

Bull Trout Identification Guide



MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE & PARKS



2025 BULL TROUT REGULATIONS

Hungry Horse Reservoir, Lake Kooconusa and part of the South Fork Flathead River are open for a regulated and experimental Bull Trout angling season. When fishing for Bull Trout each angler must have in possession a valid Bull Trout Catch Card for the specific water he/she is fishing. Anglers may select only one of the following areas: Lake Kooconusa, or Hungry Horse Reservoir and South Fork Flathead River. These fisheries are very restrictive because bull trout are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. All other waters are closed to intentional angling for Bull Trout year around.

Catch cards are free of charge and are available at the FWP Region One office in Kalispell and at the US Forest Service Spotted Bear Ranger Station. You may mail in a request for a catch card by printing the application online at fwp.mt.gov/fish/license/ and mailing to FWP Bull Trout Permit, 490 North Meridian, Kalispell, MT 59901. *Please allow for time for mailing, a digital option is not available.*

Immediately upon harvesting a Bull Trout, or if releasing a Bull Trout, you must record the following information on your catch card:

Additional records can be logged separately and submitted with the mail or on-line survey.

- Month and day of harvest.
- Zone (A, B, C, D, E or F as indicated on waterbody maps.)
- Length of bull trout to the nearest 1/2" (estimated length for fish caught-and-released)
- Cut out the notch for each Bull Trout harvested from Hungry Horse Reservoir. (Anglers may harvest only one bull trout)

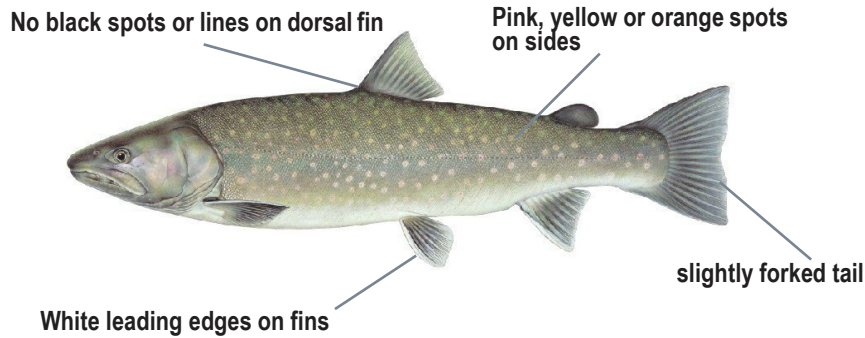
Please scan the QR code on the back of your catch card to take the on-line survey once you are done fishing for the season.

BULL TROUT SEASONS, LIMITS AND RESTRICTIONS

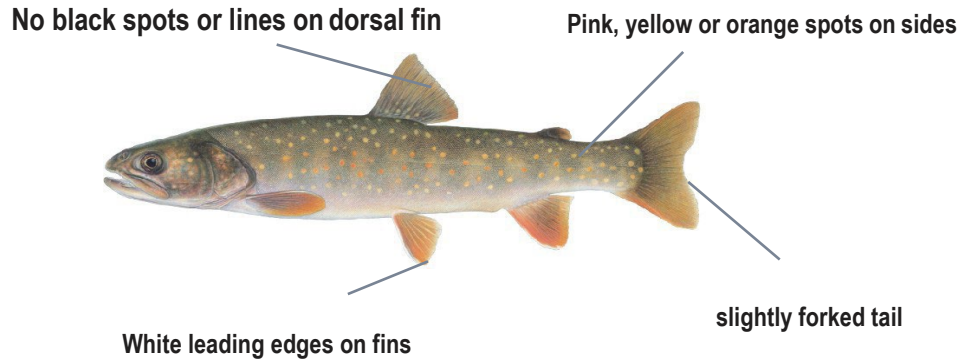
	Lake Kooconusa	Hungry Horse Res.	S. Fork Flathead River
Bull Trout Harvest	Closed to all harvest.	Open 3rd Sat. in May through Aug. 15. One trout per license year.	Closed to all harvest.
Catch-and-Release	Open entire year.	Open entire year.	Open July 1 through July 31.

NOTE: It is unlawful to possess a live Bull Trout for any reason. Any Bull Trout being harvested must be killed immediately; all other Bull Trout must be released unharmed immediately.

Adult Bull Trout with characteristics typical of fish from a lake and lengths generally greater than 20 inches.



Juvenile Bull Trout with characteristics typical of stream fish and lengths generally less than 20 inches.



Please Note: Anglers that fail to properly validate their Bull Trout catch card, exceed the specified limits, violate the season restrictions, or possess a dead Bull Trout without a properly validated catch card, will be in violation of Montana fishing regulations and may also be prosecuted for violation of the Endangered Species Act.

SEASONS, LIMITS, AND RESTRICTIONS

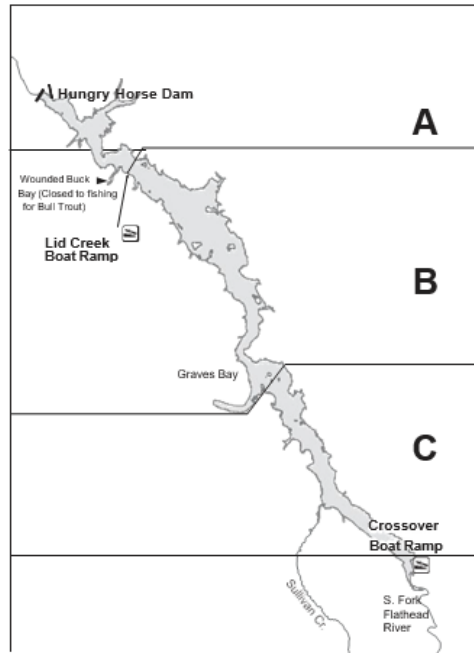
Hungry Horse Reservoir

Season/Limits:

One Bull Trout per license year from the third Saturday in May through August 15. Catch- and-release the rest of the year with a Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead permit validation on fishing license. **A Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for Bull Trout.** See Special License requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released immediately or killed and counted as your limit when harvest is allowed. It is unlawful to possess a live Bull Trout for any reason.

Hungry Horse Catch Zones:

Identify zone (A, B, or C) on catch card where bull trout was taken.



South Fork Flathead River

For Purposes of this regulation, the South Fork Flathead River extends from Crossover boat ramp south and upstream to the confluence of Youngs' and Danaher creeks.

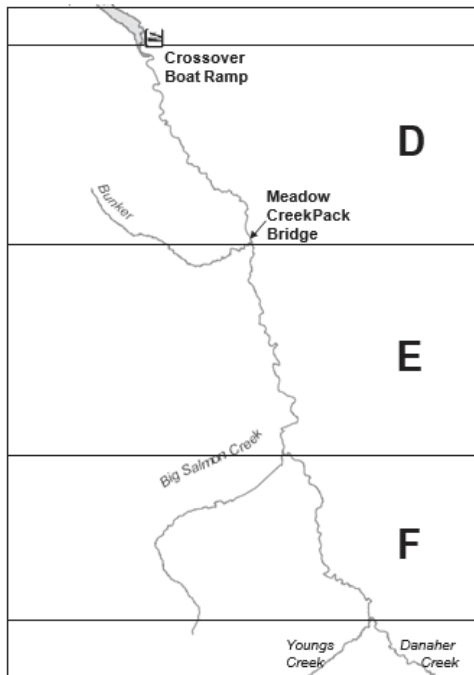
Angling for Bull Trout is NOT allowed in South Fork tributaries or Big Salmon Lake. Angling is prohibited from the mouths of Gordon Creek and Little Salmon Creek downstream 300 yards from June 15 to September 30.

Season/Limits: Catch-and-release only

Catch-and-release fishing for Bull Trout from July 1 through July 31. A Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for Bull Trout. See Special License requirements for application information. All Bull Trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live Bull Trout for any reason. **Single-pointed hooks only.** No treble or double hooks. Anglers may remove treble or double hooks from the lure and replace them with a single hook, or the shanks may be cut off the other hook points to leave a single hook. Lures with multiple hook attachments may still be used but any treble hook must be replaced by a single hook.

South Fork Flathead Catch Zones:

Identify zone (D, E or F) on Catch Card where Bull Trout was taken.

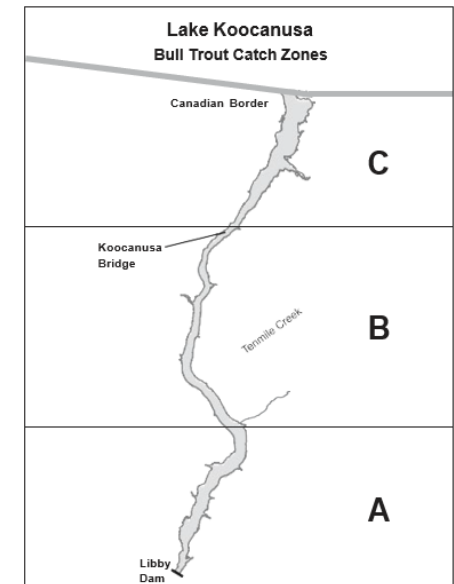


Lake Koocanusa (Libby Reservoir)

Season/Limits: Catch and Release Only
A Lake Koocanusa Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout. See Special License requirements for application information. All Bull Trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live Bull Trout for any reason.

Lake Koocanusa Catch Zones:

Identify zone (A, B, or C) on Catch Card where Bull Trout was taken.



CATCH-AND-RELEASE FISHING

Use of proper handling techniques will improve the chance of survival for any fish released. A fish that is released may still die from deep hooking injury, internal organ damage from being squeezed, bacterial infections resulting from the handling process, effects of physical stress from being played too long, heat shock, or lack of oxygen from being held in warm or poorly oxygenated water.

Anglers can help fish survival by using the following techniques:

- Fish with single, barbless hooks to reduce fish injury and handling time.
- Play the fish as rapidly as possible to minimize exhaustion.
- Keep the fish in water when handling and removing the hook. Needle-nose pliers or forceps are helpful.
- Remove the hook gently and do not squeeze the fish or place fingers in the gills.
- If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the line leaving about 1" of leader hanging out of the mouth. Do not pull the hook out as this could seriously injure the fish; the hook will degrade rapidly and will not harm the fish.
- Release the fish only after it has gained equilibrium. If necessary, hold it in a swimming position facing into the current or water moving it slowly back and forth until it recovers.
- Release the fish in quiet water close to the area where it was caught.

PHOTOGRAPHING BULL TROUT

It is legal to photograph your trophy catch; however, it is essential that you minimize or eliminate the need to take the fish out of water. Jouberta et al. (2020) showed increased post-release mortality (33%) of Bull Trout when fish were photographed and measured for moderate periods of time (1-2 minutes). Have everything ready to take a photo before you handle the fish and try not to squeeze the fish or put your hands in its gills. Release the fish as quickly as possible.