August 4, 2022

Chair Robinson, Vice Chair Tabor, Commissioners Waller, Byorth, Walsh, Cebull & Lane

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks

1420 East Sixth Avenue

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, Mt 59620-0701

Re: amendments of ARM 12.5.507 and 12.5.508- angling restrictions and fishing closure criteria

Chair Robinson; Vice Chair Tabor, Commissioners Waller, Byorth, Walsh, Cebull and Lane:

The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers values our cold, clean streams of Montana. The current hoot-owl restrictions seem to work well with our nonnative salmonid but our native species, the Westslope cutthroat, Yellowstone cutthroat and Bull trout, need cooler waters to thrive. On behalf of our roughly 3,000 dues-paying members, we support the department's proposal to lower the hoot-owl restrictions' trigger temperature to 66 degrees Fahrenheit at any time during the day for three consecutive days in cutthroat trout streams designated by the department in the statewide fisheries management plan. Managing specific rivers based on the needs of native species and best available science, while not always popular, is the correct decision to make.

To avoid on-again-off-again river restrictions, we also support the department's plan to wait until three days of lower temperatures have been met before lifting any restrictions.

While we certainly appreciate fishing opportunity, our priority is the resource. Our members and many Montana anglers recognize that even with hoot-owl restrictions we can still fish half the day or head to high-alpine lakes in the backcountry. Sacrificing some river fishing outings in the heat of the afternoon during the hottest summer months to make sure our future opportunities remain seems like a reasonable tradeoff. This proposed change specifically applying to cutthroat trout fisheries is one Montana BHA supports with and thanks the Department and the Commission for considering.

Sincerely,

Scott DeSena
Volunteer Southwest Montana Chapter Leader
Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers