



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's been quite a year so far. I sincerely hope that all of you and your families are staying well. I know that Kim and I didn't do a few things this summer that we had planned due to the pandemic, but we did get out fishing a few times and I hope you did too. Plenty of memes out there describing fishing as the original social distancing activity!

Speaking of social distancing, not having face to face meetings has made the chapter look at how to enhance communication with our membership and the public. It occurred to the board that it's been a long time since we sent out a Flathead Valley Chapter official newsletter. Whether you prefer a hard copy newsletter, email, website or Facebook page, please feel free to comment and let us know what is on your mind.

Even though we are in a virtual world in some aspects of our lives, the conservation, protection and restoration of trout and their habitat does not observe the limits of the coronavirus and social distancing. The FVTU board wrote letters and made phone calls this past spring and summer on behalf of trout and their habitat. Among other things, the board submitted comments on fishing regulations, support for native westslope cutthroat populations in local waters and applied for and received a grant along with the Kootenai Valley TU chapter to deal with selenium coming down from Canada. We received a TU mini-grant to support George Mason University in research in the Flathead on the effects of rearing native trout in a hatchery environment. We may not be able to sit down face to face, but we are still engaging with policy and decision makers.

Don't forget - **VOTE!** Voting is the single biggest thing you can do right now to make your voice heard locally, in Helena and in Washington, DC. If candidates or their organizations reach out to you asking for your vote, make sure you tell them **"I Fish and I Vote."**

Stay engaged and stay well!

Dan Short – FVTU President



SMITH RIVER

The first phase of work has begun on the Black Butte Mine in the headwaters of Montana's famous Smith River. On August 15th, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality issued a permit to the Australian mining company Sandfire Resources, formerly Tintina Resources to build roads and pads, and construct a small reservoir as it applies for future permits to tunnel underground.

Montana TU has opposed the mine since its inception. In March DEQ announced the completion of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is intended to be an in-depth analysis of the environmental impacts of an operating mine and in May issued their Record of Decision (ROD) permitting the mine.

You can get more information on the mine and the current operations on the [DEQ website](#).

Montana Trout Unlimited has joined several other organizations in filing suit to stop the Black Butte Mine, stating that the Final EIS is inadequate and that the mine poses a serious risk to both water quantity and water quality in the Smith watershed. You can help by donating to our Smith River Campaign, to cover the costs of this fight. Visit the Montana TU [DONATE](#) page to make your contribution.

MACK DAYS WEEK 9

This past weekend was the ninth week of Fall Mack Days. One that I'm sure won't be soon forgotten. It started out sunny, warm and calm. Then came winter - rain, hail, cold, and unrelenting wind with rough huge rolling waves. Cold, windy and wet and yet, there were some undaunted anglers out of the lake. A total of 218 fish entered this past weekend. A total of 14,066 lake trout have been turned in by one hundred twenty-seven anglers thus far. Friday's total was 205 lake trout entered. There were 354 Saturday and 33 hard-caught entries Sunday, when anglers dealt with frozen reels, lines and fingers

The annual Spring and Fall Mack Days events are sponsored every year by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes as a tool to reduce and control the population of nonnative lake trout in Flathead Lake. Entrants are eligible for \$200,000 in cash and prizes. The tournament runs for 10 weeks and will conclude on Nov. 15.

Mike Benson leads the anglers in the Top 10 category with 988 and an 18-day average of 49.06 over 26 days of lake trout fishing. Julie Perkins leads the Ladies with 497 total entries. Good luck to all participants. These events are an important component in the never-ending task of controlling some of the nonnative fish in the lake.



A fine day rebalancing the fish populations in Flathead Lake – thanks to Beth Gardner

KOOTENAI RIVER SELENIUM

On Sept. 24 Board of Environmental Review initiated rulemaking to establish site-specific water quality standards for selenium in Lake Kooconusa and the Kootenai River in Lincoln County, Mont. The rule initiation follows a request made by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). initiation follows a request made by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

They are proposing water column and fish tissue selenium standards for both Lake Kooconusa and the Kootenai River. The proposed water column standard for Lake Kooconusa is 0.8 µg/L. This standard was developed based on the unique, site-specific aquatic ecosystem of the water body. The proposed standard for the Kootenai River is 3.1 µg/L and based on EPA's recommended national criteria.

The current selenium standard for the water bodies was established in 1987 at 5 µg/L. In 2016, the EPA developed updated recommended national criteria at a value of 1.5 µg/L for lakes and reservoirs and 3.1 µg/L for rivers—while also suggesting to use site-specific standards, whenever possible.

MT DEQ needs your comment letter supporting adoption of the selenium standard. The public comment period runs from **October 9 to November 23**. *The sooner they receive your letter of support the better.* Please plan on writing a letter soon.

Get more information on the standard-setting process and on the selenium problem from the [DEQ website](#).

VETERANS SERVICE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Following 9/11 America rose to the challenge of helping our returning combat veterans and over 40,000 Veteran Support Organizations were spawned.

Trout Unlimited saw a natural fit combining our love for clean trout streams with the needs of our veterans and in 2011 began the Veterans Service Partnership. The VSP differed from other groups in that it served all active duty, reservists, guardsmen, veterans, and their families. Through TU's network of some 400 chapters, veterans around the country could connect with TU. Local chapters developed VSP programs specific to their area and resources. Participating veterans received a free one-year TU membership.

2020 saw a change in leadership at TU-VSP and with that, a change of direction as well. The Veterans Service Partnership was re-branded as the **Service Partnership**. No longer veteran-centric, the new program extends TU's outreach to the nation's first responders. Members of the medical, fire, and law enforcement communities are all eligible for the free one-year TU membership. Chapters are encouraged to work with their local first responders in much the same way as they did veterans. The national office does not dictate the types of programs, or where the focus should be at the local level. Each chapter develops activities that are most suited to their individual situation.

If you're a first responder or you know a first responder, bring them to our next FVTU meeting (once we're able to resume). Look up FVTU Service Partnership Coordinator Jim Borowski and he'll get you signed up for your free one-year membership. Until then, stay safe!



Catch and Release fishing is a lot like golf. You don't have to eat the ball to have a good time.

Anonymous

RATTLESNAKE CREEK DAM



It's Gone! For more than 100 years, 1904 to 2020, the Rattlesnake Dam provided water to the city of Missoula. This past August, the deteriorating dam was removed with funds provided by Trout Unlimited, the City of Missoula and others. Rattlesnake Creek is an important spawning tributary to the Clark Fork for native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout that has been cut off for over 100 years. The creek will now be reconstructed to reconnect about 15 miles of important spawning habitat.

FWP opens public scoping period on potential acquisition of 800 acres near Columbia Falls for conservation, public access

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is opening a public scoping period on a potential proposal to acquire 800 acres of forestland near Columbia Falls to protect water quality and important fish and wildlife habitat while providing free public recreational access.

FWP is working with the Flathead Land Trust on a potential acquisition of 800 acres of undeveloped land along 1.6 miles of the Flathead River. The property is highly developable due to its immediate proximity to the rapidly

growing city of Columbia Falls. The Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC), a subsidiary of Glencore, has decided to sell the property and has given FWP a two-year window to complete this project.

Comments received during this scoping period will help FWP determine public interest in the proposed project, identify potential issues that would require further analysis, and could provide insight for refining the proposal or developing and analyzing additional alternatives. Upon completion of the scoping period, FWP will determine next steps, which could include conducting an environmental analysis with additional opportunity for public input or taking no further action on the proposed project.



The 30-day scoping period begins Oct. 30, 2020. The deadline for comments to be submitted is Nov. 29, 2020.

To read the full scoping notice, visit <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices>. Submit either written or e-mailed comments by Nov. 29, 2020, to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Kris Tempel, Habitat Conservation Biologist; Re: Proposed Wildlife Management Area; 490 N. Meridian Road; Kalispell, MT 59901, or ktempel@mt.gov.

àày is the Salish word for bull trout. This newsletter is a quarterly publication of Flathead Valley TU and does not necessarily reflect the views, agenda or policy of Trout Unlimited.