



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 15, 2026

Agenda Item: Upper Flathead Drainage Brown Trout Regulation

Action Needed: Emergency Catch-Kill-Report Regulation Request

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Minutes

Background:

Over the past year anglers have reported catching brown trout in the Flathead River, Ashley Lake and Church Slough. Two of these reports have been confirmed from Ashley Lake and the others are likely legitimate. Brown Trout in the Flathead Drainage upstream of SKQ Dam are the result of one or more illegal introductions. These fish are a serious threat to existing fisheries and could spread throughout the open drainage.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

This emergency regulation change has not gone through a public review process. Some members of the public have expressed concern about the threats posed by brown trout while others have expressed excitement about the fish being present in the drainage.

Alternatives & Analysis:

Alternative regulation changes were not considered. If the emergency regulation is not adopted, FWP would have less of information about the status of invasive Brown Trout in the Upper Flathead. This would hinder the department's ability to devise future management actions to curtail the spread of Brown Trout above in the upper Flathead basin.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

Require anglers to immediately kill, retain, and submit the entire brown trout they catch in Flathead Lake and all waters upstream of Flathead Lake. Anglers must report the catch to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) within 24 hours.

When reporting a catch, anglers will be asked to provide the location, date, and time of capture. FWP may also request the angler's full name, ALS number, and telephone number. Anglers must deliver the entire fish to an FWP office within 10 days of capture during regular business hours; fish may be frozen before delivery. Upon request, FWP will return edible portions of the fish to the angler.

Additional information is needed regarding the status and distribution of brown trout within Flathead Lake and the upstream drainage. FWP therefore proposes an emergency regulation requiring anglers to kill and submit any brown trout caught within this area. Given the size of the focus area and the number of waterbodies it contains, angler reports and fish submissions are an important tool for documenting the distribution and status of brown trout.

If approved, the emergency regulation would take effect immediately and would be incorporated into the fishing regulations beginning in 2027.



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Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the following emergency regulation change for brown trout in the upper Flathead Drainage.