



Volume 4, Issue 4 **Fall 2015**
***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

Walleye Discovered in Swan Lake



Photo from the Flathead Beacon

It seems we can't go more than a month any more without hearing of another illegal fish planting. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks announced that they caught two walleye, each measuring 17

inches in Swan Lake during their annual population monitoring.

This is the first time walleye have been found in the Swan. Mark Deleray, Region 1 Fisheries Manager said that it is highly likely the fish originated from an illegal introduction.

There have been over 600 instances (that we know of) of illegal fish introductions in Montana over the last few years with more than 1/2 of those occurring in the northwest part of the state.

Walleye have been illegally introduced in Lake Five,

Noxon Rapids Reservoir, Milltown Dam, the Clark Fork below Milltown Dam, Placid Lake, Salmon Lake, Church Slough (Flathead River) and the Bitterroot River. Luckily, they seem to have taken hold only in Noxon Reservoir. MFWP has been studying how to reduce, or remove that population for many years.

Walleye from Noxon Rapids Reservoir have migrated downstream and are causing problems in Lake Pend Oreille and other waterways in the Columbia Basin.

Introduced invasive fish displace existing populations of sport fish as well as native fish species. They can also introduce disease, prey on, and compete with, other fish. These populations also provide a source for other illegal introductions into nearby waters.

In California, the state spent \$16,000,000 to eradicate invasive northern pike from the 4,000 acre Lake Portola in 1997. In 1999, pike were once again discovered in the lake leading to the expenditure of an additional \$17,000,000 to once again poison the lake. In California, the penalty for illegal stocking is \$60,000 plus restitution for a removal costs. In Montana, the fine is only a maximum of \$10,000.

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Officers

- President..... Larry Timchak
- Vice President..... Dylan Boyle
- Secretary.....Chris Schustrom
- Treasurer.....Chris Schustrom
- Banquet Chair..... Dan Short
- Conservation Chair... Lucky Sultz



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

Contact: 406-250-7473, flatheadtu@gmail.com, www.flatheadtu.org

"A trout is a moment of beauty known only to those who seek it."

~ Arnold Gingrich

[The Cold Water Climate Shield Project](#)



Federal scientists are using crowd-sourced biological datasets and high-resolution stream temperature scenarios to delineate a network of cold-water refugia across the Northern Rocky Mountains for two native salmonids, bull trout (BT) and cutthroat trout (CT).

Average temperatures in Montana have warmed by 2-3 degrees Fahrenheit, on average, since the early 1900's. We now have more very hot days (>90 degrees) in summer and fewer very cold days (<0 degrees) in winter. Since 1850, we have lost 125 of the original 150 glaciers in Glacier National Park, and scientists expect the remaining glaciers to disappear completely in the next 10-15 years.

This warming trend is mirrored by increases in stream temperatures across the Rocky Mountain West and that is reducing habitat suitable for our native trout and char species. While some wildlife species are able to compensate for warming by moving up slope, that is not always the case for aquatic species.

Climate Shield Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout models were developed from fish surveys conducted at >4,500 locations in >500 streams. Research has shown that bull trout are abandoning lower elevation habitat at a higher rate than they are able to colonize new, higher and cooler thermal refuges as water temperatures increase.

By mapping colder water refugia in five western states,

scientists are able help wildlife managers to better make decisions aimed at preserving populations of bull trout, cutthroat trout and other cold-water dependent native species.

"One of the things we're seeing is that the colder areas are typically in the headwaters," said Dan Isaak, a research fisheries biologist with the U.S. Forest Service in Boise. "Those are warming up a lot more slowly than streams at lower elevations."

In many areas of the Crown of the Continent and particularly in the Flathead system, our streams contain areas of upwelling of ground waters that provide cooler waters and clean gravels that are preferred by native bull trout as spawning and rearing areas.

The mapped areas contain streams with temperatures preferred by cutthroat trout and bull trout but that are too cold for non-native species, particularly brown trout and brook trout, thus forming the climate shield. The climate shield has practical applications, Isaak said in an email to the Associated Press.

"Rather than spending money to build artificial barriers on streams to prevent the upstream advance of invasive species (which is very expensive and commonly done in some areas), the climate refugia streams we're highlighting are so cold that you wouldn't need to build a barrier to preserve the native community,"

Over the past few decades, bull trout and cutthroat trout have already lost more than 50% of their populations to dams, development, habitat loss and poor management decisions. Hopefully, this Climate Shield research will allow managers to make more informed management decisions and protect much of the genetic diversity that still remains.

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

lucky@flatheadtu.org

aily is available online at the FVTU website.
www.flatheadtu.org

Newsletter editor: Lucky Sultz



www.warriorsandquietwaters.org

Conservation Groups vow to sue over USFWS Revised Bull Trout Recovery Plan



Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Friends of the Wild Swan, filed a 60-day notice to sue about a week after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife released its final Bull Trout Recovery Plan on Sept. 28.

The groups are disappointed with the failure of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to include target recovery numbers for bull trout populations in the various designated recovery areas. "They're essentially redefining recovery so they can list bull trout as recovered," said Michael Garrity of Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

The plan calls for stable populations in at least 75 percent of the core areas in the four largest recovery units before bull trout in those areas can be considered for delisting. The plan allows 75 percent in some recovery units because USFWS is confident bull trout could remain viable.

In comments to USFWS on the Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit, Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited stated, "We regret the missed opportunity to set specific adult population objectives throughout the Plan. We feel that the "minimum number core area total adult abundance" numbers used in the 2002 plan represented achievable numeric goals using the best science available and established a positive direction with end-point goals. The current plan does not set adult abundance goals and that will make it much harder to establish medial goals and to measure progress toward eventual restoration."

"It's pretty disappointing, I think, the direction Fish and Wildlife has gone with this recovery plan," said Arlene

Montgomery, program director for Friends of the Wild Swan. "It just doesn't make sense that (bull trout) can decline in some areas by 25 percent and you're calling that recovered," she said. "It just sort of defies logic."



Don't forget to sign up for the *Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited* annual Fly Swap held each year during our Christmas Gala and Fly Tying Extravaganza.

Each tier will tie copies of one fly pattern for each swap participant. Each participant will then exchange patterns with everyone else and wind up with a complete collection of flies during the party.

Also on hand at the Christmas party will be some of the valley's best fly tiers demonstrating patterns, techniques, tricks and new materials. Don't miss this Christmas tradition!

Always a fun experience and a good way to get flies from some of the best fly tiers in the valley. You can sign up for the swap and get more information on the flatheadtu.org website. Stay tuned and be sure to sign up early while there are still spaces available.

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 beginning at 7pm. Please join us for our regular meetings and exciting program offerings.

FVTU Calendar

- The November 17 general meeting will feature an exciting presentation by Hillary Hutcheson, star of the popular TV series "Trout TV"
- On December 15, FVTU will host our popular annual Christmas Social. The social also includes fly tying and our annual Fly Swap, so be thinking about a pattern to tie. Signups for the Fly Swap will be available on the FVTU website. Festivities will also include a plethora of fine food and snacks as well as priceless door prizes and raffles. Hope to see you all there.



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Single-Point Barbless Hook Restriction

In the latest revision of Montana fishing regulations that become effective in 2016, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has proposed to “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”. This proposal includes eight Western Montana streams and some tributaries. In comments to the MFWP Commission, FVTU supports this proposal. A decision by the FWP Commission will be announced at the November 12, 2015 commission meeting in Helena.

We support the addition of a single point, barbless restriction for some streams in the Western Fishing District. As catch and release angling has become more popular during the last several years anglers have reported to us that they are seeing more and more native trout with moderate to severe hook scarring, lost or broken mandibles and they are seeing more instances of dead fish in our waters above and beyond natural mortality. This is likely due to improper playing and handling practices. The problem has become even more disturbing this year during our lower than normal flows and increasing water temperatures. Any attempt to reduce direct harm caused by improper handling and increased handling time to our native trout will be greatly appreciated.

We would note that the rationale for this new rule is

“intended to reduce stress on cutthroat trout”. All of the waters included in the new restriction are also home to our native bull trout which are a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act. Bull trout are especially susceptible to the same kinds of damage we are seeing in our other trout species. Protection of native bull trout, along with cutthroat trout should be a very high priority and the rationale should include increased protection of all of our native trout. Using harvest as a criteria for where the rule will be implemented is really irrelevant. The purpose of the single-barbless rule is to protect native trout and not to protect harvested native or nonnative fish. Single, barbless hook protections can work just as well in waters where some harvest of natives or nonnatives is still permitted.

We support expanding the single-barbless restriction to the entire length of the South Fork Flathead above Hungry Horse Reservoir. We would also like to see the rule extended to include the wilderness sections of the Middle Fork Flathead River. These waters receive significantly more angling pressure than the section above Spotted Bear to Mid Creek and protection of native fish in these waters is even more important. Single-barbless is consistent with wilderness ethics in that it will reduce hook scarring and lost mandibles and reduce handling time. Wilderness is about leaving the character untrammled and this should not only include the landscape but the fish as well. We continue to support harvest of 3 fish less than 12” in the wilderness to provide streamside table fare as the wilderness portions of the Flathead currently support a robust population.

You can read all the proposed changes to fishing regulations for 2016 on the [MFWP Website](http://www.mfwp.mt.gov).



Walleye, continued from page 1 Most waters west of the continental divide in Montana are ill-suited for propagation of walleye. Canyon Ferry Lake in Southwest Montana provides a good example of the potential economic loss from introducing non-native walleye into a water body. There is a misperception that the walleye boom in Canyon Ferry Reservoir has increased fishing pressure and benefited the local economy. In fact, fishing pressure has not significantly increased during the walleye boom because spring, fall and winter fishing for perch and trout declined substantially due to walleye predation on these popular sport fish.

In the Flathead, millions of taxpayer dollars have already been spent trying to reduce populations of legally and illegally introduced nonnative fish. Montana fisheries officials and major statewide angling groups signed an agreement aimed at curbing the spread of illegal fish introductions into state waters. The agreement includes a pledge from angling groups for an additional cash reward of up to \$3,250 for information leading to the conviction of persons responsible for an illegal fish introduction. Montana Trout Unlimited has also offered a reward of \$10,000 for information on illegal introductions.

“Introducing invasive species of fish is like spreading noxious weeds,” said Montana TU Conservation Director Mark Aageness. *“Invasive fish are like knapweed with fins. We need to stop the problem before it gets worse.”*

The American Fisheries Society states *“Science has demonstrated that non-native fish introductions are a primary cause of declines in fish abundance and diversity throughout Montana and worldwide.”*

If you have information on any illegal fish introduction, you can be eligible for a reward of \$15,000 by calling

1-800-TIP-MONT



Don't move live fish.

Copper John



This pattern is the gold (or copper) standard for nymph fishing in Montana trout streams. Used alone, or as a dropper in smaller sizes, the Copper John should be in the fly box EVERY time you hit the water along with a couple of variations of the Prince Nymph, and maybe a couple of soft hackles.

Materials:

Hook: Standard Nymph, sizes 10-16

Thread: UTC 140 brown

Underbody: Lead Wire

Bead: Brass 3.3mm

Tail and legs: Partridge

Body: Copper Wire

Wing case: Flash Back Foil - Peacock



President's Message



Around the Crown of the Continent

Larry Timchak, FVTU President

We are very fortunate to have the “*Crown of the Continent*” in our backyard. The northern Rockies, stretching from the Blackfoot River in the south to the headwaters of the Elk River to the north in British Columbia is a spectacular and largely intact ecosystem. The Flathead River system arises from the heart of the Crown.

At our first Chapter meeting of the year, Michael Jamison, Crown of the Continent Program Manager for the *National Parks and Conservation Association*, took us around the Crown looking at issues affecting fish and aquatic resources. The virtual tour served as a clarion call to action for our chapter on several important threats to native fish.

The tour began on the Elk River in British Columbia. Coal mining by Tek Resources is contributing to toxic levels of selenium in the Elk River and ultimately into Lake Kootenai and the Kootenai River on the U.S.

side of the border.

While our ability to influence resource development in British Columbia is limited, we can and will work with our Congressional delegation, federal and state governments to ensure Canada's rivers are not polluting waters of the United States.

Our next stop was Glacier National Park where Michael reviewed the lake trout suppression efforts underway in the park. Park crews installed stream barriers to prevent upstream movement of lake trout into Quartz Lake, Logging Lake and Akokala Lake. Combined with netting in Logging Lake, bull trout are responding favorably. Suppression efforts are also underway in Quartz Lake. The Chapter will also continue to support lake trout netting in Swan and Flathead Lakes. The task is not an easy one and it will take time but it is a battle worth fighting.

We typically don't think about bull trout on the east side of the Rockies but there is a native population in the Saint Mary's river system. Just below lower Saint Mary's Lake on the river is a diversion and canal shuttling water to the North Fork of the Milk River for irrigation in the U.S. and Canada. Unfortunately the diversion is not screened, resulting in loss of native fish including bull trout when the diversion is shut off in the fall. The Chapter will be advocating for mitigation to reduce fish mortality at this site.

Finally we ended up back in the Middle Fork Flathead where the discussion turned to oil trains and the potential for a catastrophic spill in the river. While we recognize the oil will continue to move down these tracks, we will continue to press for actions that reduce the risk of spills and ensure there is adequate capacity, resources and skills to respond to a spill if it occurs.

Protecting and restoring the fisheries resources in the Crown of the Continent will continue to be an important priority for Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited.

FVTU News Briefs



A new group has been formed in the Flathead Valley aimed at recruiting women into the sport of fly fishing.

Women of the Flathead—On the Fly was formed in October to engage more women in the sport and to improve skills and the enjoyment of fly fishing.

This is about a group of women who like to fly fish and those that would like to learn how to fly fish. It is about fun, support, community, and learning.

You can learn more about the group and join in the fun by visiting their [Women of the Flathead on the Fly Facebook page](#).

If you have questions, or need more information, email Kim at WOTFOTF@gmail.com