



Volume 2, Issue 4 **Fall 2013**

aáy (pronounced “*ahh-ee*”) is the Salish word for bull trout.

Our mission: To conserve, protect and restore valuable wild fish and their habitat in Northwest Montana

Tribal Council Recommends a Preferred Alternative
Thursday, September 12, 2013

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) have recommended a preferred alternative for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS): Proposed Strategies to Benefit Native Species by Reducing the Abundance of Lake Trout in Flathead Lake, Montana.

The DEIS evaluated the implementation of methods outlined in the Flathead Lake and River System Co-Management Plan (Co-plan) for non-native lake trout suppression. It presented four alternatives with differing degrees of lake trout population reduction and for each alternative, examined the potential benefits to native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout as well as the biological, social, and economic impacts. The DEIS remains available online for informational purposes at www.mackdays.com.

The recommendation of the preferred alternative is the culmination of more than three years of careful analysis of current fisheries research, scientific study, and broad public scoping and comment periods, including a series of community *continued on page 4*



*Early 1970s.
 Bull trout from the North Fork Flathead River*

Officers

- President..... Larry Timchak
- Vice President..... Jim Johnson
- Secretary.....Chris Schustrom
- Treasurer..... Glen Anacker
- Banquet Chair..... Dan Short



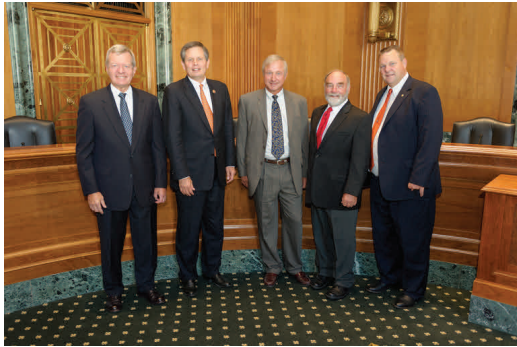
October Caddis

“When I’m asked about the state’s commitment toward bull trout recovery, my response is that we shouldn’t restore bull trout because we have to, but because we want to. I assure you, we want to.”

*~Former Montana Governor
 Marc Racicot*

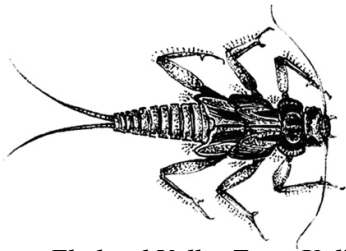
***aáy* is a quarterly publication of the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited.**

Contact: 406-260-1198, flatheadtu@gmail.com, www.flatheadtu.org



From Our President

Larry Timchak—FVTU President, meets with the Montana Congressional delegation in Washington D.C. in September



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Newsletter content does not necessarily reflect the views of Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited, it's membership or Montana Trout Unlimited.

FVTU welcomes submission of photos or content from our valued members. The newsletter is published quarterly throughout the year. Publication dates will be Oct. 1, Jan. 1, Apr. 1, and July 1. Please send contributions at least ten days prior to publication to the newsletter editor at:

lucky@flatheadtu.org

is available online at the FVTU website.

www.flatheadtu.org

Newsletter editor: Lucky Sultz

Autumn is my favorite time of the year. As the days grow shorter and sun's power wanes, each hour afield, whether last minute fishing or hunting for whitetails, seems precious. Squeezing in that one last trip between work and family and volunteer obligations is always a challenge but usually well worth the effort. Fall hatches on the Flathead can provide good fishing with blue wing olives, the large October caddis and midges.

Our Chapter has been quite active this summer and it appears we will stay busy with several important issues. I just returned from a trip to Washington DC sponsored by National TU. Trout Unlimited has partnered with the National Wildlife Federation and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Alliance to create Sportsman for Responsible Energy Development. As part of this effort, I visited our Montana delegation and Senate Energy committee staff to discuss a reasonable and balanced approach to energy development on federal land that recognizes and protects our cherished fish and wildlife resource. Helter-skelter development threatens wildlife populations by loss of habitat, cutting off migration routes, and increased population pressures. Fracking associated with oil and gas drilling can contaminate ground water if not done properly and surface water can be degraded if best management practices are not implemented and followed. We all need energy and we want a strong economy but not at the expense of our fish and wildlife. The coalition has developed a series of recommendations that would improve planning, mitigation, and overall management of our energy resources.

I met with Congressman Steve Daines who plans to introduce the North Fork Watershed Protection Act in Congress within the next month. The bill, sponsored by Senator Baucus, would withdraw Forest Service lands in the North Fork drainage from future oil and gas leasing. 85% of the leases have been voluntarily relinquished and the Act would prevent re-issuance of the leases.

The Chapter has been deeply engaged in the Flathead Lake Lake Trout Suppression EIS. The Conservation Alerts issued by Montana TU and our Chapter resulted in 80% support for maximum suppression alternative (D) in the EIS. The Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council has approved Alternative D. The next step is BIA approval followed by funding requests for BPA mitigation funds. We will track this closely and keep you informed. We are also encouraging Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to re-engage in the process.

Our Chapter as well as the West Slope Chapter from Missoula and Montana TU staff really pitched in to help with Swan Lake netting this summer. Every day one or two TU volunteers were out on the lake assisting with this important effort. Thanks to all who volunteered!

Our Chapter meetings are about to begin. We will do our best to provide interesting and informative meetings as well as a great place to meet to catch up on fishing and conservation.

Enjoy the fall! — *Larry Timchak, FVTU President*



**Joe Potoczny
1927—2013**

Joe Potoczny passed away peacefully at his home near Bigfork on Sept. 25, 2013.

Joe was a teacher and administrator who worked in Pennsylvania, Idaho and Washington before moving to Montana. He worked in the Bigfork school district for more than 20 years as well as being the head football coach at Bigfork High School

Joe was an avid fly fisherman and outdoorsman and spent many hours fishing the streams, rivers and lakes of the Northwest

Joe was a valuable friend and mentor to all of us at Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited. The WWII Navy veteran was a long-time TU member and was a leader of the FVTU annual fly tying classes. Hundreds of local fly tiers took up their craft due to Joe's careful and exacting tutelage.

Joe, and his expertise, will be missed by all his friends at Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited



FLY PATTERN: THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER

HOOK: 7999, sizes 2-6

THREAD: Red

TAIL: Golden pheasant

RIB: Oval gold tinsel

BODY: Orange goat fur

MID WING: Two golden pheasant feathers, cut in a "V"

WING: Golden pheasant



A traditional Atlantic salmon pattern, the General Practitioner has use as a steelhead fly. I know one fly angler who refers to it as the "General Proctologist" because it's a "pain in the butt to tie."

The GP has "presence" in the water, and is especially useful when flows are on the turbid side.

By: Edmund Drury, From WestFly

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited holds monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month October through April. Meetings are held at the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks conference room at 490 N. Meridian in Kalispell at 7pm. Please join us for our regular meetings and program offerings.



FVTU Calendar

- Oct. 15, 2013 - General meeting. A great program will be presented by Chris McReady on salt water fly fishing. Be sure to attend.
- Nov. 19, 2013— Thompson Smith, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Historian
- Dec. 17, 2013—Our Gala Christmas Social and Fly-Tying Extravaganza

Preferred Alternative

continued from page 1

meetings. State and federal agencies with fisheries expertise in the Flathead watershed and several renowned scientists participated in the development of the findings in the DEIS. Each alternative is designed to implement measures that increase the number of native fish in Flathead Lake and River while maintaining a recreational fishery. Alternative D is recommended as the preferred alternative.

This recommendation is consistent with direction given to the CSKT and the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission by the Flathead Reservation Fish and Wildlife Board (Board) in a letter dated September 9, 2013. The Board is made up of seven members representing the tribal and non-tribal communities and is appointed by the Tribal Chairman and the Governor. The Board has overseen this process since the adoption of the Co-Plan in 2000 and has urged that the co-managers fully implement the Co-Plan. Both public and agency comments received on the DEIS overwhelming favored the use of additional tools to reduce non-native lake trout abundance.

Alternative D provides the greatest flexibility in Flathead Lake fisheries management. The selection of this alternative does not obligate the harvest of a specific number of lake trout annually, but it rather determines

that the impacts of doing so have been fully quantified. Alternative D analyzes the effects of a maximum 75% reduction of the adult lake trout population, although this target level will not be pursued unless needed. The specifics of the alternative, including timing, techniques, and personnel will be identified subsequently in a detailed implementation plan. Most importantly, the preferred alternative allows flexibility for managers as circumstances change and new information is obtained.

The public will have another opportunity to comment when the Bureau of Indian Affairs publishes the notice of availability for the Final EIS. A record of decision (ROD) will follow that comment period, and then the CSKT will begin working with co-managers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies in the development of an implementation plan. The implementation of an adaptive management plan will ultimately guide which of the newly available suppression methods have the least by-catch of other fish species and are most compatible with the existing angler-based approaches used to balance the fishery as envisioned by the co-plan. As in the past, annual monitoring and reporting of progress under the co-plan goals will ultimately decide the level of improvement to native trout populations and the best balance for a recreational fishery.

For more information contact Tom McDonald or Germaine White at Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation or Conservation at 883-2888.



Help Plan the Future of the Flathead National Forest

The Flathead National Forest has begun revising its Forest Plan. You can find information on the Forest planning process, learn

more and become involved at their website, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/flathead/home>

The Flathead National Forest previously developed

a Forest Land and Management Plan in 2006 following the 2005 planning rule. This rule was invalidated by the U.S. District Court for Northern California on procedural grounds. The proposed plan is available for review and consideration but the 2012 planning rule will guide the development of the proposed plan that is currently being developed. Forest Plans provide strategic direction to guide management of forest resources and provide a framework for decision making on site-specific projects and activities.



Shocking Developments on Sheppard Creek

Since 1991, the U.S. Forest Service, with help from Trout Unlimited has been trying to reduce an invasive brook trout population in the isolated headwaters of Sheppard Creek, a tributary to the Whitefish River, above Tally Lake.

The brook trout were planted by the U.S. Government in the 1940s and quickly began to overtake and dis-

place the native population of westslope cutthroat trout.

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited once again provided volunteers this fall to electroshock the stream and remove brookies in hopes of keeping the brook trout population low and giving the native cutthroats a chance to survive long enough for FWP to make a decision and put funding in place to attempt complete removal.



A century ago, tens of thousands of bull trout roamed the waters of Flathead Lake and the Flathead River system. By the mid-1980s a spawning run of 10,000-15,000 fish still provided exciting fishing opportunities. Today there are less than 3,000 adult fish left in Flathead Lake and the North and Middle forks. Due to our misguided actions and inattention, these magnificent fish are on the brink of extinction in our home waters.

FVTU is proud to announce the release of our exciting video, *Jewel in The Crown*. This DVD examines the plight of native fish in the Flathead with a focus on current problems facing bull trout.

Through conversations with the last generation of anglers who were able to legally fish for bull trout in our home waters and many historical photos as well as interviews with local fisheries biologists and managers, we examine the current situation and where we need to go now to preserve our native fish heritage in the Flathead Basin.

Get your copy today: *Jewel in The Crown* is available for only \$12 (+ \$2 shipping and handling) and can be obtained on the FVTU website www.flatheadtu.org, at several participating local fly shops, or at our monthly general meetings.

FWP Final—Proposed Changes to 2014 Fishing Regulations

North Fork Flathead River

Mouth of Big Creek to Blankenship Bridge (NOTE: This is an experimental regulation for the 2014 fishing season only).

Combined Trout: 5 daily and in possession. Limit includes rainbow and rainbow/cutthroat hybrid trout, defined for the purposes of this temporary regulation as any trout (even those with an orange slash under the jaw) with as many or more spots in the front half of its body as the back half, based on a vertical line drawn through the middle of the dorsal fin to divide the fish into halves.

FWP RESPONSE AND RATIONALE: FWP appreciates that most anglers who commented on this regulation recognize the problem with expanding hybridization and maintaining genetically pure stocks of westslope cutthroat. In response to the comment about the seasonal presence of hybrid trout in the North Fork, FWP believes the data show that both adult and subadult hybrids are more likely to be resident fish

and therefore available for harvest throughout the angling season. Several other commenters were concerned with the subjective nature of the proposed cutthroat definition, arguing it could either allow harvest of cutthroats or still required releasing of some hybrids. The definition was intended to be conservative, and would require release of fish with more cutthroat genes. The comments on terminal gear restrictions were extraneous to this proposal. There is no indication that the lack of gear restrictions is impacting the fishery at this time.

This regulation was proposed as a short test section for one year with monitoring to test compliance and refine the definition as needed for broader application. However, there was insufficient coordination with Glacier National Park which manages the eastern half of the North Fork Flathead River and GNP could not support the proposal at this time. Therefore, the proposal is withdrawn but discussions will continue with GNP and other regions to improve this proposal for future consideration.

Little Bitterroot Lake

In response to an illegal planting of smallmouth bass.

Bass: No daily or possession limit for entire year

FWP RESPONSE AND RATIONALE: The proposed regulation is intended to both protect the Little Bitterroot salmon fishery from illegally-introduced largemouth and smallmouth bass (first reported in 2006 and 2008, respectively), and to start educating anglers about the problems with illegal fish plants and remove incentives to illegally move fish. In response to the commenter who felt there is no habitat overlap between bass and salmon, it is true that they occupy different lake strata during summer, but there is substantial habitat overlap during spring and fall when the water is cooler and salmonids are cruising the shoreline. The Little Bitterroot kokanee fishery is important as a fishery in itself but even more so as a brood source for two dozen other state waters that rely on stocking, including Echo Lake mentioned in the comments.

Scoping Notice for Noxon Walleye Suppression

Walleye were illegally introduced into Noxon Reservoir in the late 1980s. Since their introduction, fisheries managers have been concerned about the negative impacts of walleye to the Noxon Reservoir and downstream fisheries. In February 2013, FWP released the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to Investigate the Suppression of Walleye in Noxon Reservoir to solicit public comment. Numerous comments were received in support and opposition to the project, and some substantive issues and information deficiencies were raised. FWP subsequently released a decision notice on the project with the determination that a revised draft EA will be developed and again released for public comment.

Scoping issues

Based on threats posed to the fisheries of the lower Clark Fork River and state policy, FWP is continuing to pursue walleye suppression on an experimental basis to test effectiveness. Several issues, listed below, were identified by FWP and the public during the previous comment period.

Issues that will be addressed in the upcoming revised draft EA include:

1. Impacts to sport and native fish including by-catch of nontarget fish species.
2. Public controversy generated by the project.
3. Impacts to the local economy under the No Action alternative.
4. Funding availability to complete the project.
5. Origin of the introduced walleye.
6. FWP responses to illegal fish introductions.
7. Potential waste of game fish.
8. Long-term nature of potential suppression.

FWP invites the public to comment on this project; specifically, issues not listed above and information sources that may aid in analysis would be especially useful. Comments and questions must be received by November 30, 2013, and can be submitted to Kenneth Breidinger at kbreidinger@mt.gov or the following address:

Kenneth Breidinger
 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 PO Box 95
 Thompson Falls, MT 59873



Flathead Lake Mack Days

The annual Fall Mack Days fishing contests continue this fall. Due to uncertainties surrounding the CSKT proposed lake trout suppression, the Tribes were hesitant to spend the necessary money on the popular fishing contest which has shown very little positive results for native fish populations thus far.

Following the recent decision by the CSKT Tribal Council to back Alternative D in the proposed DEIS, the Tribal Fisheries Program made the decision to move forward with the fall contest. The event will run from Oct. 4 to Nov. 17, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Please visit the www.mackdays.com website for more information.

Illegal population of smallmouth bass discovered in Seeley Lake.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking information on the illegal planting of this disruptive predator.

FWP has focused a lot of effort on restoring native trout populations, including bull trout, in Seeley Lake and the connected Clearwater Chain of Lakes, which includes Salmon, Seeley, Inez, Alva and Rainy, and their tributaries. FWP has also recently been focusing on improving stocking practices to enhance angling for westslope cutthroat trout and salmon in the chain.

“Smallmouth bass are predators and can reduce the survival of the trout and salmon we are managing for,” said Pat Saffel, Region 2 Fisheries Manager.

Moving live fish or aquatic invertebrates (insects) from one body of water to another is illegal in Montana, and Saffel hopes to get some clues on when the introduction occurred and who might be responsible.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668). Callers can remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward for providing information that leads to a conviction.

FWP will also be proposing a no limit harvest regulation for bass in Seeley Lake at the October 10 Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting and will be discussing what can be done to potentially control smallmouth bass numbers in Seeley Lake and the Clearwater system.