**  
[Survey ref: Q33]

Page 37

**LOWER STILLWATER LAKE**

Spearing: Open for Northern Pike through the ice only.

*Yellow Perch: No limit, only 10 daily over 10 inches. No possession limit.*

**Public Comment (51 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 49 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically and 1 that was written down at public meeting. Thirty respondents (59%) supported the proposal, 7 respondents (14%) opposed, and 14 respondents (27%) expressed no opinion. Among other things, comments in support suggested a lower number of larger fish be allowed in the harvest limit each day. Some comments in opposition to the proposal recommended that no limit is better for Yellow Perch in western Montana (possibly referencing harvest limits, not fish length) and to consider alternative management strategies instead that might improve Yellow Perch spawning habitat.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Yellow Perch fisheries are increasingly popular among anglers. The public has expressed concern that larger perch (greater than 10 inches) in many areas are declining and reproduction is consequently reduced. Large perch are particularly vulnerable to angling during the spring spawning season. This regulation would ease angler exploitation of the larger fish in Lower Stillwater Lake, helping to preserve their reproductive contributions.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Proposal 27- Delete an unnecessary regulation exception for Frank Lake.**  
**[Survey ref: Q34]**

Page 33

**FRANK LAKE**

~~Northwest ¼ of the lake, as posted~~

~~Catch and release for rainbow trout from March 15 to May 1.~~

**Public Comment (48 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 48 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Twenty-one respondents (44%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (2%) opposed, and 26 respondents (54%) expressed no opinion. The single comment confirmed support for the proposal.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Frank Lake has no natural reproduction. Rainbow Trout are stocked in this lake to provide a put, grow, and take fishery. Many of the Rainbow Trout in the Northwest ¼ of the lake are post spawn fish that will likely not survive the act of spawning. Eliminating this exception provides an appropriate angler harvest opportunity by eliminating catch-and-release requirements and reverting to Western Fishing District Standard harvest regulations.

**Proposal 28- Increasing protections for adult Bull Trout in key spawning streams tributary to the Kootenai River.[Survey ref: Q35]**

Page 35

**KOOTENAI RIVER**

~~Highway 37 Bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border.~~

~~Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within 150-yards upstream and downstream of the Quartz Creek stream mouth unless posted at a greater distance.~~

~~Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within 150-yards upstream and downstream of the O'Brien Creek stream mouth unless posted at a greater distance.~~

**Public Comment (53 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 51 survey responses to this proposal, 3 were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Thirty-five survey respondents (66%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (9%) opposed, and 13 respondents (25%) expressed no opinion. Comments generally confirmed support, but some also mentioned vagueness and difficulties recognizing the suggested boundaries, also the difficulty in enforcing such regulations in the past.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Bull Trout seasonally spend time at the mouths of spawning streams waiting for flows and water temperatures in the spawning streams to reach

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



optimum immigration conditions. This congregation often attracts anglers. At these times, Bull Trout are vulnerable to angling and can suffer mortality even if released. Angling closures in key areas used by staging Bull Trout prevent anglers from targeting vulnerable fish, and avoid incidental hooking as well.

**Proposal 29- Add catch-and release for Burbot to portions of the Kootenai River; Delete Lake Koocanusa exception. [Survey ref: Q36]**

Page 35

**KOOTENAI RIVER**

Highway 37 bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 daily and in possession, includes 3 under 13 inches and only 1 over 18 inches.

*Catch-and-release for Burbot.*

PAGE 36

**LAKE KOOCANUSA**

~~Closed to burbot (ling) fishing January 15 to March 1.~~

Salmon: 50 daily and 100 in possession.

Rainbow Trout: Adipose clipped fish less than 22 inches must be released (see location of adipose fin on the Rainbow Trout color plate at the front of this booklet).

**Public Comment (50 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 50 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. Twenty-four respondents (45%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (10%) opposed, and 24 respondents (45%) expressed no opinion. Both comments recommended stocking more burbot to increase fishing opportunities; one suggested stocking more burbot might help control sucker populations.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Burbot populations in the Western Fishing District are generally lower in abundance now compared to historic levels. Reduced harvest will potentially increase numbers of mature fish. Adding a catch and release regulation on the Kootenai River between the Highway 37 bridge (near the Fisher River confluence) downstream to Idaho border provides additional protections, and supports recent burbot re-introduction efforts by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and Idaho Fish and Game. Our goal is to further protect these populations now, so that a strong spawning population may again provide improved harvest opportunities in the future. Reducing the Western District standard harvest limit also eliminates the need for the timing closure exception on Lake Koocanusa.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Proposal 30- Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest in the Kootenai River from Highway 37 Bridge downstream to the Idaho border. [Survey ref: Q37]**

Page 35

**KOOTENAI RIVER**

Highway 37 bridge, near Fisher River, to Idaho Border

Open entire year.

Combined Trout: 4 daily and in possession, includes 3 under 13 inches and only 1 over 18 inches.

*Brown trout: no limit.*

**Public Comment (54 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 52 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. We also received 2 other comments electronically. Twenty-six respondents (48%) supported the proposal, 7 respondents (13%) opposed, and 21 respondents (39%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support also agreed with the need to respond to illegal introductions and acknowledged the role anglers might play in helping that effort. No comment elaborated reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of this species in the Kootenai River drainage and the desire to see Brown Trout substantially controlled or eradicated at this location in Montana. The regulation allows anglers to participate in stream fishery conservation efforts.

**Proposal 31- Change from Western District Standard Regulation to no limit on Brown Trout harvest Lake Creek (near Troy). [Survey ref: Q38]**

Page 35

**LAKE CREEK (near Troy)**

*Entire Stream*

*Open to fishing all year.*

Snagging: open for salmon from September 15 through November 30.

*150 yards downstream of Keeler Creek to mouth*

*Brown trout: no limit.*

**Public Comment (55 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 51 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. We received 4 other comments electronically. Twenty-six respondents (47%) supported the proposal, 8 respondents (15%) opposed, and 21 respondents (38%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal. A single comment confirmed opposition to the proposal without further elaboration.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation change is a response to the unauthorized placement of species in the Kootenai River drainage and the desire to see Brown Trout substantially controlled or eradicated at this location in Montana. The regulation allows anglers to participate in stream fishery conservation efforts.

**Proposal 32- Expanding protection for Bull Trout at the mouth of Lion Creek. [Survey ref: Q39]**

<p>PAGE 36</p> <p><b>LION CREEK (tributary to Swan River)</b></p> <p>Closed entire year.</p> <p><b>Mouth of Lion Creek</b></p> <p>Closed to angling June 1 through September 30 within <i>300-yards upstream and downstream</i> <del>150-yard radius</del> of the stream mouth <i>on Swan River</i>, unless posted at a greater distance.</p>
---

**Public Comment (58 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 53 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 5 other comments electronically. Thirty-five respondents (60%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (9%) opposed, and 18 respondents (31%) expressed no opinion. One comment in support also recommended posting and enforcing the regulation. No comments elaborated reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Bull trout are listed as “Threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. Current regulations prohibit angling for Bull Trout in streams. In addition, Lion Creek includes a complete angling closure at its mouth to protect Bull Trout that stage in this area before ascending the stream to spawn. Based on observations of anglers both fishing and catching Bull Trout at this location, the current closure area appears too small to adequately protect Bull Trout when they congregate at this location. Increasing the size of the area closed to angling should benefit Bull Trout conservation objectives.

**Proposal 33- Eliminate the existing Loon Lake regulation exception and revert to Western District standard limits. [Survey ref: Q40]**

<p>Page 36</p> <p><b><del>LOON LAKE (NEAR Ferndale)</del></b></p> <p><del>Combined trout: 4 less than 12 inches and only 1 over 22 inches daily and in possession.</del></p>
--

**Public Comment (52 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 49 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically and 2 that were written down at public meetings. Twenty-nine respondents (56%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (10%) opposed, and 18 respondents (34%) expressed no opinion. No comment elaborated reasons for support. Some

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

comments in opposition mentioned that the current regulation is not meant to produce trophies, and that they would like to see an alternative to the Western District Standard fishing regulations before any changes were made.

### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Withdraw the proposal.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation proposal be entirely withdrawn. Although continuing an enforcement challenge, lake anglers adamantly believe the current regulation provides some improvement in fish size and benefit to the fishery that would be removed if the proposal is approved. This may be the case and since there is a recent unauthorized introduction of crappie, removal of the existing regulation at this time would also confound evaluation of the effect of the introduction.

### **Proposal 34- Standardize stream angling closures in Bull Trout streams in the Kootenai River drainage. [Survey ref: Q41]**

Page 29

~~BLUE SKY CREEK~~

~~Closed entire year.~~

~~CLARENCE CREEK (near Eureka)~~

~~Closed entire year.~~

Page 34

GRAVE CREEK **AND TRIBUTARIES** (near Eureka *including Clarence and Blue Sky Creeks*)

~~Snagging: open for salmon from Highway 93 bridge downstream to mouth September 15 through November 30. Standard limits apply.~~

*Downstream of Highway 93 bridge to mouth*

*Snagging: open for salmon from September 15 through November 30, 20 salmon daily and 40 in possession.*

*Upstream of Highway 93 bridge*

*Open third Saturday in May through August 15.*

Page 35

KEELER CREEK **AND TRIBUTARIES**

Open third Saturday in May through *August 15* ~~July 15~~.

New Exception

**QUARTZ CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES** (Kootenai River drainage *including West Fork*)

*Open third Saturday in May through August 15.*

Page 44

~~WEST FORK QUARTZ CREEK (Kootenai River drainage)~~

~~Open third Saturday in May through July 15~~

**Public Comment (53 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 51 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Twenty-four respondents (45%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (9%) opposed, and 24 respondents (46%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support often favorably mentioned additional protection for Bull Trout. Comments in opposition also mentioned less fishing opportunities in Graves Creek and that the additional protection for Bull Trout seems unnecessary at this time.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. These regulations standardize stream angling closures in bull trout streams in the Kootenai River drainage. Over 20 years of sampling near Blue Sky Creek has shown that Westslope Cutthroat Trout comprise approximately 10-15 percent of the estimated fish population; the rest are Bull Trout. It is currently illegal to intentionally fish for bull trout in streams in the Kootenai River drainage. Bull Trout spawner numbers, determined from redd counts, in Grave Creek have dropped in recent years. The 2014, 2013 and 2011 counts were all just over 50% of the 10 year average. Sampling indicates that from mid July to mid August, some adult spawning bull trout have already reached upstream spawning areas in Grave Creek. However, although spawning bull trout are in Grave Creek prior to the proposed August 15 closure date, spawning has not begun and the fish are not on the redds. The August 15 opening is a compromise between allowing access to Westslope Cutthroat trout fishing and protecting Bull Trout spawners.

**Proposal 35- Allow Bull Trout harvest again in Lake Koocanusa. [Survey ref: Q42]**

Page 36

**LAKE KOOCANUSA**

Closed to Burbot (ling) fishing January 15 to March 1.

Salmon: 50 daily and 100 in possession.

Rainbow Trout: Adipose clipped fish less than 22 inches must be released (see location of adipose fin on the Rainbow Trout color plate at the front of this booklet).

Bull trout: *1 fish per license year from June 1 through February 28, Catch-and-release the rest of the year.* ~~Catch and release only.~~ A Lake Koocanusa Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout. See Special Licenses requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

**Public Comment (58 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 50 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 7 other comments electronically and 1 that was written down at a public meeting. Thirty-three respondents (57%) supported the proposal, 12 respondents (21%) opposed, and 13 respondents (22%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support favorably anticipated the opportunity to harvest Bull Trout again. Comments in opposition also mentioned concern that current spawning escapement as determined by redd counts may not warrant fish harvest just yet. One comment suggested that allowing no Bull Trout harvest is easier to enforce.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. FWP in collaboration with British Columbia will continue to closely monitor the spawner numbers. Redd count trend has been upward recently and there will be a robust catch card/creel survey in place to monitor harvest. The USFWS permits re-opening the harvest fishery and will permit this proposed regulation change if adopted.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Proposal 36- Remove an unneeded seasonal angling closure from Lake Mary Ronan. [Survey ref: Q43]**

Page 36

**LAKE MARY RONAN**

~~Open March 1 to third Saturday in May: Yellow perch and northern pike only.~~

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February~~

Salmon: 10 daily and 20 in possession.

Bass: open third Saturday in May through June 30: only 1 over 22 inches. Open July 1 through the end of February: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches. ~~Closed~~

~~March 1 to the third Saturday in May~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

**Public Comment (52 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 50 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 comments electronically and 1 that was written down at a public meeting. Forty respondents (77%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (2%) opposed, and 11 respondents (21%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support of the proposal favorably anticipated more angling opportunity, but some also urged caution since Lake Mary Ronan supplies Kokanee Salmon eggs to the state hatchery system. One comment requested a slot limit for Yellow Perch and a length limit on the number of larger Yellow Perch that could be kept. No comment elaborated on reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Removing the closures will allow anglers to fish for salmon, trout and bass throughout the year as is currently allowed elsewhere in Region 1. Removing the closures would also standardize the fishing season on Lake Mary Ronan with other lakes in the Region and across the state. Increasing regulation uniformity when possible adds clarity, assisting angler understanding and compliance. Concerning caution that Lake Mary Ronan is a critical Kokanee Salmon egg source for Montana, which is true, the egg source is readily abundant and we feel the regulation change will not harm this source. Evaluation of fishing regulation effects on the fishery resource is continuously ongoing, regardless of the regulation in effect. An additional safeguarded is that we will continue to monitor angling effects over time.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## WESTERN DISTRICT – Region 2

### Proposal 37- New regulations, Skyline Pond in Butte. [Survey ref: Q45]

New Exception

#### **SKYLINE POND (BUTTE)**

*1 trout daily and in possession.*

*Open to fishing for anglers 14 years of age and younger.*

*One rod per child.*

**Public Comment (25 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 24 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Ten survey respondents (40%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 15 respondents (60%) expressed no opinion. Comments generally confirmed support. One comment asked for clarification about what the new regulations are. No comment expressed opposition.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This is a new pond needing new regulations. Fishing opportunities for young anglers are somewhat limited in the Butte area. Skyline Pond was built specifically to help remedy this situation. These regulations ensure that the new pond is reserved for young anglers.

### Proposal 38- Remove Northern Pike from the extended season list for the Blackfoot River Mainstem. Standardize trout harvest length exception within Region 2. [Survey ref: Q46]

Page 29

#### **BLACKFOOT RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES**

##### **Mainstem and all tributaries except the Clearwater River**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches long*, ~~no Rainbow Trout over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout. (See Clearwater River Drainage for exceptions).

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouths of Belmont Creek, Copper Creek, Gold Creek, Monture Creek and North Fork Blackfoot River.

##### **Mainstem only**

Extended season for ~~northern pike and~~ whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.

Tributaries are closed to fishing.

##### **Mainstem from Landers Fork mouth downstream to the confluence with the Clark Fork River**

Catch-and-release for Brook Trout. (This regulation is a result of Bull Trout being misidentified and harvested as Brook Trout. Brook Trout are rare in this section of river whereas Bull Trout are common).

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Public Comment (24 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 24 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. Fourteen respondents (58%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (13%) opposed, and 7 respondents (29%) expressed no opinion. Most comments in support of the proposal confirmed support; one raised a concern that Cutthroat Trout could be harvested by mistake. Comments in opposition to the proposal generally confirmed opposition. One respondent mistakenly assumed FWP stocked Northern Pike.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The Combined Trout modification helps standardize the various and different length limits currently applied to Combined Trout quotas in different areas to just one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams. Northern Pike are rarely found in the Blackfoot River since the removal of Milltown Dam. An extended season open for Northern Pike harvest may inappropriately misrepresent to anglers that they are still available to be caught. This proposal will eliminate that ambiguity.

**Proposal 39- Increase Kokanee snagging opportunity between Lakes Alva and Inez. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass in Clearwater River, from Salmon Lake outlet to river mouth. Standardize Combined Trout limit. [Survey ref: Q47]**

Page 30

CLEARWATER RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES (lakes not included, see exceptions for individual lakes elsewhere)

Clearwater River upstream from the Salmon Lake inlet and all tributaries of the Clearwater River except the West Fork and Marshall Creek

Closed to fishing from Rainy Lake fish barrier downstream for 100 yards.

Catch and release for Cutthroat Trout.

Northern Pike: no limit, open to spearing.

Snagging: open for *Kokanee* Salmon from *Lake Alva outlet to Lake Inez inlet and from Lake Inez outlet to Seeley Lake inlet* from September 15 through November 30. Closed to Snagging from Seeley Lake outlet to Salmon Lake inlet.

NOTE: Clearwater River sections between lakes are closed to fishing from Dec. 1 until the third Saturday in May. This includes the Clearwater River section from the outlet of Seeley Lake at Riverview Drive Bridge ("Dogtown") downstream to inlet of Salmon Lake.

Clearwater River from Salmon Lake outlet to mouth *of the Clearwater River*, including Blanchard Lake and Elbow Lake.

Open entire year.

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

~~Catch—and—release for Bass.~~

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 rainbow trout over 14 inches.* ~~no—rainbow over 12 inches.~~

Northern Pike: no limit, open to spearing.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Public Comment (27 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 5 that were expanded with additional written comments. Thirteen respondents (48%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (15%) opposed, and 10 respondents (37%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal generally confirmed support. Some comments in opposition also mentioned prohibiting snagging altogether, or suggested alternative regulations for bass.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Kokanee salmon are very abundant and show slow growth rates in many waters in this area. Increasing angler harvest opportunity between Lakes Alva and Inez in concert with regulation proposals elsewhere may help to reduce Kokanee Salmon numbers and to improve their growth rates. The bass limit would revert to Western Fishing District standard “5 daily and in possession, no size limit. Third Saturday in May through June 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches.” The Combined Trout length limit change helps standardize inconsequentially subtle length limit differences for some trout species currently used in various Combined Trout quotas, to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams.

**Proposal 40- Standardize Combined Trout limit exception for the Clark Fork River with others in Region 2. [Survey ref: Q48]**

Page 30

CLARK FORK RIVER

The Region 2 portions

**Upstream from Perkins Lane Bridge, near Warm Springs**

Open entire year.  
Catch and release only.  
Artificial lures only.  
Closed to fishing from boats/vessels.

**Perkins Lane Bridge, near Warm Springs, to mouth of Flathead River**

~~Closed to fishing from about 2 ½ miles upstream from the confluence of the Blackfoot River to about ½ mile downstream, as posted.~~  
Extended season for Northern Pike and Whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures and/or maggots only.  
Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.  
Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 over 14 inches long*, ~~none over 15 inches.~~  
Northern Pike: no limit.  
Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouths of Rattlesnake Creek, Petty Creek, Fish Creek, Cedar Creek, Dry Creek, Trout Creek, and St. Regis River.

**Public Comment (28 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 28 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. Fifteen respondents (54%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (7%) opposed, and 11 respondents (39%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal generally confirmed support. One comment suggested exercising care in how the regulation is written to

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

avoid ambiguity. One comment suggested catch and release for all Clark Fork River trout until they recover from removal of Milltown Dam.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The Combined Trout length limit change helps standardize different length limits used for some trout species in various Combined Trout quotas in Region 2, to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams. Uniformity in regulations, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 41- Standardize many trout harvest exceptions throughout Region 2.**  
**[Survey ref: Q49]**

<p>Page 25</p> <p><b>ALICE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p> <p><b>BEAVER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p> <p><b>BELMONT CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p> <p>Page 29</p> <p><b>CHAMBERLAIN CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p> <p>Page 31</p> <p><b>COPPER CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p> <p>Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.</p> <p><b>COTTONWOOD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)</b></p> <p>Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.</p> <p>Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, <i>only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches</i>, <del>no rainbow over 12 inches</del>, any size brown trout.</p>	
--	--

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 32

**DUNHAM CREEK (tributary to Monture Creek, Blackfoot drainage)**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only.

Page 34

**GOLD CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Page 36

**LANDERS FORK (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Page 37

**MONTURE CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Page 38

**NEVADA CREEK (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout.

**NORTH FORK BLACKFOOT RIVER (tributary to Blackfoot River)**

**Entire Drainage**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches*, ~~no rainbow over 12 inches~~, any size brown trout

Page 32

**FISH CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (Clark Fork River drainage)**

**Entire Drainage**

Artificial lures only, including within a 100-yard radius of the mouth.

**Mainstem downstream of the confluence of the South and West forks**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout. 3 rainbow or brown trout in any combination daily and in possession, none over 15 inches.*

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 38

**PETTY CREEK (Tributary to the Clark Fork River)**

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout.* ~~none over 15 inches.~~

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

Page 39

**RATTLESNAKE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES (near Missoula)**

**Entire River**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout.* ~~none over 15 inches.~~

Artificial lures only, including within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

**Downstream from the mouth of Beeskove Creek**

Closed to fishing from the mouth of Beeskove Creek to 100 yards downstream of Mountain Water Company Dam.

Page 40

**ST. REGIS RIVER**

Catch-and-release for Cutthroat Trout.

Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, *only 1 Rainbow Trout over 14 inches, any size Brown Trout.* ~~none over 15 inches~~

Artificial lures only within 100-yard radius of the mouth.

**Public Comment (31 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 4 other comments electronically. Seventeen respondents (55%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (10%) opposed, and 11 respondents (35%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal confirmed support. Two comments suggested exercising care in how the regulation is written to avoid ambiguity. One comment offered an alternative regulation. One respondent asked why one could not keep a Brook Trout. No comments elaborated on reasons for opposition.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This proposal helps standardize inconsequentially subtle length limit differences for some trout species currently used in various Combined Trout quotas in Region 2 to one length (14 inches) in rivers and streams. It also helps reduce the number of exceptions used to a choice of either any size fish, catch-and-release, or 3 Combined Trout, only 1 fish over 14 inches long. The biological effect of size limits that differ by 3 inches at the most for these sport fish is negligible. Use of a middle value (14 inches) in the range of existing regulations currently used further limits the potential effect on populations. Based on creel information and other angler reports, actual harvest of trout is relatively rare (much less than 10% on average) in most rivers and streams in Region 2. In these situations, harvest is simply not expected to meaningfully affect trout population abundance or size structure, while standardization can greatly aid angler understanding and compliance.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## Proposal 42- Proposal Reduce harvest limit and set a length requirement to harvest Brook Trout from Georgetown Lake. [Survey ref: Q50]

Page 34

### GEORGETOWN LAKE

Open third Saturday in May through March 31, except for the South and East shoreline area which is only open July 1 through March 31. South and East shoreline area described as follows: all waters from the shore or within 100 yards of shore in the area extending from a point 200 yards west of Denton's Point Marina (along the shore, including all of Stuart Mill Bay) to a point 200 yards north from the mouth of North Fork Flint Creek.

Salmon: no daily or possession limit.

Combined Trout, includes brook trout: 5 daily and in possession, of which **only 1** ~~no more than 2~~ may be **a** brook trout. **Only brook trout over 18-16 inches can be kept.**

**Public Comment (30 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 6 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comments electronically. Sixteen respondents (53%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (17%) opposed, and 9 respondents (30%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal generally approved the attempt to enhance a trophy Brook Trout fishery. Three comments recommended a shorter length limit to allow some harvest, suggesting that Brook Trout do not often reach 18 inches in Georgetown Lake. One comment recommended catch and release regulations instead.

### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Modify the proposal.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be modified to allow only 1 brook trout over 16 inches be harvested. Data from 2010 (when the Brook Trout population was abundant and no harvest was allowed) showed about 20% of fish 16 inches and greater whereas less than 5% were 18 inches and greater. To balance harvest with the potential to catch large fish, a 16 inch limit is more appropriate. Current FWP sampling information including angler reports indicate that Brook Trout in Georgetown Lake are being overharvested under current regulations. We especially see a reduction in the number of larger fish, 16 inches or longer. With the proposed regulation including the length modification from 18 to 16 inches, fewer small fish should be harvested, allowing larger numbers to recruit into the 16 inch and longer size classes.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Proposal 43- Increase kokanee harvest limits at Lakes Alva, Inez, Placid, Salmon, and Seeley. Remove catch-and-release restriction for Bass at Lakes Alva, Inez, and Salmon. [Survey ref: Q51]**

Page 35

**LAKE ALVA**

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

*Kokanee* Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~—5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

**LAKE INEZ**

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

*Kokanee* Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~—5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Page 39

**PLACID LAKE (includes outlet arm to outlet control structure)**

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

*Kokanee* Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~—5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Snagging: open for Salmon October 15 through December 31, 20 Salmon daily and 40 in possession.

**SALMON LAKE AND TRIBUTARIES**

~~Catch-and-release for bass.~~

Northern Pike: no limit.

*Kokanee* Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~—5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

**SEELEY LAKE**

Bass: no daily or possession limit for entire year.

Northern Pike: no limit.

*Kokanee* Salmon: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~—5 daily and 10 in possession~~

Spearing: open for Northern Pike.

Snagging: open for Salmon October 15 through December 31, 20 Salmon daily and 40 in possession.

**Public Comment (27 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Seventeen respondents (63%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 10 respondents (37%) expressed no opinion. One comment in support of the proposal simply confirmed support.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Kokanee Salmon are abundant and show slow growth

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

rates in these waters. Increasing harvest may help to reduce Kokanee numbers and to improve growth rates. Bass limit would revert to the Western Fishing District standard: "5 daily and in possession, no size limit. Third Saturday in May through June 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches."

#### **Proposal 44- Add artificial lures only restriction to Silver Bow Creek and its tributaries. [Survey ref: Q52]**

Page 40

##### **SILVER BOW CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES**

###### **Mainstem and Tributaries**

Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout

*Artificial lures only in Silver Bow Creek and German Gulch;*

*Blacktail Creek is open all year from its mouth near Montana Street in Butte, upstream to Four Mile Road crossing*

**Public Comment (32 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 28 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We also received 4 other comments electronically. Fifteen respondents (47%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (16%) opposed, and 12 respondents (37%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support of the proposal generally favored artificial lures to protect trout as they re-establish in Silver Bow Creek. One comment expressed the hope that bait would again be allowed after trout populations are sufficiently established. One comment suggested that Blacktail Creek in Butte be open to year round fishing for youth opportunities. No comments elaborated on reasons for opposition.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Modify the proposal.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be modified to limit the artificial lure restriction to only Silver Bow Creek where Cutthroat Trout are increasing abundance, and allow year-round fishing with bait in Blacktail Creek in Butte where Brook Trout numerically dominate. Silver Bow Creek's fishery is in the recovery stage and we hope that Cutthroat Trout in particular can continue to increase in number and distribution. The exclusion of the artificial lure restriction in Blacktail Creek and Browns Gulch still allows for the use of bait in these tributaries, both of which support mostly Brook Trout. Additionally, the opening of lower Blacktail Creek where it flows through Butte to year-round angling provides additional opportunity for anglers, especially youth that may be affected by the implementation of an artificial lure only regulation on Silver Bow Creek and German Gulch. The opening of this stretch of stream to year round angling also supports the goal of increasing harvest on non-native Brook Trout to help the recovery of Cutthroat Trout in the drainage.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



## CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 3

### Proposal 45- Madison River regulation modifications. [Survey ref: Q54]

Page 62

#### MADISON RIVER

##### Yellowstone National Park boundary to Hebgen Reservoir

Catch-and-release for rainbow trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, any size.

Combined Trout: 5 brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

##### ~~Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake~~

~~Open entire year~~

##### Quake Lake outlet to Lyons Bridge

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February~~

Catch and release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

Closed to fishing from boats/vessels.

##### Lyons Bridge to McAtee Bridge

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February~~

Catch and release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

##### McAtee Bridge to Varney Bridge

~~Open entire year~~

Catch and release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession, any size.

Artificial lures only.

##### Varney Bridge to Ennis Bridge

~~Open entire year~~

Catch and release for Rainbow Trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, any size.

##### Ennis Bridge to Ennis Lake

~~Open third Saturday in May through the end of February~~

Catch and release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age *or* and younger may take 1 Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, any size. Closed to fishing from boats/vessels

##### Ennis Dam to the mouth

~~Open entire year~~

Northern Pike: No Limit.

**Public Comment (520 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 197 survey responses to this proposal including 122 that were expanded with additional written comments. We also received 323 other comment electronically, 1 by mail, and 1 that was written down at a public meeting. Thirty-six respondents (7%) supported the proposal, 479 respondents (92%) opposed, and 5 respondents (1%) expressed no opinion. Many comments in support favorably mentioned harvest and yearlong angling opportunities. Comments in opposition, when discussing conservation issues, were principally concerned with retaining catch and release regulations

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



currently in place on the Madison River, and protecting trout spawning with seasonal fishing closures. Many respondents offered alternative regulation proposals for different sections of the Madison, but the clear theme was that most respondents did not favor changes at all. Many respondents confused wild fish management with special angling regulations, treating the two as synonymous. Similarly, many respondents viewed catch and release regulations as synonymous with “no kill”, also not entirely precise. Also clear from the comments is that the Madison River is truly storied and fabled: Comments often included the personal history and emotion of an individual’s experience when fishing the Madison River; Individual values and perceptions mattered as much as biological concerns. Perhaps more than any other proposal this year, this regulation change in particular seemed especially uncomfortable to many.

Some comments addressed specific components of the proposal. For example, 57 comments were received regarding the year-long angling component of the proposal. Of these comments, 46% supported year-round angling and 54% opposed. Seventy-one comments spoke directly to the proposed one fish limit, and similar to the overall comment, 4% supported while 96% opposed the proposed changes. The Madison River Foundation supported allowing year-round angling.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Modify the proposal:** Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed with the following modifications: Withdraw both the proposal to allow one fish to be harvested, and the proposal to make the entire upper river artificial lures only, defaulting instead to the 2015 regulations. We recommend approving the proposed elimination of the seasonal closure. Displacement of long-time, avid resident anglers is something that FWP has discovered through previous surveys, as well as through direct communication with displaced anglers over the years. According to survey results and other communications, crowding is the primary reason that these anglers fish the Madison less often than they did historically, or not at all. Biologically, there is no concern with opening the entire river year-round, which will provide opportunity for displaced anglers to use the resource in the non-peak season. Finally, many comments were received suggesting that this change will spread spring anglers out throughout the river and reduce crowds on currently open reaches. From a rainbow trout spawning perspective, recent surveys have shown that rainbow trout are spawning throughout the river (including in the reaches currently open to year-round angling). Angling in areas of redd concentration is no longer as significant a concern as it may have been in the past.

**Proposal 46- Delete Darlington Spring Creek and Poindexter Slough exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. [Survey ref: Q55]**

Page 58

***DARLINGTON SPRING CREEK aka Darlington Ditch (near Three Forks)***

***On Cobblestone FAS***

~~Open Entire Year—~~

~~Catch and release for trout.~~

~~Artificial Lures Only~~

***Outside of Cobblestone FAS boundaries***

~~Open Entire Year.~~

~~Standard limits apply.—~~

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Page 67

~~POINDEXTER SLOUGH~~

~~Open entire year—~~

~~Catch and release: December 1 to third Saturday in May with artificial lures only~~

**Public Comment (155 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 154 survey responses to this proposal including 8 that were expanded with additional written comments. We also received 1 other comment electronically. Twenty-four respondents (15%) supported the proposal, 42 respondents (27%) opposed, and 89 respondents (57%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support did not elaborate on reasons for support. Some comments in opposition also mentioned concern not to allow trout harvest at all. In contrast, one comment suggested allowing the use of sport fish such as Rainbow Trout as bait.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. These changes eliminate biologically unnecessary regulation exceptions for these streams, and default instead to the Central Fishing District standard regulation.

**Proposal 47- Delete five mountain lake exceptions; revert to Central Fishing District standard regulations instead. [Survey ref: Q56]**

Page 59

~~FERGUSON LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

~~FOOLHEN LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 67

~~SCOTT LAKE (Beaverhead River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 70

~~TAHEPIA LAKE (Wise River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

Page 71

~~WAUKENA LAKE (Big Hole River drainage)~~

~~Combined trout: 5 daily and in possession.~~

**Public Comment (156 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 155 survey responses to this proposal including 9 that were expanded with additional written comments. We also received 1 other comment electronically. Eighteen respondents (12%) supported the proposal, 33 respondents (21%) opposed, and 105 respondents (67%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support did not elaborate on reasons for support. Comments in opposition also mentioned desires to see catch and release regulations in place instead, rather than increasing the possession limit. Most of the comments received were general in nature and likely not specific to these waters. In addition, most of the comments appeared to be unaware that these lakes are

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

maintained primarily by hatchery stocking.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. These changes eliminate unnecessary regulation exceptions for these mountain lakes, and default instead to the Central Fishing District standard regulation. "Lakes/Reservoirs: 5 daily and 10 in possession includes cutthroat trout."

**Proposal 48- Allow Cutthroat Trout harvest in Hyalite Creek section Below Hyalite Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q57]**

Page 60

**HYALITE CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES**

**Above Hyalite Reservoir including East Fork Hyalite and West Fork Hyalite Creek**

Open July 15 through November 30.

Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout.

**Below Hyalite Reservoir**

Open third Saturday in May through November 30.

~~Catch and release for cutthroat trout~~

*Combined Trout: includes Cutthroat Trout.*

**Public Comment (169 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 166 survey responses to this proposal including 8 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comments electronically. Fifty-six respondents (33%) supported the proposal, 36 respondents (21%) opposed, and 77 respondents (46%) expressed no opinion. Several comments in support also mentioned harvesting fish that will die anyway to avoid waste. Some comments in opposition included the desire to prohibit killing any trout. One comment suggested fixing the spillway to prevent fish escape. Another suggested trapping fish, presumably to later move them to safety. Many of the respondents submitting comments against the proposal change appeared unaware that these are primarily hatchery cutthroat trout and that Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout are not the native subspecies for the drainage.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation change provides a simple way to help remove Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout otherwise lost when stranded downstream of Hyalite Dam. Hatchery and wild Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout annually wash over the reservoir to occupy parts of the creek below. Some of these Cutthroat Trout are trapped in the section of stream between the spillway on Hyalite Reservoir and the spillway channel where it connects back to Hyalite Creek. These fish cannot be legally harvested under the current regulation. Stranded fish die. Among other problems they then become an odorous attractant to bears. The regulation change would allow a new angler harvest opportunity and help to achieve a more cost-effective resolution to this problem. There are no Westslope Cutthroat Trout (the native subspecies) present in Hyalite Creek downstream from the dam.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

## Proposal 49- Allow some Rainbow Trout harvest in the Jefferson River. [Survey ref: Q58]

Page 61

### JEFFERSON RIVER

#### Entire River

Open entire year.

Northern pike: no limit.

*Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, 1 may be a rainbow trout, only 1 fish can be over 18 inches long.*

#### ~~Confluence of Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers to Williams Bridge FAS~~

~~Catch and release for cutthroat trout~~

~~Combined Trout: 3 brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

#### ~~Williams Bridge FAS to confluence with Missouri River~~

~~Catch and release for cutthroat trout~~

~~Combined Trout: 5 brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

#### Seasonal spawning closure at tributary mouths: Hell Canyon Creek and Willow Springs Creek.

Closed to fishing 100 yards upstream and downstream from the creek mouths from April 1 through April 30 and from October 15 through November 30.

**Public Comment (185 total).** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 177 survey responses to this proposal including 35 that were expanded with additional written comments. We also received 8 other comments electronically. Twenty-six respondents (14%) supported the proposal, 114 respondents (62%) opposed, and 45 respondents (24%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support favorably mentioned the opportunity to again harvest Rainbow Trout from the Jefferson River, and trusting the recommendation. Most comments opposed the proposal, mentioning catch and release for trout should be implemented everywhere or at least retained on the Jefferson River for Rainbow Trout at this time. Recent drought experience reinforced this message from many. One non-resident respondent said they would not consider returning if these regulations were passed.

### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this proposal be approved as proposed. This regulation change would provide new opportunity to harvest Rainbow Trout after the population has recovered significantly in the Jefferson River. This locally-derived proposal allows FWP to uphold a past promise to provide opportunity for Rainbow Trout harvest once the population recovers. In approximately two-thirds of the Jefferson River, Rainbow Trout are now more abundant than Brown Trout. In addition, this regulation change provides more protection for Brown Trout, and in some cases the population would benefit from such assistance (e.g., the lower third of the Jefferson River). Local sporting groups had differing opinions on this proposal. FWP contends that the drought-management plan that has been in place for over 15 years has worked, and habitat improvement projects have shown clear benefits to the Rainbow Trout population. Regardless of whether the recommendation is adopted, FWP

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

will closely monitor the fish populations in the Jefferson River and will make necessary changes if needed.

## CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 4

### Proposal 50- New regulations: East Fork Reservoir spearing opportunity. [Survey ref: Q60]

New Exception

**EAST FORK RESERVOIR (near Lewistown)**

*Spearing: open for non-game fish and Northern Pike through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.*

*Hook and line/setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.*

**Public Comment (57 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 57 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Fifteen respondents (26%) supported the proposal, 7 respondents (12%) opposed, and 35 respondents (61%) expressed no opinion. The single comment supported efforts to prevent or limit expansion of all invasive species. In this case the regulation change is about optimizing angler opportunities, not suppressing Northern Pike.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. East Fork Reservoir has a population of northern pike. The public has expressed interest in spearing pike through the ice. Allowing spearing through the ice and by swimmers would provide opportunity for this type of angling. Allowing 6 lines through the ice would allow more opportunity for ice fishing for pike using a method accepted for this species in other parts of the state.

### Proposal 51- New regulations: Willow Creek Reservoir near Augusta. [Survey ref: Q61]

New Exception

**WILLOW CREEK RESERVOIR (near Augusta)**

*5 trout daily only one over 20 inches*

**Public Comment (59 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 58 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Twenty-two respondents (37%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (3%) opposed, and 35 respondents (59%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support also mentioned desires to have more trophy fish lakes and opportunities in Montana to compliment the already large number of opportunities to catch fish more generally. No comment elaborated on reasons for opposition.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Limiting harvest of larger trout is intended to help

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

maintain or improve the abundance of larger-size trout in the reservoir. FWP is now managing Willow Creek Reservoir with emphasis on shifting size structure of the trout population towards larger (longer) fish.

### **Proposal 52- Remove Sunrise-Sunset shelter removal requirement on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. [Survey ref: Q62]**

Page 47

#### **Methods of Taking Fish**

~~**Sunrise-Sunset Removal:** Shelters may not be placed on the ice prior to sunrise and must be removed before sunset each day on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. —~~

**Public Comment (62 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 61 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Seventeen respondents (27%) supported the proposal, 7 respondents (11%) opposed, and 38 respondents (62%) expressed no opinion. Three comments mentioned an error in the survey proposal: the rationale from a different proposal had been mistakenly included here as well. Most respondents were able to navigate this error; the correct proposal and rationale were also available in a separate supporting document online. However, the mixed language was legitimately confusing. One comment mentioned that eliminating the requirement to remove ice houses each day would require an Administrative Rule modification, which is correct. No comment elaborated on reasons for opposition.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation was an artifact of high fishing pressure associated with the Kokanee Salmon fishery of the 1990's. Kokanee Salmon are no longer abundant in Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena. High Kokanee Salmon harvest is no longer an issue, so this special regulation is not needed to aid enforcement.

### **Proposal 53- Eliminate Bean Lake regulation exception. [Survey ref: Q63]**

Page 52

#### **BEAN LAKE**

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.~~

**Public Comment (63 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 63 survey responses to this proposal, none were expanded with additional written comments. Eighteen respondents (29%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (8%) opposed, and 40 respondents (63%) expressed no opinion. No comment elaborated reasons for supporting or opposing the proposal.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Lake water levels at Bean Lake are very low and have been for many years. FWP stopped stocking the lake in 2005. Maintaining a special regulation

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

implies that we still actively manage the lake as a fishery. Removing the exception helps avoid this potential misunderstanding. If the exception is eliminated, angling regulations at Bean Lake will revert to Central Fishing District standards.

#### Proposal 54- Modify Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. [Survey ref: Q64]

Page 55

##### **BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)**

~~Entire Creek~~

~~Open entire year~~

~~Upstream of the US Highway 191 bridge, including East Fork Big Spring Creek downstream from the Reservoir~~

Catch and release only for all *trout* fish species

**Public Comment (84 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 79 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 4 other comments electronically. Forty-one respondents (49%) supported the proposal, 6 respondents (7%) opposed, and 37 respondents (44%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal; one mentioned that preserving a catch and release opportunity for trout was welcome to distinguish this angling experience from others where harvesting trout is permissible. In contrast, two comments in opposition mentioned a preference that catch and release restrictions also be removed for trout.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. A catch-and-release angling regulation for all fish in portions of Big Spring Creek was instituted in 2003 due to concerns about PCB contamination of fish and the potential threat to human health. Recent PCB abatement efforts show a 95% reduction in PCB detection in Big Spring Creek. The 2014 fish tissue samples showed PCB levels were low and do not warrant “do not eat” restrictions. As such there is no need to preclude harvest of non-trout species from Big Spring Creek on the basis of human health risk. Public sentiment favors maintaining catch- and-release angling for trout, a regulation we propose to maintain. Northern Pike, Yellow Perch and Mountain Whitefish occur in low abundance locally in this drainage, and are most likely the species of fish that would be harvested with this regulation change.

If the Central Fishing District standard regulation that streams and rivers are open all year is adopted, the current exception for Big Spring Creek (near Lewistown) can be eliminated.

#### Proposal 55- Modify East Fork Big Spring Creek exception to catch and release only for trout. [Survey ref: Q65]

Page 55

##### **EAST FORK BIG SPRING CREEK (near Lewistown)**

~~Downstream from the Reservoir~~

Catch and release only for all *trout* fish species

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Public Comment (79 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 76 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 3 other comment electronically. Thirty-nine respondents (49%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (6%) opposed, and 35 respondents (45%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal; two mentioned that preserving a catch and release opportunity for trout was welcome to distinguish this angling experience from others where harvesting trout is permissible. In contrast, one comment mentioned a preference that catch and release restrictions be removed to allow trout harvest as well.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. A catch-and- release angling regulation for East Fork Big Spring Creek was instituted in 2003 due to concerns about PCB contamination of fish and the potential threat to human health. Recent PCB abatement efforts show a 95% reduction in PCB detection in Big Spring Creek. The 2014 fish tissue samples showed PCB levels were low and do not warrant “do not eat” restrictions. As such there is no need to preclude harvest of fish from Big Spring Creek on the basis of human health risk.

Public sentiment favors maintaining catch- and-release angling for trout in this area, a regulation we propose to maintain. Northern Pike, Yellow Perch and Mountain Whitefish occur in low abundance locally in this drainage, and are most likely the species of fish that would be harvested with this regulation change.

**Proposal 56- Walleye limit correction for Hauser Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q66]**

Page 60

**HAUSER RESERVOIR**

**Including Canyon Ferry Dam tailwater and Lake Helena**

Combined Trout and Salmon: 5 trout and salmon daily and in combination and 10 trout and salmon in possession in any combination.

Northern Pike: no Limit.

Walleye: **20 daily 12 daily, only 1 over 25 inches.** Possession limit is **40 fish, only 2 over 25 inches** twice the daily limit.

Yellow Perch: 10 daily and in possession, except from April 1through June 30, only 1 fish daily and in possession, 14 inch maximum.

Catch-and-release for Brown Trout, except anglers 14 years of age **or** and younger may Take 1 Brown Trout daily and in possession, any size.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice only.

**Public Comment (73 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 73 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. Thirty-one respondents (42%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (3%) opposed, and 40 respondents (55%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally confirmed agreement with the proposal. No comments elaborated reasons for opposition. One comment mentioned an alternative 5 walleye limit across the state. A second suggested keeping the regulation consistent statewide as well.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~striketrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This change corrects a misprint in the 2015 regulation booklet.

**Proposal 57- Remove Sauger from species lists for spearing in regulation exceptions for Lake Elwell aka Tiber Reservoir, Tiber Reservoir aka Lake Elwell, and Lake Frances. [Survey ref: Q67]**

Page 61

**LAKE ELWELL aka Tiber Reservoir**

Cisco and Whitefish: all fish must be released immediately or killed and counted as part of your limit. It is unlawful to possess live Cisco or Whitefish for any reason.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

**LAKE FRANCES**

Closed entire year around the water supply outlet as posted.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

Page 70

**TIBER RESERVOIR aka Lake Elwell**

Cisco and Whitefish: all fish must be released immediately or killed and counted as part of your limit. It is unlawful to possess live Cisco or Whitefish for any reason.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice.

Spearing: open for non-game fish, northern pike, walleye, ~~sauger~~ and burbot (ling) through the ice and by persons swimming or submerged.

**Public Comment (67 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 67 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. Twenty-two respondents (33%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (3%) opposed, and 43 respondents (64%) expressed no opinion. One comment asked not to spear allow walleye spearing either. One angler claimed to have caught Sauger (by implication in Tiber Reservoir) during a fishing contest.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. To our knowledge, Sauger are no longer found in Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir). Sauger do not occur in Lake Frances. Listing Sauger among species approved for spearing in these waters implies that Sauger are present. Removing Sauger from the regulations would more accurately identify the fish species likely to be taken by spearing.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Proposal 58- Increase Smallmouth Bass harvest limits on the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton. [Survey ref: Q68]**

Page 65

**MISSOURI RIVER**

**Morony Dam to Fort Benton**

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger (NOTE: The proposed Sauger Walleye change is detailed elsewhere)

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

*Smallmouth bass: 10 daily and in possession*

**Public Comment (73total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 72 survey responses to this proposal including 4 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Twenty-five respondents (35%) supported the proposal, 4 respondents (5%) opposed, and 44 respondents (60%) expressed no opinion. One comment in support noted the abundance of bass. One comment asked to include a length limit for mature females. One comment requested a slot limit to help create a trophy bass fishery. One comment in opposition stated that increasing the harvest limit would decimate the fishery.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. FWP finds Smallmouth Bass are the most abundant game species sampled in this reach of river during electrofishing surveys. Anglers also report high catch rates while targeting bass, and also incidental to angling for other species. FWP stocked this reach of river with smallmouth bass from 1994-1999. The present population represents the success of this stocking and likely expansion of smallmouth bass from Fort Peck Reservoir. Increasing the Bass harvest limit provides new opportunity for anglers.

**Proposal 59- Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River from Morony Dam to Fort Benton – Central Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q69]**

Page 62

**MARIAS RIVER**

Open entire year downstream from the I-15 Bridge.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Whitefish 35 daily and in possession.

Hook and Line/Setlines: 2 lines with up to 2 hooks per line all year.

Page 65

**MISSOURI RIVER**

**Morony Dam to Fort Benton**

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Public Comment (74total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 72 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. Seventeen respondents (24%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (4%) opposed, and 52 respondents (72%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally approved the Sauger limit change. Several comments cautioned to consider Sauger abundance carefully, including one that suggested leaving Sauger alone “until Ft Peck populations rebound”. One comment suggested an additional need for a length limit to protect mature females. One comment in opposition asked why fix something that is working? One respondent asked to see a chart demonstrating what is meant by “long term population stability”.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Sauger regulations have been very restrictive for 15 years. Population data from the Missouri River now suggest increased Sauger abundance and long term population stability. The regulation change would allow slightly more Sauger harvest opportunity for anglers on the Missouri and also serve to help match Sauger limits with the Marias and Missouri Rivers in the Eastern Fishing District. Uniformity of regulation, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 4**

**Proposal 60- Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Judith River - Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q70]**

New Exception

**JUDITH RIVER (from Hwy 81 downstream to mouth)**

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

**Public Comment (71total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 72 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. Seventeen respondents (24%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (4%) opposed, and 52 respondents (72%) expressed no opinion. No comment elaborated reasons for support. Some comments in opposition mentioned concern about current Sauger abundance, including one suggestion to leave Sauger alone “until Ft Peck populations rebound”. One comment suggested an additional need for a length limit to protect mature females.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Sauger /Walleye regulations on the Judith River are currently the standard regulation for the Eastern Fishing District: 5 daily and 10 in possession. This regulation proposal would be slightly more restrictive of Sauger harvest opportunity, but would also standardize Sauger/Walleye limits with the Missouri River in the Eastern District. Sauger occur in low abundance in the lower portions of the Judith River. Slightly less angler opportunity is offset by the benefits of regulation uniformity that aids angler understanding and compliance.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Proposal 61- Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837 – Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q71]**

Page 83

**FORT PECK RESERVOIR**

**Fort Peck Dam to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837**

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger.

Spearing: In addition to the standard regulations, Chinook Salmon and Lake Trout may be taken by spear or gig through the ice December 1 through March 31.

Snagging: allowed only for Chinook Salmon from October 1 through November 30.

**Public Comment (70 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 70 survey responses to this proposal including 3 that were expanded with additional written comments. Sixteen respondents (23%) supported the proposal, 4 respondents (6%) opposed, and 50 respondents (71%) expressed no opinion. No comment elaborated reasons for support. Some comments in opposition mentioned concern about current Sauger abundance, including one suggestion to leave Sauger alone “until Ft Peck populations rebound”. One comment suggested an additional need for a length limit to protect mature females.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. A change in the Sauger harvest number is proposed for the Missouri River upstream of Fort Peck Reservoir and the Musselshell River. This regulation would standardize the harvest limit with these other waters. Increasing the Sauger harvest limit on Fort Peck Reservoir would provide more opportunity for the public to harvest an additional Sauger in Fort Peck Reservoir. Regulation uniformity, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

**Proposal 62- Change Sauger limits for Sauger/Walleye Combinations on the Marias River and the Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton – Eastern Fishing District locations. [Survey ref: Q72]**

Page 83

**MARIAS RIVER**

Open entire year downstream from the Hwy 223 Bridge.

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, *only 2* ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, *only 4* ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger

Page 84

**MISSOURI RIVER**

**Upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton**

Paddlefish snagging: open for harvesting Paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to 9 PM MST, daily unless closed earlier by FWP.

Catch-and-release snagging for Paddlefish is open from May 1 to June 15 from 6 AM to

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

9 PM MST, daily. See Special Paddlefish Regulations (pages 79-81) for additional important Paddlefish information.  
 Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, **only 2** ~~only 1~~ may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, **only 4** ~~only 2~~ may be Sauger  
 Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with up to 6 hooks per line all year.

**Public Comment (74 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 72 survey responses to this proposal including 5 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Seventeen respondents (23%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (7%) opposed, and 51 respondents (70%) expressed no opinion. Comments in support generally approved the Sauger limit change. Several comments cautioned to consider Sauger abundance carefully, including one that suggested leaving Sauger alone “until Ft Peck populations rebound. One comment in opposition asked to keep the current regulations. One respondent asked to see a chart demonstrating what is meant by “long term population stability”.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Sauger regulations have been very restrictive for 15 years. Population data from the Missouri River now suggest increased Sauger abundance and long term population stability. The regulation change would allow slightly more Sauger harvest opportunity for anglers on the Missouri and also serve to help match Sauger limits with the Marias and Missouri Rivers in the Central Fishing District. Uniformity of regulation, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

**CENTRAL DISTRICT – Region 5**

**Proposal 63- Change bait specifications: Allow minnow collection in tributaries of the Clarks Fork. [Survey ref: Q74]**

Page 49

**Live Bait**

*\*Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose Sucker, and White Sucker.* ~~Live non-game fish~~ may be used as **live fish** bait only in the following waters:

- Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir
- Bighorn River – Afterbay Dam to cable 600 feet downstream, and downstream from the Bighorn FAS.
- Clarks Fork Yellowstone River **and tributaries** – downstream from the bridge at Bridger
- Marias River and tributaries downstream from I-15
- Missouri River downstream from Morony Dam
- Muddy Creek Drainage near Vaughn, including all streams and drainage canals
- Teton River and tributaries downstream from I-15
- Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell), Toole, and Liberty counties.
- Yellowstone River and all streams and ditches in the drainage downstream from the mouth of the Clarks Fork (except the section of the Bighorn River between the cable 600

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

feet downstream from Afterbay Dam and the Bighorn FAS).

**Public Comment (22 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 22 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Eight respondents (36%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (23%) opposed, and 9 respondents (41%) expressed no opinion. Comments did not elaborate on reasons for support. Most comments in opposition did not elaborate reasons either, but one mentioned opposition to using live fish as bait at all.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation allows anglers to legally collect minnows from tributary streams along this section of the Clarks Fork. It is a clarification for anglers that it is legal to fish with or collect minnows from tributary streams and ditches along this section of the Clarks Fork that is already open to fishing with minnows as bait. Live bait fish species allowed will now also be specified.

**Proposal 64- Increase Bass harvest limit at Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir. Specify catfish. [Survey ref: Q75]**

Page 55

**BIGHORN LAKE AND AFTERBAY RESERVOIR**

Bass: **10 daily and 20 in possession** ~~6 daily and 12 in possession.~~

Shovelnose Sturgeon: 2 daily and in possession.

Sauger/Walleye: 6 daily (only 3 may be Sauger) and 12 in possession (only 3 may be Sauger)

**Channel** Catfish: 6 daily and in possession.

Burbot (ling): 3 daily and in possession.

Hook and Line: 2 lines with 2 hooks per line on open water and 6 lines with 1 hook per line through the ice.

Anglers obtaining live bait in Montana may use them only in the Montana portion of the lake.

**Public Comment (24 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 24 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received 1 other comment electronically. Thirteen respondents (52%) supported the proposal, 4 respondents (16%) opposed, and 8 respondents (32%) expressed no opinion. Comments did not elaborate on reasons for support. Some comments in opposition mentioned a preference for lower, not higher, allowable harvest limits. One comment suggested an alternative slot limit of 8 to 12 inches and only one fish over 15 inches.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This regulation change will allow increased harvest for abundant bass and potentially improve bass size structure and reduce competition with other species. Designating Channel Catfish clearly identifies the species that is the intended subject of the catfish regulation. No one objected to this clarification.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

### Proposal 65- Change Kokanee Salmon snagging season description for Deadmans Basin Reservoir. [Survey ref: Q76]

Page 58

#### **DEADMANS BASIN RESERVOIR**

Combined Trout: 10 daily and in possession.

Snagging: open for salmon October 1 through December 31 ~~through the ice only~~, 35 daily and 70 in possession.

**Public Comment (25 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 25 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Eleven respondents (44%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (12%) opposed, and 11 respondents (44%) expressed no opinion. The single survey comment mentioned eliminating the reference “through the ice” to allow open water fishing. This change is included with this proposal.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Current regulations only allow salmon snagging through the ice at Deadmans Basin reservoir. In recent years safe ice has not been forming here until mid-December or later and by then many of the spawning salmon are dead or so soft they have lost their value as food. The proposed regulation change will allow anglers to take advantage of this resource while the salmon are still in good condition. This change has the added benefit that it might also reduce some temptation for anglers to venture out too early on to unsafe ice under current regulations that allow snagging only through ice.

### Proposal 66- Eliminate Lightning Creek exception. [Survey ref: Q77]

Page 61

#### **~~LIGHTNING CREEK (Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness)~~**

~~Open August 1 through November 30.~~

**Public Comment (26 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 26 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Twelve respondents (46%) supported the proposal, 5 respondents (19%) opposed, and 9 respondents (35%) expressed no opinion. The single survey comment opposed fishing for any actively spawning fish.

#### **Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. This proposal removes an unnecessary regulation exception. The current season exception was put in place to protect spawning Golden Trout moving out of Lightning Lake in early summer. Angling pressure is low at Lightning Lake and its vicinity, primarily due to difficult access. The seasonal protection is unneeded. Lightning Creek regulations would revert instead to the Central Fishing District standard for Rivers and Streams.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



**Proposal 67- Reduce number of Sauger allowed in the Sauger/Walleye combined harvest limit in portions of the Yellowstone River. Revert to 2 new Central Fishing District Standards: Open all year and Combined Trout Limit to include 1 cutthroat. [Survey ref: Q78]**

Page 72

**YELLOWSTONE RIVER**

Yellowstone national Park (YNP) Boundary to I-90 Bridge at Billings

~~Open entire year.~~

~~Combined Trout: 4 Brown Trout and/or Rainbow Trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. Catch and release for cutthroat trout.~~

*Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 1 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 2 may be Sauger, includes tributary streams.*

**Public Comment (26 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 26 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Thirteen respondents (50%) supported the proposal, 1 respondent (4%) opposed, and 12 respondents (46%) expressed no opinion. The single survey comment opposed the proposal without further elaboration.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The current Sauger/Walleye limit for the Yellowstone River in the Central Fishing District is 5 daily and 10 in possession. The Sauger fishery is re-establishing, with ongoing efforts to improve fish passage and to increase population monitoring in the middle sections of the Yellowstone River. More limited harvest regulations are needed to help protect Sauger as this fishery rebuilds. The current proposal extends the existing, more conservative Sauger/Walleye harvest limit for the Yellowstone River in the Eastern Fishing District upstream into the Central Fishing District, including tributary streams. Lower harvest limits extended into tributaries are important especially to limit harvest in the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone if a Sauger run can be reestablished in that river system as well.

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 5**

**Proposal 68- Reduce harvest limits for Sauger/Walleye Combined limits in the Musselshell River. [Survey ref: Q79]**

New Exception

**MUSSELSHELL RIVER**

*From the Highway 3 bridge at Lavina downstream to Fort Peck Reservoir*

*Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily, only 2 may be a Sauger. Possession limit is 10, only 4 may be Sauger.*

Channel Catfish: 10 daily and in possession.

**Public Comment (29 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 27 survey responses to this proposal including 1 additional comment included with the survey instrument.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.



We received 1 other comment by mail. Fifteen respondents (52%) supported the proposal, 2 respondents (7%) opposed, and 12 respondents (41%) expressed no opinion. No comments elaborated reasons for support. The single additional survey comment opposed the proposal without further elaboration. A second comment questioned the value of these slight changes suggesting they would make no difference to the fishery.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The current Sauger/Walleye combined limit for the Musselshell River is the District standard 5 daily and 10 in possession in both the Central and the Eastern Fishing Districts. There is no reference to species count in this regulation, so currently, all 5 fish could be a Sauger. The proposal limits Sauger harvest to 2 each day. This change would also bring the Musselshell and Fort Peck Reservoir Sauger/Walleye limits into agreement, thus eliminating potential boundary confusion.

Active fisheries conservation efforts, including improving fish passage, enhancing habitat, increasing monitoring, and potentially restocking native fish such as Sauger and Channel Catfish in the upper river, are ongoing now to reestablish native fish runs in the Musselshell River. The proposed regulation changes reduce harvest limits slightly, to protect and support fish production during the rebuilding process. In broad scale, management responsibility is shared by Regions 4 and Region 5.

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 6**

**Proposal 69- Delete exceptions for Bearpaw Lake and Beaver Creek Reservoir. Revert to Eastern Fishing District standard. [Survey ref: Q81]**

Page 83

**BEARPAW LAKE**

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession—~~

**BEAVER CREEK RESERVOIR**

~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession—~~

**Public Comment (9 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 9 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. Six respondents (67%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 3 respondents (33%) expressed no opinion. The comment confirmed but did not did not elaborate its support.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. Reduced daily and possession limit on trout have had no effect on annual trout densities (other variables have been found to influence this, not harvest). Anglers have expressed confusion and frustration with the current trout regulations set at both reservoirs. Trout harvest limits would revert to the Eastern Fishing District standard:

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Combined Trout, 5 daily and 10 in possession, includes Cutthroat Trout. Uniformity of regulation, where possible, aids angler understanding and compliance.

### Proposal 70- Paddlefish harvest lottery draw. [Survey ref: Q82]

Page 80

Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton (White Tag)

~~\*The Paddlefish fishery is managed under an annual harvest target not to exceed 500 fish. FWP may close the harvest season within 24 hours notice in any year if it appears the harvest target may be exceeded. Catch and release fishing would continue for the duration of the season. For current information on harvest status call the Glasgow FWP office at 406-228-3700. A Paddlefish harvest hotline is available with up-to-date harvest counts and Missouri River flow information.~~

*\*Paddlefish harvest only tags will be available via lottery draw for the Upper Missouri River paddlefish season (White Tag) only. Anglers need to apply individually or as a party (up to five people) before April 1<sup>st</sup>. Applications can be submitted either on-line at <http://fwp.mt.gov>, at an FWP office or mailed (must be postmarked no later than April 1<sup>st</sup>) Successful applicants will be allowed to fish from May 1 to June 15 and can harvest one paddlefish; harvested paddlefish must be immediately tagged. Unsuccessful applicants will be issued a free paddlefish conservation license that will allow them to participate in the paddlefish catch and release season on the Upper Missouri River that will run concurrent with the harvest season (May1-June15). All Paddlefish caught during the catch and release season must be released immediately and may not be gaffed or lifted out of the water. Captured fish must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).*

*\*Paddlefish anglers can participate in only one paddlefish season per year. For example, if an angler is unsuccessful in drawing a paddlefish tag for the Upper Missouri River paddlefish season (White Tag) he/she cannot purchase a tag to fish the Yellowstone River paddlefish season (Yellow Tag).*

~~\*Paddlefish snagging: open to harvesting Paddlefish from May 1 to June 15 (unless closed earlier by FWP) from 6 AM to 9 PM (MST) daily. An unused white Paddlefish tag is required. All Paddlefish captured must either be tagged and kept, or released immediately.~~

~~\*Catch-and-release snagging for Paddlefish is open from May 1 to June 15. Proof of purchase of a white Paddlefish tag on your fishing license is required for catch-and-release fishing. All Paddlefish must be released immediately and may not be gaffed or lifted out of the water. Captured fish must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).~~

**Public Comment (11 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 9 survey responses to this proposal including 1 that was expanded with additional written comments. We received 2 other comments electronically. Six respondents (55%) supported the proposal, 0 respondents opposed, and 5 respondents (45%) expressed no opinion. Comments were all in support of the proposal, referencing the potential benefits to anglers including less seasonal crowding.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. A lottery type drawing system will aid in lengthening the current harvest season while distributing harvest and pressure over a greater number of days. This regulation will alleviate current crowding issues and allow anglers to plan their trips in advance rather than the current scenario where anglers must rapidly travel to the Fred Robinson Bridge area as soon as the season opens or when fish begin to migrate because of river flow cues. Under current regulations, if an angler is unable to fish the first couple weekends, their opportunity to harvest a paddlefish is likely gone because the harvest quota will already have been met.

**EASTERN DISTRICT – Region 7****Proposal 71- Live bait specifications: Tongue River and Tongue River Reservoir [Survey ref: Q83]**

Page 84

**TONGUE RIVER****Tongue River Reservoir to Wyoming State Border**

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily (only 1 may be a Sauger) and 10 in possession (only 2 may be a Sauger).

*Fish species allowed for use as live bait are: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, White Sucker and Longnose Sucker.*

Page 85

**TONGUE RIVER RESERVOIR**

Crappie: 30 daily and 60 in possession.

Sauger/Walleye: 5 daily (only 1 may be a Sauger) and 10 in possession (only 2 may be a Sauger).

Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 6 hooks per line through the ice.

*Fish species allowed for use as live bait are: Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, White Sucker, and Longnose sucker.*

**Public Comment (17 total):** Between August 12 and October 3 we received 15 survey responses to this proposal including 2 that were expanded with additional written comments. We received one comment included with but outside the survey instrument, and 1 other comment electronically. Seven respondents (41%) supported the proposal, 3 respondents (18%) opposed, and 7 respondents (41%) expressed no opinion. Comments did not elaborate reasons for support. Some comments in opposition challenged the idea that certain species were not already present in Tongue River Reservoir, mentioned the need for more training in identification, or conversely expressed no desire to see live bait fish used anywhere in the state.

**Final Proposal (rationale and recommendation): Approve as proposed.**

Based on further internal discussion, and incorporating public comment, we recommend this regulation be adopted as initially proposed. The variety of live bait-fish species and public sources for collection or purchase are very limited upstream of Tongue River Reservoir dam. This circumstance results in anglers and vendors transporting live bait species from other areas including species not established upstream of Tongue River Reservoir dam. Clearly identifying what fish can be used as bait reduces the risk of introducing a new species into Tongue River

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.

Reservoir and Tongue River upstream of the reservoir. This regulation change is easy, with minimal controversy, and a proactive way to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species while respecting the majority of public's desire to use live bait fish at Tongue River Reservoir. Brochures and identification keys will be generated and distributed to interested anglers and commercial bait seiners.

**Note:** New language is in colored *italics*. Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. Page numbers refer to the **2015 Montana Fishing Regulations** booklet.