



MONTANA OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION
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October 28th, 2024

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission
1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, Mt 59620-0701

Subject: Support for Proposed Amendment 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations

Dear Members of the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association (MOGA) to express our support for Commissioner Walsh's proposed amendment to the 2025-2026 Fishing Regulations regarding the Daily and Possession Limits for Combined Trout in the Western and Central Districts.

Support for Specific Changes:

- Trout Limits Reduction: We endorse Commissioner Walsh's amendment, which aligns with the evolving practices and values of Montana's angling community.

Rationale and Background:

- Shift Towards Quality Fishing: Research by Arlinghaus et al. (2007) in "Understanding the Complexity of Recreational Fishery Systems" highlights a global trend where catch-and-release practices are becoming more common as anglers prioritize fish welfare and conservation. This amendment reflects this global shift, fostering a culture of quality fishing over quantity.
- Conservation and Sustainable Use: Reducing bag limits is consistent with ecological principles of sustainable use as outlined by Post et al. (2002) in "Reconsidering the Role of Fisheries Management in Allocation of Salmon Productivity Among Stakeholders." Lower limits can help maintain fish populations in the face of increased fishing pressure, particularly in wild trout fisheries.
- Comparative Management: Studies like those by Quinn et al. (2012) in "Sustainability of the World's Commercial Capture Fisheries" suggest that regulatory frameworks in neighboring states (e.g., Idaho, Washington, Oregon) which have implemented lower limits, have observed sustainable trout populations while also supporting a robust recreational fishing economy. This amendment could position Montana similarly.
- Angler Behavior and Regulation Impact: Data from studies like those by Cooke and Schramm (2007) on "Catch-and-Release Science and Its Application to Conservation and Management of Recreational Fisheries" indicate that while regulations alone do not

drive behavior, they can reinforce existing trends towards catch-and-release when supported by education and enforcement.

Recommendation:

We urge the Commission to adopt the amendment to reduce trout limits to three daily and in possession, reflecting the current angling ethos and ensuring the long-term health of our trout populations.

Further Considerations:

- Public Education Campaign: To maximize the effectiveness of this amendment, we recommend coupling it with an enhanced public education campaign on the benefits of catch-and-release.
- Angler Engagement: Engaging the fishing community through workshops or forums could help in gathering feedback and fostering a sense of ownership of these conservation efforts.

Thank you for considering our support for these vital regulations. We look forward to continued collaboration with FWP to sustainably manage our state's fisheries. We are also open to discussing these recommendations further at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Will Israel
Executive Director
Montana Outfitters & Guides Association

References

- Arlinghaus, R., et al. (2007). "Understanding the Complexity of Recreational Fishery Systems." *Fisheries Research*, 87(2-3), 143-155.
- Post, J. R., et al. (2002). "Reconsidering the Role of Fisheries Management in Allocation of Salmon Productivity Among Stakeholders." *Ecosystems*, 5(3), 247-259.
- Quinn, T. J., II, et al. (2012). "Sustainability of the World's Commercial Capture Fisheries." *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, 69(10), 1709-1713.
- Cooke, S. J., & Schramm, H. L. (2007). "Catch-and-Release Science and Its Application to Conservation and Management of Recreational Fisheries." *Fisheries Management and Ecology*, 14(2), 73-79.