



As part of the 2027–2028 fishing regulation setting process, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) received 92 regulation proposals from members of the public during the scoping period April 16- May 31, 2026. The table below compiles these proposals, each outlining a suggested regulation change or new regulation, alongside the department’s response explaining whether the Fisheries Division will carry the proposal forward into the final regulation proposal package to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the rationale for that decision.

Regulation Proposal	FWP Response	Advancing Proposal
I have 3 regulation changes to be considered for the Helena area waterbodies, along with a stocking suggestion. Walleye size continues to be very poor, doesn't seem to be improving, and walleye numbers seem to be declining. 1. I'd like to see the bag limit changed from 10 to 5. Especially during certain times of the year, most specifically in Lake Helena during the spring, from the people I see and talk to, people are keep just about every single fish they catch. At 10 fish per angler that's a crazy amount of fish being removed for the system. And at that time of year, those walleye are very vulnerable. I've found over the last several years that the number of walleyes seems to have dwindled and are tough to find in any numbers once they disperse out of Lake Helena. 2. I'd like to see a slot for walleye from around 16-23 inches be protected and released. With the size of the walleyes being so small, folks will keep everything single decent size walleye they catch. With food being on such a short supply for them, it seems like a poor decision to keep everything single decent walleye just as they're finally getting to the size where they could feed on bigger fish, such as perch, crawfish, and maybe even some trout. Maybe this could be just for Lake Helena to protect those spawning females. 3. I'd also like to see a regulation to protect the jumbo perch who reside in Lake Helena during the winter and maybe only allow 1 or 2 perch over 10". Those perch are stocked full of eggs and given their impressive size, almost nobody will release any of them. Again with the walleye size issue, small perch fry would be a great food source for walleye. 4 This really isn't a regulation suggestion, but wanted to see if there are any options out there for FWP to stock some species of minnows in the Lake Helena and Hauser bodies of water. Walking the shoreline of Hauser it's quite rare to see any minnows which seems strange. I understand putting minnows in canyon ferry may not be worth the costs, as that waterbody fluctuates so much there is no good cover for the minnows to survive long enough to reproduce, but with Lake Helena and Hauser, there is. I practice a lot of catch and release, but of the fish I do clean, it's extremely rare to find anything in their stomachs besides bugs. Thanks for your consideration!	Lake Helena and Hauser Reservoir are an open system and demonstrate similar trends in the fishery and thus are considered together from a management perspective. Relative abundance in Hauser Reservoir dropped below the management goal range in 2025 for the first time since 2009. Prior to 2025, Hauser Reservoir met or exceeded abundance goal ranges outlined in the Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan. With consistent high walleye relative abundance, condition remains poor as most forage species have declined significantly due to walleye predation. The intent of the current regulation is to encourage harvest of smaller walleye to improve prey abundance and ultimately walleye condition, growth rates, and size structure. Since the most recent walleye harvest regulation change on Hauser Reservoir, size structure has improved over time (only 5% of walleye were >15 inches in 2022, compared to 29% in 2025). Additionally, walleye angler catch rates were the second highest on record at 0.38 fish/hr with approximately a 50% harvest rate. Despite not meeting the abundance goal range in 2025, abundance was just below the goal, and most data supports a positive trajectory for the Hauser Reservoir/ Lake Helena walleye population with improved size structure. Thus, FWP is not proposing any changes to the current harvest regulation (10 fish daily with only 1 >15") to allow ample harvest of smaller fish and restrict the harvest of larger walleye. Regarding the Lake Helena/Hauser Reservoir yellow perch population, restrictive harvest regulations are already in place with a 10 fish bag limit, and the protection of spawning yellow perch from April 1st through June 30 (1 daily, 14 inch minimum). Yellow perch relative abundance has improved the past decade, especially compared to extremely low abundances from 2004-2015. Summer beach seining data shows a general increase of young-of-year yellow perch in Hauser Reservoir, suggesting adults are successfully spawning. This indicates that most mortality is due to fish predation (i.e., walleye, burbot, northern pike). Despite meeting yellow perch relative abundance goals in some recent years, maintaining the population can be difficult with high levels of predation. This is true for other small-bodied fish species as well. For example, fathead	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	minnow numbers (monitored via beach seining) have declined significantly since walleye abundance has remained high. Pre-2005, fathead minnows/seine haul average ~85 fish/haul and have since averaged ~5 fish/haul. With large predator populations in the reservoirs, stocking forage is not a viable option as any new species would face the same predation rates that have caused declines of prey species populations observed over the past two decades.	
I propose to change the combined trout daily and possession limit on rivers/streams in the central district back to 5 daily and in possession with only 1 over 18 inches, only 1 can be a cutthroat trout and all arctic grayling must be released immediately. When the previous regulation was changed to the current regulation, it was done without biological justification. It was changed to satisfy the whims of several commissioners, specifically based on the belief that if anglers wanted to keep trout, they should keep them from lakes instead of rivers/streams. Fisheries biologists didn't support the change. Several fishermen testified against the change and were blatantly ignored by several commissioners. Do the right thing and fix this current regulation that has no basis for being in effect.	The Fish and Wildlife Commission has the authority to propose and adopt fishing regulations. In 2024, the Commission proposed and adopted an amendment to change the Western and Central combined trout daily and possession limits from 5 daily and in possession to 3 daily and in possession. At that time, FWP responded that the majority of trout anglers use catch and release already, the department can and does implement specific individual exceptions when needed, and the department had no biological concerns with the standard 5 daily and in possession limits. FWP is not proposing a change to the standard trout limit at this time, which would require approval by the Commission.	N
Change the regulations at Canyon Ferry to allow the spearing of Northern Pike by persons swimming or submerged.	Currently, FWP regulations allow for liberal northern pike harvest on Canyon Ferry Reservoir, including spearing through the ice. The Canyon Ferry Reservoir northern pike population remains at a low abundance since the establishment of the species within the system, and the addition of submerged spearing harvest would likely not have any population-level impacts. Additionally, there are safety concerns with encouraging diving as Canyon Ferry Reservoir is extremely popular by boaters.	N
Canyon Ferry- cut back on rainbows and put a bait fish in for the fishery that MOST people want it to be...walleye, perch, bass and northern. There is enough rainbow opportunity in this state for the 10 boats fishing rainbows.	While this is not a regulation proposal, it should be noted, the management goal for Canyon Ferry Reservoir, as described in the current Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan (UMRR FMP), which involved extensive public involvement, emphasizes management for trout and walleye while recognizing the important of yellow perch as a game fish and forage species. Rainbow trout remain a highly sought after sportfish in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. In 2025, creel data shows that 34% of anglers were targeting trout-only, compared to 40% of anglers targeting walleye-only. On average, that equates to 25,000+ angler days targeting specifically rainbow trout in Canyon Ferry Reservoir per year. FWP's stocking provides a trout-fishing opportunity for anglers, with increased use during the ice fishing season and during the spring when spawning rainbow trout provide ample opportunities for shore anglers that would not be present otherwise. FWP has evaluated	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	potential options for stocking forage in Canyon Ferry Reservoir, outlined in the 2010-2019 UMRR FMP, and found no viable options that would provide the intended population benefits given the risks associated with stocking a bait fish.	
Comment and recommendation Proposal 40: Missouri River - Cow Creek to Beachamp Creek Setlines Limit and Season Length Mouth of Cow Creek downstream to Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837 • Hook and Line/Setlines: Only 3 lines with up to 6 hooks per line from April 15 to June 30. Page 81 add: Add the location of the Mouth of Cow Creek to the map of the Missouri River Upstream of Fort Peck Dear Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, I am writing in response to proposal 40: Cow Creek to Beachamp Creek Setlines, limit, and Season Length. I support the proposal as currently written, but have an amendment recommendation. On the weekend of 5/1/26, the Landusky USGS waterwatch site read 6,850 CFS. Despite the unseasonably low flows, I went fishing and camping with my family just downstream of Beachamp Creek. To my surprise, there were 40 jet boats beached and camping on the south side of the river off trail 837. Most of those jetboats travelled downstream in search of paddlefish. Anglers reported epci catch rates of paddlefish in the section between Beachamp and the UL bend. In my estimation, there were an average of 3 anglers on each jet boat travelling downstream from trail 837. That would be 120 total anglers chasing paddlefish and hypothetically running setlines outside of the proposal 40 downstream boundary. Watching all those jet boats run downstream of the proposal limit boundary was concerning. Here are the current setline laws taken directly from the MTFWP website. (From Page 17 of MTFWP fishing regulations) “Setlines - Number of lines is the same as for hook and line limits. Setlines may be used in all waters unless prohibited in the District Exceptions to Standard Regulations. - Setlines (unattended lines) must be checked by the owner at least once every 24 hours. “Hook and Line limits -Hook and Line Limits Open Water Rivers and Streams - 6 lines with 6 hooks per line. The line(s) must be attended and in the angler’s immediate control unless they are used as setlines. See regulations for Setlines on page 17.” Here is the concern: Anglers are fishing outside the proposed boundaries, which would negate MTFWP efforts to protect native species of concern, such as pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, Sauger, and channel catfish. Hypothetically, a single angler could be fishing 36 hooks on setlines. Some quick math of 40 jetboats x 3 anglers = 120 anglers. It’s not a stretch of imagination to expect the majority of those jet boats from paddlefish opening weekend to be running setlines while paddlefishing. Additionally, I can attest to having personally caught numerous sauger, pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, and channel catfish in the stretch between Beachamp Creek and the UL bend. This section is easily accessible by jetboat, downstream of the proposed boundaries, and would	The upstream boundary of Fort Peck Reservoir is currently defined at "Beauchamp Creek and CMR Trail 837" (pg. 80). The open water standard hook and line limits for lakes and reservoirs is 2 lines with 2 hooks per line. Thus, anglers are currently allowed 2 lines with 2 hooks per line downstream of Beauchamp Creek. Therefore, there is no need to extend the set line limit boundary downstream of this point.	N

negate the efforts of MTFWP to manage the aforementioned species. Anglers who prefer to setline could simply travel downstream of the proposed boundary to legally fish 6 lines, rather than 3. Reducing the number of setlines is an excellent idea to help decrease potential overharvest and wanton waste associated with the current setline regulations. That is why I recommend an amendment to proposal 40. Boundary Recommendation: Extend the downstream boundary. Mouth of Cow Creek (Upstream boundary) to the mouth of the Musselshell River (Downstream boundary). The MTFWP should consider adding the lower Musselshell River to the setline seasonal exceptions, as it serves as a key spawning area for the aforementioned native species of concern. FWP Rationale “Several species of concern, including sauger and endangered pallid sturgeon are known to form spawning aggregations in this reach during spring. While biological impacts are not currently being observed, the potential for overharvest of sauger exists if lines are deployed at locations with spawning aggregations present. Deep hooking mortality associated with setlines has the potential to lead to wanton waste or over limit violations due to the conservative daily limit of only 2 sauger.” “Additionally, setline densities are highest in the reach where endangered pallid sturgeon are known to form spawning aggregations. A reduction in the number of lines would help alleviate access/overcrowding concerns while also still allowing set line use during this time frame. Limiting this exception to the area and timeframe where overcrowding and potential biological impacts may occur allows anglers the opportunity to still use 6 lines and 6 hooks at other locations or times of year. Additionally, paddlefish anglers and anglers in this reach still have the opportunity to use set lines during the timeframe, but at a reduced number. Most setline anglers are pursuing channel catfish, and this proposed change retains that opportunity.” The FWP rationale justifies an amendment to the downstream boundary and will promote sustainable management of native species of concern. Thank you for your time and consideration, Montana Catfish Association Board of Directors	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
Several years ago Little Prickly Pear Creek was closed on Labor Day through 3rd Saturday in May. This was done to protect spawning brown in the fall and rainbow in the spring. However, the slaughter point of fish going up the creek from the Missouri River was left open. I testified at the commission meeting that the Missouri River at the mouth of the creek needed to be closed for that same time period if you are serious about protecting the spawning trout. There is a lot of trout slaughtered in the Missouri River at the mouth of Little Prickly Pear Creek. At that commission meeting I was told the reason that the River could not be closed at the mouth of the creek is because it would be hard to police. It certainly seems like it can be done on a lot of other situations in these proposed regulations with the “hundred yards radius”. So, why not do it here? The slaughter in this area by	The vast majority of anglers on the Missouri River practice catch and release (estimated 91% in 2015), so most trout that are caught would still have the opportunity to move into Little Prickly Pear Creek to spawn. Additionally, harvest restrictions (3 daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches, and only 1 may be a brown trout) prevent excessive harvest of the population. The seasonal angling closure in place on Little Prickly Pear Creek is conservative and provides fish with a two-to-three-week cushion before the typical start of spawning. Thus, we believe the current regulations are appropriate.	N

wading and boat anglers, especially in the late evening, is easy to observe. And it would be easy to police by a game warden with binoculars from the Wolf Creek fishing access site.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
For Missouri River from Fort Benton to Judith Bridge. Shovelnose Sturgeon, 3 daily none over 38". I am a local Loma fisherman sending this on behalf of a lot of locals. We are seeing a large drop in Shovelnose Sturgeon numbers and size. We used to average 20 fish nights with 1 over 40" but for the last 2 years, we have are lucky to catch 6 a night with 1 over 38". Please lower the size limits and daily limit to help these amazing ancient fish recover	Shovelnose sturgeon are monitored annually with netting at four sites from Fort Benton to Fred Robinson Bridge. Shovelnose sturgeon catch has been overall stable at all sites over the last 15 years, including at the Coal Banks section downstream of the Marias River. Shovelnose sturgeon from this section have been documented to use the Marias River for spawning, particularly during high flow years. Given the low flows in recent years, it is expected and has been documented with PIT and Radio Telemetry that shovelnose sturgeon have used the Marias River less. Regarding the drop in size, our data confirm that more small individuals have been present in recent years. This is a positive and indicates recent recruitment. Abundant large shovelnose are also still present in our sample. Based on our monitoring and the stable abundance, we believe the current regulation is protective of the fishery. Lower catch in the Loma area is likely a product of the recent environmental conditions and not reflective of overall changes in the population. Additionally, based on a creel survey conducted in 2023 on 201 river miles of the Missouri River from Widow Coulee to Wilder Coulee and including the lower mile of the Marias River, 87 shovelnose sturgeon were caught by interviewed anglers and 71 of these fish (81.6%) were released. This survey has been completed every four years since 2003 and catch rates of shovelnose sturgeon were similar among all years. This creel survey will be repeated in 2027 and the fishery will be monitored closely with annual monitoring to ensure the future of this fishery.	N
For Marias River: Daily limit for shovelnose sturgeon, 2 fish with none over 38". I am a Loma fisherman who has seen a huge drop in sturgeon numbers in the Loms area on the Marias and the Missouri Rivers. Not many fish are making it upriver on the Marias to spawn as there once were due to such low water levels. All the locals have noticed it as well. We used to have 20 fish nights and for the last 2 years, we are lucky to have 6 a night. Please reduce the limit for shovelnose sturgeon to help the species.	Shovelnose sturgeon are monitored annually with netting at four sites from Fort Benton to Fred Robinson Bridge. Shovelnose sturgeon catch has been overall stable at all sites over the last 15 years, including at the Coal Banks section downstream of the Marias River. Shovelnose sturgeon from this section have been documented to use the Marias River for spawning, particularly during high flow years. Given the low flows in recent years, it is expected, and has been documented with PIT and Radio Telemetry that shovelnose sturgeon have used the Marias River less. Regarding the drop in size, our data confirm that more small individuals have been present in recent years. This is a positive and indicates recent recruitment. Abundant large shovelnose are also still present in our	N

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For statewide tiger muskellunge: 1 daily, 46" minimum size limit. Tiger muskellunge (muskie) are a major trophy sport fish with very few lakes in the whole state where they are stocked. In late spring/early summer, they are very easy to catch with deadbait especially in Ackley Lake near Hobson. Ackley Lake has a high potential of producing a 40lb+ state record but thats not do-able when there is a lot of harvest on them by the locals. Can't get a 50" fish when you keep the 42" fish.	The general goal of stocking tiger muskie is to reduce the abundance and biomass of overly abundant nongame (e.g., suckers) or undesirable species, improve the condition of game species (e.g., trout), and provide a unique trophy opportunity for tiger muskie. The Central and Eastern District standard of "1 daily and in possession, must be over 40 inches" provides a restrictive harvest regulation that limits the number of individuals that can be harvested and the size at which they can be harvested and achieves these goals.	N
I'm sorry that I previously fat thumbbed a response without finishing. My comment pertains to Little Prickly Pear Creek and its Labor Day fishing closure. The management logic of this closure is not readily apparent. It cannot be to protect spawning brown trout as their average spawning date is 11/1 with a range of 10/11 to 11/10 (Grisak et al. 2012). Closing fishing on 9/30 would allow for additional fishing opportunity while still providing meaningful deference to the needs of autumn spawning and migrating trout and whitefish. I would also support a later opener (June 15), more similar to Beaver Creeks and Deep Creek, if such additional protection would benefit Rainbow and Cutthroat spawning. Grisak, Grant, Adam Strainer, and Brad Tribby. "Rainbow Trout and Brown the Missouri River, Sun Riv." (2012)	While the majority of brown trout spawning may occur in October and November, redds have been observed in Little Prickly Pear Creek in the second half of September. This is similar to observations in other tributaries including the Smith River and Sheep Creek where redds have also been observed in September. The current timing of the fall closure on Little Prickly Pear Creek gives brown trout a two to three week cushion to stage in the creek prior to the typical start of spawning during a period with low flows. The current spring opener date protects the majority of spawning rainbow trout which occurs in April through early to mid May. We believe the current season dates adequately balance angler opportunity and protections for spawning trout.	N
I propose changing the open dates of Little Prickly Pear Creek in the central district to June 15th -September 30. I am not sure I understand the management logic of of closing on Labor Day since brown trout in this drainage generally spawn on 11/1 with a range of 10/11-11/10 (Grisak). Grisak, Grant, Adam Strainer, and Brad Tribby. "Rainbow Trout and Brown the Missouri River, Sun Riv." (2012)	While the majority of brown trout spawning may occur in October and November, redds have been observed in Little Prickly Pear Creek in the second half of September. This is similar to observations in other tributaries including the Smith River and Sheep Creek where redds have also been observed in September. The current timing of the fall closure on Little Prickly Pear Creek gives brown trout a two to three week cushion to stage in the creek	N

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All bodies of water for walleye and all fish. No use of live sonar on any body of water. It makes fishing too easy and productive. It makes it easy to target large walleye. It will cause a decline in big fish and simply makes it too easy. Over time with fishing pressure it will cause fisheries to reduce limits and create slots. It is no different than using night vision for big game, speaker sounds for game, range finders mounted on bows and rifles, etc. At some point too much tech simply takes out the chance and makes it too easy. Look at the tournament fishermen. Many use 3 and 4 live sonar units because it makes harvesting the biggest walleye easy. You can't compete without live sonar because all the tourney guys use it. The same thing is coming to recreational fishermen. In order to compete we will all have them and will devastate the fisheries over time.	Lake Frances and Tiber Reservoir are examples of reservoirs where we've have had seasonal creels since the early 2000s. These creels help us understand catch rates and harvest rates by anglers through the spring and summer season. Creels also exist on other walleye fisheries in the state. We are currently monitoring the presence of sonar types including forward facing sonar (FFS) in these reservoirs. Based on initial surveys, only about 25% of anglers on Lake Frances and Tiber Reservoir use FFS. Though FFS has been available since 2018, our creel has not shown a size increase of harvested fish that is not reflective of the current population structure. Additionally, we rarely see fish greater than 25 inches harvested at either location. That has not changed with the presence of FFS on these reservoirs. Most anglers who are targeting and catching larger fish, are actively releasing them. While catch and release angling still has associated mortality, we have produced guidelines for anglers on strategies to reduce angling mortalities of these larger walleye. These guidelines have been provided to the local Walleye Unlimited groups and is available on our website. Our goal is to provide the best walleye fisheries possible. Currently, many of our walleye fisheries are balanced and steady and are meeting the goal ranges within the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan. We will continue to monitor these populations and if FFS appears to be a driver of declines in the quality of the walleye fisheries we will evaluate management options. Additionally, the Tiber and Canyon Ferry tournaments have recently introduced a no FFS category to their tournament to provide opportunity and competition for anglers without that technology. Technology has been rapidly evolving within angling since the first sonar was commercially produced. We are aware of the concerns anglers have about this technology and we are actively taking steps to monitor and understand any potential impacts to our fisheries.	N

Additional thoughts: 1. I'm concerned with the significant expansion of northern pike in the Missouri River below Holter Dam to Great Falls. I see there is no limit, and maybe that encourages harvesting the fish, but I wonder if that is enough. I've wondered about a mandatory catch and kill, but that may not be well accepted by the general public. I've wondered if a reward program or bounty could be used to encourage harvesting to suppress further expansion. The current no limit regulation has been in place for years and it has not worked to suppress the expansion of northern pike in the system. I have fished the river below Cascade for years, and it has become almost impossible to catch anything except for multiple northern pike, every trip this spring. That is not good. Maybe as a compromise, you could consider revising the number of lines and lures from Cascade downstream to Fort Benton to all the use of 2 lines with 2 hooks. This may also potentially increase harvest and potentially help suppress further expansion. I believe all it would take is changing the language on page 63 of the current regs ... Change from Morony Dam to Fort Benton to Cascade to Fort Benton and add the 2 lines with 2 hooks language that is allowed on lakes and reservoirs. I see no downside or adverse impacts to other fish because you already have harvest limits in place to protect the trout, etc. It would simply allow all the general anglers a little better chance of harvesting something.	FWP is actively studying the northern pike population in the Missouri River and trying to learn if the increasingly abundant population downstream of Cascade is impactful to the trout population upstream and the overall fishery. These studies will provide more informed management by better understanding the use of the river by northern pike. Currently, based on both sampling and angler reports, northern pike are relatively rare upstream of Cascade and have become common downstream. Implementing a mandatory harvest upstream of Cascade would not achieve the goal of effectively suppressing the pike population. Implementing a mandatory harvest downstream of Cascade would be difficult to implement as some anglers report catching numerous northern pike (e.g., 10-30). Compliance may be low given the abundance of fish caught and lack of acceptance by the general public. Waste of game law requires that any person in possession of a game fish suitable for food may not purposely or knowingly waste the game by disposing of or abandoning any portion of the fish that is suitable for food. If the waste of game law were removed for northern pike for these waterbodies in question, mandatory harvest would still require killing pike by anglers who may not be prepared to do so (e.g., kids, families, etc.) or may have ethical objections. Current mandatory catch, kill, and report regulations are viewed differently in that they are a means to collect potentially critical data from fish at locations where they are still low in abundance and difficult for the department to get samples, and is not a fish population control means or a burden on anglers that is expected to be common. FWP is not proposing mandatory harvest but does support measures to increase harvest of northern pike where No Limit regulations are in place. Adjusting waste of game language statute to allow for unrestricted harvest of species that have No Limit and are deemed undesirable could help increase harvest. Gear restrictions, including the number of lines, are a tool managers use to limit harvest where populations may be susceptible to angler exploitation. FWP will propose increasing the number of lines allowed on the Missouri River downstream of Cascade to Black Eagle where northern pike are abundant to encourage harvest, as suggested by the commenter.	Y
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TU: Northern pike mandatory harvest: MTU suggests the inclusion of regulations for mandatory harvest of northern pike where (a) the statewide fisheries management plan has identified that the management objectives are for trout and (b) that the management objective for pike is suppression. Two glaring examples of this situation are the Missouri River below Holter and the Clark Fork River upstream of the confluence with the Flathead. While we understand that the concerns and advisories related to fish consumption present a challenge, we are willing to work with the department to deal with wanton waste regulations to allow for the mandatory harvest and disposal of pike in these situations. We believe that anglers can and should be a meaningful part of the solution in regard to suppression goals in these waterbodies. Particularly in regard to the Missouri below Holter, we have reached out to other angling based groups about potential support for increasing the suppression activity, including through mandatory harvest, as a necessary tool to get a handle of the expanding problem.	FWP is actively studying the northern pike population in the Missouri River and trying to learn if the increasingly abundant population downstream of Cascade is impactful to the trout population upstream and the overall fishery. These studies will provide more informed management by better understanding the use of the river by northern pike. Currently, based on both sampling and angler reports, northern pike are relatively rare upstream of Cascade and have become common downstream. Implementing a mandatory harvest upstream of Cascade would not achieve the goal of effectively suppressing the pike population. Implementing a mandatory harvest downstream of Cascade would be difficult to implement as some anglers report catching numerous northern pike (e.g., 10-30). Compliance may be low given the abundance of fish caught and lack of acceptance by the general public. Waste of game law requires that any person in possession of a game fish suitable for food may not purposely or knowingly waste the game by disposing of or abandoning any portion of the fish that is suitable for food. If the waste of game law were removed for northern pike for these waterbodies in question, mandatory harvest would still require killing pike by anglers who may not be prepared to do so (e.g., kids, families, etc.) or may have ethical objections. Current mandatory catch, kill, and report regulations are viewed differently in that they are a means to collect potentially critical data from fish at locations where they are still low in abundance and difficult for the department to get samples, and is not a fish population control means or a burden on anglers that is expected to be common. FWP is not proposing mandatory harvest but does support measures to increase harvest of northern pike where No Limit regulations are in place. Adjusting waste of game language statute to allow for unrestricted harvest of species that have No Limit and are deemed undesirable could help increase harvest. Gear restrictions, including the number of lines, are a tool managers use to limit harvest where populations may be susceptible to angler exploitation. FWP will propose increasing the number of lines allowed on the Missouri River downstream of Cascade to Black Eagle where northern pike are abundant to encourage harvest, as suggested by another commenter.	N
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To Streamline Regulations on the Madison River from Yellowstone Park Boundary to Ennis Lake should be Catch and Release for ALL TROUT, BARBLESS HOOKS ONLY... This River is a National TREASURE . Currently 1/3 the river in this stretch is Barbless Hooks . Although NOT BARBLESS in the MOST HEAVILY FISHED 1/2 of the River where Nearly Every Fish is Hook Scarred . Many Yearling trout are killed each year because of difficult hook removal. Some die because of being out of the water for too long for hook removal while others are eaten by larger trout before they can recuperate. Harvesting of ADULT Trout in Critical SPAWNING HABITAT between Hebgen Dam and Quake Lake is counter productive . Making this section of river Catch and Release will Help Meet the Departments Goals of Streamline regulations for the Madison. In addition a SPAWNING CLOSURE should Exist from Hebgen Dam to the confluence of Cabin creek from November 1 through Trout Fry Emergence on June 30. Another SPAWNING CLOSURE should Exist from Ennis Bridge to Ennis Lake from November 1 through the opening of Fishing Season . This section of the Madison likely has the Highest number of Redds of any section of the Madison. PROACTIVE Management is ALWAYS Better than REACTIVE... The Madison Deserves the utmost RESPECT as a TREASURED RESOURCE for Recreation and Sustainable Economic Activity.	The scientific literature clearly indicates barbless regulations have little to no effect on injury or mortality rates for trout. The Commission adopted the barbless regulation near Ennis while leaving the remaining portion of the Upper Madison open to barbed hooks, which will allow FWP to track differences in hook scars and mortality between our long-term monitoring sections in those areas. FWP will continue to monitor hook scar rates to determine if changes in the Varney Section indicate the barbless regulation is having a meaningful biological effect on the rainbow and brown trout populations. A 2017 creel study along the Upper Madison River, including between the lakes, demonstrated little harvest of trout, even under Central District Standards, which at the time was five trout daily. The Central District Standard for rivers is now three trout. Only four rainbow trout were harvested by the anglers interviewed during that study; no brown trout or mountain whitefish were harvested by interviewed anglers. When extrapolated to all the anglers during the peak fishing season, it was estimated that about 17 rainbow trout were harvested in 2017, which would not have a biological effect on the rainbow and brown trout populations. Moreover, preliminary results from the ongoing creel surveys being conducted by Montana State University indicate low harvest levels as well. Shifts in recruitment or adult survival in the Madison River were not observed following the removal of previous mainstem spawning closures. However, FWP staff will be reevaluating the need for mainstem spawning closures over the next two years. The results of those efforts will be shared through public meetings and presentations and direct future regulation proposals that help meet the established management goals for the Madison River and nearby reservoirs.	N
The Jerry Creek Section of the Big Hole should NEVER close when populations are over 2,000 fish per mile. That is the sign of a supremely healthy fishery. Closures need to be done section by section, can't paint a 150 mile river with such a wide brush. Leave the upper big hole open year round, close sections with low fish numbers as needed.	The Big Hole River has been divided into 3 management sections. The river upstream of Dickie Bridge is managed for Arctic grayling. The two lower sections (Dickie to Brownes Bridge and Brownes Bridge to the confluence) are managed for wild trout. Population objectives were developed for both lower reaches. The upper of the two (Dickie to Brownes) has two monitoring sections (Jerry Creek and Melrose). Melrose has the longest and most consistent record of sampling of any Big Hole section with sampling occurring from 1969 to present. Jerry Creek has only been sampled since 1988 for rainbow trout and 1998 for brown trout. Additionally, those efforts are not as consistent as what's been completed in the Melrose Section. Therefore, sampling efforts in the Melrose Section were	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	used to establish population objectives for that reach of the Big Hole River. Combined brown and rainbow trout abundance in the Melrose Section are still below the 5th percentile. Because populations are still below objective, FWP will maintain the existing catch-and-release and spawning closure regulations. Once the populations recover, FWP will propose lifting the seasonal closure.	
Proposal: Revised Beaverhead River and Big Hole River Spawning Closure Reaches Beaverhead River Page 51 Barretts Diversion to the Mouth Jessen Park Boat Ramp Big Hole River Page 53 Brownes Bridge FAS to the Mouth High Road Bridge FAS Rationale: The Jefferson River begins at the confluence of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers near Twin Bridges, Montana. The furthest downstream available boat launch on the Beaverhead River is the Jessen Park Boat Ramp approximately one mile upstream from the confluence of the Jefferson River. The furthest downstream available boat launch on the Big Hole River is the High Road (or Melrose Road) Bridge FAS roughly one mile above the start of the Jefferson River. About eight years ago there was confusion as to whether commercial users needed a Beaverhead or Big Hole River CUP (Commercial User Permit) when floating the upper Jefferson River launching from the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the lower Beaverhead River or the High Road Bridge FAS on the lower Big Hole River. The Fish and Wildlife Commission revised the recreation rules and defined that the upper Jefferson River users did not need a Big Hole or Beaverhead CUP and could launch from either the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the Beaverhead River or the High Road Bridge FAS on the Big Hole River. Therefore, for commercial users this revision defined the beginning of the Jefferson River NOT at the confluence of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers, but at either the High Road Bridge FAS on the Big Hole River OR Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the Beaverhead River. The seasonal spawning closure regulations implemented on the Beaverhead River extend from Barretts Diversion to the mouth, or confluence with the Big Hole River or start of the Jefferson River. The seasonal spawning closure regulations implemented on the Big Hole River extend from Brownes Bridge FAS to the mouth, or confluence with the Beaverhead River or start of the Jefferson River. The Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana is a strong proponent of seasonal spawning closures to protect wild trout. Further, we assisted Fish, Wildlife & Parks in defining the spawning closure dates and reaches on the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers. Currently, there are no spawning closures on the Jefferson River. However, there have been several observations of anglers fishing while floating from the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the lower Beaverhead River to the Jefferson River during the spawning closures on the Beaverhead River. These anglers, we think, may be fishing these lower one-mile reaches of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers confusing the commercial recreation definitions of the Jefferson River with the	Thank you for the comment. FWP supports the idea to move the downstream extent of spawning closures on the lower Beaverhead River from the confluence with the Big Hole River upstream to the Jessen Park Boat Ramp to enable anglers to fish that reach of the Beaverhead River while accessing the upper Jefferson River. FWP does not anticipate any biological effects to result from the proposed change. Although FWP does not oppose the idea of making similar changes on the Big Hole River, more discussion is needed to minimize confusion and enforcement issues that could result from inconsistencies with the Big Hole Drought Plan, which has flow-based closures that extend to the mouth of the river. FWP is committed to further exploring the proposal with FOAM, the Big Hole Watershed Committee, Enforcement staff, anglers, and others.	Y

spawning closure definitions of those rivers. We think revising the spawning reach definitions for the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers would alleviate and confusion among anglers as to where the Jefferson River starts and where spawning closures are implemented on these rivers without adversely affecting trout recruitment from either the Beaverhead or Big Hole rivers.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
Just like Thompson creek and Benhart creek, all spring creeks feeding the East Gallatin should be put on the spawning season closures. It used to be this way and was removed. There is data that proves that spawning should be preserved.	The proposed spawning closures are based on recently completed studies by FWP staff. FWP will continue to monitor spawning and rearing habitats in the Gallatin and East Gallatin drainages as well as changes to the mainstem fisheries to determine whether additional spawning closures are needed.	N
East Gallatin River. Closing fishing from boats/vessels. Why? There is barely any foot access. Landowners should have to share the water!	Based on public feedback and internal discussions, the proposed angling restriction for the East Gallatin River will not be included in the final regulation package for the October Commission meeting. Fisheries staff will continue monitoring the rainbow and brown trout populations in the East Gallatin and lower Gallatin rivers. FWP is committed to providing opportunities for public involvement should the Department see a need to pursue management actions in the future based on changes to trout abundances and size structures observed during long-term monitoring efforts or other sampling.	N
Shut down spring fishing in the upper Madison (above Reynolds pass bridge) river until Memorial day weekend. Too many people walk through the river, and or directly target the spawning fish. And eliminate all boat traffic on this stretch all year.	Shifts in recruitment or adult survival in the Madison River were not observed following the removal of previous mainstem spawning closures. However, FWP staff will be reevaluating the need for mainstem spawning closures over the next two years. The results of those efforts will be shared through public meetings and presentations and direct future regulation proposals that help meet the established management goals for the Madison River and nearby reservoirs.	N
Madison River Limit the numbers of professional guides who are overfishing this river. Whether increasing the price of their permits, limiting their days on the river to certain days of the week, limiting the hours they are allowed to fish. This river is suffering and cannot support this onslaught much longer.	Thank you for your comment. However, limiting commercial use is out of the scope of the angling regulations process.	N
To: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission From: Western Watersheds Project Re: Proposed 2027–2028 Fishing Regulations – Arctic Grayling Conservation Dear Commissioners, As a lifelong angler and conservationist, I am writing to urge the Commission to adopt substantially stronger protections for Montana’s remaining Upper Missouri River Arctic grayling populations during the 2027–2028 fishing regulation cycle. Specifically, I urge FWP to adopt year-round angling closures on occupied Arctic grayling streams in the Centennial Valley, as well as full closures on several conservation-significant Big Hole watershed lakes currently proposed only for catch-and-release regulations. Scientific evidence on Arctic grayling biology, the impacts of angling	Fourteen of the 18 Upper Missouri River Arctic grayling populations have large population sizes, stable genetic variation, and, resultantly, high viability. The closure on the lower reaches of Red Rock Creek between Elk Lake Road and Upper Red Rock Lake was responsive to large concentrations of grayling seasonally occupying that reach and the added stress that anglers may place on them during those discrete periods. In 2026, there were about 360 grayling in the Red Rock Creek spawning population, an increase of almost 400% from its lowest levels in 2021. Low angling pressure and the absence of seasonal grayling concentrations do not support	N

and environmental stressors, and the effectiveness of conservation closures overwhelmingly supports these comprehensive protective measures. Given the increasingly dire status of multiple Upper Missouri River grayling populations, applying the precautionary principle and eliminating avoidable sources of mortality and stress is the most prudent and scientifically defensible management approach available. Centennial Valley Arctic Grayling Need Comprehensive Watershed-Scale Protection I urge the Commission to adopt year-round angling closures on the following Centennial Valley streams occupied by Arctic grayling: •Red Rock Creek •Odell Creek •Corral Creek •Tom Creek •Metzel Creek •Long Creek •West Creek •Middle Creek These streams are all identified by FWP as occupied Arctic grayling habitat and are critically important to the persistence and recovery of the imperiled Centennial Valley grayling population. Implementing only limited or partial closures does not make sense given the dire population numbers and genetic bottleneck that grayling face. FWP itself has acknowledged that grayling utilize these stream systems outside of the spawning season to seek refugia from temporarily harsh summer conditions in Upper Red Rock Lake and elsewhere within the watershed. In order to make any real progress towards recovery, angling pressure should be eliminated from all occupied streams in the Centennial Valley through the implementation of full-creek closures. FWP has previously identified a long-term conservation objective of maintaining at least 1,000 spawning Arctic grayling in Upper Red Rock Lake (FWP, 2023:13). Given the current population estimate of only approximately 150 spawning fish, the Centennial Valley grayling population plainly remains in an emergency situation and continues to face an unacceptably high risk of extirpation. Indeed, FWP itself acknowledged the severity of this crisis when it adopted the emergency Red Rock Creek closure last year, specifically recognizing the grave conservation status of this population and the urgent need for protective action. Under these circumstances, applying the precautionary principle and eliminating all controllable sources of grayling mortality and stress — no matter how small they may individually appear — is the most prudent, scientifically defensible, and ethically responsible management approach available. Catch-and-release angling mortality, handling stress, habitat disturbance from wading anglers, and displacement effects from partial closures all represent avoidable anthropogenic pressures on a population already hanging by a thread. Expanding year-round angling closures throughout occupied Centennial Valley grayling streams would help reduce these cumulative stressors and would therefore meaningfully contribute toward achieving FWP's stated recovery objective of 1,000 spawning fish. Furthermore, even if some of these streams currently support only remnant grayling occupancy or have experienced localized population loss, maintaining these waters free from fishing pressure remains ecologically important. As grayling attempt to recolonize formerly	implementation of angling closures in other Centennial Valley streams; no detectable angler pressure was observed in Corral, Tom, Metzel, Long, West, and Middle creeks and angling use in Odell Creek is distributed over a wide area outside of where grayling occur. A joint FWP and U.S. Fish and Service science program has demonstrated that the primary limiting factor for Centennial Valley Arctic grayling is over winter habitat in Upper Red Rock Lake; accordingly, FWP, Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and other partners are evaluating solutions to improve conditions there. All grayling being introduced for conservation purposes – whether to create new populations or improve genetic variation of existing populations - are of Upper Missouri River origin and are collectively representative of their ancestral genetic legacy. Additional angling restrictions are not warranted to achieve conservation objectives for grayling in Miner and Pintlar lakes. Seasonal concentrations of grayling similar to those observed in Red Rock Creek do not occur in either Pintlar or Miner lakes. The Miner Lake grayling population has high abundance and is genetically stable, while angling pressure on Pintler Lake is relatively low.	
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occupied habitats or expand seasonal use of tributary streams in response to warming temperatures and changing hydrologic conditions, they should not be subjected to additional and entirely avoidable angling-related stress and mortality. Protecting these streams now preserves future recovery and recolonization opportunities. FWP has also acknowledged the increasingly desperate nature of this situation through consideration of increasingly interventionist management measures, including proposals involving the stocking of tributaries such as Winslow Creek with what FWP itself has described as “hybridized” grayling (Kreiner et al., 2025:17). The Corral Creek pond project documented in the 2024 Centennial Valley CCAA annual report also appears to have used these hybridized grayling for stocking. Such actions risk diluting the unique genetic integrity of the Centennial Valley population — a population already recognized as conservation-significant within the Upper Missouri River system. If the situation is truly severe enough to justify emergency closures and the potential introduction of hybridized fish, then expanding precautionary angling closures throughout occupied grayling streams is not only reasonable, but necessary. By comparison, maintaining recreational fishing opportunities on these small tributaries offers little conservation benefit while exposing an irreplaceable native fish population to additional risk. Finally, the limited closure currently in place on only a small reach of Red Rock Creek is plainly inadequate to address the scale of the crisis facing Centennial Valley grayling. A much broader, watershed-scale protective approach is warranted. Additional Protections are Needed for Aboriginal Arctic Grayling Populations in the Big Hole Watershed Lakes FWP’s current proposal to merely require catch-and-release angling for Arctic grayling in Pintler Lake and Lower Miner Lake does not go far enough given the conservation status and documented genetic decline of these uniquely important Big Hole watershed populations. It is rather baffling and deeply concerning that harvest of Arctic grayling from these genetically distinct aboriginal lake populations has continued into 2026 despite their acknowledged conservation significance and documented demographic and genetic vulnerability. According to FWP’s recently released genetic assessment, the aboriginal grayling population in Pintler Lake has experienced measurable declines in genetic variation and population viability over time (Kreiner et al., 2025). FWP determined that Pintler Lake exhibited reduced genetic variation, a low effective population size, and a “low ability to maintain extant variation over time” relative to other Upper Missouri River grayling populations (Kreiner et al., 2025:10). The report further acknowledged that the population has “declined demographically over time and genetic variation has been reduced as a result” (Kreiner et al., 2025:20). Importantly, Pintler Lake, Mussigbrod Lake, and Lower Miner Lake were also identified as among the populations most genetically divergent from Centennial Valley grayling and therefore critically important for

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preserving unique Big Hole River genetic ancestry and evolutionary legacy (Kreiner et al., 2025:16-20). Given these findings, it makes little sense to continue allowing recreational angling pressure — even under catch-and-release regulations — on these already vulnerable populations. The same scientific concerns that justified FWP’s emergency closure on Red Rock Creek apply equally here. Catch-and-release angling still subjects grayling to physiological stress, hooking injuries, delayed mortality, altered behavior, and repeated disturbance during critical seasonal periods. For populations already experiencing declining genetic diversity and demographic instability, even low levels of additional anthropogenic mortality and stress should be avoided wherever possible. Indeed, if FWP deemed conditions severe enough in the Centennial Valley to justify emergency fishing closures to reduce extirpation risk, then adopting similarly precautionary protections for vulnerable Big Hole watershed lake populations is entirely logical and consistent. The precautionary principle should apply equally to all conservation-significant grayling populations experiencing documented decline, especially where the threats associated with recreational angling are entirely avoidable. FWP’s own report makes clear that introduced and aboriginal Upper Missouri River grayling populations collectively serve as essential reservoirs of genetic diversity and redundancy for the species throughout its remaining range (Kreiner et al., 2025). Once unique genetic variation is lost from populations such as Pintler Lake, it cannot realistically be recovered. Continuing to permit recreational targeting of these fish — even under catch-and-release regulations — unnecessarily exposes them to additional cumulative stressors at a time when FWP itself is warning of ongoing genetic erosion and demographic decline. Furthermore, unlike the Centennial Valley, where at least limited emergency closures have finally been implemented in portions of Red Rock Creek, no comparable fishing closures currently exist anywhere within the Big Hole watershed to protect these aboriginal lake populations. This regulatory inconsistency is difficult to justify given the conservation importance FWP itself assigns to these fish. Accordingly, I strongly recommend that FWP adopt full year-round angling closures for Pintler Lake, Lower Miner Lake, and Mussigbrod Lake rather than merely implementing catch-and-release restrictions. Such closures would: •Eliminate all direct angling mortality and handling stress on genetically important grayling populations. •Reduce cumulative anthropogenic pressures on populations already exhibiting signs of demographic and genetic decline. •Better align management with the precautionary conservation approach already adopted elsewhere for imperiled Arctic grayling populations. •Help preserve the unique Big Hole River genetic lineage and evolutionary legacy identified by FWP as critical to long-term Upper Missouri River grayling conservation. •Demonstrate regulatory consistency with FWP’s own recognition that these populations face	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
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increasing conservation risk and require active intervention to persist into the future. Angling Impacts are Detrimental to Critically Low Populations, Even Catch-and-Release While FWP's recent proposals acknowledge the threat posed by angling, it is crucial to recognize that even catch-and-release fishing poses significant risks to populations as vulnerable as Upper Missouri River Arctic grayling. Scientific studies have consistently demonstrated that catch-and-release angling causes:

- Physiological Stress: Fish experience elevated stress hormones (cortisol) and lactic acid buildup, impacting their energy reserves and immune systems. This stress can be particularly damaging during sensitive periods like spawning (Duncan et al., 2023; Olsen et al., 2010).
- Physical Injury and Mortality: Despite best practices, hooking injuries, handling, air exposure, and scale/mucous loss can lead to immediate or delayed mortality (Duncan et al., 2023; Olsen et al., 2010). Reported catch-and-release mortality rates for Arctic grayling, though sometimes appearing low (e.g., 5-10%), are unacceptable for critically low populations already facing demographic and genetic decline (Falk and Gillman, 1975; McKinley, 1993).
- Behavioral Alterations: Angling stress can lead to changes in feeding behavior, migration patterns, and overall activity, further reducing the chances of survival and successful reproduction. Given the precarious status of multiple Upper Missouri River grayling populations, minimizing all potential sources of mortality and stress from recreational angling is paramount. Environmental and Habitat Stressors Further Exacerbate Population Decline Beyond angling pressure, Arctic grayling face significant environmental challenges throughout both the Centennial Valley and Big Hole watersheds:
- Temperature Sensitivity : Arctic grayling are highly susceptible to elevated water temperatures. Studies show that exposing grayling juveniles to higher temperatures (e.g., above 18°C) results in decreased growth, lower survival, and increased chronic stress responses (Carrillo-Longoria et al., 2023). This is particularly concerning given climate change impacts and increasing water temperatures in Montana rivers and lakes supporting grayling populations.
- Fine Sediment Impacts and Nutrient Pollution From Livestock Grazing : Fine sediment negatively impacts Arctic grayling egg survival and spawning habitat suitability (Anderson, 2016). Wading anglers additionally disturb stream substrates and contribute to sediment mobilization in already impaired systems. Nutrient pollution from livestock grazing in riparian and shoreline zones has been listed by Montana DEQ as causes for impairment of many streams in the Centennial Valley, leading to overgrowth of aquatic vegetation and other impacts. Recommendation: To ensure the highest probability of recovery and long-term persistence for Montana's remaining Upper Missouri River Arctic grayling populations, I strongly recommend that the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission adopt the following regulations for the 2027–2028 fishing season: Centennial Valley Stream Closures Adopt full

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year-round angling closures on: •Red Rock Creek •Odell Creek •Corral Creek •Tom Creek •Metzel Creek •Long Creek •West Creek •Middle Creek Big Hole Watershed Lake Closures Adopt full year-round angling closures on: •Pintler Lake •Lower Miner Lake •Mussigbrod Lake These measures would: •Provide maximum protection for all life stages of Arctic grayling. •Eliminate avoidable angling-related mortality and stress on highly vulnerable populations. •Help preserve irreplaceable drainage-specific genetic diversity and evolutionary legacy. •Reduce cumulative anthropogenic pressures during a period of severe demographic and genetic decline. •Align management with the precautionary conservation principles already recognized by FWP in other Arctic grayling recovery efforts. Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical conservation issue. Sincerely, Montana & Washington State Director Western Watersheds Project

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Upper Madison River Proposal: Allow open boat fishing from Reynold's Bridge to Lyon's Bridge. Conditional upon no fishing from the boat within 500 feet of either mentioned bridge. This would add approximately 8 more miles of boat fishing and help decongest the 37 miles of river from Lyon's to Town (Ennis). An approximate 18% increase in boat access while reducing congestion and pressure on the current water/fish.	Thank your comment. However, the long-established walk-wade regulations on the Upper Madison River have widespread support in the angling community. A recent study of recreational trends on the Upper Madison found that the walk-wade section was targeted by many anglers who specifically chose that section of the Madison River in an attempt to avoid crowding by float anglers and boats.	N
Madison river: Close quake lake outlet to Lyons bridge and varney bridge to the lake sep 30- 3rd Saturday in May. Go pack to similar season as we had before to protect spawning fish on the Madison river.	Shifts in recruitment or adult survival in the Madison River were not observed following the removal of previous mainstem spawning closures. However, FWP staff will be reevaluating the need for mainstem spawning closures over the next two years. The results of those efforts will be shared through public meetings and presentations and direct future regulation proposals that help meet	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	the established management goals for the Madison River and nearby reservoirs.	
Bringing back a trout season on the spawning sections of the Madison. A 3rd saturday in may to october 15 season from quake lake outflow to ruby creek, and from 8 mile to the lake. It already has precedence being similar to past regulations and would drastically help trout recruitment on one of hardest pressured rivers in the state. The amount of springtime and fall pressure currently put on spawning trout cannot be sustainable.	Shifts in recruitment or adult survival in the Madison River were not observed following the removal of previous mainstem spawning closures. However, FWP staff will be reevaluating the need for mainstem spawning closures over the next two years. The results of those efforts will be shared through public meetings and presentations and direct future regulation proposals that help meet the established management goals for the Madison River and nearby reservoirs.	N
Since there is a proposal to restrict fishing from a boat on the East Gallatin, I propose that FWP open fishing from a boat on the main stem of the Gallatin from opening day of fishing season to July 20. Similar to the regulation on Rock Creek near Philipsburg. This would enable anglers to more safely fish the river at higher water levels and may reduce some pressure on the Madison. Thank you for your consideration.	Based on public feedback and internal discussions, the proposed angling restriction for the East Gallatin River will not be included in the final regulation package for the October Commission meeting. Fisheries staff will continue monitoring the rainbow and brown trout populations in the East Gallatin and lower Gallatin rivers. FWP is committed to providing opportunities for public involvement should the Department see a need to pursue management actions in the future based on changes to trout abundances and size structures observed during long-term monitoring efforts or other sampling.	N
Fishing the East Gallatin River (EGR) Dear FWP, In consideration of climate changes affecting water flow, water temperatures, and water quality, I would like to propose restrictions on the use of water craft and fishing on the EGR. I am aware of the relatively short time one can take watercraft down the EGR and that it appears to have become a new normal where, later in the summer, water quality and quantity worsens. I am thinking about protections for the fishery of the EGR.	Based on public feedback and internal discussions, the proposed angling restriction for the East Gallatin River will not be included in the final regulation package for the October Commission meeting. Fisheries staff will continue monitoring the rainbow and brown trout populations in the East Gallatin and lower Gallatin rivers. FWP is committed to providing opportunities for public involvement should the Department see a need to pursue management actions in the future based on changes to trout abundances and size structures observed during long-term monitoring efforts or other sampling.	N
I grew up fishing the Ruby River near Alder Montana. Until only the past few years it was open for Brown, Rainbow Trout. I feel now it is specifically catering to fly fishermen from out of State. Both my kids learned to fish on that river below the outlet and down river of Ruby Dam. Please reconsider opening it for people that live here and enjoy eating a Trout once in a while. Instead of fly fishermen where them down taking a photo throwing them back and dieing anyway thanks for your time and consideration.	Thank you for the comment. The present seasonal closure and catch-and-release angling is in response to historically low trout populations in the reach below Ruby Reservoir. In 2026, FWP estimated that there were 602 trout per mile in the monitoring section that characterizes the reach between Ruby Dam and Alder Bridge, which is below the 5 th percentile of all population surveys that have occurred there since 1998; the long-term average for this reach is about 1250 fish per mile. These regulations are in place to protect spawning adults from added angling-related stress and incubating embryos in redds from being stepped on or trampled by anglers. As described in the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan, when trout populations improve to over 750 fish per mile in consecutive years regulations will be proposed to restore year-round	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	angling and allow a one fish limit, with higher limits being proposed as abundances increase. FWP is working to identify and alleviate limiting other factors beyond angling pressure to improve the population.	
Amend the new closure of the upper Ruby Confluence with Sweetwater Creek to Ruby Reservoir •Open third Saturday in May through Nov. 30. This is mostly private waters that most people don't even fish. The lower ruby is what needs to be protected and figured out.... It seems silly to close a whole section of a river that barely gets fish compared to other sections in central Montana. That get completely pounded and the trout get abused. RE OPEN the upper Ruby and create more closures for the lower to protect that ecosystem which is in danger	Thank you for the comment. This closure is in place specifically to protect spawning and incubating rainbow and brown trout from the Ruby Reservoir that seasonally aggregate and spawn in this reach as they annually ascend the Ruby River. Because recent research has shown that about 75% of the rainbow trout fishery in the Ruby Reservoir is of wild origin, FWP has implemented protective regulations in spawning tributaries and is working with partners and landowners to improve those habitats.	N
We would further provide an addition proposal to the 2027-2028 fishing regulation proposals - FOAM Proposal: Revised Beaverhead River and Big Hole River Spawning Closure Reaches Beaverhead River Page 51 Barretts Diversion to the Mouth Jessen Park Boat Ramp Big Hole River Page 53 Brownes Bridge FAS to the Mouth High Road Bridge FAS Rationale: The Jefferson River begins at the confluence of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers near Twin Bridges, Montana. The furthest downstream available boat launch on the Beaverhead River is the Jessen Park Boat Ramp approximately one mile upstream from the confluence of the Jefferson River. The furthest downstream available boat launch on the Big Hole River is the High Road (or Melrose Road) Bridge FAS roughly one mile above the start of the Jefferson River. About eight years ago there was confusion as to whether commercial users needed a Beaverhead or Big Hole River CUP (Commercial User Permit) when floating the upper Jefferson River launching from the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the lower Beaverhead River or the High Road Bridge FAS on the lower Big Hole River. The Fish and Wildlife Commission revised the recreation rules and defined that the upper Jefferson River users did not need a Big Hole or Beaverhead CUP and could launch from either the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the Beaverhead River or the High Road Bridge FAS on the Big Hole River. Therefore, for commercial users this revision defined the beginning of the Jefferson River NOT at the confluence of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers, but at either the High Road Bridge FAS on the Big Hole River OR Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the Beaverhead River. The seasonal spawning closure regulations implemented on the Beaverhead River extend from Barretts Diversion to the mouth, or confluence with the Big	Thank you for the comment. FWP supports the idea to move the downstream extent of spawning closures on the lower Beaverhead River from the confluence with the Big Hole River upstream to the Jessen Park Boat Ramp to enable anglers to fish that reach of the Beaverhead River while accessing the upper Jefferson River. FWP does not anticipate any biological effects to result from the proposed change. Although FWP does not oppose the idea of making similar changes on the Big Hole River, more discussion is needed to minimize confusion and enforcement issues that could result from inconsistencies with the Big Hole Drought Plan, which has flow-based closures that extend to the mouth of the river. FWP is committed to further exploring the proposal with FOAM, the Big Hole Watershed Committee, Enforcement staff, anglers, and others.	Y

Hole River or start of the Jefferson River. The seasonal spawning closure regulations implemented on the Big Hole River extend from Brownes Bridge FAS to the mouth, or confluence with the Beaverhead River or start of the Jefferson River. The Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana is a strong proponent of seasonal spawning closures to protect wild trout. Further, we assisted Fish, Wildlife & Parks in defining the spawning closure dates and reaches on the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers. Currently, there are no spawning closures on the Jefferson River. However, there have been several observations of anglers fishing while floating from the Jessen Park Boat Ramp on the lower Beaverhead River to the Jefferson River during the spawning closures on the Beaverhead River. These anglers, we think, may be fishing these lower one-mile reaches of the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers confusing the commercial recreation definitions of the Jefferson River with the spawning closure definitions of those rivers. We think revising the spawning reach definitions for the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers would alleviate and confusion among anglers as to where the Jefferson River starts and where spawning closures are implemented on these rivers without adversely affecting trout recruitment from either the Beaverhead or Big Hole rivers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and your time and consideration.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
TU: Jefferson displacement during BH2 closures: We have been, and continue to be strong advocates, of the adaptive management framework for the upper Jefferson watershed and the current spawning closures in place on the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers (BH2). One unintentional consequence of those closures, particularly in the fall, though is that it has dramatically increased through displacement the angler use of the mainstem of the Jefferson River, which is ostensibly in similar if not worse population parameters. We would like to see a regulation that extends those closures to the mainstem of the Jefferson when the adaptive management triggers are met on both upstream rivers. At a minimum, gathering some user data about the amount of pressure the mainstem Jefferson is receiving in the month of October would be useful. o We have communicated that absent a regulation change to the mainstem of the Jefferson during the closure, that we are supportive of the Fishing Outfitters of Montana proposed solution regarding definition of closure boundaries since the current “mouth of” is ambiguous given the geomorphology of the confluence.	Thank you for the comment. The existing spawning closures on the Big Hole and Beaverhead rivers have created a relatively new dynamic for the upper Jefferson River. We appreciate the concern about the potential for increased use by displaced anglers but the potential effects of those dynamics are not well understood. FWP lacks sufficient data to support the need to implement concurrent fall spawning closures on the Jefferson River. FWP staff will be working over the next several years to assess the potential effects that specific management actions, including spawning closures, may have on the rainbow and brown populations in the Jefferson River. The results of those efforts will be shared through public meetings and presentations and direct future regulation proposals that help protect and improve the Jefferson River trout fishery.	N

Warm springs ponds. Specifically the new job corp ponds. Close to fishing year round.	The fisheries in the Warm Springs Ponds and new Job Corps Ponds are stocked put and grow fisheries. These ponds are popular for their ability to grow large stocked trout. These are not wild fisheries and there is no biological justification to close the ponds to fishing. Fishing seasons at the various waterbodies in the Warm Springs system are already restricted to specific dates that have been deemed to be compatible with wildlife and waterfowl objectives/needs. The new Job Corps Ponds are currently only open for fishing for six weeks due to waterfowl nesting, rearing, and hunting conflicts. Additionally, the Warm Springs Settling Ponds are privately owned and fishing seasons and access were developed at the request of the owners.	N
I propose salmon in Georgetown Lake. You once had one a couple years ago but politics the way it was they took back off. They don't catch any during the summer but through the eyes they kill thousands.. Place a limit on them and keep it no matter what political people intervene.	The initial attempt to instate a kokanee limit was in response to an exceptional increase in size of kokanee in Georgetown Lake observed during netting in 2020 and 2021. Kokanee size is typically dependent on abundance (e.g., the less fish in the population, the larger the size of fish), so this exceptional increase in size was interpreted as a large decrease in number of kokanee. Currently, size appears to be better than average the last couple of years, but it is still within the range we have observed over the last several decades, with the exception of the large sizes observed during netting in 2020 and 2021. The no-limit regulation attempts to keep numbers regulated through harvest to maintain or improve the size of kokanee. Reducing the limit at this time and keeping more fish in the lake may decrease the size of kokanee and is counter to FWP's management direction in the Statewide Fish Management Plan.	N
Length and no spawning clause on tributaries to start sep30 till 3 week in may . Omit the exception to the closure for ditches, canals, and slough's between Hamilton and Florence Bridge and between 93 and E. Side Highway	The commentor appears to be asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and lengthen the seasonal closure that would then apply to those waters, which is currently from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, to September 30th to the 3rd Saturday in May. No rationale was given for why the commentor was requesting this change, but based on similar comments received it appears it is for the protection of spawning brown trout. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted. Initiating closures early (e.g. September 30th) in tributaries already under seasonal restrictions is unlikely to have any measurable impact on fish recruitment from those waters in the Bitterroot drainage. This is primarily due to limited angling pressure in these streams overall. Most of the angling pressure is on the mainstem Bitterroot River or its side channels.	
city of butte, skyline dog park / kids fishing pond. and any other kids fishing ponds in mt.....respectfully request that you allow seniors 65 and older and handicapped persons to be allowed to fish these ponds, catch and release only, artificial bait only. thank you for your consideration on this matter.	Skyline Park pond is a very small pond (.5 acres) stocked with catchable sized trout for kids fishing. The pond is already heavily used by kids and additional pressure could be incompatible with current management. The pond struggles to maintain a good population of trout through the middle and late summer due to warm water temperature, and this issue may be exacerbated by additional catch and release angling pressure. The pond was paid for and developed using primarily Natural Resource Damage Program funds with the specific target of creating a quality kids fishing area. There are several stocked ponds and lakes within close proximity to Butte that currently provide opportunity for seniors with a range of disabled access. Examples include Homestake Lake, Warm Springs Gravel Pit, and Racetrack Pond.	N

I suggest extending the spawning closure. It should start September 30th rather than November 30th and go through the third week of May. I also suggest removing the exception for "ditches, canals, and sloughs" between Hamilton and Florence Bridge, Highway 93 and the Eastside Road. I'm also a strong proponent of single barbless hooks and catch and release everywhere. Thank you.	The commentor is asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and lengthen the seasonal closure that would then apply to those waters, which is currently from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, to September 30th to the 3rd Saturday in May. No rationale was given for why the commentor was requesting this change, but based on similar comments received it appears it is for the protection of spawning brown trout. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted. Initiating closures early (e.g. September 30th) in tributaries already under seasonal restrictions is unlikely to have any measurable impact on fish recruitment from those waters in the Bitterroot drainage. This is primarily due to limited angling pressure in these streams overall. Most of the angling pressure is on the mainstem Bitterroot River or its side channels. The commentors feelings on single barbless and catch-and-release in all waters are noted.	N
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1. Close tributaries of the Bitterroot River to fishing from Oct. 1 till the third week in May INCLUDING “ditches canals and sloughs between Hiway 93 and the Eastside hwy, and Hamilton to Florence Bridge”. Protect the spawning fish!!!	The commentor appears to be asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and lengthen the seasonal closure that would then apply to those waters, which is currently from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, to October 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May. Rationale given is for the protection of spawning fish. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted. Initiating closures early (e.g. October 1st) in tributaries already under seasonal restrictions is unlikely to have any measurable impact on fish recruitment from those waters in the Bitterroot drainage. This is primarily due to limited angling pressure in these streams overall. Most of the angling pressure is on the mainstem Bitterroot River or its side channels.	N
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1. Discontinue the exception for regulations on the Bitterroot tributaries for “ditches, canals and sloughs from Hiway 93 to the Eastside hwy between Hamilton and Florence bridge. 2. Extend fishing closures tributaries from Sept. 30 til the third week on May (in order to protect spawning ... brown trout spawn in October) 3. Ps. Change regs to single barbless catch and release only	The commentor is asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and lengthen the seasonal closure that would then apply to those waters, which is currently from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, to September 30th to the 3rd Saturday in May. Rationale given is for the protection of spawning brown trout. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its potential benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted. Initiating closures early (e.g. September 30th) in tributaries already under seasonal restrictions is unlikely to have any measurable impact on fish recruitment from those waters in the Bitterroot drainage. This is primarily due to limited angling pressure in these streams overall. Most of the angling pressure is on the mainstem Bitterroot River or its side channels. The commentors feelings on single barbless and catch-and-release in all waters are noted.	N
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Protect spawning trout by REMOVING “regulations are the same as the adjacent river section” for the section of the Bitterroot River between US 93 and Eastside hwy, and between Hamilton and Florence Bridge. Add single barbless only for stream sections labeled Cutthroat and Bull Trout habitat consistent with Hoot Owl regulations.	The commentor appears to be asking to remove the extended season allowance for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and have these areas seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, as is the case with most tributary streams in the region. This is being proposed by the commentor for the protection of spawning trout. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted. Regarding the proposal for single barbless hooks in reaches designated as cutthroat or bull trout waters in the Statewide Fish Management Plan, much of scientific literature on the issue of barbed versus barbless hooks has failed to identify statistically significant or biologically meaningful differences in mortality. One summary paper (Schill, D. J. and R. L. Scarpella. 1997. Barbed hook restrictions in catch-and-release trout fisheries: a social issue. North American Journal of Fisheries Management 17 (4): 873-881.) looked at a number of previous studies on the subject. For flies and lures combined, they found that the mean hooking mortality for	N
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<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	barbed hooks was 4.5% and for barbless it was 4.2%. Natural mortality for wild trout in streams commonly ranges from 30% to 65% and can maintain numbers with a degree of catch-and-release and harvest mortality. The authors concluded that the relatively low mortality rates of catch-and-release angling with this gear and a 0.3% difference in mortality between barbed and barbless hooks was irrelevant. Limited creel data from the West Fork of the Bitterroot River collected in conjunction with the 2016 senior thesis of Benjamin Rich suggests that a majority of anglers fishing the Bitterroot are voluntarily using barbless and debarbed hooks. Here is a quote from the thesis: “Of my survey participants, 93.6% used fly gear as their primary gear type and of those anglers 71.7% voluntarily used barbless or debarbed hooks.” The remaining anglers were using spinners with treble hooks. Therefore, not only is there little difference in the effect of hook type on mortality, a regulation would have minimal effect on what is currently being used. Finally, select harvest of fish is allowable along the entire length of the Bitterroot River. Going to a barbless rule may impact those seeking to harvest fish for food. Studies have shown that barbless hooks have a lower capture efficiency than barbed hooks. Implementing a barbless rule that would likely offer no biological benefit would require additional commitment from our enforcement staff to assure compliance, and would likely increase the number of equipment citations for illegal gear type (i.e. barbed hooks).	
I propose a change to the existing regulation exception for the Bitterroot River that states: ditches, canals, and sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, and between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge – regulations are the same as the adjacent river section. The Bitterroot River in this reach is open to fishing year-round, and this exception therefore changes the fishing season on these waters to year-round as well. However, all other tributaries in the Western District are closed from December 1 through the 3rd Saturday in May to protect spawning trout. These waters, which are not part of the mainstem of the Bitterroot River, are important spawning and major nursery areas that produce fish for the Bitterroot River system. Extending human impacts during spawning seasons is detrimental to that reproduction. Why is this area an exception to that important seasonal closure that protects trout reproduction elsewhere? If FWP truly cares about the fishery resource, what is the justification for this exception? I propose changing the regulation exception for ditches, canals, and sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, and between Hamilton and the Florence	The commentor is asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to Third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and have these areas seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, as is the case with most tributary streams in the region. This is being proposed by the commentor for the protection of spawning trout. FWP has no significant data regarding the importance of any of the ditches, canals, or sloughs (including Mitchell Slough) for trout spawning or recruitment to the mainstem river. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed	N

Bridge to seasonally close these waters to angling during spawning seasons, just like all other tributaries in Western Montana.	from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted.	
I would like to see the fishing regulations changed on the Bitterroot watershed. Currently year round fishing is permitted on tributaries to the Bitterroot unlike other rivers in Western Montana. However these tributaries are important spawning grounds for that river and having human interference during that time of year can have a very detrimental effect on the overall fish population. I propose closing any fishing from December 1st to Memorial Day weekend on any tributaries(including sloughs, ditches, etc)of the Bitterroot from Hamilton to the Florence bridge.	The commentor is asking for a seasonal closures on tributaries to the Bitterroot River, the vast majority of which already have a seasonal closure in place from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May. Given the related nature of this comment to others received, more background on this issue may be gleaned from other responses.	N
Montana FWP Fisheries Division, I am hereby submitting a proposal for a change to the Montana fishing regulations. Please see the attached PDF document for my detailed proposal. Please respond to this email to let me know that this proposal has been received with the attached PDF for consideration. Thank you,	The commentor is asking to remove the Extended Season (Dec. 1 to Third Saturday in May) for Ditches, Canals and Sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge, and have these areas seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May, as is the case with most tributary streams in the region. This is being proposed by the commentor for the protection of spawning trout. FWP has no significant data regarding the importance of any of the ditches, canals, or sloughs (including Mitchell Slough) for trout spawning or recruitment to the mainstem river. Many of the ditches and canals are seasonal and do not provide quality spawning or rearing habitat. For perennial waters, like Mitchell Slough, there is little data regarding trout populations, spawning, and juvenile recruitment to the river because of restricted access for surveys. Spawning is known to occur in areas of Mitchell Slough, but its relative significance compared to other areas such as side channels of the Bitterroot	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	River or larger tributaries (which are currently seasonally closed from December 1st to the 3rd Saturday in May) is not known. Population surveys for brown trout in the mainstem Bitterroot River in the Stevensville section downstream of the confluence of Mitchell Slough indicate that the population is relatively low and has been stable for decades. This is during a time of increased angling pressure over the same period, so angling pressure itself does not appear to be affecting brown trout abundance in this area. We have no data to indicate that recreational pressure during the current extended season is having an impact on brown trout redd production and fish numbers in Mitchell Slough or the Bitterroot River. A limited survey in the very lower reaches of Mitchell Slough where access was granted in early 2026 (post-spawning for brown trout) indicated that overall redd numbers were low, and of those observed none appeared to have been disturbed by recreational use (boaters or wade anglers/hunters). Reducing angling opportunity as suggested without more information about its benefits to fish populations and other angling opportunities is not warranted.	
Yellowstone river paddlefish season May 1st. Eliminate catch and release. Bring back plastic tags. This fishery has been ruined! With the bypass channel. Help bring it back.	Thank you for the comments and concerns. The Intake Bypass Channel was completed the spring of 2022, providing only five years of monitoring to see how paddlefish and anglers respond to this new habitat change that allows fish to disperse upstream of Intake. This includes the range and timing of river flows that vary each year and the resulting paddlefish migrations. Significant fishing regulation changes occurred for the 2025-2026 paddlefish season to align with the newly dispersed fishery. We need more years of monitoring both fish passage, the new fishing regulations, and angler satisfaction to see how well they work before making additional regulation changes. Reviewing both river flows and telemetry data for paddlefish the last ten years demonstrates that paddlefish are absent or low in numbers in Montana between May 1 - 15, but are generally distributed throughout the lower river after May 15. Field observations in 2026 with anglers and enforcement staff demonstrates complications of not having the plastic tag or a physical tag to attach to harvested fish. Ongoing discussions will occur to reconsider the plastic tag or other style that can be attached to fish. The majority of anglers prefer harvest days, however a growing segment of anglers prefer catch and release to harvest. This is also true for many new paddlefish anglers that inquire about participating each year but have no desire to harvest a fish. Catch and release days allows participation without reducing	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	the population from harvested fish. Although paddlefish are no long artificially concentrated below Intake Diversion Dam, it has increased their potential to spawn in more habitats upstream and likely increase the overall abundance of paddlefish in Lake Sakakawea over time and likely improve angler opportunities in the future when the fish that hatched upstream of Intake reach sexual maturity (age 10 for males or the year 2032 and age 20 for females or year 2042). Dispersing the fishery to upstream areas of the river also creates quality angler opportunities in more locations without the combat fishing that historically occurred at Intake - thus eliminating a historic request to reduce the number of anglers at Intake to reduce conflicts.	
Dear MTFWP fisheries department, I am writing to recommend a special season to better regulate set-line use on the Yellowstone River. Region 5 has been a hotbed for set-line use over the past 20 years. Warmwater species anglers in the region have expressed their concerns about the health of the fishery. The Yellowstone County jet boat community has recently observed an increase in set-line use, which has likely contributed to decreased catch rates of warmwater species. Anglers have reported decreased catch rates in sauger, shovelnose sturgeon, pallid sturgeon, and channel catfish. Not only are these species native to Montana, but they have also been included as a “species of concern” in the rationale for proposal #40. Although a different drainage, it should be noted that anglers share the same concerns on the Yellowstone as on the Missouri River. FWP rationale is listed below for reference. FWP Rationale for proposal #40 “Several species of concern, including sauger and endangered pallid sturgeon are known to form spawning aggregations in this reach during spring. While biological impacts are not currently being observed, the potential for overharvest of sauger exists if lines are deployed at locations with spawning aggregations present. Deep hooking mortality associated with setlines has the potential to lead to wanton waste or over limit violations due to the conservative daily limit of only 2 sauger.” “Additionally, setline densities are highest in the reach where endangered pallid sturgeon are known to form spawning aggregations. A reduction in the number of lines would help alleviate access/overcrowding concerns while also still allowing set line use during this time frame. Limiting this exception to the area and timeframe where overcrowding and potential biological impacts may occur allows anglers the opportunity to still use 6 lines and 6 hooks at other locations or times of year. Additionally, paddlefish anglers and anglers in this reach still have the opportunity to use set lines during the timeframe, but at a reduced number. Most setline anglers are pursuing channel catfish, and this proposed change retains that opportunity.” I recommend that the Region 5 fisheries department consider mirroring the special season set-line regulation	Thank you for the comments and concerns. While there have been concerns raised about setline use in the Yellowstone River from Billings downstream to the mouth of the Bighorn River, we have not received similar concerns for the Yellowstone River below this reach. Based on the scoping comments received, Region 5 Fisheries will move forward with proposing a special season setline regulation of 3 lines with up to 6 hooks per line from May 1–June 15 in the Yellowstone River from the I-90 bridge in Billings to the confluence of the Bighorn River, but are not proposing changes for the Yellowstone River downstream of the Bighorn confluence at this time.	Y

proposed on the Missouri River. The special season boundary would likely span the full length of the R5 management area. Additionally, it may be necessary to collaborate with the R7 office to extend the special season set-line regulations, as the species of concern are in greater concentrations during the spawning period within the R7 boundaries (especially in low-flow years). Rationale for a regulated set-lining season would likely mirror proposal #40. I would like to commend the MTFWP for being proactive in fisheries management and conservation efforts during this two-year scoping period. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the public comment period,	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
New on line licenses need a help line 24/7 for customers to find als # and better search options for that like last name	Thank you for taking the time to submit a comment during the 2027 fishing regulation proposal process. We appreciate your feedback regarding the online licensing system, including the suggestion for a 24/7 help line and improved search functionality for locating ALS numbers by last name. While this comment falls outside the scope of the current regulation-setting process, we recognize that accessible and user-friendly licensing services are important to anglers across Montana. We will forward your feedback to the appropriate staff responsible for licensing systems and customer service to ensure improvements are evaluated.	N
I propose that we go back to a 6 week fishing season for paddlefish on the Yellowstone. Since the bypass at Intake, the quota has not been meet. Shortening of the season 2 week only made it more difficult to meet the quota	Thank you for the comments. The paddlefish harvest cap is utilized to prevent harvesting over 1,000 fish in each state (MT & ND) rather than a goal or quota to achieve. This ensures a stable paddlefish population over time by keeping the five-year average harvest rate below the five-year average recruitment rate. The pace of paddlefish harvest the first two weeks of the 2025 season would have led to an early season closure had river flows sustained or continued to increase throughout the rest of the season. This reality, even with open fish passage at Intake, requires maintaining the ability to close the season early should the harvest cap be approached. The last two weeks of season were dropped due to: 1) historically few anglers participate beyond the Memorial Day Weekend, 2) river flows traditionally drop sharply after the first week of June causing fish to migrate back towards Lake Sakakawea, and 3) water temperatures continue to rise in late June, increasing the potential for delayed mortality for paddlefish on catch and release days or bycatch of other species (specifically pallid sturgeon that spawn in the mid to last week of June).	N
Big Horn River and other over loved rivers. No guided fishing on weekends. Only allow guided fishing Monday thru Friday. This would reduce conflict on weekends with non paying fisherman. It would also allow guides to work a 5 day week and not have to work 7 days a week. It would alleviate pressure and the	Thank you for your comment. FWP fisheries staff do not have authority to regulate guides and outfitters with fishing regulations. This action would require a River Recreation Rule.	N

building anger that residents have toward nonresident fishing and the outfitting community. This week the Big Horn shuttles has been averaging well over 100 guide vehicles per day and the weekends are way more.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
I would like to see the number of rods to be used for trolling on fort peck lake to be increased from 2 rods to 4. I often times fish alone for salmon. It would be nice to be able to utilize 2 downriggers rods with 2 dipsy or long line rods.	Thank you for your comment. With the popularity of the Chinook Salmon fishery on Fort Peck we have had many similar comments from the public. Currently within the Eastern Fishing District the number of rods allowed per person is 2 on flatwater and 6 within rivers and streams. We do not see any negative biological ramifications for a waterbody exemption allowing 4 rods per angler on Fort Peck Reservoir. However, all rods would need to be attended and within the anglers control similar to the current regulations.	Y
Fort Peck Lake. During ice fishing on Fort Peck, they should allow for more than six poles per person. With the lake being so big it does not draw near the amount of fishers in the winter time as it does the summer.	Thank you for your proposal. Fort Peck Reservoir is becoming more popular to anglers during both the open water and ice seasons. Reservoir use data has steadily increased over the past two decades. FWP currently allows six poles through the ice, which includes the use of setlines. Setlines (tip-ups) are very popular in the Eastern District and do not need to be attended or in the anglers immediate control. Since setlines only need to be monitored every 24 hrs., the mortality associated with catching a fish and releasing a fish is increased over actively monitoring a pole. Since the daily bag limit is 3 lake trout and 5 walleye an increase in the number of poles used as setlines could cause more mortality than is currently legal. By having more than six rods unattended, anglers risk taking more fish than their limit allows, especially while setting tip ups and using live minnows as bait. While this is already possible with the current six rods, it would be more likely to happen with an increase in rods per person. Adding more rods per person during the ice season would likely increase crowding near accessible fishing areas. Although Fort Peck Reservoir is very large, the majority of ice angling occurs within a relatively short distance from a finite number of access points.	N
Hello, I would like to encourage fwp to strongly take a look at the number of fishing "guides, outfitters" that are operating on eastern district waterbodies. I know in western montana there have been areas that limited number of guides on certain waterbodies. It seems every year there are more and more guides on Fort Peck Lake. I understand Fort Peck is a big waterbody. But when is enough enough...I think a cap on the number of guides would be great. Thank you for your time.	Thank you for your comment. FWP recognizes that the public is concerned about the number of fishing guides on Fort Peck Reservoir. Currently there is no limit on how many fishing guides can fish Fort Peck. Fishing guides and outfitters in Montana are regulated by the Department of Labor and Industry.	N

I would like to see the number of rods allowed per person on fort peck lake to increase from 2 to 4. This would allow for more trolling opportunities when you're trolling for salmon in particular and fishing by yourself.	Thank you for your comment. With the popularity of the Chinook Salmon fishery on Fort Peck we have had many similar comments from the public. Currently within the Eastern Fishing District the number of rods allowed per person is 2 on flatwater and 6 within rivers and streams. We do not see any negative biological ramifications for a waterbody exemption allowing 4 rods per angler on Fort Peck Reservoir. However, all rods would need to be attended and within the anglers control similar to the current regulations.	N
Consideration for generating substantial revenue in the Glasgow and Fort Peck areas through the pursuit of a Bassmaster Elite Series event. These qualifying events attract top professionals from across America. It is projected that this could result in a million-dollar week for the area. Late fall, specifically mid-September, is recommended as an optimal time for the event. Thanks for the time if any was given.	Thank you for your comment. Currently the number of tournaments on Fort Peck Reservoir during a calendar year is limited to 16, which includes 13 open water and 3 ice tournaments as stated in the Fort Peck Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan. The 13th open water event is on a rotational basis, whereas that slot will change ever year as long as their are applicants. Therefore Bassmaster can enter an application for a bass tournament. Please contact the Region 6 FWP office for details.	N
Fort Peck, Nelson Res. All waters. Eliminate using any live sonar devices which increase catch success and allow for the targeting of large female walleye. You have allowed fishermen too easy of access to target and kill the large spawning females. Tournament boats have 3 to 4 live sonar devices making catching the large females and other walleye simply too easy. If you don't control the use now, you will have to end out adjusting the limit down to protect the fish. It is no different than night vision during big game season, electronic game calls, using archery mounted range finders. There needs to be a limit on the high tech gadgets or fishing will suffer. It already is impossible to compete in fishing tournaments without multiple live scopes. Looks at the average catch 10 years ago vs now at the tough guy tourney. Fishing should be a game of chance, skill, patience, and escaping the electronic gadget world. Every year more fishermen buy these units because it makes fishing easy. Too easy. Please ban the use of live sonar.	Thank you for the proposal. With the advances in fishing technology over the past couple of decades and specifically forward facing sonar (FFS), FWP is committed to monitor how this technology may affect fish populations. On Fort Peck Reservoir, FWP has begun gathering data to address this issue. During the last reservoir wide creel survey conducted in 2025 FWP found that 30% of anglers on Fort Peck are using FFS. Catch rates for walleye were nearly identical for those using FFS (0.652 walleye per hour) versus those not using FFS (0.654 walleye per hour). Angler harvest rates of walleye were actually less for those that used FFS (0.27 fish/hour) versus those not using FFS (0.31 fish/hour). In addition, standardized netting surveys on Fort Peck Reservoir indicate an increase in the relative abundance of walleye over the past several years. The long-term (30 year) average relative abundance of walleye is 4.4 walleye per net night. During 2025 the relative abundance was 8.2 walleye per net night. Larger and older walleye continue to be well represented during the annual monitoring efforts and the annual walleye spawn has had no issues will collecting enough eggs to restock the reservoir on an annual basis.	N

Allow jug fishing again the eastern district, to include fort peck reservoir and milk river. You could use similar regulations as ice fishing, only allow six jugs, or if you are fishing with rod and reel also could only have 5 jugs, have to have all of your identification information on them. Could add in something along the lines of angler has to be within sight distance of all jugs or something similar to that. All fish caught are subject to other procession rules that apply to that species of fish.	Thanks you for your proposal. Jug fishing has been illegal in the Eastern Fishing District for some time. It is illegal because it is an unattended line that can move with the wind, current or by a fish on a hook. The jugs and lines associated can cause significant hazards to wildlife and people when swimming, boating or other recreational water activities. Within the Eastern District the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers and their major tributaries harbor federally endangered pallid sturgeon. Pallid sturgeon get very large and can take a jug with them when hooked. To minimize the impacts to this fish FWP recommends keeping Jug Fishing illegal.	N
The current regulations for pike in the western district is set at 15 daily. I believe there shouldn't be any limit on pike. Why are we protecting a fish that has been illegally introduced and wide spread everywhere? Look at how many fish populations are at low levels or completely wiped out. Most anglers never reach the 15 limit so why not have it unlimited? Its time to change things up on pike.	We have found that in most systems, it is unlikely that anglers will harvest 15 northern pike in a day. The possession limit was modified to "no possession" to allow for additional harvest without resulting in illegal possession at the residence.	N
Waterbody: Flathead Lake, including the portion managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, with requested coordination with CSKT for consistent lake-wide implementation. Proposed Regulation Change: Amend the existing Flathead Lake lake trout protected slot from 30–36 inches to 26–36 inches. The regulation should require release of all lake trout from 26 through 36 inches while retaining the existing restriction allowing harvest of only one lake trout over 36 inches. Flathead Lake currently protects lake trout once they reach 30 inches, but that protection does not adequately preserve the younger adult fish needed to replenish the existing protected slot and future trophy-size fishery. Lake trout are slow-growing and long-lived. Under FWP and CSKT's own co-management information, Flathead Lake lake trout reach approximately 30 inches at an average age of about 12 years and require another five to six years to reach 36 inches. This means the fish below the current 30-inch protected slot are not merely small harvestable fish; they are the future supply of mature, quality lake trout. Current management places significant harvest and suppression pressure on lake trout below approximately 28–30 inches. While the existing 30–36 inch slot protects fish that have already survived to mature size, it does little to ensure that enough younger adult fish will survive long enough to enter that protected class. If too many lake trout are removed before they reach 30 inches, the current slot may eventually protect a declining number of fish, and anglers will see fewer quality fish move into the over-36-inch trophy class. Expanding the protected slot downward to 26 inches would address this problem by protecting more of the age classes immediately approaching maturity and allowing a greater number of lake trout to recruit into the current 30–36 inch protected range. This change would improve the long-term size structure of the population and help sustain quality angling opportunity, while still allowing significant harvest of	The current Flathead Lake trout regulation of 100 daily and in possession, only 1 over 36 inches, and all fish 30 to 36 inches must be released is intended to balance tradeoffs between native fish conservation and maintaining a quality sport fishery. The current slot limit was put in place to protect the trophy lake trout fishery and reduce numbers of smaller lake trout. This is intended to reduce impacts to bull trout from the most abundant portion of the population. High harvest of smaller fish also reduces intraspecific competition. Catch rates for sub slot lake trout remain high with Mack Days anglers routinely catching limits. Based on spring and fall gill net surveys, slot size and larger fish also remain abundant. The current regulation is meeting the goals of the states fish management plan.	N

smaller lake trout below 26 inches. It would be a measured, balanced regulation rather than a complete shift away from harvest opportunity. Lake trout are the primary recreational fishery in Flathead Lake and provide substantial value to local and visiting anglers, charter operators, fishing events, tackle and marine businesses, fuel sales, lodging, restaurants, and the broader recreation economy. Flathead Lake should not be managed solely around maximizing removal of lake trout without also considering the long-term loss of the fishery that provides much of the lake's current recreational value. This proposal does not disregard the conservation importance of bull trout. Bull trout conservation should continue through habitat protection, spawning tributary protection, monitoring, enforcement, connectivity improvements, and targeted actions shown to produce measurable biological benefit. However, protecting native fish and maintaining a quality lake trout fishery do not have to be mutually exclusive management objectives. FWP already recognizes in other western Montana waters that restrictive lake trout size regulations can be appropriate where maintaining large-fish opportunity is valuable. Tally Lake, for example, is regulated at one lake trout daily and in possession, with that fish required to be over 42 inches. Flathead Lake is a different and far larger system, and I am not requesting identical regulations. However, Tally Lake demonstrates that lake trout can appropriately be managed as a valuable quality recreational fishery rather than exclusively as fish to be removed. I request that FWP adopt a 26–36 inch protected slot for lake trout on the portion of Flathead Lake under its jurisdiction and work with CSKT toward a consistent lake-wide regulation. A lake-wide 26–36 inch protected slot would reduce angler confusion, provide a clear and enforceable regulation, maintain meaningful harvest of smaller fish, and preserve more of the younger adult lake trout needed to sustain Flathead Lake's quality and trophy fishery into the future.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
Flathead lake Make it so t people can still keep all the small fish 24 in and under and only can keep 1 over 40 in. We want a trophy fishery again.	The current regulations provide for that opportunity	N
Protect Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass Reproductive Age Classes by turning back 16"-22" Bass from May 1st - June 1st	In most lakes in the Western District where largemouth bass were stocked, the Western District Standard is conservative (5 daily and in possession, only 1 greater than 12 inches, Third Saturday in May through Jun 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches" which adequately protects adult spawning fish in most lakes. where additional information exists about spawn timing, exceptions have been created to reflect that. From SFMP Part I; 1.6.2 Black Bass (Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass) ..."Over 20 (Now greater than 40) illegal introductions of smallmouth bass have occurred in western and northwest Montana, and several illegal smallmouth introductions have been documented in	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	southwest Montana. In some waters these introductions have had impacts to existing fisheries through increased predation of other fish, decreased fish quality due to high fish densities, or have thwarted efforts to maintain quality of existing sport fisheries or threatened conservation efforts for native species.” Management Plan Reference (drainage, waterbody, language directly from the plan): SFMP Part I; 1.4.2: “Fishing regulations must balance simplicity to facilitate public understanding while achieving the desired biological outcome.” “The goal of fishing regulations is to make them effective but also as simple as possible to improve public understanding and angler compliance.” SFMP Part I; 1.47: Illegal and Unauthorized Fish Introductions. FWP’s action plan for responding to a confirmed unauthorized introduction may include the following management strategies: Modify angling regulations for the immediate and connected waterbodies, which may include: - o liberalizing or removing daily angling limits. - o enacting catch-and-release fishing. - o extending or removing the angling season. - o allowing capture methods other than hook and line. - o mandatory catch-and-kill or catch-kill-and-report regulations. - o closing the water to all fishing.	
I would like to see protection for smallmouth bass during the spawning period in region one. These fish have world class trophy potential which is very rare and has lots of value. Harvest of large individuals should be regulated to protect the genetics and size structure. Thank you for all you do!	In most lakes in the Western District where largemouth bass were stocked, the Western District Standard is conservative (5 daily and in possession, only 1 greater than 12 inches, Third Saturday in May through Jun 30: 1 daily and in possession, must be over 22 inches" which adequately protects adult spawning fish in most lakes. where additional information exists about spawn timing, exceptions have been created to reflect that. From SFMP Part I; 1.6.2 Black Bass (Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass) ...“Over 20 (Now greater than 40) illegal introductions of smallmouth bass have occurred in western and northwest Montana, and several illegal smallmouth introductions have been documented in southwest Montana. In some waters these introductions have had impacts to existing fisheries through increased predation of other fish, decreased fish quality due to high fish densities, or have thwarted efforts to maintain quality of existing sport fisheries or	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	threatened conservation efforts for native species.” Management Plan Reference (drainage, waterbody, language directly from the plan): SFMP Part I; 1.4.2: “Fishing regulations must balance simplicity to facilitate public understanding while achieving the desired biological outcome.” “The goal of fishing regulations is to make them effective but also as simple as possible to improve public understanding and angler compliance.” SFMP Part I; 1.47: Illegal and Unauthorized Fish Introductions. FWP’s action plan for responding to a confirmed unauthorized introduction may include the following management strategies: Modify angling regulations for the immediate and connected waterbodies, which may include: - o liberalizing or removing daily angling limits. - o enacting catch-and-release fishing. - o extending or removing the angling season. - o allowing capture methods other than hook and line. - o mandatory catch-and-kill or catch-kill-and-report regulations. - o closing the water to all fishing.	
Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU) Proposal #5: FVTU requests the opportunity to harvest Rainbow Trout be restored in the Swan River. We commented in opposition to the establishment of catch and release regulations for Rainbow Trout in the Swan River when it was implemented in 2025, largely at the behest of the past R1 Commissioner and without scientific support. While Rainbow Trout dominate in the Swan River fishery, it makes little sense to propagate the species in the Swan and then actively promote and fund their removal downstream in the Flathead Lake and River system when the same fish pass below Bigfopprk Dam.	Rainbow trout were introduced in the Swan River drainage nearly 75 years ago. The resulting population can be described as relatively low density with some large individuals. For many years the regulations only allowed rainbows to be caught and released. In 2020 FWP proposed changing the regulation to allow limited harvest of rainbow trout (Western District Standard of 5 fish, one over 14"). This was adopted by the Commission and became the regulation for the 2021 season. During the following regulation cycle there was concern of overharvest of rainbow trout and concern for population level declines. A Commission-driven regulation was adopted to restore catch and release in the Swan River. Monitoring of the rainbow trout population in the Swan River is difficult, and FWP does not have data to support or refute whether this regulation is effective. FWP has no plans to change the regulation in the absence of these data.	N

Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU) Proposal #4: FVTU requests that the removal of limits on Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike in Flathead Lake be adopted in Swan Lake as well. Rainbow Trout were well-established in the Swan Lake and River system as early as the 1950's. Over time they thrived and by the 21st Century pure populations of native Westslope Cutthroat trout (i.e., those not hybridized with Rainbow trout) were mostly limited to a few headwater tributaries. By the 1970's Northern Pike were also illegally established in Swan Lake. Despite their establishment, numbers remained relatively low and the Swan Lake Bull Trout population continued to thrive, presumably because the lake habitat was effectively partitioned for the two predator species and the Bull Trout spawning and rearing habitat in the tributaries to the Swan River remained productive. As previously noted however, the recent and rapid decline of Bull Trout in the Swan drainage, concurrent with the explosive growth of an illegal or accidentally established lake trout population in Swan Lake, has led to the implementation of a costly and to-date only partially successful lake trout suppression effort. Now, in the last decade, smallmouth bass have been illegally added to the mix. What these events portend for the survival of native Bull and Westslope Cutthroat Trout remains uncertain. But while high quality Bull Trout habitat remains in the Swan it is prudent that FWP do all it can to reduce competition/predation by these nonnative invaders.	As described in this comment, rainbow trout have been in the Swan River drainage for nearly 75 years, and have become the predominant sport fish in the Swan River. A Commission-driven regulation change in 2023 restored catch and release regulations to the Swan River amid concern of overharvest and impacts to the population. Regulations for rainbow trout in Swan Lake are consistent with the rest of the Western District and allow for harvest of 5 rainbows with one over 22". These regulations allow for liberal angler harvest in the lake and protective measures in the river. While FWP recognizes the impact of rainbow trout on the native westslope cutthroat trout population, FWP has no plans for suppression of rainbow trout. Therefore the current regulations are appropriate. Northern pike were illegally introduced into Swan Lake some time in the 1970's. FWP recognizes that these fish can have a negative impact on bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Current regulations allow for harvest of 15 fish daily with no possession limits. Past creel surveys reveal few anglers keeping 15 pike and the current regulation (Western District Standard) is appropriate. Smallmouth bass have not been detected in Swan Lake. They have been documented downstream in the Swan River near Bigfork Dam and in the power canal of the dam. It is likely they are in Swan Lake but have never been detected. The current regulation allows for harvest of 15 smallmouth daily (Western District Standard). This regulation is appropriate given that smallmouth have not been detected in the lake.	N
Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU) Proposal #3: FVTU requests the standardization of Lake Trout limits on Flathead Lake and Swan Lake at 100 Fish. The recent and rapid decline of Bull Trout in the Swan drainage, concurrent with the explosive growth of an illegal or accidentally established lake trout population in Swan Lake, has led to the implementation of a costly and, to-date, only partially successful lake trout suppression effort. The need to reduce lake trout in Flathead Lake was recognized as early as the 1990's. That effort has not yet produced the desired result of increasing native Bull Trout in the Flathead. Conversely, the Swan hosted a historically strong and stable Bull Trout population for decades prior to the more recent lake trout expansion beginning after 2000. Tagging information associated with the experimental Swan lake trout suppression efforts demonstrated that a significant outmigration of tagged lake trout Swan Lake ended up in Flathead Lake. The public is left to wonder why seemingly similar lake trout suppression efforts in the two lakes call for a 100 fish limit in Flathead Lake but only the district standard 20 fish lake trout limit in Swan Lake. FWP advocates for simple and consistent fishing regulations. In this case,	The 100 lake trout limit on Flathead Lake is the result of a Co-Management Plan with CSKT to effectively allow anglers fishing during the MAC days tournament to capture additional lake trout. Based on anecdotal and personal angler information, typical harvest of lake trout by average anglers in Flathead and Swan Lakes rarely reaches the Western District Standard of 20 fish. It is highly unlikely that there will be a tournament established at Swan Lake due to extremely limited boating access and FWP is not likely to put recreational anglers in competition with tournament anglers for that limited access.	N

changing the lake trout limit in Swan Lake is long overdue and would send a clear message that lake trout are not welcome in Swan Lake.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited (• FVTU Proposal #2: Initiate a Bait Ban and mandate Barbless Hooks in the Flathead River and its forks. This has been a longstanding position of FVTU. While we acknowledge there is mixed scientific support for barbless hooks, it is well established that trout caught with bait suffer greater injury and lower post-release survival. As the fishing pressure continues to increase and the stocks of native Westslope Cutthroat and Bull Trout continue to decline, there comes a time when maximum protection makes sense. FVTU advocates we adopt these simple changes before we reach a critical point.	The current regulations require no live, dead or artificial bait in the mainstem Flathead River from December 1 to third Saturday in May when migrating adfluvial bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are at their most vulnerable. Additionally, the mainstem and all the forks are restricted yearlong to single pointed hooks. And it is illegal to target bull trout in the entire Flathead system downstream of Hungry Horse Dam.	N
Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited (• FVTU Proposal #1: Remove limits on Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike in the Flathead River and its forks. The logic and management support you have identified for removing catch and harvest limits on Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike in Flathead Lake (see FWP Proposals #9, 10, & 11 above) needs to be expanded to the entire Flathead River system. As you rightly and FINALLY recognized, the presence of co-management jurisdictions on Flathead Lake (FWP and CSKT) asserts no biological justification for separately managing the contiguous fish populations. Similarly, because native Westslope Cutthroat and Bull Trout coevolved to share a predominantly adfluvial life history pattern in the Flathead, there is no biological justification for continuing different fishing regulations from the lake, for nonnative Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike in the Flathead River. To meaningfully assess the impact of the lake regulation changes, FVTU proposes that the elimination of restrictions on harvest of Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Northern Pike in the interconnected Flathead River system also be removed. The long-acknowledged conditions that create a “Predator Trap” for smolting native trout in the lower Flathead River and Flathead Lake delta cannot continue to be ignored.	Current regulations for rainbow trout, smallmouth bass and northern pike in the Flathead River are liberal. Anglers can keep up to five rainbow trout and 15 northern pike and smallmouth bass. Creel surveys suggest that few, if any, anglers harvest limits of these species. Increasing these harvest limits would require additional special regulations and be unlikely to cause population level changes of these fish.	N
The current regulation in the Western District allows spearing on pretty much all lakes. That is fine but the problem is there is no regulation to require marking the spear hole so someone doesn’t fall through the ice and possibly die. Please correct this before a little kid or someone else dies! Thank you for your consideration.	Thank you for your comment and for raising concerns about safety around ice spearing holes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks takes ice safety seriously and recognizes the potential for injury whenever there is open or weakened ice. After reviewing available information, we found that incidents involving people falling into pre existing spearing holes appear to be exceedingly rare compared to other ice related accidents, which are typically associated with generally thin or variable ice conditions rather than a specific hole. Because of this very low documented occurrence, and given the practical difficulty of consistently detecting and enforcing a requirement to mark all spearing holes under a variety of ice and weather conditions, FWP will not be bringing forward a marking requirement at this time. Instead, FWP’s preferred approach is to	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	emphasize individual responsibility and education around ice fishing safety. This includes encouraging anglers to learn how to evaluate ice conditions, travel cautiously, and be aware that any disturbance or variation in the ice surface can pose a risk. We appreciate your engagement in this process and your concern for the safety of all ice anglers and recreationists.	
Hi there is a great. Need for echo lake a no wake marker for smalls for the smaller kayaks boaters and docks for them and docks for kids to fish off of. Its a safety concern on the no wake	Thank you for your comment, it is not pertinent to the fishing regulations setting. You may contact FWP enforcement with your concerns.	N
2027-2028 fishing regulations, and I am deeply concerned about the current and future management of Flathead Lake and its fisheries. First, I want to thank everyone involved in the recent Region 1 meeting. Once the format shifted from station-style presentations into a town hall discussion, I felt the public was finally able to speak openly and be heard. I strongly encourage future meetings to begin with a town hall format first, followed by breakout stations afterward for additional questions, education, and discussion. The public needs to feel involved, respected, and listened to throughout this process. Regarding fisheries management, I strongly oppose many of the regulations currently being proposed and implemented on Flathead Lake. I believe there are alternative approaches that deserve serious consideration before continuing large-scale suppression efforts such as Mack Days and gill netting. I would like to propose the following: • A 26-inch to 36-inch slot limit for lake trout on the north end of Flathead Lake. • A reduction in the current lake trout limit from 100 fish down to 20 fish. • A long-term, science-based 10-year evaluation plan focused on restoring balance to the ecosystem instead of relying primarily on suppression. Most importantly, I want to see kokanee salmon reintroduced into Flathead Lake. Whether kokanee need to be planted by the thousands or by the millions, I believe every effort should be made to restore them and monitor the results over a full 10-year period before deciding whether the effort succeeds or fails. Kokanee once played a major role in the lake's ecosystem and economy. Reintroducing them could provide an additional forage source for bull trout, lake trout, cutthroat trout, smallmouth bass, northern pike, and other species throughout the system. I believe restoring forage fish and rebuilding ecological balance is a better long-term investment than continuing to spend large amounts of money on ongoing netting and suppression programs alone. If, after a full 10-year evaluation period, the kokanee restoration effort does not improve the ecosystem, then management agencies could revisit previous strategies. But I believe the public deserves to see restoration efforts fully attempted before more irreversible management decisions are made. I would also like to see changes to panfish regulations: • Crappie regulations with a protected slot of 12 to 15 inches, requiring fish within that range to be released. • Allow harvest of crappie	Lake trout regulation: The current Flathead Lake trout regulation of 100 daily and in possession, only 1 over 36 inches, and all fish 30 to 36 inches must be released is intended to balance trade offs between native fish conservation and maintaining a quality sport fishery. The current slot limit was put in place to protect the trophy lake trout fishery and reduce numbers of smaller lake trout. The slot was based on the lake trout population structure observed in empirical data from FHL gillnetting and lake trout aging. This is intended to reduce impacts to bull trout from the most abundant portion of the population. High harvest of sub-slot fish also reduces intraspecific competition. Catch rates for sub-slot lake trout remain high with Mack Days anglers routinely catching limits. Based on spring and fall gill net surveys, slot size and larger fish also remain abundant. The current regulation is meeting the goals of the states fish management plan. Black crappie: Black crappie in Flathead Lake and all of Region 1 are the result of an illegal introduction. Protecting an illegally introduced fish incentivizes criminals to commit more crimes. A no limit regulation is consistent with the direction of ARM 12.7.1501. Yellow perch: The yellow perch regulation on Flathead Lake is intended to limit harvest of large fish primarily during the spring spawning season in Polson and East Bays. Perch are very fecund and abundant in FHL. Abundance trends in spring and fall gillnet monitoring surveys do not indicate there is currently an issue with over harvest.	N

under 12 inches with a limit of up to 50 fish. • Change the current perch regulation from “10 perch over 10 inches” to a straight 50-perch limit. I have spent my life around Flathead Lake and care deeply about its future. I believe many local anglers, guides, families, and residents want to see balanced fisheries management that considers restoration, public input, and long-term ecosystem health alongside conservation goals. Thank you for your time and consideration.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
Change regulations of Flathead Lake to allow the spearing of Lake Trout and whitefish by persons swimming or submerged.	Montana Code Annotated 87-3-204 does not permit spearfishing for trout. Additionally, bull trout are present in Flathead Lake and may be difficult to distinguish from lake trout.	N
Open Flathead Lake to Underwater Spearfishing for Lake Trout and Whitefish. Underwater Spearfishing harvest rates are already very low and opening these 2 species would allow increased recreational opportunities for stakeholders. Bull trout populations would be positively impacted by the proposal due to reduced competition by Lake Trout. Lake Trout harvest is encouraged by the FWP and this proposal falls in line with that guidance.	Montana Code Annotated 87-3-204 does not permit spearfishing for trout. Additionally, bull trout are present in Flathead Lake and may be difficult to distinguish from lake trout.	N
ON areas that allow snagging salmon in the NW District - proposed change is to allow bowfishing salmon in addition to snagging salmon. It would address additional enjoyment of the sport of fishing and allow bowfishing in limited areas at limited times.	All of the streams where snagging for kokanee is permitted also have bull trout that are either migrating at approximately the same time, following kokanee in the streams/Kootenai River as predators or residing in those areas at the same time. FWP has adjusted snag season to minimize bycatch of bull trout but it is still a regular occurrence. a snagged bull trout can be released, one shot with an arrow is almost certainly going to be killed.	N
Why do you have c and r for Rainbow Trout in the Swan River? Less rainbows = more Cutthroat. You also need to work on upper swan habitat and stock fingerling Cutthroat, to bring back native Cuts. You have not stocked any trout in the Swan River in decades.	Rainbow trout were introduced in the Swan River drainage nearly 75 years ago. The resulting population can be described as relatively low density with some large individuals. For many years the regulations only allowed rainbows to be caught and released. In 2020 FWP proposed changing the regulation to allow limited harvest of rainbow trout (Western District Standard of 5 fish, one over 14"). This was adopted by the Commission and became the regulation for the 2021 season. During the following regulation cycle there was concern of overharvest of rainbow trout and concern for population level declines. A Commission-driven regulation was adopted to restore catch and release in the Swan River. Monitoring of the rainbow trout population in the Swan River is difficult, and FWP does not have data to support or refute whether this regulation is effective. FWP has no plans to change the regulation in the absence of these data. As for stocking fish in the river, FWP has had a wild trout policy in place since the 1970's that chooses wild reproduction over hatchery supplementation in our rivers and streams. FWP does not intend to depart from this policy on the Swan River.	N

If FWP was truly committed to controlling/eradicating nonnative illegally introduced species like pike in Western District , anglers should be allowed 6 lines while ice fishing when targetting them like fishing Eastern District. Lakes like Upper and Lower Stillwater, Smith.etc...	The current regulation of 2 lines and two hooks/lures per line provides ample opportunity to catch and harvest target species at an acceptable rate relative to their daily limits.	N
Why do you have c and r for Rainbow Trout in the Swan River? Less rainbows = more Cutthroat. You also need to work on upper swan habitat and stock fingerling Cutthroat, to bring back native Cuts. You have not stocked any trout in the Swan River in decades.	Rainbow trout were introduced in the Swan River drainage nearly 75 years ago. The resulting population can be described as relatively low density with some large individuals. For many years the regulations only allowed rainbows to be caught and released. In 2020 FWP proposed changing the regulation to allow limited harvest of rainbow trout (Western District Standard of 5 fish, one over 14"). This was adopted by the Commission and became the regulation for the 2021 season. During the following regulation cycle there was concern of overharvest of rainbow trout and concern for population level declines. A Commission-driven regulation was adopted to restore catch and release in the Swan River. Monitoring of the rainbow trout population in the Swan River is difficult, and FWP does not have data to support or refute whether this regulation is effective. FWP has no plans to change the regulation in the absence of these data. As for stocking fish in the river, FWP has had a wild trout policy in place since the 1970's that chooses wild reproduction over hatchery supplementation in our rivers and streams. FWP does not intend to depart from this policy on the Swan River.	N
Hi, I would like to propose a change for Open water Spearing in the western fishing district. I would like Fwp to consider allowing lake trout to be speared with the regulations being the same as they already are for northern pike. I know that Lake Trout are generally considered a deepwater fish, but in the spring and fall, they regularly come up into shallow water and could be taken by someone with a spear. As the lake trout are a non native fish and are aggressively managed by hook and line fishing I think that allowing them to be speared would cause no problems at all but would help reduce their numbers in lakes where the high lake trout population is already putting stress on native fish. Thanks for your consideration. Ben D	Montana Code Annotated 87-3-204 does not permit spearfishing for trout. Additionally, bull trout are present in Flathead Lake and may be difficult to distinguish from lake trout.	N
I am a lifetime Montana resident and have been fishing in Region 1 around the Flathead Valley for over 65 years. I am writing regarding the warmwater fishery at Noxon Rapids Reservoir. I would like to see less suppression of the walleye population. I understand that before the dams were built, the river was a cold, free-flowing system that provided quality spawning habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. However, once the dams were installed, the river changed significantly. Water temperatures changed, the river bottom became silty instead of rocky, and the natural flow conditions necessary for spawning habitat were	Walleyes exist in the Lower Clark Fork reservoirs as a result of one or more unauthorized introductions in the late 1980's into the 1990's. They are an apex predator that along with other apex predators including illegally introduced northern pike have significantly and negatively impacted the populations of native non-game species. additionally, because of the nature of the dams, they have been entrained and have become an established and significant predator on native and recreational fish species in our neighboring state, specifically in Lake Pend Oreille	N

greatly reduced. In my opinion, the decline of those native fish populations began long before warmwater species such as walleye became established. I am frustrated that Fish, Wildlife & Parks continues to blame walleyes for the decline of westslope cutthroat and bull trout populations. Walleyes have been present in the reservoir for many years, and there is an abundant forage base available for them, including millions of yellow perch. Walleyes are adaptable fish that can successfully reproduce in the reservoir. I also understand that each year Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives funding from Avista to study walleyes, including electroshocking them during their spawning period and around nesting areas. I believe this practice is detrimental to successful spawning. In addition, reservoir water levels are often lowered during that same period, leaving many eggs exposed and unable to survive. Currently, there is no limit on walleye harvest at Noxon Rapids Reservoir. I do not believe this reflects sound fisheries management, especially when most other waters in Montana maintain limits on walleye harvest. For example, many waters have a five-fish limit, while Canyon Ferry allows a larger harvest of smaller fish. I would like to propose the following: • Discontinue electroshocking walleyes during their spawning period. • Establish a harvest limit of five walleyes per day. • Allow 10 fish in possession. • Allow only one fish over 22 inches. Thank you for your time and consideration.	From SFMP Part I; 1.6.20 Walleye FWP Policy prohibits the stocking of walleye west of the Continental Divide...Management of fisheries that include walleye can be challenging because they can be a prolific voracious predator. It is not uncommon for walleye abundance to outstrip forage resources, leading to poor growth or stunted populations. Illegal introduction of walleye also poses problems, especially in western and west central Montana. To combat illegal introductions in northwest Montana, all walleye captured outside of Noxon Reservoir are required to be reported to FWP. SFMP Part I; 1.4.2: “Fishing regulations must balance simplicity to facilitate public understanding while achieving the desired biological outcome.” “The goal of fishing regulations is to make them effective but also as simple as possible to improve public understanding and angler compliance.” SFMP Part I; 1.47: Illegal and Unauthorized Fish Introductions. FWP’s action plan for responding to a confirmed unauthorized introduction may include the following management strategies: Modify angling regulations for the immediate and connected waterbodies, which may include: - o liberalizing or removing daily angling limits. - o enacting catch-and-release fishing. - o extending or removing the angling season. - o allowing capture methods other than hook and line. - o mandatory catch-and-kill or catch-kill-and-report regulations. - o closing the water to all fishing.	
FWI - Little Bitterroot Lake Kokanee Harvest Limit: Little Bitterroot Lake may be the most popular kokanee fishery in Region 1. The kokanee fishery has occasionally been supplemented with plantings of kokanee, the last plants were in 2019 and 2020. That may be an alternative to cutting the daily limit in half. However, the Bitterroot kokanee are very sensitive to changes in abundance. Over-increasing kokanee numbers, either through a limit reduction or stocking, could cause kokanee sizes to decrease fairly dramatically and the smaller kokanee will produce less eggs and be less desirable to anglers. An additional problem, Little Bitterroot Lake is known for producing a small number of oversize kokanee (12”-20”) that feed deep on mysis. The number of oversize kokanee has decreased in recent years as more anglers focused on fishing deep. Little Bitterroot Lake had a limit of 20 kokanee, only 2 over 12” to try to move harvest to the smaller, more abundant shallow kokanee. The thought was that 12” and larger kokanee feeding deep on mysis grew better, a 12” kokanee from the depths	Thank you for your comment. There does not appear to be a proposed regulation change in this comment. We are happy to talk about Little Bitterroot monitoring and research anytime.	N

might be only 2 years old and, if protected, could grow for another year to 15” or better before spawning and dying. The 2 over 12” limit was removed 2 years ago. If the limit is dropped to 10 kokanee daily, many anglers will focus harvest only on the larger kokanee, culling if necessary, and further deplete the number of large kokanee. That will further deplete the potential for egg take. There was also at one time a hatchery program to net and spawn the larger kokanee together, planting the resultant fry back into Little Bitterroot, to see if there was a genetic basis. That program seemed to produce more large kokanee but was dropped. When the 2 over 12” limit was removed over Flathead Wildlife objections, at the time FWP made the statement that age-growth studies would be done to determine if those larger kokanee were 3 years old or only 2 years old with another potential year of growth. Have those age-growth studies been done and what did they reveal? Otherwise, Flathead Wildlife recommends reinstating the only 2 over 12” kokanee limit.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
FWI - Region 1 Kid’s Trout Fishing Ponds (page 22): This listing implies only kids can fish the ponds as is the case in the rest of the state. These were originally termed Family Fishing Ponds, the entire family can, and is encouraged, to fish but only kids 14 and younger can keep fish. This encourages fishing as a family activity and makes it easier for adults to help kids to fish without worrying about doing something illegal. Also, the ponds are only listed on page 22, not in the alphabetical index of District Exceptions. In the section on page 4 on How To Use These Regulations, the booklet says to check the District Exceptions, if the water is not listed to use the standard district regulations. An angler following those directions would assume the ponds are under the standard regulations and open to harvest by all. Flathead Wildlife recommends these ponds be listed as Family Fishing Ponds and the ponds be listed under District Exceptions.	On Page 22. Change to, Region 1 Kid's Trout Fishing Ponds: See Exceptions Page 24. Move Region 1 Kid's Trout Fishing Ponds to top of the Western District Exceptions on Page 24. It clearly states "Catch-and-release for trout, except anglers 14 years of age or younger may take 1 trout daily and in possession..."	N
FWI - Loon Lake (Ferndale): Loon Lake is very productive and can grow large trout but heavy harvest prevented trout from living long enough to grow large so a 12”-18” slot limit was imposed several decades ago to increase the potential to grow and catch larger trout and to occasionally harvest one over 18”. That worked. The slot limit was removed 2 years ago with the rationale of simplifying regulations, that very few fish over 18” were found in sampling and there is a children’s camp and the kids should be able to harvest trout. Flathead Wildlife expressed opposition to removing the slot limit, we were told that FWP would monitor the fishery to determine if larger trout disappeared from the fishery. Has that monitoring been done, what were the results? We have been told anecdotally that larger trout became scarce shortly after the slot limit was removed. The plan was never to produce a lot of trout over 18”, the expectation was they would be harvested shortly after they became legal. However, under the slot it was possible to catch and release a lot of trout in the 12” to 18” range. Without the slot, average size will tend more to 12” trout which are available in	FWP manages Loon Lake as a put-grow-and take fishery for rainbow trout. The previously described slot limit was in place for many years as an attempt to promote a trophy rainbow fishery. Previous gill net sampling in Loon Lake (prior to the recent regulation change) revealed few fish over 18"and even fewer reaching the trophy size of 22". Additionally, very warm surface temperatures in mid-summer make releasing slot fish difficult. FWP eliminated the slot limit because it was not meeting the objectives of producing trophy fish and to allow anglers to harvest fish that may have poor survival in summer months. FWP has continued to monitor Loon Lake since the regulation change and has seen no change in size distribution in the 2 years since adoption of the regulation. FWP will continue to monitor the lake to determine if this regulation is meeting the objective of providing a quality rainbow trout fishery.	N

many lakes. While simplification is a worthy goal, it would seem that 1 regulation exception to produce more of a quality fishery is not excessive. Furthermore, for the kids camp, they are campers and are not able to keep and process fish. They are also there in summer when most of the harvest is warmwater fish so the camp should not be a consideration.	<i>FWP response continued from previous page.</i>	
FWI - South Fork Flathead River; catch and release from Meadow Creek Bridge to Spotted Bear Foot Bridge: Studies have shown that trout in the South Fork move around and in and out of this 7 mile section. Studies have also shown that the general trout limit of 3 daily and in possession, none over 12" adequately protects the cutthroat in the South Fork. In interest of simplification, this regulation could be removed.	The South Fork Flathead River provides one of the best westslope cutthroat trout fisheries in the state. While the commenter is correct, and that the current wilderness harvest regulations have been effective, FWP data does show a reduction in the number of larger (>12") cutthroat trout. This is observed in the lower reach of the wilderness section as well as the catch and release section. Concomitantly, FWP's mail in survey has revealed a considerable increase in angler pressure in all 3 forks of the Flathead River. The catch and release section is the most readily accessible section of the South Fork, and experiences a high level of angler pressure because of that. The reduction in larger, older individual justifies the continuation of the catch and release regulation.	N
FWI - FWP recently approved expanded pike spearing through the ice in Region 1. There is no size limit for holes used for spearing. Region 1 commonly has cold weather that promotes ice formation and frequent snow that covers skimmed over ice holes. In addition, many ice anglers use snowmobiles or 4-wheelers for transport. This creates a real hazard potential for anglers on foot or on a motorized vehicle to hit a hole barely skimmed over and either fall in or be thrown and hurt. Spearers should be required to mark their hole once done by sticking in a branch, etc. so other anglers know to use caution.	Thank you for your comment and for raising concerns about safety around ice spearing holes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks takes ice safety seriously and recognizes the potential for injury whenever there is open or weakened ice. After reviewing available information, we found that incidents involving people falling into pre existing spearing holes appear to be exceedingly rare compared to other ice related accidents, which are typically associated with generally thin or variable ice conditions rather than a specific hole. Because of this very low documented occurrence, and given the practical difficulty of consistently detecting and enforcing a requirement to mark all spearing holes under a variety of ice and weather conditions, FWP will not be bringing forward a marking requirement at this time. Instead, FWP's preferred approach is to emphasize individual responsibility and education around ice fishing safety. This includes encouraging anglers to learn how to evaluate ice conditions, travel cautiously, and be aware that any disturbance or variation in the ice surface can pose a risk. We appreciate your engagement in this process and your concern for the safety of all ice anglers and recreationists.	N

TU: Bull trout handling: we continue to support efforts in these regulation cycles to resolve threats to bull trout populations across the state. While intentional angling for the species is generally not allowed on most waterbodies, these fish are often caught and released by anglers. We continue to be concerned given the online social media environment for ‘grip and grin’ photography with large bull trout from around western Montana. We are grateful to the department for changing the language related to ‘no delay’ in release, but we would continue to put on the radar the need for more intentional interactions with enforcement staff and identifiable parties posting photography that has fish clearly out of the water/over boats where the ‘no delay’ regulation is not being satisfied.	Thank you for your comment	N
I would like to see something done to help out the declining burbot populations in the western district of the state. Could we capture some local populations and use them as rough fish/ sucker and perch control in some local land locked lakes? This would help perch out by making them bigger instead of stunted populations and provide a genetic back up of burbot in case local populations did crash. This would be a way better option than tiger muskies as people would stand a better chance at catching burbot. We also wouldn't have to import them from another state and could use our own fish.	FWP appreciates the proposal and the concern for burbot conservation in Montana. We recognize the apparent decline in burbot populations in portions of the state and agree that a more coordinated, long-term approach is needed. In response, FWP is considering development of a statewide burbot management plan that would evaluate current status, key habitat needs, and limiting factors, and then identify conservation and management options appropriate for different waters. Potential tools considered in such a plan could include changes to harvest regulations, targeted habitat and, where biologically and logistically feasible, translocations or reintroductions to support or restore populations. Any translocation efforts would need to be carefully evaluated to ensure they are consistent with native fish conservation goals, disease and genetic considerations, and broader ecosystem management.	N
All rivers - no guiding on rivers on Saturday or Sunday. Montana needs to reduce pressure and competition on our over used and abused rivers. Guides could work a normal 5 day work week. Weekends would be saved for resident fishermen and DIY nonresident fishermen. Limit the number of guides. There are now over 60,000 guides in Montana. This is ridiculous and needs to be managed. It's a limited resource with unlimited management.	The ideas you raise about limiting guiding on weekends and capping the number of guides are outside the scope of the current fishing regulation setting process and are not determined by FWP's Fisheries Division. Guiding is regulated by the Bureau of Labor and by river recreation rules	N

Standard Harvest regulations for Rivers and Streams in Western and Central Districts should be 3 trout under 14 inches or 2 trout under 14 inches and 1 trout over 18 inches . Current regulations with increasing use is reducing the most reproductive age classes of Trout. This is damaging to reproduction and the joy of catching a quality trout . People don't Neeeeeed to Kill our prime reproductive trout to SURVIVE..! This is akin to Ranchers killing their BEST HEIFERS and WONDER WHY their HERD is DWINDLING...In addition this will move some of the Biggest HARVESTERS to lakes where regulations are more Liberal...PLEASE be PROACTIVE and SAVE OUR RIVERS and STREAMS...	FWP agrees that harvest regulations can influence the size and age structure of trout populations, and protecting productive spawning adults is an important consideration when regulations are evaluated. At the same time, standard district regulations must balance biological objectives with a broad range of angler preferences and conditions that vary widely among individual rivers and streams, which is why size- and number-based limits are often tailored through water-specific exceptions rather than a single rule applied everywhere.	N
Corner to Corner crossing input. Public should not be denied access to public land. I am a land owner and have no problem with this action. I know of several corners where the fence lines are off a bit anyways and no one have ever complained. If for some reason a landowner feels his corners are abused from stepping on a fraction of a fraction of their land then maybe a latter crossing could be required so no actual or accidental stepping would take place. This push back from land owners gives the FW&P as well as land owners a black eye as the optics look greedy and not allowing access to public is playing favoritism to one side. Thank you for looking for public input to this matter. PS it should not require legal action to resolve this.	This topic is well outside the scope of the current fishing regulation-setting process and is not something that can be addressed or changed through fisheries regulations.	N
We need more fish hatcheries! Not less opportunity. And more regulations.	FWP's current regulation process is focused on reviewing specific proposals that include biological rationale, defined regulation language, and identified waters where changes would apply Your proposal does not include a specific, actionable regulation proposal (such as a defined limit, season, or gear rule tied to particular waters) that can be evaluated in this cycle.	N
Stop proposing regulations you can't seem to do anything for the true honest fisherman. That's my proposal.	FWP's current regulation process is focused on reviewing specific proposals that include biological rationale, defined regulation language, and identified waters where changes would apply Your proposal does not include a specific, actionable regulation proposal (such as a defined limit, season, or gear rule tied to particular waters) that can be evaluated in this cycle.	N
Open all waters with sustainable fisheries to underwater spearfishing from band-propelled spearguns with a limit at or lesser than the legal rod and reel limit.	FWP appreciates your interest in spearfishing and your suggestion to expand opportunity. Montana's current spearfishing rules allow submerged and ice spearing for specific species and waters, and those regulations have been developed carefully to align with existing fisheries objectives, safety considerations, and statutory constraints. A blanket, statewide authorization for spearfishing on all fish in every water open to fishing would be a very broad change, and FWP is not	N

<i>Regulation proposal continued from previous page.</i>	considering such a broad-reaching regulation in the 2027–2028 cycle.	
State wide Spearfishing open for all non game fish in any waters open to fishing.	FWP appreciates your interest in spearfishing and your suggestion to expand opportunity for nongame fish. Montana’s current spearfishing rules allow submerged and ice spearing for specific species and waters, and those regulations have been developed carefully to align with existing fisheries objectives, safety considerations, and statutory constraints. A blanket, statewide authorization for spearfishing on all nongame fish in every water open to fishing would be a very broad change, and FWP is not considering such a broad-reaching regulation in the 2027–2028 cycle.	N
State wide spearfishing open for Walleye for any waters open to fishing.	FWP is not considering a statewide regulation that would open spearfishing for walleye on all waters open to fishing. A change that broad would have to account for very different biological conditions and management objectives across reservoirs and rivers where walleye occur. When spearfishing opportunities are evaluated, they are typically considered at the level of specific waters and species, with careful attention to harvest impacts, enforcement, and safety, rather than through a single statewide rule.	N
In all districts Western, Central and Eastern adding chumming for types of outlawed bait. It seems extremely unethical for a person to catch trout and proceed to the same day or days later have a bucket of trout eggs to use as an attractant to lure fish to the specific area that they are fishing. I dont know the benefit of feeding trout eggs and then using artificial eggs as a bait to catch more fish. I see people do this all the time when they are not catching fish or when they do not want to put the effort in to act.ually catch a fiah.	FWP appreciates you taking the time to share your concerns about chumming and the use of trout eggs as attractants. At this time, FWP does not have information indicating that chumming with trout eggs or other baits is a common or widespread practice in Montana’s Western, Central, or Eastern Fishing Districts. Before considering a new, statewide prohibition on specific chumming methods, we would need better data on how often this occurs and whether it is causing measurable biological or enforcement problems in particular fisheries.	N