

#1

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Tuesday, August 27, 2024 4:55:59 PM
Last Modified: Tuesday, August 27, 2024 6:00:56 PM
Time Spent: 01:04:56
IP Address: 69.144.74.134

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Ramon Dyba
City/Town: Miles City
State/Province: MT
Email Address: ramon.dyba@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

These comments are just my personal opinions and not any group that I'm affiliated with. Paddlefish registration changes are good overall with the exception of the sonar and the boundaries. If fishing from a boat is only allowed while parked on shore or on an exposed island the sonar will not matter. Fish can be found just as easy with side imaging and 2d. My other concern with banning ffs is that it will start a domino effect with larger wider bans. It definitely is a hot topic in the fishing industry but I don't feel bans are needed. The last 2 years since the bypass was open the quota has not been meet as the fish are spread throughout the river not piled up in 1 area. Yes they will have areas they stage in at some point but never like Intake. Intake was shooting fish in a barrel with no water. Allowing anglers to have an open river like it has been for many years should not have a negative impact on fish. I understand not wanting another Intake at Forsyth potentially but with a shorter season this most likely will always be avoided. The biggest comment I hear from other anglers is they love not having to travel far to get a Paddlefish. This should include the Rosebud County anglers. Stopping the boundary at the Tongue River in Miles City seems strange. The confluence is where most people will stand and will be fishing I the Tongue River illegally. Extending the boundary further west somewhere near Rosebud should be looked at. The numbers FWP has provided shows the numbers are low currently as there has not been enough time for the change in the river for the fish to continue west and have anglers harvest them. One last comment like mandatory reporting but I think everyone should have to report tag regardless of harvest and to include their catch and release numbers. Non reporting result in loss of next year opportunities. Thanks for your time. Ramon

#2

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Tuesday, August 27, 2024 7:54:30 PM
Time Spent: 00:09:15
IP Address: 209.200.217.56

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Alan W Burch
City/Town:	Thompson Falls
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	burchhydro@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

In the regs in Western Montana during ice fishing season we are only allowed 2 lines. In Eastern Montana they are allowed 6 lines. I feel in the interest of fairness we either increase the amount of lines we can have in Western Montana or decrease the number of lines you can have out in Eastern Montana.

#3

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Last Modified: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 5:21:53 PM
Time Spent: 01:16:47
IP Address: 50.37.157.199

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Larry R Lampton**
City/Town: **Libby**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **rlampton@frontiernet.net**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I would like to see the daily limit for Lake Trout on Mcgregor Lake, between Libby and Kalispell, reduced back to 10 daily, as it was several years ago. Thru my personal experience and talking to other fishermen, there appears to be fewer large lake trout available and the presence of larger schools of lake trout do not appear to be as numerous. Also, with the introduction of smallmouth bass that are present now, I believe it could have a detrimental effect on lake trout recruitment. I just don't see the need to continue with a 20 fish daily limit.

#4

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Last Modified: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 7:08:57 PM
Time Spent: 00:37:33
IP Address: 174.201.25.16

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Dylan sander
City/Town: Glasgow
State/Province: MT
Email Address: dylantjsander@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Regarding the proposed ban on using livescope to harvest paddlefish, I believe instead of outright banning it and setting the precedent of restricting this technology, we should first make anglers report if they used livescope to target fish and monitor harvest of big fish. If over harvest of large female fish is occurring due to the use of livescope then and only then should a ban be considered.

#5

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Last Modified: Friday, August 30, 2024 9:45:36 AM
Time Spent: 00:06:24
IP Address: 174.215.24.195

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Kent undlin
City/Town:	Miles city
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	Kundlin2@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 2:cleaning fish for transport. Page 18 change:

This section completely contradicts itself. Follow suit with numerous other states and require square inch of skin attached to identify and allow fish to be cleaned while on the water or ice as indicated "fish may be cleaned prior to transport." Any warden should be able to differentiate a walleye fillet from a pile etc. If not we've got bigger issues!! Identification is key work here!

#6

COMPLETE

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Started: Saturday, August 31, 2024 7:43:52 AM
Last Modified: Saturday, August 31, 2024 7:48:48 AM
Time Spent: 00:04:55
IP Address: 64.89.220.111

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **craig wagner**
City/Town: **glendive**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **craig.wagner60@gmail.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I would like to comment on the fact that FWP incorporated some of the suggested changes from the first round of comments related to fishing from a boat and barbless hooks. These changes are commonsense and appreciated!

#7

COMPLETE

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Started: Tuesday, September 03, 2024 12:25:27 PM
Last Modified: Tuesday, September 03, 2024 12:43:24 PM
Time Spent: 00:17:57
IP Address: 216.228.49.15

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Henry Mischel
City/Town:	Glendive
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	henrym@midrivers.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I would like to be able to use hooks with barbs on harvest days; and the use of barbless hooks; a requirement for catch & release days. this would make the regulation easier to enforce the regulation, and allow those who what a harvest a paddlefish a much better chance to do so: especially a new fisherman This who help to get the youth involved, by increasing a positive experience...

#8

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 03, 2024 12:44:31 PM
Time Spent: 00:00:20
IP Address: 216.228.49.15

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Henry Mischel
City/Town: Glendive
State/Province: MT
Email Address: henrym@middrivers.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I would like to be able to use hooks with barbs on harvest days; and the use of barbless hooks; a requirement for catch & release days. this would make the regulation easier to enforce the regulation, and allow those who what a harvest a paddlefish a much better chance to do so: especially a new fisherman This who help to get the youth involved, by increasing a positive experience...

#9

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 03, 2024 2:26:15 PM
Time Spent: 00:17:12
IP Address: 216.228.49.15

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **HENRY MISCHEL**
City/Town: **GLENDIVE**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **henrym@middrivers.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Dear FWP;

Barbed hooks should be allowed on harvest days; and on catch & release days is when the barbed less hooks should be required; This will help those that want to harvest a paddlefish much better odds; especially newcomers to the sport. Please allow barbed hooks on harvest days and required barbless on catch & release days.

Thank You
Henry Mischel.

#10

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Last Modified: Wednesday, September 04, 2024 9:00:55 AM
Time Spent: 00:06:18
IP Address: 107.122.173.26

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Aubrae Alt
City/Town: Livingston
State/Province: MT
Email Address: acricci@ymail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

We are for changing the regulations of cleaning fish for transport. This will help eliminate broken fish cleaning stations for salmon fishing. This also help keep fish from spoiling in a live well.

#11

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 04, 2024 9:02:39 AM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 04, 2024 9:03:15 AM
Time Spent: 00:00:35
IP Address: 107.122.173.26

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Dan Alt
City/Town: Livingston
State/Province: MT
Email Address: dan@alternativeimpact.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

We are for changing the regulations of cleaning fish for transport. This will help eliminate broken fish cleaning stations for salmon fishing. This also help keep fish from spoiling in a live well.

#12

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 8:21:10 AM
Time Spent: 00:19:32
IP Address: 198.162.78.5

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Jess Wagner
City/Town:	Lewistown
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	jess_wagner2@hotmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I am pleased to see the recommendation to require barbless or pinched barbs for paddlefish snagging. I have been using barbless hooks for years and I feel that it hasn't caused me to lose more paddlefish. It is much easier on the fish, and much safer for anglers. Usually during paddlefish season the rivers are high and muddy so you can't see into the water when you are trying to grab a paddlefish by the tail to land it. It is not uncommon to catch a paddlefish that already has a giant treblehook in it, and you could easily hook yourself while trying to land one of those fish. Barbless hooks that break off on fish would be more likely to fall out on their own. Paddlefish anglers also snag a lot of other species of fish as bycatch, and barbless hooks would help reduce the mortality on those fish too.

If casting from a drifting or anchored boat is allowed, then I fully support banning forward facing sonar to snag paddlefish.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

#13

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 11:26:32 AM
Time Spent: 00:03:28
IP Address: 97.121.203.41

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Marvin O Edeler
City/Town:	Bozeman
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	hoekedel@q.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 47 - I support proposal as revised.

Proposal 48 - I support reducing limits on walleye from 20 to 10 for the entire section.

#14

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 1:38:05 PM
Time Spent: 00:03:29
IP Address: 129.222.101.121

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Marty Jorgensen
City/Town: Bozeman
State/Province: MT
Email Address: marty.jorgensen@barnard-inc.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support Proposal 47 Missouri River Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry as revised.

#15

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 1:39:18 PM
Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 1:41:27 PM
Time Spent: 00:02:09
IP Address: 129.222.101.121

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Marty Jorgensen
City/Town: Bozeman
State/Province: MT
Email Address: marty.jorgensen@barnard-inc.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support the revised limits as proposed for Proposal 48 Missouri River to Black Eagle Dam.

#16

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 3:38:57 PM
Time Spent: 00:07:08
IP Address: 154.27.111.36

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Christopher Wanner
City/Town:	Townsend
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	jiggineyzs@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 47 Missouri River Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry... i am 100% in support of proposal as revised.

Proposal 48 Missouri River to Black Eagle Dam to support the revised limits as proposed

#17

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Last Modified: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 5:56:20 PM
Time Spent: 00:04:04
IP Address: 174.231.83.229

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Tam Crawford
City/Town: Lewistown
State/Province: MT
Email Address: travel@tammistravel.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support Proposal 47 as revised!
I also support the revised limits in Proposal 48!
Thank you for offering this very important comment period!

#18

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 9:42:31 AM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 9:46:35 AM
Time Spent: 00:04:04
IP Address: 174.234.5.224

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Lance Kresge
City/Town: BOZEMAN
State/Province: MT
Email Address: lancekresge@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I agree with the FWP removing the regulation change for Walleye on Proposal 47. I firmly believe the regulations on that population of Walleye need to be the same no matter where they happen to be swimming.

#19

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 11:32:02 AM
Time Spent: 00:09:27
IP Address: 206.127.119.220

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Douglas J Breker
City/Town:	Townsend
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	dbreker@mt.net

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 47 Missouri River Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry I support proposal as revised. Leave existing limit of only one walleye over 15".

Proposal 48 Missouri River to Black Eagle Dam I support the revised limit of walleye to 10

#20

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 12:27:15 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 12:35:43 PM
Time Spent: 00:08:28
IP Address: 107.122.173.89

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Justin Scott**
City/Town: **Kalispell**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **jscottbassslayer@gmail.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 1 main stream of Flathead single point hook. I fish lower mainstream of river between October to February 40 plus days. I have never caught a cutthroat trout this time of year. Single hook will damage bull trout numbers because fishermen will let them bite a jig for a delayed amount of time because they are tired of missed bites. So now it is in the fishes stomach or gills. And now where killing fish your trying to protect.

#21

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Last Modified: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 1:29:49 PM
Time Spent: 00:06:48
IP Address: 172.221.78.214

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Matt Zeadow
City/Town: Townsend /Mt
State/Province: MT
Email Address: zeadow@mt.net

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I agree that the fishing regs should stay the same in the missouri river above Canyon Ferry Res and Canyon Ferry Res it self at 10 walleyes with no more then 1 walleye over 15". We cant be changing the regs in the river above Canyon Ferry it would hurt the res a ton and not help FWP to get the PSD to where the management plans says it should be. Also there is zero science and biology that would support a reg change for the Missouri river above Canyon Ferry. I support fwp in leaving the regs the same as is with only change is spearing for Northern Pike in Canyon Ferry in the winter. Thanks

#22

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Last Modified: Thursday, September 12, 2024 7:57:37 AM
Time Spent: 00:17:24
IP Address: 129.222.113.146

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Mike Howe
City/Town:	Bigfork
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	mike@howesfishing.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I fully support the Proposal #2 for the cleaning of fish before transport changes. Fishing guides on catch and keep waterways need to be able to clean fish for clients on the water, away from shore, since (especially in the Western District) there are no cleaning stations on 90% of Western and Central boat launches.

#23

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Thursday, September 12, 2024 1:42:05 PM
Time Spent: 23:32:55
IP Address: 69.146.110.146

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Ian Wargo
City/Town:	Kalispell
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	iwargo@RPA-kal.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 17: Flathead River- I was in attendance at the R1 scoping meeting, the removal of the use of treble hooks in the lower (inundated) portions of Flathead River was very contentious and impacts a large user group. My recommendation would be to pick a more reasonable and less contentious location for single point hooks only. There are two types of fisheries, the lower flathead where pike, bass and lake whitefish are the primary species targeted and the upper flathead where cutthroat are the primary target. I am very supportive of single point hooks in the upper flathead to limit damage to cutthroat and bull trout, but less supportive of the single point regulation in the inundated portions of the lower flathead. I would suggest moving this demarcation to the river confluence downstream of leisure island or some other easily definable location (not higher than the old steel bridge). This would significantly improve negative impacts of treble use in the upper stretches of the river while not eliminating a user group on the lower flathead.

Proposal 22: Little Bitterroot Lake- I am very supportive of this regulation to remove the 2 fish over 12" sublimit. Since this regulation was enacted, the anecdotal consensus is that this regulation has had the opposite effect of what was intended. This regulation was enacted to protect the larger salmon in this lake. But what appears to be happening by what is now being caught is that the larger (mysis eating) fish have overpopulated and have out competed mysis populations. Since the regulation was changed the numbers of fish seem to have increased (which was intended) but the size of the fish has been reduced, which points to strong evidence of the predator/prey dynamic playing out. When there was fewer fish, but the fish were large (20-22" was not uncommon) the bellies of the fish were packed with mysis. When the numbers grew, there were years where 12-14" fish were the largest fish heard of being caught, but they were caught in abundance and these smaller fish also appeared to be unhealthy with bellies that contained very few mysis. It appears that pressure on fish over 12" could be increased without negatively impacting the lake and it may even increase the number of large fish in the lake. We had a regulation that worked and produced big fish. Then we changed the regulation to protect the big fish. Maybe we should have kept the regulation that created the big fish in the first place... That said please increase monitoring on the lake so we can know what is impacting kokanee size and abundance. Also, an added comment on Bitterroot is that myself and many other local sportsmen hope that FWP will invest into new facilities/containment systems so that the prized Gerrard strain rainbows can continue to be planted in Bitterroot lake. These fish provide a phenomenal fishery, and we hope that stocking of these amazing fish can continue. (it is my understanding that disease in the Murray springs hatchery that will end Gerrard stocking in Montana unless investments are made).

Vice Chair Tabor- Whitefish Amendment: I am supportive of removing the 100 fish limit on lake whitefish and sticking with the region Western fishing district regulation of 20 fish. At one time there was a very robust lake whitefish population in Flathead Lake but CSKT's netting efforts to remove lake trout have significantly reduced lake whitefish populations and the reduction in Lake Whitefish limits are warranted. Hopefully an effort from the department can be initiated with CSKT to discuss how their netting efforts are negatively impacting lake whitefish populations.

#24

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Last Modified: Thursday, September 12, 2024 4:26:43 PM
Time Spent: 00:06:24
IP Address: 104.28.48.74

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Mike Wade
City/Town:	Savage
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	birdsnwalleyes@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support Proposal 47 Missouri River Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry as revised. Also, Proposal 48 Missouri river to Black Eagle Dam - I support the revised limits as proposed.

#25

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Thursday, September 12, 2024 6:38:47 PM
Last Modified: Thursday, September 12, 2024 6:39:39 PM
Time Spent: 00:00:52
IP Address: 69.144.233.178

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Ronald Miller III
City/Town:	Great Falls
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	ronmiller838140@yahoo.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

In regards to Proposal 43 - Tiber Reservoir spearing and Proposal 44 - Lake Frances Burbot Spearing

I am in great support of removing burbot from the list of species that are allowed to be speared. I don't see many burbot at either lake and I fish them quite often. I've always disagreed with the burbot spearing as they're a unique native species that rely solely on natural reproduction.

In regards to Proposal 45 - Lake Sutherlin Burbot and Proposal 50 - Newlan Creek Reservoir Burbot Limit

I fish these lakes quite often and over the years there have been more and more people targeting the burbot. I've seen quite a few of the big 30"+ fish get harvested and have hoped for a size restriction of some sort. I am in great support of the 3 fish daily with 1 over 30 inches.

In regards to Proposal 60 - Shortnose Gar Bag Limits

I am in great support of a bag limit and a catch card for Gar as they're a species of concern with a declining population. I also think that they should be a game fish. A few states are moving towards making Gar a game fish instead of leaving them as non game fish.

#26

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Last Modified: Thursday, September 12, 2024 6:42:12 PM
Time Spent: 00:03:43
IP Address: 174.231.95.64

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Randy Schmeusser
City/Town: Kalispell
State/Province: MT
Email Address: Rtschmeusser@live.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I agree with the proposal 22 regarding little Bitterroot lake. While everyone would love to have bigger fish, the 12" size limit often results in throwing back a majority of my catch. Some of these fish get damaged by the hooks and handling them and you still have to let them go, even if it's doubtful that they will survive .

#27

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Last Modified: Friday, September 13, 2024 9:56:14 AM
Time Spent: 17:22:49
IP Address: 172.56.200.166

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Mike Sedlock
City/Town:	Helena
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	mikesedsaid@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support Proposal 47 as revised

I support the revised limits as proposed in Proposal 48

#28

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Saturday, September 14, 2024 7:30:42 AM
Last Modified: Saturday, September 14, 2024 7:45:22 AM
Time Spent: 00:14:39
IP Address: 184.166.72.172

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Greg Houska
City/Town:	Missoula
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	gjhouaska@aol.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

2024 Fishing Regulations page 30. Remove the bait prohibition for northern pike during the extended season.

Goes along with the proposed no possession limit on pike.

#29

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Monday, September 16, 2024 7:45:02 AM
Last Modified: Monday, September 16, 2024 8:10:19 AM
Time Spent: 00:25:17
IP Address: 66.9.181.231

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Bryan Thies**
City/Town: **Cascade**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **montbryan@yahoo.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I am opposed to lowering the limit on trout from Cascade Bridge to black eagle Bridge, there are no biological reasons to do this and you are lowering opportunity by doing so! The 5 fish limit has been in place for years and fish count numbers essentially not changed. Most are fly fishing C&R anyway.

Also I believe we should limit the number of fish that can be caught and released by all fisherman. You might ask how could this be done? #1 voluntarily by honest sportsmen, #2 by implementing reporting requirements on outfitters. Require outfitters to keep track of catches and report the information via a computer app. We have a generation of fisherman who think it is ok to catch 20-30 fish a day. They are killing more fish now than the ones who catch 3 trout and go home with them. A fish biologist for FWP told me that the Missouri trout are caught an average of 3-4 times a year! Studies show that mortality can reach 25% when caught that many times. Do the math. $30 \times .25 = 7.5$, so even at half that they are limiting out with 4 fish killed???? What a wasted resource. Also studies have shown that the stress of being caught multiple times can stunt fish size! C&R fisherman are feeding the ospreys, eagles, hawks and others who prey on tired out stressed fish. Nature preys on the weak. #3 way to enforce is to be on the water and write citations. I also believe it would reduce crowding. Try it you might be surprised. Outfitters in AK are required to report their catches daily on available apps. Think of the data that could be collected for research with such reporting requirements. I am also opposed to issuing limited float permits to outfitters because as soon as you do you add equity value to their business and limit free enterprise. Look at the outfitters on the Snake River in ID, their businesses are worth millions because they have a monopoly.

#30

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Monday, September 16, 2024 5:07:49 PM
Last Modified: Monday, September 16, 2024 5:59:50 PM
Time Spent: 00:52:01
IP Address: 75.143.220.117

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: Robbi Robinson
City/Town: GREAT FALLS
State/Province: MT
Email Address: somwill99@hotmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

#47-I think as long as Canyon Ferry is being managed to improve the walleye fishery than no changes should be made in the river as far as walleye harvest. As long as a number of fish migrate back and forth from reservoir to river than no changes should be made for any reason. The concern of damage to trout population is not a concern when only 7% of 53 walleyes had trout in there stomachs. Not a predatory concern.

#48-A step in the right direction. Not far enough, but this is a better proposal than we have had in the past. Unless management for a better walleye fishery i.e. Canyon Ferry calls for a limit above the normal walleye limit and possession there is no good reason to exceed the standard of 5 walleye per day and 10 in possession. With the ungodly number of trout per mile in the section of river from Holter to Cascade there is no danger of having a robust walleye fishery in the same river. No one has ever produced biological evidence suggesting otherwise to my knowledge. I realize trout = money on the Missouri River, but to make walleye a second class species and walleye fishermen second class citizens is just wrong on many levels.

#46- With the species of fish available for harvest in the Marias 2 poles with 2 hooks is appropriate and should not have a detrimental effect on the fishery. When fishing species such as cats and sturgeon is is beneficial to the fisherman to have multiple poles.

#44- Agreed, if numbers cannot sustain the extra harvest than it should be eliminated.

#43- Agreed, if numbers cannot sustain the extra harvest than it should be eliminated.

#50-Newlan has seen increased pressure and setting the limit at 3 is a responsible action.

#31

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 8:19:25 AM
Last Modified: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 8:27:59 AM
Time Spent: 00:08:34
IP Address: 66.171.20.43

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Steve Harada
City/Town:	Wolf Point
State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	sharada@nemont.net

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 48 - I fully support the proposal and the rationale as revised.

Proposal 48 - I also fully support the revised limits as proposed.

#32

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Time Spent: 00:13:46
IP Address: 216.166.172.107

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Jim Muscat
City/Town:	Townsend
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Email Address:	jimmuscat@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

It is long past time that MTFWP fisheries moves on from the outdated and unessesary "suppression is the only tool in the box" to manage walleye in the upper Missouri system. Let's embrace the goose that lays the golden eggs instead of focusing on killing it. We can have our cake and eat it too if energy and dollars are focused on improving the forage options in the lake by initiating permanent, perch spawning habitat that is varying seasonal elevation proof and at the volume scale it needs to be. All anglers win in a multi species fishery like Canyon Ferry if perch numbers are brought up. It's time to stop hoping it will fix it self and use some American ingenuity and make it happen. All that's needed is a "can-do" attitude as opposed to the sky is falling so suppress, suppress, suppress the walleye. Joint partnership on large scale projects has created enormous recreational opportunities for hunters and fisherman every where. Helena FWP would be wise to look forward, stop the can't do attitude and embrace the (warmer) future. Thank you

#33

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 11:08:40 AM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 11:16:56 AM
Time Spent: 00:08:16
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Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Austin Wargo
City/Town:	East Helena
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Email Address:	austinwargo@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 22: I am in favor of changing the regulations to remove the 2 fish over 12" limit. From my experience, this regulation has had the exact opposite effect of its intention. The regulation has reduced the size of fish in the lake but increased the abundance of smaller fish. The original regulation of no size limit brought about a world class salmon fishery. The current regulation has had negative effects on this fishery. There does not appear to be a scientific reason why the regulation was changed to have a size limit, and it makes no sense to change a regulation that was working. I believe the proposed change of going back to no size limit will be very beneficial to the fishery.

#34

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 1:22:49 PM
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IP Address: 76.75.36.167

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Scott Vollmer**
City/Town: **Gallatin Gateway**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **vollmerscott@yahoo.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Madame Chair and Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the adoption of the proposed 2025-2026 fishing regulations, including the Commissioner-initiated amendment on lake whitefish.

I would also like to recommend an amendment for Proposal 1: Definition of a Hook. The language stating "A lure with multiple hooks is still considered a single hook" should be removed from this section. This amendment would eliminate the use of gear on rivers and streams throughout the state that could potentially lead to a decrease in the prevalence of hooked-scarred fish and fish mortality. Currently, on rivers and streams throughout the state, anglers are allowed to use as many as two hooks on one line. If Proposal 1 is left as written, this would allow anglers to use as many as two lures on one line on rivers and streams, with each lure containing multiple hooks. This would also be the case for an angler using two articulated flies on one line, each with multiple hooks. It is my belief that gear that places this many hooks within proximity of fish while angling can be extremely harmful to fisheries, especially our native and wild salmonids. This is especially true in places where treble hooks are allowed. By eliminating this line, the Commission would not be limiting opportunity, only limiting the amount of hooks that can be placed in proximity to fish while angling. Please consider adding this amendment as a part of the 2025-2026 fishing regulations. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Scott Vollmer
Gallatin Gateway, MT

#35

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 4:38:49 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 4:52:53 PM
Time Spent: 00:14:03
IP Address: 72.255.168.130

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Bryan Tomlinson**
City/Town: **HARLOWTON**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **budnbuster2321@gmail.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I support proposal 47 and 48 as written. Until some biological evidence that the Walleye population is having a huge negative impact on the Trout population in the rivers I support lowering the limit. I also would like to see a change in Canyon Ferry limits to all walleye must be over 15" until the netting surveys indicate some larger fish are surviving above 12". I'd be embarrassed to say I'm a manager of Walleye on Canyon Ferry and the average fish size is 10-12". If I was managing a ranch and my fall calves were only half the weight of a normal operation I'd be fired.

#36

COMPLETE

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Started: Thursday, September 19, 2024 8:18:59 AM
Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 8:20:37 AM
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Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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State/Province:	MT
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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I am very pleased to see that the proposed regulation change was removed for proposal 47 and that it is staying the same.

#37

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Thursday, September 19, 2024 8:23:07 AM
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IP Address: 174.234.8.11

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name: **sam deschene**
City/Town: **townsend**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **redneck_fisherman123@yahoo.com**

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Would like to see lower limits or size limits placed on walleye for proposal 48. There is plenty of evidence to say that trout and walleye live together just fine. There is no need for these limits.

#38

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 12:54:00 PM
Time Spent: 00:01:33
IP Address: 66.135.72.193

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Jim Vashro
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State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	Jim.E.Vashro@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

I bring a unique perspective to fishing regulations, having fished the Flathead for more than 40 years including when bull trout fishing was legal. At the same time, I was the fisheries manager (1981-2013) when many fishing regulations were put into effect and I know the background.

1. Definition of a Hook. Oppose expansion.

The statement "A lure with multiple hooks is still considered a single hook" is confusing and could be interpreted to mean a lure with multiple treble hooks is considered a single hook. Clarify. There is no value in picturing an octopus hook as opposed to other non-J hook types.

In regards to requiring the use of single hooks as opposed to treble hooks to improve catch and release mortality, there are more than 60 scientific catch and release studies on post-release mortality. None of those studies show a significant difference in mortality between single and treble hooks. In fact, several studies indicated single hooks might be ingested more deeply than treble hooks, increasing chances of hooking in the gills or gullet. Single hooks are also being promoted to decrease hooking scars. No information shows that hooking scars increase fish mortality nor am I aware of any studies showing a difference in hooking scars between single and treble hooks. In fact, a hooking scar shows the fish was successfully released. A regulation should only be applied when it can make a substantial difference in fishery numbers or quality. When single hooks were proposed for the upper Flathead in 2020, the statement was made that the regulation would be evaluated within 4 years and dropped if not effective. No evaluation has been provided yet the regulation is proposed for expansion to more waters.

2. Removal of Flathead River Northern Pike closure (March 1-3rd Saturday in May). Oppose.

There are approximately 3,000 adult bull trout spawners moving out of Flathead Lake in spring, holding in the lower 20 miles of the Flathead River in March, April and May until flows increase. The common wisdom was that the bulk of bull trout would be around the Old Steel Bridge and just upstream the 3rd Saturday in May (fishing opener), staying in the lower 23 miles of river prior to that which was then closed to fishing. That's more than 130 bull trout per mile and a higher density when you consider good holding water. One day fishing the lower 3 miles of the river in spring when legal, I landed 29 bull trout.

Northern pike are found in the same water, it is common to catch both species in the same hole. Bull trout will hit the same lures and flies. Bull trout tend to get hooked deeply and fight hard, making successful release difficult. That is why the river is closed to pike fishing. There are more than 30 fishing guides on the Flathead River, if the river is opened to pike fishing many have expressed interest in guiding for pike. In addition, more pike fishermen will hit the river. Bull trout bycatch is unavoidable. In addition, many pike fishermen in the past showed a tendency to illegally fish bait despite a ban. All of this will result in additional bull trout mortality. Northern pike are currently available for harvest 12 months of the year in the sloughs. Harvest is allowed in the river for 8-1/2 months. The last tagging study showed a harvest of 50% or more on tagged pike, the level where numbers start to drop. Pike appear to be much less common in the lower river than in the 1980s when both pike and bull trout were much more abundant. No data was provided for this proposal to show that pike are increasing or that pike predation on bull trout is increasing.

It should also be noted that bull trout spawning has now returned to levels of 70% to 80% of pre-mysis levels after dropping to 30% of average after mysis showed up and lake trout increased dramatically. 70% to 80% may reflect the new normal with mysis in the system. Most of the annual fluctuations in spawner numbers are now occurring in individual tributaries, indicating that the lake and lower river are not driving fluctuations in bull trout abundance. No data has been presented that pike abundance or predation are increasing in the lower river.

The rationale was given that many anglers are now fishing the lower river in spring (for lake trout). The impact of spring river anglers on lake trout pales when compared to lake harvest. If anything, the lower river should be closed to all fishing in spring to ensure bull trout a safe passage. In the absence of compelling data, the lower river should not be opened to increased fishing in the name of helping bull trout.

3. Little Bitterroot Kokanee Limit. Oppose dropping size limit.

Mysis shrimp were introduced to many northwest Montana lakes in the 1960s and 1970s with the goal of increasing kokanee size. Too late, it was discovered in most systems mysis would compete with kokanee for zooplankton and actually decrease salmon size.

Region 1 lakes are relatively unproductive and kokanee generally average 8" to 10". There are exceptions. Middle Thompson Lake is productive, kokanee are difficult to catch and some fish in the 12" to 14" range are caught.

About 20 years after mysis introductions, biologists discovered that a small proportion of salmon in some mysis lakes had converted to feeding on mysis in deep water and therefore growing much larger. It is unknown if this conversion is genetic or learned behavior. In

2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

the case of Little Bitterroot Lake, those kokanee commonly grew to 15" with some salmon exceeding 20" while the more pelagic shallow salmon were still running 8" to 9".

Little Bitterroot Lake sustains very heavy fishing pressure. Once anglers discovered how to catch large kokanee in over 200' of water, the numbers of large salmon started to decline. Creel surveys revealed an inflection in the size of harvested salmon at about 12". In attempt to balance the harvest with the fishery, a limit of only 2 salmon over 12" was adopted. Fishing pressure and harvest continued to increase. Party fishing to ensure every angler got 2 large salmon is common. Many anglers fish frequently, ignoring possession limits. Large salmon continued to decrease. There are a number of salmon now caught from 10" to 12" with an occasional salmon over 12". Not satisfied, some anglers are calling for the size limit to be dropped so they can harvest even more large salmon. Although anglers fishing deep have decreased a little there are still sizable numbers. Some anglers would fish deep all day to maximize their catch of large salmon given the option. As it is, many anglers release 8" salmon to maximize the number of fish from 10" to 12". A crucial question, are 10" to 12" salmon age 3 fish that will die soon or age 2 salmon that, given another year of growth, would be 15" salmon? That seems likely, even feeding on mysis a salmon is not likely to grow from 6"- 8" to 15" in one year. Once overharvested, it may take several decades to recreate the larger salmon, if ever. It is crucial to develop more creel data and age-growth data before a drastic change is made. That is even more important as FWP looks at Little Bitterroot Lake as a possible kokanee brood source. Overharvesting your largest salmon is not a good model for developing a quality brood source. This proposal should be delayed for at least 2 years until more data is collected.

#39

COMPLETE

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IP Address: 37.140.223.226

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

The psd is down again this year and since the lake and river population are the same fish, we should not change regulations. It has been a long process of trying to show this and the fact that it is even still on the docket is a joke. There is no scientific evidence that the walleye are affecting the population of "wild trout". We have provided opinions on the data produced and they do not provide any useable data to show walleye having adverse effects on trout. Please review the science again and release this proposal is entirely based on the opinion of one man and not fact.

#40

COMPLETE

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Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 1:47:37 PM
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IP Address: 98.97.39.32

Page 1

Q1

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Email Address:	susan@pccmg.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Flathead Wildlife, Inc. (FWI) Comments on 2025-26 Fishing Regulation Proposals

The Statewide Fisheries Management Plan states “The goal of fishing regulations is to make them effective but also as simple as possible to improve public understanding and angler compliance”. While this is a worthy goal, this simplification and standardization concept seems to apply only to non-native fish. An increasing proportion of regulation exceptions are being added for native fish. At the same time, regulations for non-native fish are being simplified and standardized, many times eliminating exceptions to defer to standard regulations. This removes a lot of opportunity for quality fishing or increased harvest where appropriate. In many cases it drives fisheries with potential to mediocrity. Use education when needed. Don't let simplification be the enemy of quality fishing and opportunity.

1. Definition of a Hook. Needs clarification.

The statement “A lure with multiple hooks is still considered a single hook” is confusing. Anglers could interpret that to mean a lure with multiple treble hooks is considered a single hook and legal where single hooks are required. As long as hooks are being defined, the definition of a barbless hook should be included.

2. Cleaning Fish For Transport. Support.

This a common sense clarification that will help anglers prepare fish for transport while remaining legal.

4. Western District Kids trout Fishing Ponds. Support with clarification.

FWI supports standardizing the regulations. However, these ponds were established as Family Fishing Ponds. That is an important distinction. In Kids Fishing Ponds only youth 14 and younger can fish. In Family Fishing Ponds everyone can fish, that is an important distinction that should be encouraged. Calling them Kids Fishing Ponds will cause confusion.

15. Fishtrap Creek Cutthroat. Support.

17. Flathead River Exceptions. Opposed to both single hook proposal and proposal to remove northern pike seasonal closure. Single pointed hooks were proposed in 2020 for the Flathead forks to reduce hooking mortality and scars despite there being no scientific studies showing any difference in mortality between treble and single hooks. At the time, the statement was made that the single hook regulation would be evaluated in 4 years and dropped if not working. We have seen no evaluation to date. No evidence was presented that hooking mortality is reducing fish survival in the mainstem Flathead River. In fact, some studies suggest single hooks may be ingested more deeply than treble hooks, causing more damage to gills and gullets. Therefore, this an unnecessary restriction. FWI contends that removing the prohibition on intentionally fishing for northern pike in spring will result in increased fishing pressure that will increase bull trout bycatch. Northern Pike are open for harvest in the sloughs for 12 months of the year and open for harvest in the Flathead River for 8-1/2 months. Encouraging fishing in the river during the height of migration for spawning bull trout will only hurt bull trout.

20. Kootenai River. Oppose hook restriction.

FWI supports maintaining the trophy rainbow fishery and protecting bull trout downstream of Libby Dam. However, no data has been presented that hooking mortality is a problem or that a single hook restriction will protect fish.

22. Remove Little Bitterroot Lake Kokanee Restriction. Strongly Oppose.

Little Bitterroot Lake offers a unique opportunity to catch a larger kokanee over 12”. Extreme fishing pressure is reducing the number of larger kokanee. Eliminating the existing limit would mean it will be unlikely to ever catch larger kokanee again. If anything, the limit should be more restrictive. This proposal is catering to those anglers who would catch every large fish with no thought for the future. There needs to be more creel and age-growth surveys before any changes are made in the limit.

29. South Fork Flathead River Gear Change. Oppose.

The proposal is to substitute a single point hook regulation for an artificial lure ban in a catch and release section (Meadow Creek footbridge to Spotted Bear footbridge). This flies in the face of scientific studies. This would allow the use of bait (with a single hook) in a catch and release area even though scientific studies show up to 40% post-release mortality with bait. Studies show no difference in post-release mortality between single and treble hooks. In fact, some studies indicate single hooks may be ingested more deeply and cause deep tissue damage.

31. Vermillion River Catch and Release for Cutthroat. Support.

32. West Fork Thompson River Catch and Release for Cutthroat. Support.

FWI supports this limit even though the current cutthroat definition requires the release of rainbow-cutthroat hybrids (with an orange slash). This needs to be resolved.

2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

33. Remove Whitefish Lake Lake Trout Exception. Oppose.

Whitefish Lake is currently inhabited by stunted lake trout. Studies have shown that any lake trout that grow large enough can exert significant predation on small lake trout through cannibalism. This limit was intended to improve the quality of the lake trout fishery by increasing large lake trout to reduce overall numbers. If there aren't sufficient large lake trout, perhaps the limit should be adjusted downwards rather than just eliminated and removing any chance for improving the quality of the fishery.

34. Commissioner Submitted Limit on Flathead Lake Whitefish (20). Support.

A daily limit of 20 whitefish when applied to Flathead Lake lake whitefish is more than ample. FWI is concerned that lake trout suppression gillnetting on the south half of Flathead Lake by CSKT is removing substantial numbers of whitefish. No catch data is being provided the public.

#41

COMPLETE

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Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

The psd is down on the lake there is no evidence to warrant a change on proposal 47. They are the same population of fish

#42

COMPLETE

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Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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Email Address:	mnizdil@me.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

No on proposal 47 there is no science behind it

#43

COMPLETE

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IP Address: 37.140.223.38

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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State/Province:	GA
Email Address:	nizdilcameron@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

No on proposal 47 it makes no sense at due to the lack of scientific evidence to warrant the decision

#44

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 2:41:35 PM
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IP Address: 82.132.227.81

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

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Email Address:	peterrettig7@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

No to proposal 47 due to lack of scientific evidence.

#45

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 2:41:45 PM
Time Spent: Over a day
IP Address: 184.166.100.74

Page 1

Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Jeff Lukas
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State/Province:	MT
Email Address:	jeff@mtwf.org

Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

The Montana Wildlife Federation welcomes the opportunity to comment on Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks' 2024 Fishing Regulation setting. As the oldest conservation organization in the state, representing over 5,000 members in Montana, we highly value the amount of work put into the State Fisheries Management Plan and the regulations that have been derived from it. The focus on science based conservation of our cold and warm water species is greatly appreciated, and we are encouraged by the overall direction of these proposals and where this round of setting regulations takes the state.

Overall, this round of fishing regulation setting has a lot of positives and a few proposals we're not in alignment with. For a document of this size and scope, that is bound to be the case. Nonetheless, we support sound, science based regulations reflecting management that supports both the opportunities that healthy fisheries provide to the public and the conservation of fisheries so that future generations can enjoy the same resources that Montanans and the rest of the world do now. As always, MWF is very appreciative of FWP's efforts to protect and improve habitat for native fish species throughout the state. We believe conservation of our native fish species is critical, and we are looking forward to assisting efforts to bolster native fish populations in Montana. MWF is pleased to see several proposals removed from this Spring's fish regs package, as there seemed to be enough public commentary to warrant further review. While we are not opposed to creating catch and kill regs for Westslope Cutthroat Trout where appropriate, for example, we feel that better public education with a solid justification will help folks understand why these regs were proposed, resulting in better potential for passage in the future.

Proposal 3: Northern Pike Western District Standard Limits

MWF supports elimination of northern pike possession limits in the Western District. For folks that target northern pike frequently in areas where keeping pike is encouraged, going past the possession limit can be a concern. Removing the possession limit should allow them the ability to continue targeting northern pike a day, or days, after reaching the daily bag limit, while having not consumed them yet. This is a minor expansion of opportunity that we can support, particularly because it can help further suppress pike populations in the 4 rivers mentioned in the rationale.

Proposal 9: Bull River Cutthroat Trout

MWF supports establishing catch and release regulations for Westslope Cutthroat trout in the Bull River. We are pleased to see that FWP is prioritizing the protection of the few remaining migratory native fluvial trout in this drainage.

Proposal 15: Fishtrap Creek Cutthroat Trout

MWF supports the proposal to establish catch and release regulations for Westslope Cutthroat trout in Fishtrap Creek. Populations of Cutthroats in this creek are low. Management actions that protect them from harvest is a proactive approach to maintaining and growing this population that we agree with.

Proposal 17: Flathead River Boundary and Remove Some Exceptions to District Standards

Having attended FWP's both Kalispell Fishing Regs Scoping meetings, MWF has seen how the public reacted to this proposal. What makes this a thorny issue for the public is that no data was provided on why this proposal is necessary. Treble hook mortality data and bull trout redd counts that are either stable after decades of steady decline, or currently falling, would have helped the public understand FWP's position. Without solid data to back up this proposal, FWP risks losing trust from the public. MWF opposes requiring single hooks for the lower 22-mile section of the Flathead River.

MWF also opposes opening this portion of the Flathead River to year-round fishing for pike. Fishing in the sloughs is a long standing tradition and is appropriate, because these areas do not have bull trout or cutthroat trout in them. However, the mainstem of the river is a staging ground and the migratory route for thousands of bull trout which would be caught in high numbers by folks targeting pike if year-round fishing is allowed. This is an unnecessary expansion of opportunity that will be detrimental to bull trout populations.

Proposal 20: Kootenai River Gear Restrictions

MWF supports a single hook regulation on the Kootenai River from Libby dam to the Highway 37 bridge.

We oppose the requirement for circle hooks for bait fishermen. In our experience, circle hooks can be especially difficult to remove, particularly when using bait, as the bait is typically taken deeper into the fish's mouth. This regulation could result in high fish mortality even if anglers using bait release fish.

Proposal 21: Landers Fork Gear Restriction

MWF supports gear restrictions and catch and release for cutthroats below Silver King Falls.

We oppose catch and keep regs for cutthroats in all portions of the Landers Fork. We believe that gear restrictions in this vital spawning area are necessary to protect bull trout and cutthroat trout.

2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 22: Little Bitterroot Lake Remove Exception to District Standard

MWF opposes getting rid of the 2 fish over 12" regulation and would like to see that reg stay in place. Better Kokanee biology and behavior data needs to be collected so that this fishery remains one of the few places where trophy sized Kokanee are available. The public has shown a strong desire to have that particular opportunity to continue.

Proposal 28: Snowbank Creek Gear Restriction and Cutthroat Trout

MWF strongly supports mandatory catch and release for cutthroat trout in Snowbank Creek, as well as moving to an artificial only regulation for this waterbody. Due to its importance for both bull and cutthroat trout spawning and rearing, we are very pleased to see this proposal by FWP.

Proposal 29: South Fork Flathead River Artificial Lures

MWF supports single pointed hook only regs for the entire South Fork of the Flathead.

We oppose striking the artificial lures only regulation so that bait can be used. We fail to see how adding a bait fishing opportunity helps native trout conservation on any stretch of this river.

Proposal 31: Vermillion River Cutthroat Trout

MWF supports designating the Vermillion River as a mandatory catch and release fishery for native cutthroat trout. This unique fishery deserves protection, and we are very pleased to see that FWP's SFMP highlights fisheries such as the Vermillion for native fish protections.

Proposal 32: West Fork Thompson River Cutthroat Trout

MWF supports the proposed regulation for catch and release for cutthroats in the West Fork of the Thompson River. With non-native trout encroaching on one of the few portions of cutthroat populations within the Thompson River drainage, we would also recommend more liberal catch and keep regulations for non-native trout species in the West Fork of the Thompson.

Proposal 37: Dearborn River Combined Trout

MWF opposes increasing the daily bag limit for trout on the Dearborn River. The justification of "harvest is likely minimal" does not suggest that FWP has the data to support this action. We are concerned that this small river with a relatively low population of trout would be negatively impacted through increased harvest opportunity, as it has become a popular fishing spot over the last few years. We also question if folks that do harvest trout from this river feel the need to keep more trout than 3 per day. Some exceptions to District Standards should remain in the regs, and we believe this one should.

Proposal 38: East Fork Hyalite Creek Remove Exceptions to District Standards

MWF supports transitioning to District Standards for Hyalite Creek bag limits. We are proud of FWP's work to rebuild this wild, sustaining fishery. Ceasing stocking efforts here will help deploy those resources elsewhere, so that more successes like this one can be achieved.

Proposal 40: Hauser Reservoir and Holter Reservoir Northern Pike Spearing

MWF supports allowing northern pike spearing in both Hauser and Holter Reservoirs. This increased opportunity will help further suppress pike in areas where it is needed. While pike certainly are established firmly in these systems, having the public remove as many of them as possible is a worthy goal.

Proposals 43 and 44: Tiber Reservoir aka Lake Elwell, and Lake Frances Spearing

The Federation is pleased to see the public become more interested in burbot fishing across the state. This increased pressure has required FWP to be more attentive with burbot regulations. MWF supports both of these proposals, and others, that acknowledge the status that burbot has achieved among anglers. Prohibiting burbot spearing is just one tool to help burbot populations remain within sustainably harvestable populations, and we applaud FWP for addressing this issue.

Proposals 45 and 50: Lake Sutherland and Newlan Creek Reservoir Burbot

MWF supports reducing the bag limit and restricting harvest to 1 fish over 30" for burbot on Lake Sutherland and Newlan Creek Reservoir. These fisheries have become destination fishing for burbot anglers over the last few years, and this proposal is easily justified in order to keep this fishery one of the best in the state for truly large burbot. Having attended FWP's R4 Scoping meeting, we heard members of the public speak in support of protecting these fisheries for their unique trophy qualities, and MWF is aligned with their support.

Proposal 46: Marias River Remove Exceptions to District Standards

MWF supports this reasonable proposal for the Marias river above the Highway 223 bridge. In speaking with the regional biologist, this seems like a common sense change in regulation that supports management goals.

Proposal 47: Missouri River – Toston Dam to Canvon Ferry Walleve

2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

MWF supports removing the size restriction for walleye harvest here, but we suggest keeping the daily bag limit at 10 walleye. Having attended the R4 Scoping meeting, MWF understands the very reasonable opinions on all sides of this issue. Predation of trout by walleye here is a factor that negatively affects the local trout population. Management of this portion of the Missouri prioritizes the trout fishery over walleye, and sustaining this trout fishery means that a liberal walleye harvest is necessary. We do understand the consternation of local walleye anglers with this change, but attempts at addressing this issue have fallen short in recent years and the end result is that walleye are now migrating into trout spawning tributaries in this stretch, further hampering efforts to manage trout according to the SFMP. We look forward to a reasonable discussion on this proposal, and we find our organization aligned with the Montana chapter of Trout Unlimited's recent work and statements on this particular issue.

Proposal 48: Missouri River – Holter Dam to Black Eagle Dam Walleye

MWF opposes reducing the daily bag limit for walleye between Holter Dam and Cascade. While walleye populations have grown and spread throughout the Missouri River drainage, the stretch of river between Holter Dam and Cascade remains one of the greatest trout fisheries in the world. Concessions have been made in the past to curtail daily walleye bag limits, which is contradictory to the prioritization that the trout fishery has earned. We see no reason to further limit the amount of walleye that can be harvested in a day, as protection of the trout fishery in this short span of river should be given every opportunity to continue to be the world class fishing destination that it is.

Proposal 53: Ruby River Seasonal Closure

MWF supports this seasonal closure in order to protect spawning rainbows and their habitat. With solid data on reproducing trout in this system, we applaud the application of this closure that has good, scientific backing.

Proposal 59: Paddlefish Regulations

MWF supports the suite of regulation proposals for paddlefish. We strongly encourage mandatory reporting of harvest for paddlefish, as this unique population deserves every tool at management's disposal to maintain populations that are capable of sustaining harvest. With more exposure comes more demand, and paddlefish snagging has become even more popular over the last few years than it was before. We are pleased to see a tightening up of the regulations, making them clear and concise. We also support the adjustments proposed for the Intake Bypass Channel for paddlefish. We firmly believe that this native fish deserves refined, granular regulations such as these in order to manage their population at levels that allow the opportunity for the public to have such a unique experience.

Proposal 60: Shortnose Gar Bag Limits

MWF supports creating a bag limit of 1 shortnose gar in Montana. As a species of concern, native gar need regulations in place to better curtail harvest while getting a better understanding of populations and their dynamics. We look forward to seeing data collected relative to the conservation of the shortnose gar.

Proposal 61: Powder River Remove Exception to District Standard

MWF supports closing off the Powder River to snagging for paddlefish. There is abundant opportunity for paddlefish snagging below the confluence of the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers, so this opportunity appears to be unnecessary. The Powder River has proven to be spawning habitat for both paddlefish and pallid sturgeon, and this regulation is a reasonable approach to conserving crucial habitat for these unique species.

Regarding the three public proposals for paddlefish and sturgeon, the Montana Wildlife Federation supports each one. Barbless hooks will harm these fish less and allow for easier release of fish not intended to be kept. It is in the state's best interest to maintain this opportunity while ensuring that catch and release methods do as little damage to the resource as possible. We are also strongly supportive of banning forward facing sonar for the pursuit of paddlefish. When forward facing sonar is used to aid in fishing for other species, an angler may be able to locate a fish, but the fish still has to bite a lure. With snagging for paddlefish, an angler simply has to locate the fish and cast the snagging tackle to it. This completely takes the element of fair chase out of this style of fishing, and for this reason we are opposed. It also makes it likelier that large, reproducing females are targeted, as an angler using forward facing sonar has the ability to pass on smaller fish.

Lastly, for non-proposal issues that we've encountered that have more to do with process than proposals, one concern that MWF has, and has heard voiced by folks across the state, is that there is almost no mention to the public that citizens have the ability to make their own proposals for this scoping portion of setting fishing regulations. In the past, part of the scoping process included consistent notification to the public that their ideas had an important place in the regulation setting process. Individual proposals would then be incorporated into FWP's proposals and the scoping process, so the rest of the public could comment on them. We are pleased to see there are some additional proposals from the public in this final draft of fishing regulations. That said, MWF would like to access all public proposals to see which we agree with and should be promoted, and which ones had no merit. This would allow for a more robust scoping process ensuring the public is involved in a meaningful way. While attending numerous FWP Fishing Regulation Scoping

2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

scoping process, ensuring the public is involved in a meaningful way. While attending numerous FWP Fishing Regulation Scoping meetings this year, we heard multiple people mention that they are frustrated with the new process and are wondering how they can submit their own proposals. Clearly, not every idea that comes from the public merits a larger discussion, but we feel that the public comes up with good solutions to issues often enough that our ability to give public input in an easy way should be upheld and promoted more widely. Creating a process that is more transparent and responsive to the public will increase the faith and trust the public has in FWP to manage public resources such as Montana's fisheries.

MWF also agrees that simplification of regulations should always be a goal, and where regulations can be narrowed and made precise, FWP should do so. However, simplifying regulations for entire drainages to make them uniform with existing and adjacent regulations sometimes misses the nuances required for managing specific streams or reaches of streams. The detailed approach that FWP has undertaken in this scoping process is laudable, but we are wary of the oversimplification of some regs at the expense of the nuanced management that is required in some drainages. Overall though, MWF believes that FWP's effort to make fishing regulations as clear and as easy as possible for the public to understand, and for wardens to enforce, is a worthy goal.

In closing, the Montana Wildlife Federation would like to reiterate that we are very appreciative of the work that went into the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan and the fishing regulations that have flowed from them. As stated above, a suite of proposals this large is bound to have portions that we support and some that we hope for clarification on, or oppose. Please feel free to reach out to us (Jeff Lukas, 406-546-8406) for any discussions regarding our comments on FWP's proposals. We look forward to working with FWP throughout the rest of this process to ensure that these proposals strike the right balance between science based regulations and the fishing opportunities that Montanans enjoy.

#46

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Page 1

Q1

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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Thank you for the opportunity to comment once again on the 2025-2026 DRAFT Montana Fishing Regulations. Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited represents about 400 active members, most of whom reside in Northwest Montana.

We are disappointed that despite our previous comments in 2022, and again during scoping in May of 2024, there remains no scientifically credible MFWP Regulation Proposal for lake trout limits in Flathead Lake. The long-enduring 30-36 inch slot limit for lake trout seems to be the result of a stubborn ongoing agency stalemate, rather than a step towards logical compromise and unification into a single lakewide regulation for the largest lake in Montana. Representatives of both CSKT and MFWP have indicated to us in the past that they would be willing to adopt a lakewide regulation that allows the harvest of 20 lake trout, with only one over a specific size. Unfortunately, they haven't been able to agree on what that size should be and neither agency seems willing to compromise in the best interests of the public and the fishery. For that reason, FVTU calls on the FWP Commission to exert their authority and adopt a regulation allowing the harvest of 20 lake trout, with only one over 30 inches, for Flathead Lake.

It is telling that Proposal 33 in the DRAFT Regulation package eliminates the slake trout slot limit on Whitefish Lake with the supporting rationale stating: "The slot limit does not appear to be effective at increasing the number of large lake trout." To our knowledge this superficial analysis was not rooted in any hard data, certainly none that was ever displayed. We challenge the managers at MFWP to show their work and be consistent, and then do the same analysis for Flathead Lake. We suspect they would come to the same conclusion. IT IS TIME TO KILL THE FLATHEAD LAKE TROUT SLOT LIMIT!

The extension of the single pointed hook regulation to the entire Flathead River upstream of Flathead Lake (Proposal 17) is logical in promoting consistency and we support it. But, there's no scientific evidence that we have seen that says single hooks are less lethal than treble hooks. The single pointed hook regulation is truly still an experimental approach. What has been repeatedly shown in the scientific literature, however, is that barbless hooks are less lethal than barbed hooks. If the rationale for extending the single pointed hook regulation is, as stated, to "provide additional protection for native bull trout and cutthroat trout", then FVTU remains steadfast in recommending that the regulation for single pointed hook regulation should also require BARBLESS HOOKS ONLY.

We also get the sense that in Proposal 17 there's an assumed quid pro quo, proposing single hooks as protective of native fish while simultaneously eliminating the existing lower Flathead River closure on pike fishing. This is concerning, as opening the lower river to Spring pike fishing will undoubtedly increase fishing pressure from Feb. 28th to the third Saturday in May. It is our contention that when taken together these regulation changes will result in an overall negative impact to native trout. A truly protective approach would be to close the lower mainstem Flathead River to all fishing in the Spring, as there is ample data to support that this reach of the river is a crucial bottleneck through which both bull trout and cutthroat trout must pass to ultimately spawn upstream. FVTU ADVOCATES THE COMPLETE CLOSURE OF THE FLATHEAD RIVER BETWEEN THE LAKE AND THE HIGHWAY 2 BRIDGE DURING THE PERIOD FEB. 28 TO THE THIRD SATURDAY IN MAY. Thank you for considering these comments!

#47

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Page 1

Q1

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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Hello,

My comment is specific to Proposal #40,
Hauser Reservoir and Holter Reservoir Northern Pike Spearing

My concern with this proposal is based on human safety.

As per the 2024 Montana Fishing Regulations Laws and Rules section (Page 19):

"Ice Fishing

Size of Hole

-In waters not open to spearing, the maximum size hole that may be used is 144 square inches or 12 inches in diameter.

-There is no size limit for a hole used for fishing with a spear."

These regulations, as currently worded, provide no guidance on the maximum size ice hole that can be used for (non-spear) fishing in waters open to spearfishing, which would apply to Hauser and Holter reservoirs if this proposal is adopted. Further there is no rule(s) about marking spearing holes when not in use, to prevent other people from stepping or falling into them. 12" (and even smaller) dia. holes can be (and are) stepped in by other anglers and ice recreationists, but generally only capture one foot or at worst one leg of the unlucky individual. Spearing holes of unlimited size can capture both legs of any size human at the same time and therefore the whole person can fall in and get at least a shocking cold bath and risking hypothermia, and at worst, become submerged and end up swept under the ice by currents, which do exist in these reservoirs.

Unlike Canyon Ferry or large Eastern and Northern Montana reservoirs where spearing is legal, Hauser and Holter reservoirs sustain highly concentrated ice angling pressure and associated over-ice travel. If this proposal is adopted, I strongly urge that it be accompanied by spearing hole size limits and other rules designed to minimize the potential of humans (and their pets) stepping and or falling into these holes (examples/ hole marking, requiring refilling the holes with the ice that was removed etc...).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Bruce Rich
Helena, MT

#48

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Page 1

Q1

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Q2

Please comment on 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Proposal 47 Missouri River Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry...I support proposal as revised.
Proposal 48 I support the revised limits as proposed
