



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

## PROPOSAL #1

### Waterbody or Fishing District: Holter Reservoir

**Proposed change, addition, or deletion** (for existing regs, include District Standard or Exception to the District Standard. Indicate new language in *italics*, deleted language with a ~~strikethrough~~):

Page 63 and page 67 change:

#### HOLTER RESERVOIR

- Catch-and-release for brown trout, except anglers 14 years of age or younger may take 1 brown trout daily and in possession, any size.
- Walleye: 5 daily, only 1 over 25 inches. Possession limit is twice the daily limit.
- Combined trout and kokanee salmon: 5 rainbow trout and kokanee salmon daily in any combination and 10 rainbow trout and kokanee salmon in possession in any combination.
- Yellow perch: 25 daily and **50** in possession.
- Northern pike: no limit.
- Hook and line/setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice only.

**Rationale** (biological justification for proposing this change. Include how this change addresses a fisheries management problem):

The Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan (UMRRFMP) identifies the Holter Reservoir yellow perch goal range from 8 to 12 yellow perch per net. The Holter Reservoir yellow perch abundance in 2021 was 30 yellow perch per net and the abundance in 2022 was 32 yellow perch per net. The UMRRFMP states: "To maximize fishing opportunity, consider more liberal bag limits when abundance trends increase above goal range." Maintaining the daily possession limit of 25 and increasing the possession limit to 50 will maximize fishing opportunity as described in the UMRRFMP while minimizing the impact to the yellow perch population.

**Regulation Type** (clarification, enforcement, conservation, relevancy, management plan, other):

Management Plan

**Public Engagement** (summary of any public scoping or outreach that has been completed as it relates to this change. Includes public meetings, sporting group meetings, surveys, etc.):

Current population trends and regulation proposals were presented to the UMRRFMP CAC on Dec. 14, 2022. One CAC member was opposed, preferring a more liberal harvest limit, believing the population is resilient enough to withstand more harvest.



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

## PROPOSAL #2

### Waterbody or Fishing District: Missouri River

**Proposed change, addition, or deletion** (for existing regs, include District Standard or Exception to the District Standard. Indicate new language in *italics*, deleted language with a ~~strikethrough~~):

Page 67 change:

#### MISSOURI RIVER

##### Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry Reservoir (Toston Dam downstream to Highway 287 Bridge)

- Localized spawning areas closed as posted from March 1 through June 15.
- Catch-and-release for brown trout, except angler 14 years of age or younger may take 1 brown trout daily and in possession, any size.
- ~~Walleye: 10 daily, only 1 over 15 inches. Possession limit is twice the daily limit.~~
- Northern Pike: no limit.

##### Canyon Ferry Reservoir (High 287 Bridge downstream to Canyon Ferry Dam)

- Catch-and-release for brown trout, except anglers 14 years of age or younger may take 1 brown trout daily and in possession, any size.
- Yellow perch: 10 daily and in possession.
- Walleye: 10 daily, only 1 over 15 inches. Possession limit is twice the daily limit.
- Northern pike: no limit. Spearing allowed through the ice only.
- Hook and line/setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice only.

**Rationale** (biological justification for proposing this change. Include how this change addresses a fisheries management problem):

As outlined in the UMRRFMP, this section of river is managed primarily for wild rainbow trout and brown trout with walleye providing secondary angling opportunity. The management goal for walleye in this section is: "Rely on migratory walleye to supplement the fishery while minimizing impacts on existing trout and forage species." As such, the proposed regulation is intended to provide additional walleye angling opportunity while maintaining coldwater fishery management goals. The regulation currently in place was implemented in 2021 when the regulation was also adopted in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. The reservoir regulation (10 fish daily, only 1 over 15-inches) is intended to address skewed size distribution in the reservoir. A regulation with a length restriction is not biologically warranted in the river reach.

Since walleye were first captured during spring electrofishing efforts in 2007, the size structure of the walleye population has gradually shifted from one that consisted of many fish less than 15-inches to a population dominated by fish greater than 16-inches in 2021 and 2022. Therefore, the current regulation limits harvest opportunity, despite a higher overall limit of 10 fish, because much of the population exceeds the current 15-inch limit. Adopting the central district standard regulation of five



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

walleye with no size restriction would provide additional harvest opportunities for anglers while reducing predation on juvenile brown trout.

**Regulation Type** (clarification, enforcement, conservation, relevancy, management plan, other):

Management Plan

**Public Engagement** (summary of any public scoping or outreach that has been completed as it relates to this change. Includes public meetings, sporting group meetings, surveys, etc.):

Current population trends and regulation proposals were presented to the UMRRFMP CAC on Dec. 14, 2022. The CAC was not in agreement with the department recommendation. Three of the five members did not support the change, they support maintaining the current regulation. Concerns were raised that the river and reservoir should be managed together as one unit with the same regulations and lack of information supporting the recommendation. Concern was raised that the regulation recommendation would impact the reservoir walleye population. Two CAC members supported the recommendation because it was based on the best information available.