MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

2020 Paddlefish Regulations

General Paddlefish Regulations for ALL Areas

- Each angler must cast for, hook and reel in his or her own paddlefish. It is unlawful for another person to do so. It is illegal to loan tags or use another angler's tag.
- It is unlawful to snag paddlefish via boat trolling; casting from an anchored or drifting boat is lawful.
- Any fish other than paddlefish caught while paddlefishing must be immediately released alive.
- Bow and arrow: lawful on harvest days in sections of river open to harvest or in a bow fishing only area; unlawful for catch-and-release.
- Hook size is limited to 8/0 and smaller for all paddlefish snagging.
- Gaffs, no longer than 4.5 feet in length, may be used to land a paddlefish that will be tagged. Gaffs may not be used to land a paddlefish that will be released.
- Any angler tag locked shut prior to attachment to a paddlefish shall be void and is not replaceable. Any altered or modified tag shall be void. **Voided or lost tags are not replaceable.**
- Paddlefish must be tagged immediately upon harvest.

Mandatory Paddlefish Harvest Reporting

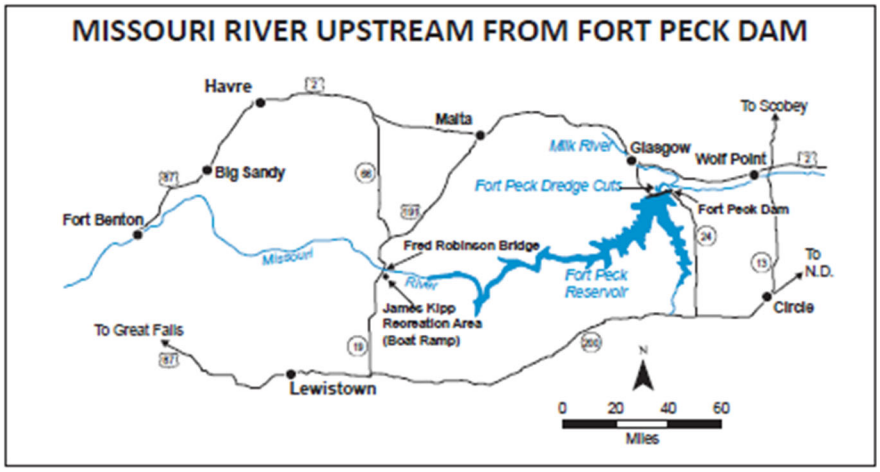
- **When a paddlefish is captured and tagged, the fish must be removed from the river by the end of the day (9:00 pm MST).**
- **Anglers are required to report the harvest of any paddlefish within 48 hours of harvest.**
- **Reporting options include on-site at fisheries check station or roving crews, phone hotline (1-877-FWP-WILD or 406-444-0356), or online at myfwp.mt.gov/.**
- **Anglers reporting a harvested paddlefish will be required to provide the following information: Angler tag number, jaw tag number (if present), length (eye-tail fork), sex, date of harvest and harvest location. Additional information that may be collected on-site includes: weight and age structure (jaw section).**
- **Anglers not reporting a harvested paddlefish will not be eligible to purchase a paddlefish tag the following year.**
- **It is unlawful to possess an untagged paddlefish or part of one. If anglers fillet a paddlefish, they must keep the part of the fish back and dorsal fin (back fin) where the tag is attached and sealed to the fish.**
- **Angler tags must remain with processed fish until consumed.**
- **It is unlawful for an individual to sell any portion of a paddlefish including eggs (processed or unprocessed) as prescribed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission.**

Special Paddlefish Regulations

All paddlefish anglers must purchase a paddlefish tag, a conservation license, and the required fishing license (see License Requirements pages 12-13 in the 2020 Montana Fishing Regulations). All licenses must be in the angler's immediate possession while fishing.

Daily and Possession Limits and Tags: One paddlefish per season per angler. Anglers may select only one of the following areas, and may only fish in the area selected:

- Upper Missouri River, upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton - **White Tag**
- Fort Peck Dredge Cuts (west of Park Grove Bridge and Nelson Dredge) on the Missouri River - **Blue Tag**
- Yellowstone River and Missouri River downstream from Fort Peck Dam – **Yellow Tag**



Missouri River upstream from Fort Peck Dam to Fort Benton (White Tag)

Upper Missouri Paddlefish Drawing: Paddlefish harvest tags will be available via lottery draw for the Upper Missouri River paddlefish season (White Tag). Anglers need to apply individually or as a party (up to five people). Applications can be submitted either on-line at **fwp.mt.gov** or at an FWP office. Paper (mail in) applications **will not** be accepted. This is incorrectly stated in the 2020 Fishing Regulations on page 82. ***You may purchase one bonus point per year; either at the time of application or between July 1 and September 30 of the current year. If you choose to purchase a bonus point at the time of application, you may not purchase one from July - September.***

- Applications must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 pm March 27, 2020.
- Unsuccessful applicants can still catch-and-release paddlefish with their Conservation, Fishing and paddlefish license.
- Paddlefish Snagging: open May 1 to June 15 from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm (MST) daily.
- Catch-and-release snagging: open May 1 to June 15 from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm. Proof of purchase of a white (or Upper Missouri River) paddlefish license is required for catch-and-release fishing.
- All paddlefish caught while catch-and-release fishing must be released immediately, may not be gaffed, and must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).

Fort Peck Dredge Cuts (west of Park Grove Bridge and Nelson Dredge) (Blue Tag)

- Bow and Arrow: open July 1 through August 31 for paddlefish. One paddlefish per angler. An unused blue paddlefish tag is required to fish for paddlefish.
- Snagging: no snagging allowed, this is an **archery only** season.

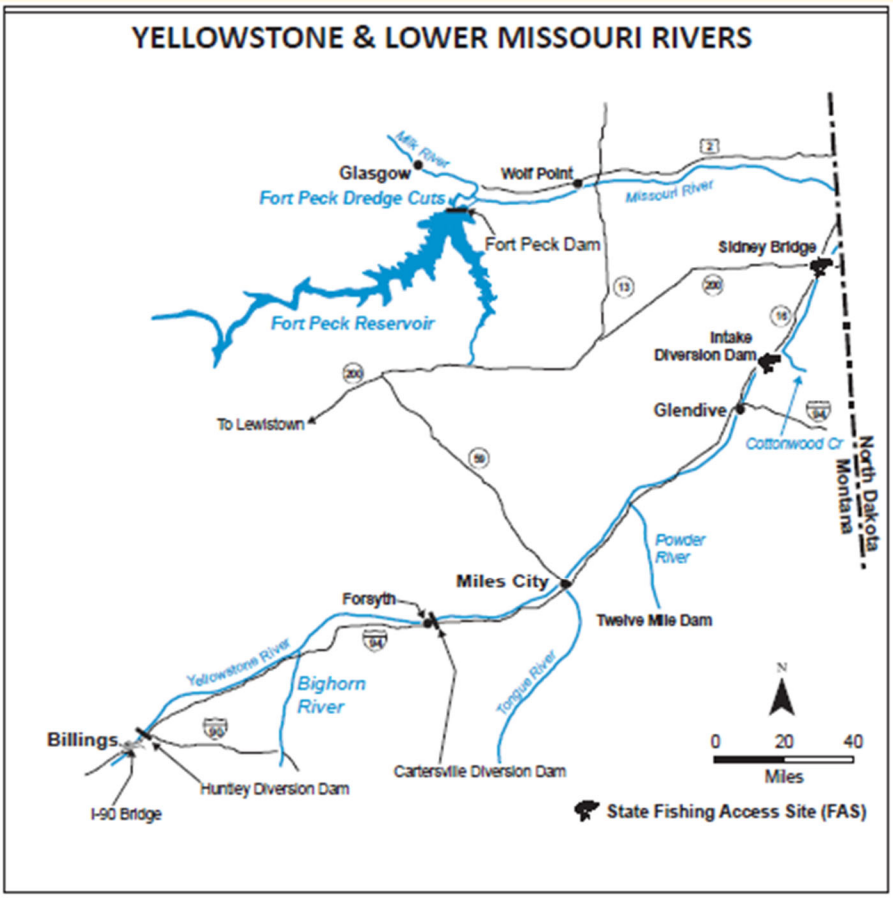
Yellowstone River from Bighorn River confluence to Intake Dam (not including Intake Fishing Access Site), downstream of Intake Fishing Access Site to North Dakota State Line, Powder River downstream of Highway 10 bridge, and Missouri River downstream of Fort Peck Dam (Yellow Tag)

- Fishery is managed under a harvest target so annual harvest will not exceed 1,000 paddlefish. FWP will announce a 24-hour closure of the harvest season through a public news release. Closure can be immediate at Intake FAS (Intake Dam to ½ mile downstream) to prevent exceeding the estimated harvest target. Other yellow tag areas will close as noted in the 24-hour notice. For current information on harvest status call the Miles City FWP office at 406-234-0900.
- Following announcement of the harvest closure, catch-and-release snagging will be allowed, at Intake Fishing Access Site only, for 10 consecutive calendar days or through June 30, whichever comes first.
- The Montana nonprofit corporation designated to accept paddlefish egg donations in exchange for a free fish cleaning service, in accordance with guidelines developed and implemented through the annual Memorandum of Understanding, is authorized to accept and transport lawfully taken and tagged paddlefish donated by the angler.

- Paddlefish harvested on the Yellowstone River between the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge at Glendive and the North Dakota state line are eligible for donation to the cleaning station at Intake FAS.
- **Paddlefish Harvest Days:** open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from May 15 through June 30 from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm (MST) daily, unless closed earlier by FWP.
- It is unlawful to release a paddlefish on a harvest day during the paddlefish season.
- An unused yellow paddlefish tag is required to fish for paddlefish. The tag must be properly placed on the first paddlefish caught and landed.
- Paddlefishing closed Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays (see exception under Intake Fishing Access Site below).

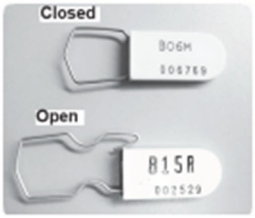
Intake Fishing Access Site (Intake Dam to ½ mile downstream)

- **Paddlefish Catch-and-Release Days:** open Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays from May 15 through June 30 from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM (MST) daily, unless closed earlier by FWP.
  - All Paddlefish caught on catch-and-release days must be released immediately, may not be gaffed, and must remain at least partially submerged in water at all times (to avoid injury to the fish).
  - Evidence of purchasing a current year yellow Paddlefish tag must be in possession to catch-and-release snag for Paddlefish.
  - Bow and arrow fishing unlawful on catch-and-release days.
- **Paddlefish Harvest Days:** open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from May 15 through June 30 from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM (MST) daily, unless closed to harvest earlier by FWP.
  - It is unlawful to release a Paddlefish on a harvest day during the Paddlefish season.
  - An unused yellow Paddlefish tag is required to fish for Paddlefish. The tag must be properly placed on the first Paddlefish caught and landed.
  - Closed to fishing, snagging or landing Paddlefish from boats/vessels during the open Paddlefish season (i.e. May 15 through June 30 or earlier as posted on site).



Tagging a Paddlefish

- Cut a small hole in the base of the dorsal fin.
- Insert the metal loop portion of the plastic self-locking tag through this hole and seal tag.
- The metal loop must penetrate the fish so as to make the plastic self-locking tag non-removable when tag is sealed.
- The plastic self-locking tag must be completely sealed so it cannot be reopened. Any fish not tagged in accordance with these instructions shall be considered to be untagged.



Paddlefish Season Summary by River and River Section

River	River Section	Color	Season Dates	Harvest Days	C&R Days
Missouri River	Ft Peck Dam to Ft Benton	white	May 1 - Jun 15	all	all
	Ft Peck Dredge Cuts - no snagging	blue	July 1 - Aug 31	all - bow & arrow harvest only	none
	Ft Peck Dam to ND Line	yellow	May 15 - Jun 30	Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	none
Yellowstone River	Big Horn R to Intake Dam	yellow	May 15 - Jun 30	Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	none
	Intake FAS	yellow	May 15 - Jun 30	Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	Sun, Mon,Thur
	Downstream of Intake FAS to ND Line	yellow	May 15 - Jun 30	Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	none
FAS = Fishing Access Site				C&R = Catch-and-release	

Contact FWP

STATE HEADQUARTERS
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East 6th Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-2535

REGION 1
490 North Meridian Rd
Kalispell, MT 59901
406-752-5501

REGION 2
3201 Spurgin Rd
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5500

REGION 3
1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-577-7900

HELENA Area Resource Office (HARO)
930 Custer Ave W
Helena, MT 59602
406-495-3260

BUTTE Area Office Resource (BARO)
1820 Meadowlark Ln
Butte, MT 59701
406-494-1953

REGION 4
4600 Giant Springs Rd
Great Falls, MT 59405
406-454-5840

LEWISTOWN Area Resource Office (LARO)
333 Airport Rd
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-538-4658

REGION 5
2300 Lake Elmo Dr
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940

REGION 6
1 Airport Rd
Glasgow, MT 59230
406-228-3700

HAVRE Area Resource Office (HvARO)
2165 Hwy 2 East
Havre, MT 59501
406-265-6177

REGION 7
352 I-94 Business Loop
PO Box 1630
Miles City, MT 59301
406-234-0900