



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Wade Fredenberg,
President Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited*

With one of the more interesting Summers in our history now in the rear-view mirror I hope you are all able to take advantage of this glorious Fall weather thus far. For my money, September and October are truly the First Best Months in the Last Best Place. As your new FVTU President I have to begin with a hearty thank you to Dan Short. You have to be on the Board to truly understand how much Dan (with an assist from Kim) has done for this chapter and will continue to do. He steered us through Covid and kept the ship afloat. Now, please make sure Dan, that the newly available time in your schedule is spent fishing!

I agreed to take over as Chapter President for several reasons. First, and foremost, is to try to rebuild the participation in our Membership Meetings back to what it was a few years ago. As an organization of over 400 members, we ought to be able to turn out more than a handful to our meetings. This post-Covid malaise has affected other clubs as well, but we promise to present programs that you'll find interesting, stimulating and interactive. The September meeting got us off to a great start with the "Guides Night Out." David Sandler has agreed to be Program Chair, so please, please share any great program ideas with David and/or any Board Member. Or better yet, our Board is still a few positions short of full staffing, so let us know if you want to help steer the raft!

Secondly, as a retired Fisheries Biologist I can talk biology all day (and, according to my family, even late into the night), but the Board also recognizes that not everyone digs the science. So, look for us to blend some really hot angling topics and tips with some of the less exciting but probably more important scientific information. We are, after all, an advocacy organization and that means getting things done to help our streams, lakes and fish populations to thrive. The Board has remained fairly active in promoting scientifically based fisheries management, most recently with comments on Montana FWP's 2024-2026 Fish Management Plan and 2024 Fishing Regulations.

Thirdly, we continue to try to roll boulders upstream in fighting the invasive nonnative fish issues, particularly the lake trout scourge in the Flathead Valley that is waging war on native bull and cutthroat trout in the Swan and Flathead Systems. It certainly doesn't help that Smallmouth Bass, Black Crappie, Northern Pike and Walleye continue to be bucketed about. We (collectively) are losing that battle and during my term I would like to experience a win or two.

All of this requires just one thing of you all. Show up, speak out, and participate! See you at the meetings and then out on the river!

Chars!

Wade Fredenberg

President, Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited

FWP ISSUES STATEMENT ON MONTANA STREAM ACCESS LAW



Sep 29, 2023 9:23 AM

HELENA – Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has recently received questions on Montana’s Stream Access Law and how it is applied across the state. For landowners and recreationists alike, it’s important to know about the law and understand how it applies to private land and water-based recreation.

Montana Stream Access Law

Under the Montana Stream

Access Law, the public may use rivers and streams for recreational purposes up to the ordinary high-water mark. Although the law gives recreationists the right to use rivers and streams for water-related recreation, it does not allow them to enter posted lands bordering those streams or to cross private lands to gain access to streams.

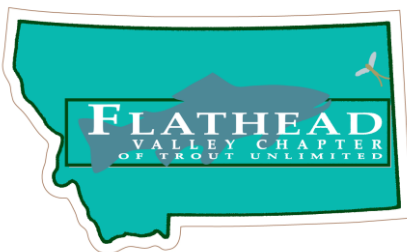
- [Montana Code Annotated Title 23: Part 3](#)
- [Stream Access in Montana brochure](#) (PDF)
- [Class I Waters](#) (PDF)



No fisherman ever fishes as much as he wants . . . this is the first great rule of fishing, and it explains a world of otherwise inexplicable behavior.

~Geoffrey Norman

FVTU Comments on proposed revision of the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan



(The following are comments from FVTU submitted to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks on the proposed 2023-2026 Statewide Fisheries Management Plan.)

From: Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the revised Statewide Fisheries Management Plan. The Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited represents nearly 400 anglers and conservation-minded members from Northwest Montana and beyond. We are committed to protecting and preserving wild and native fish populations in Northwest Montana.

We are heartened that the department has begun to recognize and deal proactively with the effects of our changing climate in the Management Plan. Northwest Montana is experiencing rapid changes in the temperature regimes and stream flows that will only continue into the future. Thank you for recognizing that record-setting low flows and high temperatures are now major influences on our fish populations and something that we need to proactively try to address. Anglers and other stream users need to know how the Department will plan for record low flows, high water temps, and the increasing need for fishing restrictions as we go forward.

Another important threat that is dealt with in the Plan is the increasing problem of “Illegal and Unauthorized Fish Introductions”. It seems that we are constantly hearing news of illegal fish showing up in popular waters. Introduced fish that compete with and prey on our native and wild populations is also a problem that is exacerbated by warming waters. We have recently heard of illegally introduced smallmouth bass in the Bitterroot, northern pike in NW Montana lakes and ponds, brown trout in the Kootenai and other threats. Once introduced fish are found in a water body it is usually too late to effectively deal with the problem. It is encouraging that FWP chose to highlight this problem in the Fisheries Plan and continues to seek crucial solutions.

Our members are concerned that penalties for illegal fish introductions are insufficient as real deterrence with fines on conviction of only \$2,000 to \$10,000. Although fines are something that the Department has little control over, it seems that those fines need to be increased and there need to be real consequences as is evident by the increasing number of illegal fish plantings. Local judges often don't see fishery infractions as real crimes and penalties are often very light. This needs to change and the attitude of FWP can help that change.

ARM 12.7.1501 – 1505 offers helpful solutions such as mandatory catch-and-kill, closing waters to all fishing and removing catch limits that need to be used more often to dissuade bucket biologists.

DRAINAGE-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

“**Recruitment Source**” should include a source code that identifies illegally introduced fish. Hatchery, Wild, or Transfer do not identify fish populations that are illegal in the water body. Having a separate source code would help to highlight the problem.

2.02 - South Fork Flathead River Drainage

The South Fork contains some of the most pristine and unique fish habitat and fish assemblages in the country. We have done a very good job at protecting this area, but we can do more. All three forks of the Flathead should be protected from angling with barbed hooks and/or bait. There is really no reason to allow this destructive equipment to continue to do harm to the best, and most fragile native bull trout and westslope cutthroat populations in the country. These fish are overly stressed by increasing numbers of anglers, warming waters, and increasing numbers of catch-and-release incidents. Our fish cannot stand the harm of deeply hooked bait or barbed hooks.

2.04 - Flathead River Drainage

There is a very real need for FWP and CSKT to get together and come up with a unified management plan for Flathead Lake. Having two sets of rules for the North and South ends of the Flathead Lake is confusing to anglers, results in duplicated efforts, and could lead to conflicting management actions. You guys need to set aside your biases and sit down across the table from each other with the goal of consolidating regulations for our most important lake.

SUMMARY

Overall, the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited would like to thank Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for their efforts to protect and preserve our precious populations of native and wild coldwater fish in Northwest Montana. Their hard work, professionalism and dedication continue to set a high bar for proficient management. We look forward to continued work with the agency and Region 1 staff on important fisheries issues in the future.

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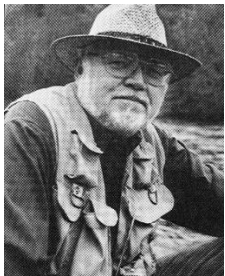
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Join Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited for our October General Meeting



Our next general meeting will be held October 17th at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 1, Conference Room - 490 North Meridian Road Kalispell, MT. You won't want to miss this one. We will have Barry Hansen, Fisheries Biologist for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Barry will update us on "Tribal Efforts to Restore Native Trout in Flathead Lake". Festivities will begin at 7pm. Light refreshments will be available. If you have any questions, please contact us at (406) 261-0888

We are in the middle of the 2023 Fall Mack Days event. Mack Days is the premier fishing event held twice each year on Flathead Lake sponsored by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and sanctioned by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. We just completed week number three of the nine-week long event. There is **UP TO \$200,000 in CASH and PRIZES** that will awarded at the conclusion of the event on November 12th.



Quinnett's Quips;

The Treasure of the Fishes – "The mystery of the fishes is a very big one and you need several lifetimes to solve even part of it. Consider that of all the planets known, ours is the only watery one, the only known aquarium in the cosmos. It's a pretty big one at some 300 million cubic miles of water, not counting the tears in your lachrymal glands in case you break off a really big one. Throughout nearly all this water, fishes have been busy evolving into more shapes, sizes, colors, methods of movement, camouflages and special adaptations of defense and offense than you could ever imagine. We have not met them all. Many remain hidden in the depths."

Note to readers: Since retirement I have been blessed to spend a week or more in Alaska each year. Last year I had fabulous fishing on a Charter off Kodiak Island. Much as I love filling the freezer with Halibut, Pacific Cod, Lingcod, Rockfish and Salmon, this is the "coolest fish" I've ever caught in the Ocean up there. It's a regal Irish Lord! What's your coolest fish of 2023?

Wade Fredenberg
FVTU President



òy 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.