



Subject: Opposition to Proposed Amendment on Trout Daily and Possession Limits for Western and Central District Rivers/Streams

October 31, 2024

Dear Commissioner Walsh and Members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission,

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) is writing to formally oppose the proposed amendment to reduce the daily and possession limits for combined trout in the Western and Central District rivers and streams to "3 daily and in possession." After reviewing the proposal, we urge the Commission to maintain the existing limits, as there has been no request or scientific justification from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) biologists indicating that this amendment is necessary for sustaining trout populations in these districts.

As an organization deeply invested in the conservation of Montana's natural resources, MWF fully supports initiatives that maintain healthy stream ecosystems and robust fisheries. Our members and partners are committed to ensuring that current and future generations can enjoy Montana's rich hunting and fishing heritage. This includes the legal keep of trout populations where they are healthy and can sustain responsible harvest without risking ecological balance.

The philosophy of wild trout management has served Montana well since it was established in the 1970s. It is a guiding principle that has balanced angling pressures with conservation needs for decades. The proposed reduction in limits, which lacks biological support from FWP's own data, risks infringing upon the opportunity for harvest-oriented anglers without delivering a meaningful conservation benefit. As FWP has highlighted, current data show high rates of voluntary catch-and-release among anglers across the state, a trend that effectively manages trout populations without the need for further restriction.

Montana's streams and rivers are critical to both our local ecosystems and outdoor culture, and they should be managed with consideration of scientific data and input from FWP biologists.

This proposed amendment appears misaligned with FWP's stated commitment to monitoring and responding to localized conditions over time, which currently shows no need for altering the daily and possession limits.

We respectfully ask the Commission to reject this amendment and to instead continue supporting science-based, data-driven and biologically sound management practices that benefit both conservation and angling communities.

Thank you for considering our position, and please feel free to reach out to MWF Conservation Policy Specialist, Garrett Titus, at garrett@mtwf.org or I should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Christopher Servheen

Christopher Servheen, Ph.D.
President and Board Chair
Montana Wildlife Federation

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