Volume 4, Issue 3 **Summer 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

STATE OF THE TROUT—2015

Bull Trout

Category	Status	Explanation
Listing status		Listed as Threatened under the ESA; Sensitive Species (BLM, USFS) Species of Special Concern (CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA)
Current range		Occupy 22,400 miles of stream habitat; approximately 60 percent of historical range.
Historical range		Ranged broadly throughout Klamath, Upper Snake, Columbia, Coastal and McCloud River systems
Climate change		Very sensitive to rising water temperatures; wildfires a concern with reduced snowpack and forest drying
Energy development		Minimal impacts other than legacy hydroelectric developments
Non-native species		Lake trout, brook trout, brown trout and northern pike are particularly problematic
Water demand		Dams fragment habitat
Data issues		Status of many smaller populations is uncertain

Bull trout

Trout Unlimited recently released an important report on the State of the Trout. The report outlines current status, trends and threats to trout populations around the country. Some of the report is a bit depressing, but it is nevertheless an important status report:

"Of 28 native trout species and subspecies, three are extinct and six are listed as Threatened or Endangered. Excluding the extinct trout, 52 percent (13 of 25) occupy less than 25 percent of their historical habitat and are at high risk from at least one major threat."

If you care about, wild trout, clean, cold water, climate change, or fishing and want to know what needs to be done and what we can all do, you will want to read this report.

"If future generations of Americans are to continue to reap the recreational and economic benefits of abundant trout populations, we must chart a new path forward. As described in this report, we have the knowledge and tools to deal successfully with current and emerging threats and to restore robust populations of native trout. The question is not whether we can restore native trout but whether we choose to do so."

Officers

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

"Three-fourths of the Earth's surface is water, and one-fourth is land. It is quite clear that the good Lord intended us to spend triple the amount of time fishing as taking care of the lawn."

~ Chuck Clark

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

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

Red Flag Fishing

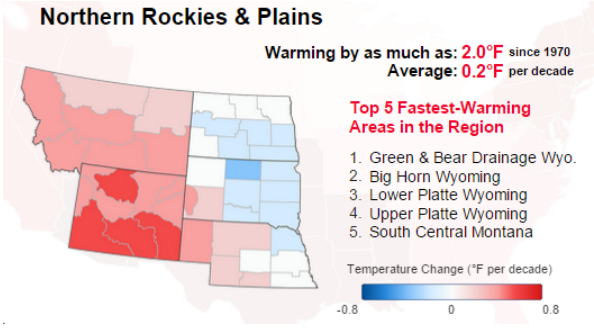
On July 4 Flathead County, along with most of Western Montana, was under a red flag warning for windy conditions and heat along with extreme low humidity. Fire danger and drought conditions have reached extreme very early this year.

All of this does not portend well for summertime fishing. Several streams are extremely low and warm and many are already under Hoot Owl restrictions, meaning that fishing is restricted and no fishing is allowed between the hours of 2pm and midnight.

Fish are stressed by higher water temperatures and every caution should be taken by anglers to prevent damage to our fisheries. Watch the FWP list of impacted streams and act accordingly.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has released a useful list of **Drought Tips for Anglers**. Please pay attention and follow common sense practices out on our streams. These conditions are likely to remain, or worsen throughout the summer, so please follow these tips.

- Fish in the cool morning hours — low water flow and rising temperatures combine to stress fish.
- Try another location, if water is low at a favorite fishing spot.
- Be alert for fishing closures on streams hardest hit by drought.
- Work with water users to try to conserve flow.



Report fish kills to the local Fish, Wildlife & Parks office. Anglers who practice catch-and-release fishing can minimize the stress they place on fish:

- Use barbless hooks.
- Land fish quickly once they are hooked.
- Keep fish in the water as much as possible while handling them.
- Limit the amount of time fish are handled.
- Wet hands before attempting to remove the hook.
- Handle fish gently.
- Take care not to touch a fish's gills.

On streams experiencing extreme drought conditions and high water temperatures anglers may want to avoid catch and release fishing as it is difficult for trout to recover under these conditions.

Learn more at the Montana TU web page;

Angling During Drought

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

www.warriorsandquietwaters.org

USFWS Revised Bull Trout Recovery Plan

Don't forget, you have until July 20 to send comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on their recently -released Recovery Unit Implementation Plans (RUIP) as part of the overall recovery plan.

The plan for the Upper Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit (CHRU) includes 35 bull trout core areas. There are 163 local bull trout populations in the recovery unit. The Flathead Lake Region accounts for 17 distinct bull trout populations that have seen a 75% decline in redd counts since the 1980s with lake trout seen as the dominant primary threat to these populations.

The implementation plan for the Flathead Lake Region calls for implementation of the Flathead Lake and River Co-Management Plan which has been dormant since it expired in 2010. It calls for removal of the lake trout slot limit on all of Flathead Lake to encourage lake trout suppression. The plan supports current suppression efforts on Flathead and Swan Lakes and suggests an increase in suppression through commercial harvest in State-managed waters if necessary. Also a reduction in the population of illegally-planted northern pike in the section of the river just above Flathead Lake is called for.

The plan calls on managers to set a demographic target in the Flathead Lake bull trout population of 300 redds in the tributaries. This number comes from a Security Levels memo from 2002 which was based on 1980s populations levels. The numbers largely ignored the 5,000 to 6,000 fish harvest of bull trout during that period and so, the target number of 300 redds is likely below the actual numbers.

The goal of the demographic targets is to *"Increase bull trout spawners to attain the average redd count levels of the 190s and maintain this level for 15 years (3 generations) in the North Fork, and Middle Fork monitoring areas."*

You can read and comment on the recovery plan at the USFWS bull trout website. The six draft Implementation Plans are available for public comment during a 45-day period, which closes July 20, 2015.

Glacier Institute

FVTU board member Chris Schustrom presenting one of the 12 donated rods.

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited, with the assistance of Glacier Anglers, is pleased to award a grant of 12 Orvis fly rod, reel, and line outfits to the Glacier Institute for their kids fly fishing programs.

"The health of our clean, clear, cold waters and the fish and fisheries that depend on those waters will rest with future generations of fly fishers. Fly fishing camps and programs such as those offered by the Glacier Institute will build those future generations of conservation-minded anglers and we are happy to be a part of that process":

Larry Timchak, Chapter President of Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited.

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

- Don't forget, you have until July 20 to submit comments to USFWS on the Implementation Plan for bull trout recovery in the Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit. You can read the plan at the USFWS Bull Trout Website
- In August, FVTU will once again provide volunteers for the lake trout suppression effort on Swan Lake. Please watch our website for an opportunity to help out with this important effort.

Bomb Trains and Bull Trout

"*An unspoiled river is a very rare thing in this Nation today. Their flow and vitality have been harnessed by dams and too often they have been turned into open sewers by communities and by industries. It makes us all very fearful that all rivers will go this way unless somebody acts now to try to balance our river development.*"
– President Lyndon Johnson on signing the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, October 2, 1968.

In Montana we have 368 miles designated as Wild & Scenic Rivers. This amounts to only 2/10ths of 1% of the state's river miles. The Middle Fork of the Flathead River is designated wild and scenic from its headwaters to the confluence with the South Fork and is one of the wildest rivers left in the state and the nation.

The Wild & Scenic designation prohibits any activities that would harm a river's values and is one of the strongest tools we currently have to protect wild rivers and their watersheds.

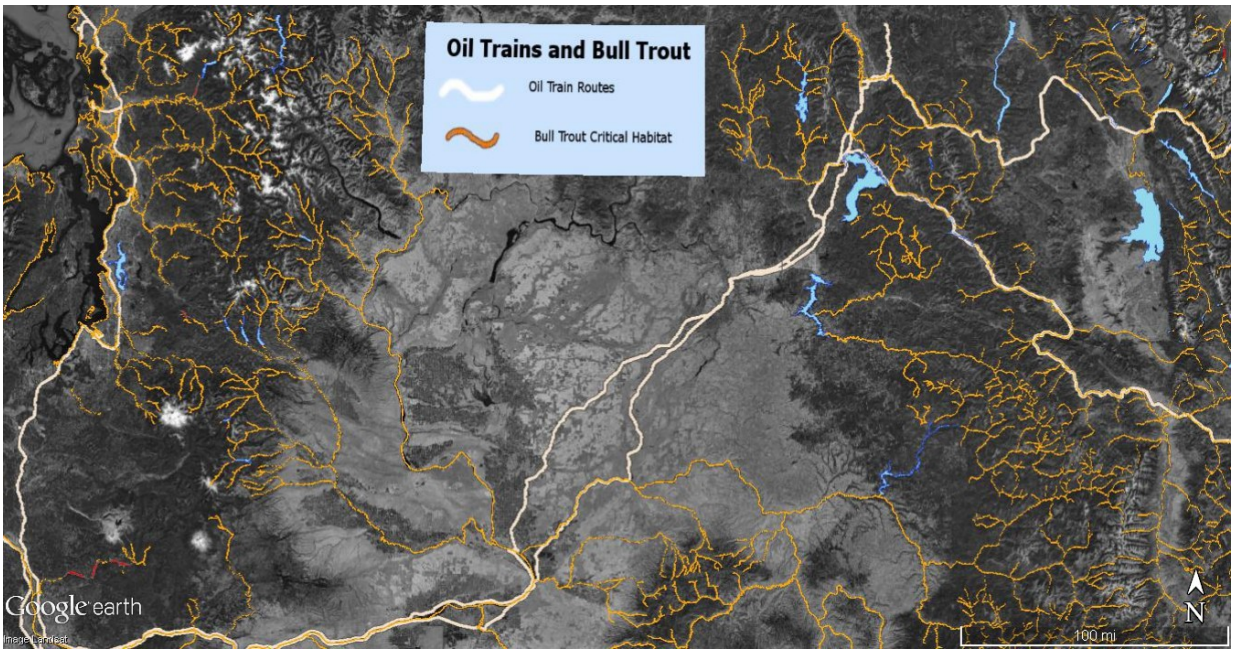
Today, on average twice a day, trains carrying 100+ cars each containing 30,000 gallons of crude oil from the Bakken oil fields traverse the Middle Fork corridor along the southern edge of Glacier National Park. Glacier owes its very existence to the railroads. Early promoters spent millions to develop the Park and entice eastern tourists to visit Glacier.

The Flathead system is home to the largest remaining assemblage of native adfluvial bull trout in the country. These fish are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The system is also home to the largest remaining intact population of native westslope cutthroat trout. All of that could be endangered for decades and maybe forever by the careless loss of even a single 30,000 gallon carload of crude oil into the river.

With a steadily expanding volume of rail traffic, railroads have been reluctant to focus on any solutions that could impact the amount of oil moved by rail. They have instead placed most of their emphasis on emergency response plans to the address inevitable accidental spill. No matter how good a spill plan is in place, too much depends on weather and terrain conditions in the wilds of the Middle Fork through the rugged John Stevens Canyon. A mid-winter spill could be impossible to mitigate due to cold conditions and deep snows. Dealing with a devastating explosive oil spill, such has occurred in other parts of the country, in this area with little or no access could be truly overwhelming to emergency responders.

Failure to address the tragic consequences of a spill of this magnitude on this unique landscape will amount to a colossal breach of our obligation to preserve these few remaining wild places for future generations.

Below is a map of bull trout critical habitat streams and oil train routes through the northwest.



New Wild and Scenic Rivers Proposal

In 1976, the Middle Fork, South Fork and North Fork of the Flathead River were listed as Wild and Scenic Rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. There have been no new designations since that time.

Currently, only about 2/10 of 1% of Montana's 169,829 miles of river are protected as Wild and Scenic. A new group of conservation partners has proposed 55 new sections of creeks and rivers across Montana — about 700 river miles — as candidates for possible protection. The list includes 12 streams in the Flathead drainage totaling 89 river miles.

The proposal came out of meetings with more than 200 watershed groups, conservation organizations, land trusts, recreation groups, riverside landowners, business owners and other stakeholders. You can see a complete list of the proposed streams along with an interactive map at the Montanans for Healthy Rivers website.

Parachute Purple Haze

This pattern is a variation on the standard Parachute Adams and was developed around the Bitterroot river based on the theory that purple anything will catch fish. From my experience, that theory seems to hold true on most any water. I like to tie this one in size 14-16 for cutthroats. I also use yellow Zelon for the post to improve visibility.

Hook: Standard Dry-Fly Hook/
Dai-Riki #305, sizes 10-20

Thread: Purple, 6/0 or 70 denier

Body: Purple Uni-Flexx

Tail: Moose-body hair

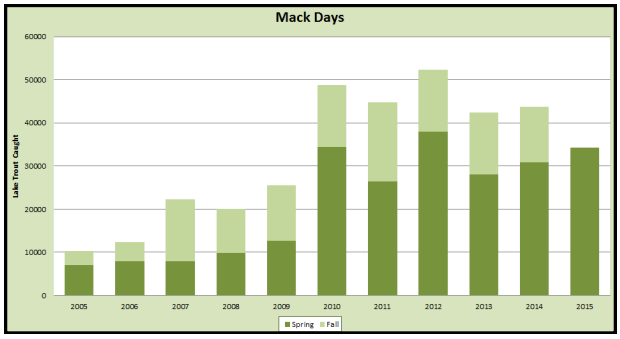
Wing Post: White Calf-Body Hair

Hackle: Brown and Grizzly

There are may variations to the Purple Haze. This pattern came from the Orvis website.

Native Fish Society

2015 Spring Mack Days



As part of the ongoing effort to reduce the prolific population of lake trout in Flathead Lake and improved conditions for native fish, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes hold two Mack Days fishing tournaments each year.

The 2015 Spring Mack Days tournament wrapped up on May 14 with a total of 34, 239 fish caught. This was the second highest total since the tournaments began in 2008. The largest fish was a 41-inch, 24.4 pound monster. The award for smallest catch went to John Gauci for a 3.7-inch lake trout.

INSPECT. CLEAN. DRY.

It's that time again. Montana FWP is running their roadside inspections to check for aquatic invasive species. Remember ALL watercraft are required to stop. Please remember to stop at the inspection stations and comply with all the guidelines for preventing an alien invasion of Montana waters.

"Watercraft inspections are a way of intercepting vessels and equipment that have the potential to spread aquatic invasive species (AIS), and to decontaminate them (if necessary) before launching into Montana waters. Data collected at watercraft inspection stations also provide valuable information on boater movement, cleaning habits, and bait use while providing information and education about invasive species to the public."

MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

FLATHEAD VALLEY CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED
www.flatheadtu.org

FVTU News Briefs

Canadian Logging Proposal Raises Concerns

Jemi Fibre, a forest products company based in Vancouver, B.C. has acquired about 320,000 acres of mostly private timber land in the Elk River and Flathead River drainages in British Columbia.

As the land is mostly private, Jemi is exempt from many of the Best Practices protocols in Canada. They will be able to clear cut the land without replanting.

Due to their previous environmental record in coastal forests, the logging proposal has raised red flags with conservation and recreation organizations north and south of the border.

The lands Jemi bought includes private timber on Sportsman's Ridge in the headwaters of Foisey and McLatchie creeks on the Flathead side. Logging operations are scheduled begin this summer.

The Canadian portion of the Flathead River drainage provides about 35% of the threatened bull trout spawning sites in the Flathead basin so, this is something that FVTU will be following closely. Logging operations are scheduled begin this summer.

More fine Flathead Bull Trout
Go Griz!