



Volume 5, Issue 2

Spring 2016

***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 Update



Photo from Montana FWP

Otolith microchemistry tests on the two walleye found in Swan Lake last fall revealed that the fish were not spawned in the lake and were therefore the result of an illegal introduction.

If you have information on any illegal fish introduction, you may be eligible for a reward of over \$30,000. The reward is supported by contributions from groups including Montana Trout Unlimited, Walleyes Unlimited, Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana, Invasive Species Action Network, the Montana Bass Federation Nation, Montana Pikemasters, Montana Wildlife Federation, and Walleyes Forever. If you have information on the illegal introductions, you can claim the reward by calling.

1-800-TIP-MONT

Tests were compared to fish from Lake Francis, near Conrad, or Noxon Reservoir. The tests revealed that the fish did not originate in those two waters, but through ongoing analysis Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks hopes to pin down the origin of the fish.

The FWP Commission approved a mandatory kill regulation for walleye in Swan Lake, Swan River, and their tributaries. All walleye caught by anglers must be kept and immediately killed. Walleye must be reported to FWP within 24 hours, and arrangements made for the entire fish to be turned into FWP within 10 days.

Montana is certainly not alone in dealing with illegal introductions. Gillnet surveys in Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho have revealed that the walleye population there continues to expand. Idaho walleye are likely the result of fish from Montana that moved down the Clark Fork, infesting waters to our west. "Lake Pend Oreille, well known for its kokanee, Kamloops rainbow trout, bull trout and cutthroat is now also the home to a growing walleye population," says Phil Cooper, educational specialist for Idaho Fish and Game.

Walleye, likely from illegal introductions are also causing problems in Washington

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Officers

- President.....Larry Timchak
- Vice President.....Vacant
- Secretary.....Dylan Boyle
- 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

"There he stands, draped in more equipment than a telephone lineman, trying to outwit an organism with a brain no bigger than a breadcrumb, and getting licked in the process."

Paul O'neil, 1965

Climate Action Needed Now

February 2016 set temperature records around the globe. Flathead TU and other local conservation groups are publicly expressing the need for quick and concerted action to reverse some of this alarming trend. Here is a recent letter to the editor that went out to local media outlets regarding climate change.

Editor,

Our climate is changing and global temperatures are soaring. NASA climate data shows that January, 2016 was the hottest month ever recorded – until February broke January's record.

The science is settled. Carbon pollution is impacting Montana's outdoor heritage. Drought and high temperatures are making our forests more susceptible to insect infestations and disease. Our wildfires are larger and more extreme. We are seeing more rain, less snow, and reductions in snow water content, along with earlier snowmelt and peak streamflow. Summer river closures are becoming the norm as we try to protect our world-renowned fisheries from high summer stream temperatures and low stream flows. Glaciers are disappearing. The list goes on.

Our outdoor economy and treasured heritage are at risk. A recent study prepared for the Montana Wildlife Federation projects that the changing climate will cause the loss of 10,922 Montana outdoor recreation and tourism jobs and \$281,000,000 in labor earnings. It's hard to sell the amenities of our "Big Sky" to tourists and new businesses when it is frequently ob-

scured by unhealthy amounts of smoke from western wildfires.

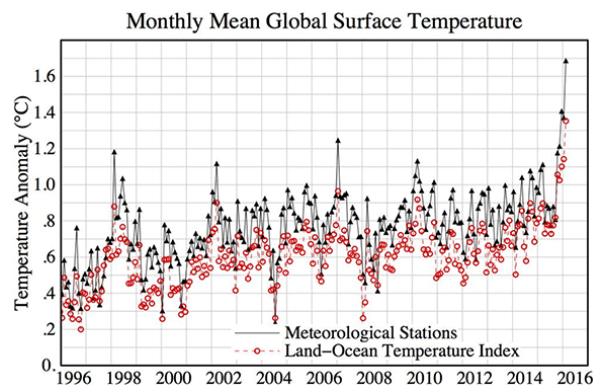
We need to move forward with policies that reduce our CO2 emissions. The Clean Power Plan would slash emissions and reinvigorate our energy sector. Let's hope its stay in the courts is short-lived, and that it will be implemented soon. In the meantime, Montana needs to develop its own plan to transition to clean, renewable energy. There's too much at stake, both ecologically and economically, for us to wait any longer.

Sincerely,

Larry Timchak
President, Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited

Hilary Hutcheson
Vice President, Outside Media

Todd Tanner,
President, Conservation Hawks



Newsletter content does not necessarily reflect the views of Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited, its 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

Oil Trains and the Flathead



A coalition of local conservation groups, including Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited, Headwaters Montana, American Rivers, National Parks Conservation Association, Flat-

head Lakers, Whitefish Convention & Visitors Bureau, and others is working to increase the profile of the problems associated with the passage of 100-car long oil trains passing through the Flathead River corridor.

In 2012, trains carried 40 times more oil than they did in 2008, and the volume doubled again in the following year, to about 400,000 tanker-car loads, according to figures posted by the Association of American Railroads. We are currently seeing 12-18 100-tank car trains, each, carrying Bakken Crude on the BNSF line that follows the Middle Fork Flathead River. One tank car can carry 30,000 gallons of crude oil, so each train can haul up to around 3 million gallons of oil. The oil is predominantly from the Bakken fields in North Dakota. Bakken oil is extremely volatile. North Dakota light crude is especially flammable, perhaps because it is being produced at such a breakneck pace that drilling companies aren't following standard industry practices to separate out volatile gases. In 2013 an unattended 74-car train carrying Bakken oil exploded in Lac Megantic, Ontario, resulting in the fire and explosion of multiple tank cars. Forty-two people were confirmed dead, with five more missing and presumed dead. In 2015, four tank cars carrying Bakken crude headed for the Flathead spilled 35,000 gallons of crude oil. It took nine hours for a hazardous materials team to arrive on site from Texas. "We're lucky it didn't ignite," said a Roosevelt County deputy sheriff.

There were more than 141 "unintentional releases" reported from railroad tankers in 2014, an all-time high and a nearly six-fold increase over the average of 25 spills per year during the period from 1975 to 2012. There would really be no effective way to stop a spill into the Middle Fork once it occurs, especially if it happened during winter. Booms won't stop much in the wild whitewater sections. They might get some of the viscous mess off the water surface, but there is no way to stop the volatile chemicals like benzene from getting into the downstream aquifer where it would take many years to percolate through. They got about 1% of the oil from the Yellowstone River pipeline spill in 2015 under much better conditions.

BNSF has shown little interest in prevention of derailments and tends to focus instead on response to spills. Almost all trains through the Middle Fork corridor use only one engineer so there is no backup in case of problems.

"The federal government predicts that trains hauling crude oil or ethanol will derail an average of 10 times a year over the next two decades, causing more than \$4 billion in damage and possibly killing hundreds of people if an accident happens in a densely populated part of the U.S.

I can't imagine what would happen if we had an oil train explosion in the Middle Fork during a dry summer like we had last year. There would be no way emergency crews could get up that narrow canyon, not to mention the danger to hikers and tourists from the resulting wildfires. Nobody is even talking about a possible explosion.

This is a conversation we must have and it must be soon if we hope to protect our extraordinary watershed and its invaluable native fish populations.

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

- On Tuesday April 19, Colin Cooney, with Montana Trout Unlimited will present a program on the proposed Black Butte Mine on Sheep Creek in the headwaters of the world-famous Smith River.
- May 21 once again brings our popular and exciting Spring Fundraiser Banquet at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish. Get more details on our website at www.flatheadtu.org



ATTENTION ANGLERS

FLATHEAD RIVER

- **CATCH-AND-RELEASE FOR CUTTHROAT TROUT ALL YEAR**
- **CLOSED TO FISHING FOR BULL TROUT ALL YEAR**
- **December 1 to third Saturday in May:**
 - *Artificial lures and/or maggots only
 - *From mouth of Stillwater River to Flathead Lake unscented artificial lures only.
 - *See 2016 Fishing Regulation Booklet for all Flathead River regulations.

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks
Report Illegal Fish Introductions call 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668)

Due to an unnoticed error in the 2016 Montana Fishing Regulations booklet prior to publication an important omission occurred in the book.

The stipulation for "Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout" for the section of the Flathead River from the confluence of the North and Middle Forks (near Blankenship Bridge) downstream to Flathead Lake was omitted

from the regulations.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is trying to get the word out about the error. They are posting the above sign at all fishing access sites along the main river and will publish the correction in local media.

Please let your fishing friends know that there has been no change; all cutthroat trout in the mainstem flathead river above the lake **MUST** be released unharmed.

2016 Spring Mack Days

As of this writing, the 2016 Spring Mack days event on Flathead Lake is just getting underway.

The opening weekend turned out to be one for the record books. A total of 5,898 lake trout were turned in shattering the highest previous weekend record of 4,314 during the 2012 Spring Event. Eight anglers caught their 100-fish limits on the first Friday during this year's event.



This, along with the Fall event are an integral part of the management toolbox used by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to slowly reduce the numbers of non-native lake trout in Flathead Lake and increase the numbers of native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Spring Mack Days will run from March 18 to May 15 with \$225,000 in prize money to be awarded. Anglers can sign up any time during the event.

"Our vision is a future in which we integrate the wisdom inherited from our elders and ancestors—our traditional ways of knowing and understanding—with the best available science in a way that ensures our children and grandchildren will always enjoy abundant native fish and wildlife." CSKT Natural Resources Dept.



Walleye, continued from page 1 State. An expanding walleye population in Lake Roosevelt on the Columbia river and have spread to the remainder of the main stem Columbia River, from near the mouth to the Canadian border and throughout reservoirs in the Columbia Basin Irrigation District. Walleye continue to advance to other waters in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project by using canals as frontier highways. They have established populations in Lake Billy Clapp, Moses Lake, Potholes Reservoir, Long Lake, Crescent Lake, Soda Lake and Scooteney Reservoir where the threaten established sport fish fisheries and populations of threatened and endangered native fish.

According to Montana Trout Unlimited Executive Director Bruce Farling; "These introductions are occurring all over the place because anglers think they can go back one day and catch a particular species of fish. Well we've had it. This puts a multimillion-dollar fishery at risk."



Aquatic invasive species watercraft inspection stations are now open for the season at Browning, Clearwater Junction and Pablo with the other stations set to open soon.

Remember, ALL boaters MUST stop at inspection stations. Boaters are urged to inspect, clean and dry boats, trailers and gear exposed to the water to ensure they don't carry organisms from one water body to another, whether they plan to travel an inspection route or not.



Flathead Women On the Fly



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

Flathead Women 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 [Flathead Women on the Fly Facebook page](#). And their new website <http://www.flatheadwomenonthefly.com/>

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



Sunday evening, May 1st at the Bigfork Playhouse, Conservation Hawks will present a screening of their two amazing angling films *Cold Water* and *Chrome*.

Both films offer some amazing, and gorgeous, fishing footage along with an insightful perspective on climate change and how it will, and is, affecting anglers, our waters and our fish populations.

Festivities will kick off around 5:30pm with beer, wine and snacks in the lobby before the films. Following the screening, they will follow up with a panel discussion featuring Hal Herring of Field & Stream Magazine, Hilary Hutcheson host of Trout TV and Todd Tanner President of Conservation Hawks. Audience participation is invited.

In addition to the great films and panel discussion, there will be some great fishing gear, art and goodies to raffle off. For more information contact Conservation Hawks at (406) 291-0857, or info@conservationhawks.org



President's Message



Michael, Christmas Island Guide

Giving Back

Larry Timchak, FVTU President

Spring has arrived full of promise for another season on our rivers and lakes. Snowpack across the state is in good shape so hopefully we can avoid the low flows and warm temperatures of last summer. From what I observe on my frequent walks along the Flathead River with my dog Max, lots of local anglers are out and about trying to intercept the large adfluvial cutthroats from Flathead Lake that are migrating upstream to their traditional spawning areas. Warm sunny days before the runoff begins in earnest provide some of the best fishing of the year on the Flathead.

Many outdoor enthusiasts are generous with their time

and support of worthy causes, fly fishers included. I see this locally as our Chapter supports efforts to engage local youth, increase outreach to women, expand awareness of coldwater fish conservation, and lend a hand with Warriors and Quiet Waters and Casting for Recovery. Hundreds of hours are donated every year by our Chapter members to support causes they care deeply about.

There's one story about the generosity of fisherman that I want to share with you. I had the good fortune of fishing Christmas Island this January for bonefish and giant trevally. As you walk across the flats with your guide, in this case, Michael, you visit about local culture, family and of course fishing while you watch for telltale signs of cruising bones. Michael shared a story that reflects upon the generous nature of fisherman.

Christmas Island is part of the third world island nation called Kiribati. Most residents never leave the islands and health care is limited to local clinics. Michael's wife was diagnosed with blockage of arteries to her heart which required major surgery not available on the island. When Anchorage area doctors who had fished with Michael learned of her plight, they arranged an all-expenses paid trip to Anchorage where they successfully completed the operation resulting in full recovery. Back on the island with many stories to share of their travels to an exotic land, Michael and his wife are celebrating the birth of their first child. While my generosity was a pittance compared to the good doctors in Anchorage, Michael really appreciated the Flathead Valley TU shirt I gave him!

As you can see from the newsletter, another busy season is in store. From continued support for lake trout suppression in Swan and Flathead Lakes to efforts to reduce risks from oil trains along the Middle Fork, we are engaged with conservation efforts at many levels. Thank you for your support and I hope to see you at our annual banquet on May 21 at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish. Good fishing!

FVTU News Briefs

Illegal Introductions Continue

In 2010 or 2011, somebody illegally released a few northern pike into Pelican Pond south of Cascade and the population took off with the efficient predators feeding on established populations of bass, crappie and perch — the species that draw hundreds of anglers to the popular little fishery each year.

Each year Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks personnel set gill nets to catch northern pike to keep them at bay in an attempt to save the variety of species that families and on-shore anglers have come to expect and appreciate

at the pond. About 300 pike have been removed in the past four years.

This introduction is only one of the latest in a long string of illegal introductions in Montana (see page 1).

"No doubt, it's a hell of a lot harder to catch these guys than it is to catch a poacher," Bruce Farling, TU's executive director, on why the group decided to ante up \$10,000 for information leading to convictions of those responsible for illegal introductions in Swan Lake as well as incidents on Noxon Reservoir and Seeley Lake. *From the Great Falls Tribune* <http://goo.gl/3scHcP>