



Volume 4, Issue 2

Spring 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



Flathead Native Trout Restoration Efforts Continue

The 2015 Spring Mack Days lake trout fishing event on Flathead Lake is under way. The opening weekend turned out to be very successful with 3,774 lake trout turned in. Two anglers had limits of 100 lake trout on the opening Friday.

Spring Mack Days sponsored by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes runs through May 17th and is only one of several ongoing efforts to reduce the numbers of predatory lake trout in the Flathead Drainage. This year, the Tribes have added bonus fishing days on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays in addition to the weekend fishing in hopes of increasing the total number of

lake trout removed. Goals for this year are to remove 45,000 lake trout through the annual Spring and Fall Mack Days events. They also hope to see 25,000 fish removed by the general harvest and have implemented a limited gill netting program which should remove another 20,000 to 30,000 fish.

Lake trout have a long history of competition with, and predation on native fish in Flathead Lake and throughout the watershed. We have seen drastic declines in bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout due to lake trout since their numbers increased due to planting of Mysis shrimp during the 1960s and 1970s. Lake trout were directly responsible for the complete extirpation of the popular kokanee salmon fishery in Flathead Lake and are credited with drastic declines in several popular native trout fisheries in the basin.

The National Park Service, along with biologists from the U.S. Geological Survey have implemented lake trout

(Native Trout, continued on page 5)

Officers

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



www.warriorsandquietwaters.org

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

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

"The difference between fly fishers and worm dunkers is the quality of their excuses." ~ Anonymous

From Our President



Larry Timchak—FVTU President

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

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

Newsletter editor: Lucky Sultz

Supporting the Next Generation of Flyfishers

The Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited is actively engaged with youth outreach and education. The importance of encouraging young folks to experience, enjoy and appreciate the natural world cannot be overstated. They will become the next generation of stewards of our environment.

You can lend a hand, or a rod, or reel to help advance this important cause.

Glacier High School Teacher Pete Byl has created an innovative class titled "Outdoor Pursuits." Juniors and seniors learn about and participate in a wide range of outdoor activities including fly tying and fly fishing. Our Chapter has enjoyed participating in these classes for the past couple of years.

Participation in the class has consistently grown and Mr. Byl sees a bright future for this class. Instead of scrounging up 24 fly rods and reels and outfits for the two classes every spring and fall, he is in the process of acquiring fly fishing gear for the class. Our Chapter will donate a complete LL Bean 5 weight rod and reel to the cause along with other donated fly-fishing equipment. If you wish to contribute a rod and/or reel, please contact Larry Timchak at (406) 250-7473.

Up the road in Whitefish, a similar effort is underway at the Whitefish Christian Academy where Clark Berg, Director of Development, is gathering fly fishing gear for the 5th and 6th grade classes. They need 17 beginner fly rods along with line and tippet for 30 reels to round out their collection. If you can help, please contact Clark at cberg@whitefishacademy.org or at (406) 862-5875.

Our efforts to engage youth to help increase participation as



well as understanding and appreciation of our natural environment including cold water fisheries will continue. We've donated Trout in the Classroom aquariums to many of our local schools, assisted in kids fishing fairs, and will host a Montana Girl Scout STREAM Girl project this August.

Don't forget to bring along a kid when you go fishing! I hope to see you at our annual fundraiser banquet on May 9th. Until then, good fishing.

Larry Timchak
President, FVTU

See you on the river!



Don't move live fish.



It's Banquet Time!

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited will hold our annual fundraising banquet on May 9, 2015 at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish, MT.

This is our main fundraising event of the year and we need your help to continue funding of our current and future projects to protect wild populations of our valuable native fish, to fight against degradation of essential cold-water habitat and maintain and restore family-friendly, accessible fishing opportunities in the Flathead.

The best way for you to help is to attend our annual banquet, take part in the silent and live auctions and participate in the many raffles throughout the event.

Don't forget to get your tickets for this year's grand prize, a 14-foot, self-bailing Super Duper Puma Aire raft complete with NRS rowing frame and Carlisle oars.

A no-host social hour will begin at 6pm with a scrumptious dinner at 7:30pm. Tickets for the event are \$40 and include dinner, and a chance to win one of our fabulous door prizes. If you need tickets, please contact Dan Short at (406) 250-5064 or Chris Schustrom at (406) 260-1198. We hope to see you there!

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 program offerings.



The Slumbuster Streamer

By John Barr, via Orvis

Hook: 4X-long streamer hook (here a Dai-Riki #700), size 8.

Head: Nickel cone, large.

Weight: Lead-free round wire, .020.

Adhesive #1: Superglue or head cement of your choice.

Thread: Brown olive, 6/0 or 140-denier.

Rib: Chartreuse Ultra Wire, brassie size.

Body: Silver Sparkle Braid.

Adhesive #2: Superglue or head cement of your choice.

Wing/tail: Chartreuse pine-squirrel Zonker strip.

Collar: Chartreuse pine-squirrel Zonker strip

"It has subtle flash and looks alive in the water. Tricked-up streamers can often get follows or flashes, but fish don't eat them. When a pattern has lots of flash, rubber legs, and gaudy colors, trout, especially pressured fish, may show interest but can sense that something is not quite right. Trout routinely try to actually eat the Slumbuster."

FVTU Calendar

- April 21: Our general meeting will host Mark Deleray and his staff from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks who will give a presentation on the State of the Fishery and update us on some of the great work MFWP is doing around Northwest Montana.
- May 9: FVTU Fundraising Banquet! See adjacent article.
- May 16: Opening of the general fishing season!

Walleyes West of The Continental Divide?

In 1989 an Environmental Assessment was completed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to assess the potential impacts of walleye introductions west of the Continental Divide. Citing the paucity of suitable habitat west of the divide and potential impacts on other fisheries and on native fish populations, the Commission voted for a policy of no stocking of walleye west of the divide citing biological and social concerns.



Noxon Reservoir Walleye

In 2004, the Commission again agreed to hear a proposal to stock sterile walleye in closed-basin lakes west of the continental divide. The proposal was strongly opposed by several conservation and sportsman's groups including Trout Unlimited and the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. In their response to the proposal, AFS stated,

Science has demonstrated that non-native fish introductions are a primary cause of declines in fish abundance and diversity throughout Montana and worldwide. The bull trout is currently listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the westslope cutthroat trout is classified as a species of special concern. Both fish have declined due to habitat loss and negative interactions with non-native fish species.

Montana TU and AFS also pointed out that non-indigenous fish west of the divide will provide a source for bucket biologists to spread that population to other water bodies nearby. Dale Burk of Stevensville, representing about 100 members of the Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association, called the idea of introducing walleye west of the divide "insane."

Finally in September, 2004 the FWP Commission voted 4-1 to reject the proposal to plant walleye west of the divide and uphold the 1989 ban.

By the late 1990s, it was revealed that there is an illegal

reproducing population of walleye in Noxon Reservoir near Thompson Falls. They were first caught in the reservoir by FWP in 1994 and have reached over 13-pounds. Noxon Reservoir is a popular smallmouth and largemouth bass fishery that supports several popular fishing tournaments each year. It is also part of the migration corridor for native bull trout. Avista Utilities, Idaho Fish and Game, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPL) Montana, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are currently pursuing an intensive and costly program to aid bull trout recovery in the lower Clark Fork that is threatened by non-natives.

In recognition of the threat posed by this walleye population, the [Montana Statewide Fisheries Management Plan](#), adopted in 2012 called for a Management Type of "Suppression" for walleye in Noxon Rapids Reservoir. The specific Management Direction called for the Department to "Suppress illegally introduced walleye from the reservoir as possible." Guidelines adopted by the FWP Commission commit to launching, within 30 days of a credible report, investigations that confirm the presence and distribution of the new species. The department is then committed to draw up an action plan for responding to and potentially suppressing or even removing the unwanted species.

In 2013, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks released a "[Draft Environmental Assessment to Investigate Suppression of Walleye in Noxon Reservoir](#)". That plan included, as its number one Primary Objective to "Suppress walleye in Noxon Reservoir to minimize future impacts to the sport and native fisheries and conform with Montana's Illegal and Unauthorized Introductions of Aquatic Species policy." The EA was met with substantial opposition by the growing group of walleye anglers in the lower Clark Fork. Early studies,

"In a thorough review of fisheries trends since the completion of Noxon and Cabinet Gorge Reservoirs, Scarnecchia et al. found significant increases in nonnative predator abundance concurrent with significant declines in forage species."

The walleye population in the lower Clark Fork is not only a threat to fisheries in Montana, but has caused

Walleye, continues on page 5



(Walleye, from page 4) headaches for neighboring states as they move downstream. It has been estimated that 2 million young steelhead and salmon are consumed each year by non-natives in the Columbia River system, accounting for up to 1/3 of the loss due to predation. In [Lake Roosevelt](#), nonnative fish constitute what has been called a “predator trap”, a large number of predatory fish with a declining prey base threatening moves to re-establish native redband rainbow trout. In the “1970s, the average length of Roosevelt walleye was 18.5 inches. “By the mid-’80s, the average length had dropped to 14 inches.” A study by an Eastern Washington University research biologist found that Roosevelt walleye, and to a lesser extent, smallmouth bass were consuming

*95 percent of the kokanee fry being released
40 percent of kokanee yearlings,
24 percent of redband trout yearlings,
27 percent of 2-3-year-old redbands.*

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks continues to study the walleye problem in Noxon Rapids Reservoir. The number of nonnative fish and the constituency for that fishery continue to increase. The forage fish base that supports other popular fisheries in the reservoir continues to decline and the threat to existing populations and recovery of native species increases. These factors make it ever harder to do any kind of meaningful suppression on the invasive population. We have been studying this problem for more than a decade, we know what the threat is and what needs to be done, but what we are required by law to accomplish. Is it finally time to act and do the right thing?

(Native Trout, from page 1) suppression efforts on Quartz Lake in Glacier National Park and hope to soon ramp up suppression, through a netting program on nearby Logging Lake.

Netting has been ongoing on Quartz Lake for the past five years and has shown very positive results. According to Dr. Clint Muhlfeld, research aquatic ecologist for the USGS, “The bull trout numbers increased last year, giving us hope that the population is stable and that suppression is working..It’s the most promising results to date of any lake trout suppression program.”

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks also continues lake trout suppression efforts on Swan Lake. Netting on Swan Lake has been ongoing since 2009 in an experimental effort to determine if removing lake trout can be an effective tool in improving conditions for kokanee salmon and native bull trout and cutthroat trout.

Swan Lake efforts have seen some success with a slight increase noted the last couple of years in the number of native bull trout spawning beds in the system. This past fall, a new lake trout spawning areas was discovered in the south half of the lake and there is hope that additional exploitation of this new spawning area will increase even further the hoped-for recovery effort.

While improving conditions for native fish in the Flat-head watershed has proven to be a large and ever-evolving task, and funding has proven to be a challenge, there are some positive signs that lake trout suppression efforts are bearing fruit and biologists hope that continuing these reductions will make room for increases in populations of our important native fish.

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Water Compact

FVTU supports legislation ratifying the water compact between the State of Montana, the Federal Government and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

For more information on the Compact:

The Montana DNRC website has all the Compact documents and a good overview of the Compact process:

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/rwrcc/Compacts/CSKT/>

The CSKT website has many good documents:

http://www.cskt.org/tr/nrd_waternegotiations.htm

[Montana Water Stewards](#) is a non-profit, bipartisan group following the Compact process very carefully and they have lots of excellent information and explanations on the Compact.



[Native Fish Society](#)

This Land is Your Land—NOT!



Attacks on Trout Unlimited and other conservation organizations in support of the transfer of federal lands to state control continue apace in several western states. In this latest iteration of the “Sagebrush Rebellion” money from oil, gas, timber and mining interests is being funneled through Berman & Co., a large Washington, D.C. lobbying and public relations firm headed by [Richard Berman](#). Berman was labeled “Dr. Evil” by CBS 60 Minutes.

The Citizens United v. F.E.C. decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010 unleashed unlimited corporate money to be used by faux nonprofit groups who don’t have to report their donors. Corporations eager to get their hands on what’s left of our natural resources are mounting a coordinated public relations campaign to discredit anyone who has shown support for the protection of public resources and wildlife habitat. Rick Berman has set up a large network of websites, fake sportsman’s groups and foundations using money from Koch Industries, Exxon/Mobil, Shell and others to justify the transfer of public lands and attack any person or group that opposes the transfer.

Several western states have expressed an interest in obtaining federal lands as a means to grow their budget through selling off public resources to the highest bidder. It is well documented that states like Montana can in no way afford to manage vast amounts of federal land without aggressively marketing the resources on those lands to corporate interests and likely selling the land itself.

In recent months we have seen a determined attack on conservation and sportsman’s groups that actively oppose transferring federal lands to states. Most recently, we have seen another op-ed in many newspapers across the west, including Montana, by someone named Will Coggin, who is pro-swap. Mr. Coggin claims to be the “*director of research for the Environmental Policy Alliance*”. The (purposely named) EPA is a public relations front group set up by Rick Berman through the “*Center for Organizational Research & Education*” (formerly the *Center for Consumer Freedom*, which is active in attacking food safety advocates), another Berman front organization funded by business interests. These organizations apparently feel that by attacking conservation and sportsman’s groups, they can create enough doubt among voters and state officials to further their ultimate goal of control of your public natural resources.

Using boilerplate state legislation ginned up by the Koch/Exxon/BP-funded *American Legislative Exchange Council* (ALEC), they hope to gain control of what is left of our natural resource base. The latest example was the budget amendment that passed the U.S. Senate that authorizes the Senate to create a fund relating to legislative action that results in transfers, sales or exchanges of federal lands with states. [Montana Senator Steve Daines](#) provided the tie-breaking vote to authorize creation of the fund. Not surprising since the #2 donor to Senator Daines election campaign was Koch Industries, with the #1 donor being a large Washington, D.C. hedge fund.

This is not an onslaught that we can afford to ignore or take lightly. This attack is very well funded and well-coordinated and conservation groups will need to learn to work together if we are to foil their efforts to steal our fish and wildlife habitat.

FVTU News Briefs

Mack Days

Spring Mack Days is in full swing on Flathead Lake. The semiannual fishing contest is hosted in the spring and fall by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes as one tool in their arsenal to reduce the over-abundant lake trout population in Flathead Lake that threatens populations of native westslope cutthroat and bull trout throughout the basin.

As of the third weekend, more than 13,000 mackinaw have been removed with two 100-fish days recorded on the first day. The contest continues through May 17.

The Tribes are also continuing with a gill netting program in an attempt to increase the number of nonnative lake trout removed.

Lake trout suppression projects are also being conducted by the National Park Service at Quartz and Logging Lakes in Glacier National Park. As well as in Swan Lake each fall.

Group lists Montana's Smith as fourth most-endangered river in US

Once again a Montana river has made the infamous list of America’s Most Endangered Rivers.



The pristine Smith River, one of Montana’s most treasured resources was named No. 4 on the list of most endangered rivers by the group “[American Rivers](#)” due to the threat of the Tintina Resources proposed-Black Butte copper mine on a primary tributary to the Smith.