



**FWP Fish Removal Projects
January 2023 – December 2026**

Fish removal is a common method used to manipulate population densities and species composition of a fishery. Fish removals may be used to reduce competition between species, remove undesirable or invasive species, protect species with elevated conservation risk, or to improve the quality of a sport fishery. Removals are often intended to restore or reintroduce native fish to a drainage or to improve an existing fishery. Most removal projects aspire to improve fishing opportunity by reintroducing species better suited for available habitats or by reducing competition with other species. Tools commonly used by FWP for removal include angling regulations, netting and electrofishing, dewatering, construction of barriers, and use of piscicides/chemicals (Table 1). These are described in more detail below.

Table 1: Comparison of fish control or removal methods commonly used for fisheries management.

Control Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Typical Use
Angling regulations	Allows harvest of fish, and less fish waste	Slow, angling pressure often inadequate for significant change, and many species/sizes not vulnerable	Used where total removal not possible or necessary
Netting and Electrofishing	Can allow for selective removal	Unlikely to eradicate fish and could harm non-targeted species through bycatch	Used in large lakes or rivers where chemicals not feasible, small streams to reduce species competition, or where sensitive/endangered species must be protected
Dewatering of pond/reservoir	May be low cost and allows for less mechanical effort or use of chemical	Water remains in pools, detrimental to aquatic community, and often environmentally disruptive	Removal of most fish and serves to prep waterbody for piscicide use or more efficient mechanical removal
Physical barriers	Relatively permanent	Doesn't block downstream migration, less effective under floods, high cost, isolates populations	Block upstream migration of undesirable species and create closed system for piscicide use or mechanical removal
Piscicides/Chemicals	Effective in complex habitats, avoidance by fish difficult	Kills many non-target gilled organisms	Removal of entire fish assemblage

TOOLS FOR REMOVALS

Regulations

Angling regulations are the most common fish removal tool. This tool can be applied through bag limits or length restrictions to direct harvest of a particular species while protecting others. Though cost-effective, angling regulations are constrained in that it could take a long time for a notable population change to occur, the species desirable for removal may not be vulnerable to angling, or angling pressure may be too low to effectively influence the fishery.

Mechanical Removal

Mechanical tools are more effective at removing fish than angling and may be used in conjunction with other removal tools. Mechanical tools include netting and electrofishing, draining or dewatering a waterbody, and construction of physical barriers. Nets and electrofishing allow managers to selectively remove undesirable species and leave desirable fish in the waterbody. Fish removed through these methods may be killed or may be moved to another waterbody or below a physical barrier, depending on project objectives. Rarely are species completely eradicated from a waterbody through nets or electrofishing alone.

Draining or dewatering can completely remove all fish and other aquatic species from a waterbody or can be used to improve removal efficiency by other means. Dewatering might not completely eliminate the undesirable species unless the waterbody is completely drained of all water, which isn't always possible. Complete draining will be highly impactful to the desired species of the aquatic community and may extend the period of time needed for their re-establishment.

Physical barriers are often used to conserve native fish populations and in many waterbodies are the first step before initiating mechanical or chemical removals. Physical barriers prevent upstream migration of undesirable species, but they also fragment habitat and can isolate fish populations detrimentally. Construction of physical barriers can be very expensive and permanent. Barriers impact fisheries above and below, and long-term sustainability of the upstream and downstream fishery are thoroughly considered prior to construction.

Chemical Removal

Use of piscicides, or chemicals, are one of the most effective tools to remove all fish from a waterbody. Piscicides are most commonly used in streams above barriers to remove non-native fish and replace with native species. Piscicides are also commonly used to quickly remove illegal introductions that threaten the local fishery. Piscicides are restricted-use pesticides that are closely regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Montana Department of Agriculture, and all applications require the presence of a certified licensed applicator during treatment. Piscicide chemicals are safe for non-gilled organisms and are chemically neutralized at waterbody outlets or downstream barriers to prevent impacts to humans and non-target organisms outside the treatment area. All gilled organisms are impacted by piscicides, but aquatic life in treated waterbodies rebound quickly due to reduced competition for habitat and abundant food; this also leads to quick reestablishment of the fishery when fish are reintroduced.

AUTHORITY FOR REMOVAL

The commission may approve fish removal projects through its broad authority to set policy for the conservation, protection, management, and propagation of fish species under MCA 87-1-301(1)(a). Approval for fish removal projects varies depending on the type of project, be it the Future Fisheries Improvement Program FFIP, aquatic invasive species, or others. For all projects, the department solicits public input through the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process. The commission approves all angling regulations, projects funded through the FFIP, and aquatic invasive removals. Fish removal projects that don't fall into these categories are now getting review and approval by the commission.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Table 2 below summarizes fish removal projects that are expected to occur January 2023 through December 2026. Fish removal projects that were reviewed and approved by the commission prior to January 2023 are not included in the table. The department expects that some projects will still be needed outside of this process due to unforeseen circumstances, such as illegal fish introductions or immediate conservation needs.

Table 2: Proposed Fish Removal Projects 2023-2026

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Ashley Creek (Lower Clark Fork River)	1	Remove brook trout and translocate local westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout	Remoting setting, public access by foot only. Very little if any fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but serve as a long-term solution to preserve local WCT populations.	Planning	Unknown, FWP	Yes
Big Rock Creek (Thompson River-Lower Clark Fork River)	1	Remove non-native trout to conserve WCT and resident bull trout populations	Electrofishing and/or piscicide	Brown trout, brook trout, hybrid cutthroat	Remote setting, most of the stream is only accessible by trail-currently receives very light if any fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity.	Planning, fish population and barrier assessment	NorthWestern Energy, FWP, others	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Chain Lakes (Flathead)	1	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT, and remove source of hybrid trout	Piscicide	Hybrid cutthroat	Temporary loss of fishing until WCT can be restored.	Planning	BPA	Yes
Evans Lake (Prospect Creek-Lower Clark Fork River)	1	Remove brook trout and repopulate WCT to improve fishery and reduce threat to bull trout and WCT in upper Prospect Creek	Piscicide	Brook trout	Remote setting, only accessible by trail. Currently receives light fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but improve quality of fishery and opportunity in long term while helping to protect native fish downstream.	Planning	Avista, NorthWestern Energy	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Marion Lake (Flathead)	1	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT, and remove source of hybrid trout	Piscicide	Hybrid cutthroat	Temporary loss of fishing until WCT can be restored.	Planning	BPA	Yes
McGinnis Creek (Flathead)	1	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT, and remove source of hybrid trout	Piscicide	Hybrid cutthroat	McGinnis Creek on public land is small and likely receives little fishing pressure. Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity.	Planning	BPA	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Murr Creek (Thompson River-Lower Clark Fork River)	1	Remove brook trout and translocate local WCT populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout	Remote setting, accessible only by trail. Currently receives very light if any fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but expected to improve quality of fishery and provide long-term Thompson River WCT conservation	Planning	Unknown, FWP	Yes
Shady Lane Pond (Flathead)	1	Remove illegally introduced Northern Pike from a community fishing pond	Piscicide or draw down	Northern pike	Temporary loss of fishing opportunity. Angling is currently limited by northern pike. Angling opportunity would be restored by stocking WCT.	Planning	Unknown	Yes
Tranquil Basin East and West lakes (Flathead)	1	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT, and remove source of hybrid trout	Piscicide	Hybrid cutthroat	Temporary loss of fishing until WCT can be restored.	Planning	BPA	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Upper Vermilion River (Lower Clark Fork River)	1	Remove brook trout, salvage aboriginal WCT to serve as long-term refugia.	Piscicide	Brook trout	Remote setting receives light fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but will improve quality of fishery and provides long-term solution for Vermilion River WCT conservation, potentially introduce bull trout.	Planning	Avista	Yes
Moore Lake (St. Regis River – Middle Clark Fork)	2	Remove brook trout and repopulate with WCT to improve fishery and reduce threat to migratory bull trout in South Fork Little Joe Creek.	Piscicide	Brook trout	Accessible mountain lake currently receives moderate fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but expected to improve quality of fishery and opportunity in long term.	Planning	SWG, Northwestern Energy – Thompson Falls Dam Mitigation Funds, USFS	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Upper Trio Lake (Fish Creek – Middle Clark Fork)	2	Remove brook trout and repopulate with WCT to improve fishery and reduce threat to migratory bull trout in N Fork Fish Creek.	Piscicide	Brook trout	Remote setting currently receives light fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but expected to improve quality of fishery and opportunity in long term.	Planning	SWG, NorthWestern Energy – Thompson Falls Dam Mitigation Funds, USFS	Yes
Blind Canyon (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide or electrofishing	Brook trout	Blind Canyon is very small and likely receives no fishing pressure. Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing.	Fish barrier planning	SWG	Yes
Christiansen (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Christiansen Creek is small and while on public land, access is limited, and angling is likely very limited or non-existent. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Fish barrier assessment	SWG	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Governor (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Governor Creek on public land is small and likely receives little to no fishing pressure. Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity.	Fish population assessment	SWG	Yes
Granite (Ruby)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT in Mill Gulch (tributary)	Piscicide	Brook trout, hybrid cutthroat	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Fish barrier planning	MDT	Yes
Green Hollow (Gallatin)	3	Protect one of the state's conservation brood populations of Arctic grayling	Piscicide	Brook trout	Green Hollow Reservoir is on private land and contains one of the state's conservation broods for Arctic grayling. Efforts to mechanically remove brook trout from the inlet stream have not been successful. Landowner would like to remove brook trout with piscicide.	Planning	Private Landowner	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Hyde (Madison)	3	Create vacant habitat to replicate at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brown trout	Hyde Creek is small and receives little (if any) fishing pressure. Lower Hyde Creek will still contain brown trout and multiple other streams in the area have better fishing for brown trout.	Barrier assessment and Fish Removal	NorthWestern Energy	Yes
Moose (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Moose Creek (near Wisdom) is small and on public land. Given its small size and relative isolation angler use is likely very limited. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Fish barrier assessment	SWG	Yes
NF Divide (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout, hybrid cutthroat	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity.	Modify existing barrier	SWG	Yes
Rock (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby	Fish population and barrier assessment	SWG	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Trapper (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout, hybrid cutthroat	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Fish population and barrier assessment	SWG	Yes
Twelvemile (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Fish barrier assessment	SWG	Yes
Winslow (Red Rock)	3	WCT and Arctic grayling conservation. Habitat exists to replicate Red Rocks grayling population and secure unaltered populations of WCT from Red Rock sub-basin.	Piscicide	Hybrid cutthroat	Mostly private land. Landowner is supportive.	Discussions with landowner.	Private Landowner	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
York Gulch (Big Hole)	3	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Electrofishing	Brook trout	York Gulch is extremely small and receives no angling pressure.	Periodic electrofishing removal of brook trout to reduce impacts to cutthroat.	SWG	Yes
Box Creek (Marias)	4	Remove brook trout and translocate local WCT populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Planning	Unknown	Yes
Carpenter Creek (Belt)	4	Protect at-risk population of unaltered WCT	Piscicide or electrofishing	Brook trout, rainbow trout	Limited impacts to fishing opportunity. Stream is heavily impacted by mining effluent. Small numbers of nonnative trout are expanding upstream as EPA cleanup of mine tailings continues.	Barrier construction	SWG, NorthWestern Energy, USFS, FFIP	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Daniels Creek (Smith)	4	Protect conservation population of WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout, rainbow trout, hybrid trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Planning	Unknown	Yes
Dry Fork Belt Creek (Belt)	4	Remove brook trout and translocate local WCT populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout, rainbow trout, hybrid trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity until WCT can be restored. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby.	Planning	SWG, Northwestern Energy	Yes
Falls Creek (Upper Missouri- Dearborn)	4	Remove brook and rainbow trout and translocate local WCT populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout, rainbow trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby	Planning	Unknown	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Smith Creek (Sun)	4	Protect conservation population of WCT	Piscicide	Brook trout	Temporary (2 year) loss of fishing opportunity. Multiple similar brook trout streams nearby	Planning	Unknown	Yes
Wegner Creek (Upper Missouri- Dearborn)	4	Remove brook and rainbow trout and translocate local WCT populations to serve as long-term refugia	Piscicide	Brook trout, rainbow trout	Remote setting receives light fishing pressure. Project will temporarily reduce opportunity but will provide long-term solution for WCT conservation.	Planning	Northwestern Energy	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Soda Butte Creek and associated ponds	5	Remove newly discovered brook trout in private pond and creek	Piscicide	Brook trout	Likely a spot treatment. Soda Butte Creek was treated in 2015 and 2016 to remove brook trout. Brook trout were discovered in fall of 2022 in Yellowstone National Park and in a private pond near Cooke City. Some angling pressure near Cooke City and Silver Gate, but likely won't have to treat there.	Planning	Unknown	Yes

Site (Sub-basin)	Region	Purpose	Removal type	Species targeted for removal	Impacts to opportunity	Project status	Funding	Needs commission approval Yes/No
Home Run Pond (Lower Milk)	6	Removal of undesirable species	Drawdown, mechanical	Common carp, black bullhead	Home Run Pond is an 'urban' < 1 acre pond currently designated for kids 14 and under. This drawdown would occur prior to freeze up and water levels would be restored in advance of spring stocking of hatchery reared rainbow trout. Winter fishing opportunity would be impacted during the drawdown.	Planning	FWP	Yes

Montana Code and Administrative Rules Related to Fish Removal

87-1-201. Powers and duties. (1) Except as provided in subsection (12), the department shall supervise all the wildlife, fish, game, game and nongame birds, waterfowl, and the game and fur-bearing animals of the state and may implement voluntary programs that encourage hunting access on private lands and that promote harmonious relations between landowners and the hunting public. The department possesses all powers necessary to fulfill the duties prescribed by law and to bring actions in the proper courts of this state for the enforcement of the fish and game laws and the rules adopted by the department.

(2) Except as provided in subsection (12), the department shall enforce all the laws of the state regarding the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and game and nongame birds within the state.

(3) The department has the exclusive power to spend for the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and game and nongame birds all state funds collected or acquired for that purpose, whether arising from state appropriation, licenses, fines, gifts, or otherwise. Money collected or received from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses or permits, from the sale of seized game or hides, from fines or damages collected for violations of the fish and game laws, or from appropriations or received by the department from any other sources is under the control of the department and is available for appropriation to the department.

(4) The department may discharge any appointee or employee of the department for cause at any time.

(5) The department may dispose of all property owned by the state used for the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of fish, game, fur-bearing animals, and game and nongame birds that is of no further value or use to the state and shall turn over the proceeds from the sale to the state treasurer to be credited to the fish and game account in the state special revenue fund.

(6) The department may not issue permits to carry firearms within this state to anyone except regularly appointed officers or wardens.

(7) Except as provided in subsection (12), the department is authorized to make, promulgate, and enforce reasonable rules and regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of Title 87, chapter 2, that in its judgment will accomplish the purpose of chapter 2.

(8) The department is authorized to promulgate rules relative to tagging, possession, or transportation of bear within or outside of the state.

(9) (a) The department shall implement programs that:

(i) manage wildlife, fish, game, and nongame animals in a manner that prevents the need for listing under [87-5-107](#) or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.;

(ii) manage listed species, sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing under [87-5-107](#) or under the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq., in a manner that assists in the maintenance or recovery of those species;

(iii) manage elk, deer, and antelope populations based on habitat estimates determined as provided in [87-1-322](#) and maintain elk, deer, and antelope population numbers at or below population estimates as provided in [87-1-323](#). In implementing an elk management plan, the department shall, as necessary to achieve harvest and population objectives, request that land management agencies open public lands and public roads to public access during the big game hunting season.

(iv) in accordance with the forest management plan required by [87-1-622](#), address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction.

(b) In maintaining or recovering a listed species, a sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing, the department shall seek, to the fullest extent possible, to balance maintenance or recovery of those species with the social and economic impacts of species maintenance or recovery.

(c) Any management plan developed by the department pursuant to this subsection (9) is subject to the requirements of Title 75, chapter 1, part 1.

(d) This subsection (9) does not affect the ownership or possession, as authorized under law, of a privately held listed species, a sensitive species, or a species that is a potential candidate for listing.

(10) The department shall publish an annual game count, estimating to the department's best ability the numbers of each species of game animal, as defined in [87-2-101](#), in the hunting districts and administrative regions of the state. In preparing the publication, the department may incorporate field observations, hunter reporting statistics, or any other suitable method of determining game numbers. The publication must include an explanation of the basis used in determining the game count.

(11) The department shall report current sage grouse population numbers, including the number of leks, to the Montana sage grouse oversight team, established in [2-15-243](#), and the environmental quality council, established in [5-16-101](#), on an annual basis. The report must include seasonal and historic population data available from the department or any other source.

(12) The department may not regulate the use or possession of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition, including the chemical elements of ammunition used for hunting. This does not prevent:

- (a) the restriction of certain hunting seasons to the use of specified hunting arms, such as the establishment of special archery seasons;
- (b) for human safety, the restriction of certain areas to the use of only specified hunting arms, including bows and arrows, traditional handguns, and muzzleloading rifles;
- (c) the restriction of the use of shotguns for the hunting of deer and elk pursuant to [87-6-401](#)(1)(f);
- (d) the regulation of migratory game bird hunting pursuant to [87-3-403](#); or
- (e) the restriction of the use of rifles for bird hunting pursuant to [87-6-401](#)(1)(g) or (1)(h).

From <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0870/chapter_0010/part_0020/section_0010/0870-0010-0020-0010.html>

87-1-301. Powers of commission. (1) Except as provided in subsections (6) and (7), the commission:

(a) shall set the policies for the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of the wildlife, fish, game, furbearers, waterfowl, nongame species, and endangered species of the state and for the fulfillment of all other responsibilities of the department related to fish and wildlife as provided by law;

(b) shall establish the hunting, fishing, and trapping rules of the department;

(c) except as provided in [23-1-111](#) and [87-1-303](#)(3), shall establish the rules of the department governing the use of lands owned or controlled by the department and waters under the jurisdiction of the department;

(d) must have the power within the department to establish wildlife refuges and bird and game preserves;

(e) shall approve all acquisitions or transfers by the department of interests in land or water, except as provided in [23-1-111](#) and [87-1-209](#)(2) and (4);

(f) except as provided in [23-1-111](#), shall review and approve the budget of the department prior to its transmittal to the office of budget and program planning;

(g) except as provided in [23-1-111](#), shall review and approve construction projects that have an estimated cost of more than \$1,000 but less than \$5,000;

(h) shall manage elk, deer, and antelope populations based on habitat estimates determined as provided in [87-1-322](#) and maintain elk, deer, and antelope population numbers at or below population estimates as provided in [87-1-323](#). In developing or implementing an elk management plan, the commission shall consider landowner tolerance when deciding whether to restrict elk hunting on surrounding public land in a particular hunting district. As used in this subsection (1)(h), "landowner tolerance" means the written or documented verbal opinion of an affected landowner regarding the impact upon the landowner's property within the particular hunting district where a restriction on elk hunting on public property is proposed.

(i) shall set the policies for the salvage of antelope, deer, elk, or moose pursuant to [87-3-145](#); and

(j) shall comply with, adopt policies that comply with, and ensure the department implements in each region the provisions of state wildlife management plans adopted following an environmental review conducted pursuant to Title 75, chapter 1, parts 1 through 3.

From https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0870/chapter_0010/part_0030/section_0010/0870-0010-0030-0010.html

87-1-283. Native Montana fish species enhancement program. (1) In order to enhance populations of native Montana fish species through habitat restoration, reductions in species competition, and natural reproduction, the department shall, through its future fisheries improvement program, restore habitats and spawning areas and reduce species competition in rivers, lakes, and streams for Montana's native fish species.

(2) In order to implement this section, the department may expend revenue from the native Montana fish species enhancement program for one additional full-time employee and one contractor to assist the review panel.

(3) The department shall also work with the department of transportation to implement enhancement of native Montana fish species by providing annual updates to the state transportation improvement program regarding possible additions to projects that will benefit the enhancement effort. State transportation improvement plan funds expended for native Montana fish species must be accounted for separately and reported annually.

From <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0870/chapter_0010/part_0020/section_0830/0870-0010-0020-0830.html>

87-1-702. Powers of department relating to fish restoration and management. The department is hereby authorized to perform such acts as may be necessary to the establishment and conduct of **fish restoration and management projects** as defined and authorized by the act of congress, provided every project initiated under the provisions of the act shall be under the supervision of the department, and no laws or rules or regulations shall be passed, made, or established relating to said fish restoration and management projects except they be in conformity with the laws of the state of Montana or rules promulgated by the department, and the title to all lands acquired or projects created from lands purchased or acquired by deed or gift shall vest in, be, there remain in the state of Montana and shall be operated and maintained by it in accordance with the laws of the state of Montana. The department shall have no power to accept benefits unless the fish restoration and management projects created or established shall wholly and permanently belong to the state of Montana, except as hereinafter provided.

From <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0870/chapter_0010/part_0070/section_0020/0870-0010-0070-0020.html>

87-5-715. Extermination or control of transplanted or introduced wildlife or feral species posing threat. Any wildlife or feral species transplanted or introduced in the state may be exterminated or controlled by the department if the commission determines that the species poses harm to native wildlife or plants or to agricultural production.

From <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0870/chapter_0050/part_0070/section_0150/0870-0050-0070-0150.html>

80-7-1008. Invasive species management area -- authorization. (1) Except as provided in [80-7-1015](#), when an invasive species is identified as infesting or threatening an area, the department with jurisdiction over that invasive species may designate and administer an invasive species management area for a specific area of land or for a body or bodies of water for a specific or indeterminate amount of time to prevent and control the infestation or spread of that invasive species.

(2) To the extent practicable, prior to the designation of an invasive species management area, the department making the designation shall coordinate with all of the departments in order to further the purposes of this part.

(3) The designation of an invasive species management area must specify:

- (a) the invasive species present or considered threatening; and
- (b) the method or methods for preventing the introduction of the species or controlling or eradicating the species, including regulations pertaining to:
 - (i) the use of quarantine measures;
 - (ii) the movement of vessels and equipment within, to, and from the area; and
 - (iii) whether check stations will be used to inspect and clean vessels and equipment moving within, to, or from the area. Mandatory inspections of any interior portion of a vessel or equipment that may contain water may occur only if the use of mandatory inspections is included as part of quarantine measures established pursuant to subsection (3)(b)(i).
- (4) As far as practical, signs indicating that an invasive species management area is in place must be posted in an effective manner at access points to the designated area and along the boundaries and within the area. The signs must include information about the specific regulations that apply to the area. The signs must be paid for with funds from the invasive species account established in [80-7-1004](#). The departments may coordinate with any other governmental entity for the posting of signs.

From https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0800/chapter_0070/part_0100/section_0080/0800-0070-0100-0080.html

Administrative Rule Subchapter: 12.7.15 Unauthorized Placement of Fish

12.7.1501 GENERAL PURPOSE

- (1) As determined by the department, these rules pertain to the department's response to the detection of a species of fish in public waters where the department has not authorized the presence of that species. These rules are intended to cover all placement of unauthorized species into the public waters, including from outside or inside the state through introduction or transplantation. Unauthorized species refers to any live fish found in public waters without authorization by the department.
- (2) Unauthorized fish in public waters is of significant concern and is likely to have many adverse impacts, including but not limited to:
 - (a) adverse impacts on native, wild and stocked fish populations;
 - (b) potential to spread disease;
 - (c) degradation of water quality;
 - (d) degradation of aquatic habitat;
 - (e) increased fishery management costs;
 - (f) loss of angling opportunities and quality; and
 - (g) harm to local and regional tourism economies.

(3) The department and commission shall make prevention of and response to unauthorized species a priority.

(4) During efforts to respond to unauthorized species, the department will endeavor to protect the previously existing fishery and suppress or eradicate the unauthorized species to maintain the existing management objectives for that fishery.

History: [87-5-704](#), MCA; [IMP](#), [87-5-701](#), [87-5-704](#), [87-5-713](#), [87-5-715](#), MCA; [NEW](#), 2014 MAR p. 1592, Eff. 7/25/14.

From <<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=12%2E7%2E1501>>

12.7.1502 DEPARTMENT'S INITIAL RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN

(1) The department shall begin an initial investigation within 30 days after the report of the presence of an unauthorized species in an attempt to confirm that an unauthorized placement has occurred and to estimate the distribution, abundance, age structure, and potential population expansion of the unauthorized species.

(2) The department shall prepare an action plan for responding to an unauthorized species. The action plan will identify the department's immediate and long-term management objectives for the unauthorized species and the management actions that may be implemented to achieve those objectives. The management objectives shall be based on a risk and feasibility assessment, with consideration for the following:

(a) the risk that the unauthorized species could expand into connected or nearby waters;

(b) the current distribution of the unauthorized species and the proximity of those populations to the new placement;

(c) the probability that the unauthorized species will survive and propagate;

(d) the impact that the unauthorized species might have on the existing fishery, especially threatened or endangered species, native species, game species, and important forage species;

(e) the immediate and long-term impacts that the unauthorized species might have on previously existing angling opportunities; and

(f) the immediate and long-term economic impacts that the unauthorized species might have on the department, the public, and the economy.

(3) To protect existing fisheries, local economies, wildlife enjoyment, and angler opportunities, the department shall attempt eradication or suppression of the unauthorized species if determined to be practical and necessary based on a risk and feasibility assessment, as set forth in this rule.

(4) The department shall attempt to identify and cite any individuals responsible for the unauthorized placement and seek penalties and restitution pursuant to the penalties and fines outlined in law.

History: [87-5-704](#), MCA; [IMP](#), [87-5-701](#), [87-5-704](#), [87-5-713](#), [87-5-715](#), MCA; [NEW](#), 2014 MAR p. 1592, Eff. 7/25/14.

From <http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=12%2E7%2E1502>>

12.7.1503 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

(1) The department's action plan for responding to a confirmed unauthorized species may include, as determined by the department, the following management actions for eradication or suppression:

(a) prohibit or discontinue stocking the water body if the presence of the unauthorized species reduces the effectiveness of the stocking effort;

(b) prohibit or discontinue stocking of any forage fish species that benefits the unauthorized species;

(c) modify angling regulations for the immediate and connected water bodies with unauthorized species including:

(i) liberalizing or removing daily angling limits;

(ii) enacting catch-and-release fishing;

(iii) extending or removing the angling season;

(iv) allowing capture methods other than hook and line;

(v) instituting mandatory catch-and-kill regulations; or

(vi) closing the water to all fishing.

(d) deny applications for fishing contests that target the unauthorized species, except in cases where the department determines the contest is an essential tool for suppression or eradication and requires that the contest has catch-and-kill rules;

(e) authorize commercial harvest or economic harvest incentives for the unauthorized species if statutory authority is provided and is prescribed by a management plan;

(f) implement physical control measures to reduce the population of unauthorized species, including:

(i) installation of fish barriers;

(ii) removal using chemical or mechanical methods;

(iii) netting spawning fish;

(iv) habitat manipulation (e.g., reservoir drawdown);

(v) removing illegal species when encountered incidental to other management or survey activities; or

(vi) disturbing spawning areas to reduce survival.

(g) implement angler harvest incentive programs.

History: [87-5-704](#), MCA; [IMP](#), [87-5-701](#), [87-5-704](#), [87-5-713](#), [87-5-715](#), MCA; [NEW](#), 2014 MAR p. 1592, Eff. 7/25/14.

From <<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=12%2E7%2E1503>>

12.7.1504 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH FOR UNAUTHORIZED SPECIES

(1) The department may amend its management objectives for a body of water if after a reasonable period of time the department concludes that:

(a) the management actions have succeeded and the department has accomplished the management objectives and that continued implementation of the existing action plan is no longer necessary; or

(b) the management actions have failed to accomplish the management objectives, and that continued implementation of the existing action plan is unlikely to accomplish the desired outcome.

(2) Revisions to the management objectives may prescribe management actions that are more tolerant or less tolerant of the presence of the unauthorized species and must include a rationale for any changes. The department shall report any revisions to the management objectives to the commission.

History: [87-5-704](#), MCA; [IMP](#), [87-5-701](#), [87-5-704](#), [87-5-713](#), [87-5-715](#), MCA; [NEW](#), 2014 MAR p. 1592, Eff. 7/25/14.

From <<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=12%2E7%2E1504>>

12.7.1505 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

(1) The department shall maintain an electronic repository utilizing a standardized format to document the initial investigation and subsequent management actions taken in response to each unauthorized species.

(2) Documentation must include, but is not limited to:

(a) results of the department's initial investigation to confirm the presence of the unauthorized species and information collected on the distribution, abundance, age structure, and potential population expansion of the unauthorized species;

(b) the action plan for responding to the unauthorized species, including the management objectives and potential management actions;

(c) a summary of management actions taken to respond to the unauthorized species; and

(d) changes to any action plan taken under the adaptive management approach.

(3) The electronic repository shall be updated on an annual basis to include all new unauthorized species and changes to documentation regarding previously reported unauthorized species.

(4) The electronic repository will be made available to the public.

History: [87-5-704](#), MCA; IMP, [87-5-701](#), [87-5-704](#), [87-5-713](#), [87-5-715](#), MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 1592, Eff. 7/25/14.

From <<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=12%2E7%2E1505>>