



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

Will Rogers

As of the date of my writing the 68th Montana Legislature is early in the second half of the session. Members of [Montana Trout Unlimited](#) are blessed with the presence in the legislative halls of Clayton Elliott as our Conservation and Government Relations Director for MTU. At halftime, Clayton reported MTU is doing relatively well on the budget and policy issues that impact cold water conservation and native fisheries.

That's not to say that it has been an easy session. Constant vigilance on the part of Clayton and MTU caught the attempted sneak attack Montana's stream access law in the form of Senate Bill 497 by Sen. Steve Fitzpatrick (R-Great Falls). A big thank you to the many TU members that dropped what you were doing that afternoon and made the calls and sent the many emails that led to a decisive 14-36 no vote on the Senate floor. Your words were heard loud and clear that there is a painful price to pay for messing with stream access.

There are many other bills I could, and perhaps should, highlight due to their impact on cold water conservation and native fish but the point is we have boots on the ground in Helena watching out for our interests. Be alert for calls to action. We know our voice can be heard and make a difference.

The old sports saying that there is no off season is also true in politics. Our citizen legislators return to their regular jobs, farming, teaching, contracting etc. after the session is over. While they are home, take the time to get to know them. Thank them for their service to the state even if all they did was make you mad. Let them know if they made the right decision on some bills. And hold their feet to the fire on the votes that you didn't agree with. Even with the legislature not in session, that doesn't mean they aren't working on important issues, including those affecting our fishing and hunting, water quality and other issues.

Dan Short

President, Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited

BEER AND WATER

"Wednesday morning, 23 cars of a 66-car Montana Rail Link train bound for Laurel derailed." While the train had 19 empty cars, it was carrying a variety of commodities, like cedar chips and lumber. The empty cars, which were submerged in the river, once carried sugar and fuel. It could have been much worse. . . Oh, wait, that was 2013.



“A Montana Rail Link freight train derailed between Paradise and Plains, spilling hot liquid asphalt, corn syrup and an estimate 8,000 12-packs of Coors Light beer into the Clark Fork River. . . “ Oh shucks, that was in July 1999. The headline should be, “Crews will attempt to remove Boeing 737 fuselages that tumbled down a steep embankment and into the Clark Fork River in western Montana”. . . No, No, No, that’s not right, that’s 2014.

Fast forward to April 2, 2023: [“Freight train derails into Clark Fork River”](#) About 25 rail cars derailed along the Clark Fork near Quinn’s Hot Springs in Sanders County. Luck played a part once again and it appears that no hazardous material made it to the river. However, this does seem to be a popular stretch of river for dumping Coors Lite Beer. The current wreck dumped another large batch of tasty Coors beer into the Clark Fork. Montana Rail Link employees stretched booms across the river to round up all the escapees.



The derailment was reminiscent of other wrecks along this stretch of tracks. Especially a 1999 mishap that dumped 8,000 12-packs of Coors into the Clark Fork near the same area as the new accident.

The point is that it won’t always be lite beer that winds up in Montana waters. Approximately 12-18 trains composed of 100 tank cars containing toxic crude oil pass down the Middle Fork of the Flathead River each week and these trains, headed for west coast refineries pass along the Flathead and Clark Fork rivers and as has been said many times, “it’s not a matter of if, but when” one of these derailments will result in oil cars in one of our precious rivers. Should one or more carloads of toxic oil spill into the Middle Fork of the Flathead River near Glacier National Park, it would likely be game over for fishing in the Middle Fork and possibly as far as Flathead Lake. When questioned about the safety of the tracks along our waterways, the standard answer from BNSF is “Don’t worry, we are ready to clean up the mess if and when it happens.” For many of us, that answer is not good enough. Most crude is transported in upgraded DOT-117 tank cars, but those are the same design that ruptured and exploded in Ohio in February. The railroad will not release their plan for spill prevention. They do have a response plan in the event of an oil spill, but that too is not a public document. Given the frequency of derailments in the western part of Montana, the public needs to know what BNSF is doing to prevent a mega-disaster and keep the toxic oil in the rail cars.



FVTU Steps Up to Help the Flathead

The Flathead Land Trust is spearheading an effort to obtain a conservation easement on 442 acres of the [Owen Sowerwine Natural Area](#) near Kalispell between the Flathead and Stillwater rivers. *“This means that over 400 acres of really natural, excellent river bottom habitat just close to the city limits of Kalispell will be maintained in the future for birds, fish, wildlife and for people to enjoy,”* said

Laura Katzman of the Flathead Land Trust.

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited has participated in the conservation of over 1,200 acres along the upper Flathead. We have pledged our support and funds for this important project. The overall effort includes the recently completed acquisition of an easement on the 772-acre Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project. We can all be proud that our chapter remains active in preserving these important areas for the enjoyment of our children and grandchildren.



There comes a time in every man's life when he is either going to go fishing or do something worse.

~Havilah Babcock

HERE COMES THE 2023 FLATHEAD VALLEY TROUT UNLIMITED FUJNDRAISER BANQUET!

I know it's been a while since we have had the opportunity to get together, but we are finally ready to gear up for our annual banquet. Be advised that there are some changes this year. **We will be selling Banquet Tickets and Package tickets ONLINE ONLY** this year. You will NOT be able to purchase paper Banquet tickets. You can still get Raft Raffle tickets from any board member or at events before the banquet.

Our silent auction is now online. You can point your browser to the URL or QR code below to learn more, or to browse items in the auction. Return often as new items will added on a regular basis. Bidding for Silent Auction items will start on Tuesday, April 25th and continue until the night of the banquet. Live Auction and various raffles will be held as always during the banquet. We hope to see you all at this gala event!

NOTE: THE BANQUET WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, MAY 5TH THIS YEAR, EARLIER THAN OUR TRADITIONAL DATE



SAVE THE DATE
Friday, May 5, 2023
 Annual Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited
 Banquet
 Grouse Mountain Lodge
 Whitefish, Montana

Social Hour 6:00 pm—Dinner 7:30 pm
 Live Auction, Silent Auction, Raffles, Door Prizes

Tickets \$70 each-RSVP by May 1

<http://www.flatheadtu.org/annual-banquet-information>

Ticket information-406-250-5064 or 406-261-8956

Live Auction, Silent Auction, Raffles, Door Prizes
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Finally Some Movement on Transboundary Pollution



The Biden Administration announced at the end of March that the U.S. and Canada intend to come to an agreement this year to reduce and mitigate the impacts of water pollution from mining operations in the Kootenai watershed, including addressing selenium issues.

The decision comes after U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, sent the administration a letter March 21, asking President Joe Biden to address the issue. He sent the letter just prior to Biden’s trip to Canada to meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

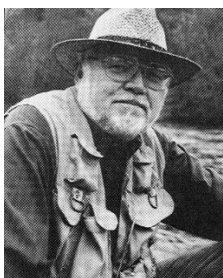
The problem has been highlighted in recent months as Teck Resources, who run the coal mines in the Elk River Valley in British Columbia has been fighting to open five new mines which will undoubtedly increase the Selenium pollution that has reached beyond the International Border. The new mines have received the backing of the Provincial government. According to Tester’s office, the two governments will spend the next few months, alongside tribes and First Nations, identifying specific steps to protect transboundary waters, specifically aiming to reduce mining pollution. We can only hope that the two governments can reach an equitable solution before we see any increase in pollution levels.

River Cleanup – Time to get out and show some love for our rivers.

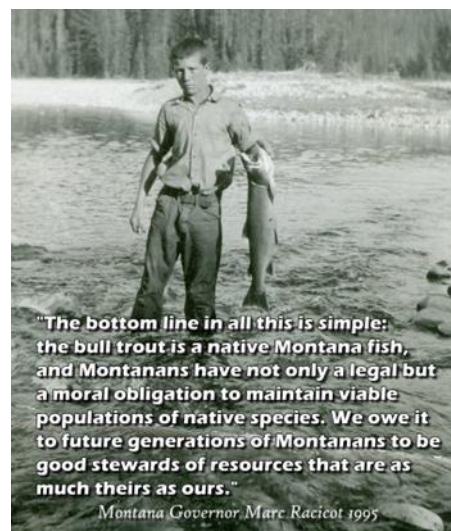
Join the FVTU Board on Saturday, April 29th for a few hours of outdoor sport vying for the most unusual item collected in our Annual Fishing Access Site Cleanup! We will gather for Coffee and Donuts at the Steel Bridge Fishing Access at 9:00 AM, rain or shine. From there crews will disperse throughout the lower mainstem Flathead River sites at the direction of Montana FWP. Bags will be provided, but bring your gloves and wear appropriate footwear for the cause. You can call or text Wade (406) 261-8956 with any questions.

Quinnett’s Quips;

Night Fishing – “I like night fishing, even though there is a molecule of terror in it. Maybe it is that tiny bit of terror that I relish, that going mano a mano with another predator in the dark. I know it is not entirely civilized, but there is nothing to compare with the sizzle of fear except, perhaps, the rush of being feared. Either condition confirms you are alive.



Dr. Paul Quinnett, from Spokane, is a clinical psychologist and a leading expert on mental health and suicide. In his books “Pavlov’s Trout” and “Darwin’s Bass” he presents passionate support for the linkage between good mental health and a bad fishing habit. In this and coming newsletters we will share some of his wisdom.



“The bottom line in all this is simple: the bull trout is a native Montana fish, and Montanans have not only a legal but a moral obligation to maintain viable populations of native species. We owe it to future generations of Montanans to be good stewards of resources that are as much theirs as ours.”

Montana Governor Marc Racicot 1995

òày 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.