

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:

The first 3 options should be implemented as the river has become crowded and over-fished. Guides and clients should be limited, there is an extreme overabundance of out-of-state fisherman wreaking havoc on our local resource.

I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.

I support implementing options 1-3. The status quo is not working.

I agree with the proposed angling restrictions and additionally I believe that this river should be single artificial lure only. I have seen on near daily occurrences, people harvesting quality breeding stock fish on this river. I believe it is detrimental to population. Also on numerous occasions, I have witnessed sick and/or dead fish, a product of mishandling with spin and bait gear.

I support seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only; and implementing hoot-howl restrictions.

I believe that these three restrictions are necessary to implement to prevent a crash in the brown trout population

I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.

please implement all three

Adopt seasonal fishing closure as listed, catch and release only for brown trout and implement standing hootowl restrictions from July 1-August 15

agree with all options

Implement all proposed regulation changes above. Make the upper beaverhead from Dam to High Bridge catch and release for all fish. Limit days for out of state fishing. Strengthen relationship between Wildlife dept and outfitters to better ensure regulation compliance and reporting of violators. More wildlife resources committed to enforce compliance on these rivers.

Adopt all suggested changes.

I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

I support all the above options except Status Quo

For beaverhead I support all actions

All of the above

All of these need implementation. Establish minimum streamflow regulations. This "drought" is created by agriculture.

The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.

Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.

I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.

I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout

As with the Boulder, all options should be tried on different sections of the river to provide the biologists with a true picture of the success or failure of these approaches.

I agree with all of FWP's options except Status Quo.

Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.

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Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the Beaverhead's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release and hoot owl
All but status quo. Please add barbless hook use only
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Beaverhead. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows
All are good changes
I support new protective regulations
You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated. The Beaverhead is a mess. Has been for some time. Restoration needs to take place to reduced incised banks and straightened channels. There needs to be shelter for the fish in the water.
Support seasonal closure for brown trout Support catch and release for brown trout Support Hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
Once again, I support all proposals.
I am in favor of the top three options for the Beaverhead River
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT status quo
agree with all
Adopt seasonal fishing closure; catch and release; and hoot-owl to protect brownn trout on the Beaverhead
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.
The regulations above are needed to protect a healthy fishery. Please do so.

Catch and Release

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:
Catch and release for brown trout and rainbow trap ASAP.
Regarding the Beaverhead, items one and two would apply. Item three isn't applicable. What is most applicable on the Beav is the management of flows from the dam. Too little or even too much can do damage to fish populations of all species but Brown trout most especially. Thanks
Catch and release only!! Please get the bait fishermen off the river. No bait!!!
Catch and release, no bait would be good. Too many big fish removed by wormers.
Definitely adopt seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only for brown trout.
Catch and release
Although I think most people practice C&R, I feel it would benefit the trout to make C&R mandatory.

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Catch and Release for Brown trout and Rainbow Trout
I would support additional closures on the Beaverhead River to support successful brown trout spawning. I would also support catch and release mandates and the removal of bait and implement single hook regulations. For the Beaverhead river above Barrett's launch I would oppose hoot owl regulations, as water temperatures remain cold.
I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Not supportive of seasonal closure, Supportive of catch and release Supportive of hoot-owl as needed based on conditions. Consider single hook restrictions and artificial lures only for the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers in certain river sections
Please adopt seasonal fishing closures, catch and release, barbless, but let treble hooks be used implement hoot owl
The upper section of the beaverhead from dam to high bridge should be single hooks and catch and release artificial only. And the redds should be closed to fishing. And no keeping of any rainbows the whole river. We also need to listen to our biologist
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. I do not support a standing hoot owl restriction on the Beaverhead River. Because it is a tailwater, we very rarely see the temperature become too high for fishing. Historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
Catch and release only
Eliminate bait fishing above Selway Bridge. Catch and release for all trout.
Absolutely catch and release only. The seasonal closure here is already good I believe. Could we look into hook size restrictions? Barbless requirements?
A Seasonal , catch and release , , and standing hoot owl
Close the upper river from the Reservoir to Pipe organ Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only from Reservoir to Pipe organ Single barbless hooks And maintain a winter flow of no lower than 75 CFS
Seasonal Catch and release
This River already has a winter closure in the top section that seems to protect a late brown spawn and the rainbows in the spring. Extending that season to protect the brown better seems logical. Again, the hoot owl is a good idea and we hit those water temperatures most July and August days anyway. This just allows people to plan appropriately for that eventuality. Catch and release is a good idea too. We don't want Montana rivers to become like crappy fisheries that exist in most states due to the "I bought a license, so I'm entitled to some fish to eat." mentality.
support measures 1 & 2
Catch and release only and hoot owl
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.

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Catch and release only for browns and hoot owl restrictions.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.
Catch and release fishing only for brown trout.
Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant a fishing closure for that time frame. Virtual no hook mortality in the winter. They need a break in the summer. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
The Beaverhead should be catch and release for brown trout as it maintains access for anglers while protecting fish year-round.
Catch and release for Brown trout single hook and barbless. Closure from Oct 1to April 15th.
Stop fishing during the spawn, fishing has degraded significantly over the last 20 years. Implement Catch and release only for all species.
While adopting seasonal closures is what should happen, it will never happen as long as the commercial interests have a say, I believe in a rest and rotation system would be palatable before total seasonal closure, I think a three year cycle with the Beaverhead and Big Hole would work so 2 of the 3 were open every year for extended catch and release, I also think catch and release should be implemented along with single barbless hooks. I do know many fisherman who like to throw streamers and I believe that style of fishing is more impactful on the larger fish
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
please avoid total closures. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Hoot owl restrictions, if necessary. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning areas closed during season.
catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job
I am in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout.

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<p>Beaverhead River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Beaverhead River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon and Beaverhead County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only</p>
<p>Catch and release/ implement hoot owl</p>
<p>Catch and release, I'm in favor of it. We need legislation to maintain minimum stream flows.</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.</p>
<p>I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only</p>
<p>the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.</p>
<p>I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.</p>
<p>Catch and release brown trout</p>
<p>Catch and release</p>
<p>You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Beaverhead and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.</p>
<p>Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.</p>
<p>Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.</p>
<p>Catch and release only</p>
<p>No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.</p>
<p>Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.</p>
<p>C&R for browns on the Beaverhead</p>
<p>Catch and release, minimum stream flows.</p>
<p>I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.</p>

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Protect spawning and catch and release only.
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
Catch and release
Same as big hole and Jefferson Seasonal closures-yes Catch and release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl closures-no maintain current hoot owl thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!
Catch and release
The Beaverhead has had repeated brown trout mortality issues as well as issues with algae/turbidity. This river should be catch and release only for brown trout and should be closed during fall spawning.
Protect the spawn, catch and release
Change the rules stopping bait fishing. Catch and release for browns and rainbows. Require a minimum flow of 150 in the winter.
Catch and release for brown trout
The entire river should be catch and release and single barbless hook. Less time out of the water for the fish

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:
Regarding the Beaverhead, items one and two would apply. Item three isn't applicable. What is most applicable on the Beav is the management of flows from the dam. Too little or even too much can do damage to fish populations of all species but Brown trout most especially. Thanks
Close the beaverhead in the fall ! You shut the flows down to 50 cfs after summer, then the fish are all stacked up in a few spots , then you put fishermen on top of them stand on redds racking up fish after fish, then you wonder why the numbers are plummeting. Eliminate this and put more flow in the river!
Definitely adopt seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only for brown trout.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

I would support additional closures on the Beaverhead River to support successful brown trout spawning. I would also support catch and release mandates and the removal of bait and implement single hook regulations. For the Beaverhead river above Barrett's launch I would oppose hoot owl regulations, as water temperatures remain cold.
I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Not supportive of seasonal closure, Supportive of catch and release Supportive of hoot-owl as needed based on conditions. Consider single hook restrictions and artificial lures only for the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers in certain river sections
Please adopt seasonal fishing closures, catch and release, barbless, but let treble hooks be used implement hoot owl
The upper section of the beaverhead from dam to high bridge should be single hooks and catch and release artificial only. And the redds should be closed to fishing. And no keeping of any rainbows the whole river. We also need to listen to our biologist
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. I do not support a standing hoot owl restriction on the Beaverhead River. Because it is a tailwater, we very rarely see the temperature become too high for fishing. Historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
A Seasonal , catch and release , , and standing hoot owl
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout as well as hoot owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15.
hoot owl regulations are not necessary on the upper reaches of this river. I think certain areas should be closed for the spawn. The redd areas are very defined and certain hot spot areas can be closed. Single barbless hooks should be implemented to support the catch and release regulation for browns and rainbows.
Close the upper river from the Reservoir to Pipe organ Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only from Reservoir to Pipe organ Single barbless hooks And maintain a winter flow of no lower than 75 CFS
Because the uppermost section is already closed to fishing for a good portion of the year. Leave the rest of the river open year round. Some of the best fishing I have and my favorite time is early spring before the crowds flood the area. Focus on flows not limiting anglers.
Seasonal Catch and release
This River already has a winter closure in the top section that seems to protect a late brown spawn and the rainbows in the spring. Extending that season to protect the brown better seems logical. Again, the hoot owl is a good idea and we hit those water temperatures most July and August days anyway. This just allows people to plan appropriately for that eventuality. Catch and release is a good idea too. We don't want Montana rivers to become like crappy fisheries that exist in most states due to the "I bought a license, so I'm entitled to some fish to eat." mentality.
support measures 1 & 2
Catch and release for Brown trout single hook and barbless. Closure from Oct 1to April 15th.
Need for a seasonal closure and hoot owl restrictions for the brown trout as it gets fished really hard during spawning season!

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I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
Beaverhead I'd hate to see you close the upper completely. Would it be possible to close it for 2-4 weeks or just in certain sections? Maybe do that and then extend the season to 12/31. Catch and release for a time is fine. Wasn't long ago that fly shops were advising people to keep the smaller Browns. Yes to Hoot Owl, Anderson Lane down. No for the river above that.
Adopt seasonal fishing closures
While adopting seasonal closures is what should happen, it will never happen as long as the commercial interests have a say, I believe in a rest and rotation system would be palatable before total seasonal closure, I think a three year cycle with the Beaverhead and Big Hole would work so 2 of the 3 were open every year for extended catch and release, I also think catch and release should be implemented along with single barbless hooks. I do know many fisherman who like to throw streamers and I believe that style of fishing is more impactful on the larger fish
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Hoot owl restrictions, if necessary. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning areas closed during season.
I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.
Beaverhead River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Beaverhead River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon and Beaverhead County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only
Seasonal closure
Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.
seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible
I agree on a seasonal closure and adding hoot owl restrictions to the Beaverhead river
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
Hi favor adopting seasonal fishing closures
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Same as big hole and Jefferson Seasonal closures-yes Catch and release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl closures-no maintain current hoot owl thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Adopt a seasonal fishing closure, artificial lures only, one hook per lure.. No double or treble hooks
Seasonal fishing closure
The Beaverhead has had repeated brown trout mortality issues as well as issues with algae/turbidity. This river should be catch and release only for brown trout and should be closed during fall spawning.
Close certain sections of the river where heavy spawning takes place. This is not like any other summer. It's hot, there aren't a lot of fish. All great trout rivers can be fickle certain years. It will come back

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:
I support a hoot owl restriction for the Beaverhead river. It is the primary river that I fish and feel it needs to be protected as much as we can.
I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed. Also, we have to stop de-watering the aquifer with foolish irrigation in the middle of the day when 90% of the water evaporates. Agriculture needs to evolve and get smarter.
Hard to believe there is a decline of Browns in this river. I would be more inclined to think there is an environmental issue at hand more than a fishing pressure problem. Implement the standing hoot-owl restrictions may be the best of the alternatives for this river.
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. I do not support a standing hoot owl restriction on the Beaverhead River. Because it is a tailwater, we very rarely see the temperature become too high for fishing. Historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
The Beaverhead does not need hoot-owl restrictions in the upper thirteen miles as temperatures are not a factor on this tailwater fishery. Such regulations below Barrett's diversion dam might be helpful. The FWP needs to look at obtaining water in Clark Canyon Reservoir to avoid fish population crippling low flows in the winter.
A Seasonal , catch and release , , and standing hoot owl
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout as well as hoot owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15.
Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions on the Beaverhead.
This River already has a winter closure in the top section that seems to protect a late brown spawn and the rainbows in the spring. Extending that season to protect the brown better seems logical. Again, the hoot owl is a good idea and we hit those water temperatures most July and August days anyway. This just allows people to plan appropriately for that eventuality. Catch and release is a good idea too. We don't want Montana rivers to become like crappy fisheries that exist in most states due to the "I bought a license, so I'm entitled to some fish to eat." mentality.
Catch and release only and hoot owl
Catch and release only for browns and hoot owl restrictions.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant a fishing closure for that time frame. Virtual no hook mortality in the winter. They need a break in the summer. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
Standing hoot owl
I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
Beaverhead I'd hate to see you close the upper completely. Would it be possible to close it for 2-4 weeks or just in certain sections? Maybe do that and then extend the season to 12/31. Catch and release for a time is fine. Wasn't long ago that fly shops were advising people to keep the smaller Browns. Yes to Hoot Owl, Anderson Lane down. No for the river above that.
implement hoot-owl
I support the hoot-owl restrictions. I do NOT support any of the other proposals.
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
please avoid total closures. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Hoot owl restrictions, if necessary. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning areas closed during season.
I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.
Beaverhead River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Beaverhead River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon and Beaverhead County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Catch and release/ implement hoot owl
Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
Minimum flow standards, Hoot Owl restrictions
Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Beaverhead River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.
seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible
I agree on a seasonal closure and adding hoot owl restrictions to the Beaverhead river
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
hoot owls for this river and further reduce guides/outfitters on the river. Paying clients kill fish in photos and outfitters could care less.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Same as big hole and Jefferson Seasonal closures-yes Catch and release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl closures-no maintain current hoot owl thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:

I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed. Also, we have to stop de-watering the aquifer with foolish irrigation in the middle of the day when 90% of the water evaporates. Agriculture needs to evolve and get smarter.

Catch and release only!! Please get the bait fishermen off the river. No bait!!!

Catch and release, no bait would be good. Too many big fish removed by wormers.

The Beaverhead river already has a seasonal closure from the dam to grasshopper. I think you've got that covered already. Brown trout 1 over 24inches. It's disgusting to float that river on the opener and see all the live bait casters lining the banks with stringers full of fish, not one person thought about taking away live bait on the beaverhead when putting these possible solutions together??? Tells me not one person involved in this process spends any time on the beaverhead. The worm draggers are out of hand on that river and they're mopping up on the fish. Beaverhead doesn't need hoot owl, its a tail water.

I would support additional closures on the Beaverhead River to support successful brown trout spawning. I would also support catch and release mandates and the removal of bait and implement single hook regulations. For the Beaverhead river above Barrett's launch I would oppose hoot owl regulations, as water temperatures remain cold.

Not supportive of seasonal closure, Supportive of catch and release Supportive of hoot-owl as needed based on conditions. Consider single hook restrictions and artificial lures only for the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers in certain river sections

Please adopt seasonal fishing closures, catch and release, barbless, but let treble hooks be used implement hoot owl

The upper section of the beaverhead from dam to high bridge should be single hooks and catch and release artificial only. And the redds should be closed to fishing. And no keeping of any rainbows the whole river. We also need to listen to our biologist

I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)

Eliminate bait fishing above Selway Bridge. Catch and release for all trout.

Absolutely catch and release only. The seasonal closure here is already good I believe. Could we look into hook size restrictions? Barbless requirements?

hoot owl regulations are not necessary on the upper reaches of this river. I think certain areas should be closed for the spawn. The redd areas are very defined and certain hot spot areas can be closed. Single barbless hooks should be implemented to support the catch and release regulation for browns and rainbows.

Close the upper river from the Reservoir to Pipe organ Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only from Reservoir to Pipe organ Single barbless hooks And maintain a winter flow of no lower than 75 CFS

I agree with the proposed angling restrictions and additionally I believe that this river should be single artificial lure only. I have seen on near daily occurrences, people harvesting quality breeding stock fish on this river. I believe it is detrimental to population. Also on numerous occasions, I have witnessed sick and/or dead fish, a product of mishandling with spin and bait gear.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.

I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.

Catch and release for Brown trout single hook and barbless. Closure from Oct 1to April 15th.

No treble hooks no bait fishing.

While adopting seasonal closures is what should happen, it will never happen as long as the commercial interests have a say, I believe in a rest and rotation system would be palatable before total seasonal closure, I think a three year cycle with the Beaverhead and Big Hole would work so 2 of the 3 were open every year for extended catch and release, I also think catch and release should be implemented along with single barbless hooks. I do know many fisherman who like to throw streamers and I believe that style of fishing is more impactful on the larger fish

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
Beaverhead River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Beaverhead River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon and Beaverhead County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only
INCREASED WINTER FLOWS. No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.
All but status quo. Please add barbless hook use only
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
Adopt a seasonal fishing closure, artificial lures only, one hook per lure.. No double or treble hooks
BARBLESS HOOKS are a start.
Change the rules stopping bait fishing. Catch and release for browns and rainbows. Require a minimum flow of 150 in the winter.
The entire river should be catch and release and single barbless hook. Less time out of the water for the fish

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:

The Beaverhead fishery is loaded w/ plenty of fish. Just ask anybody who has been there this year. Current regulations are working.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

I regularly fish this river and recommend maintaining the status quo. I haven't seen the problem that you are describing. Current regulations provide for hoot owl closures, as needed. There is no need for standing closure schedules, harvest limitations, or least of all Sep-May closures. Such spawning closures already limit access today to the Boulder of the Jefferson and Prickly Pear of the Missouri.
Status Quo
Status quo, with hoot owl regulations imposed at necessary times.
I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.
Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status Quo

Other

Enter your comments for the Beaverhead River:

The Beaverhead is already a man made stream, restrictions would be directly related to how much water the ranchers are pulling from the ditches. This is a controlled situation and should be managed as such.
I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed. Also, we have to stop de-watering the aquifer with foolish irrigation in the middle of the day when 90% of the water evaporates. Agriculture needs to evolve and get smarter.
Close the beaverhead in the fall ! You shut the flows down to 50 cfs after summer, then the fish are all stacked up in a few spots , then you put fishermen on top of them stand on redds racking up fish after fish, then you wonder why the numbers are plummeting. Eliminate this and put more flow in the river!
recent montana outdoors articles have recommended increased harvest of smaller brown trout on the beaverhead river. do you agree with those recommendations?
This river seems to be regulated much more than the Big Hole, I do not have any comments on this river.
The Beaverhead does not need hoot-owl restrictions in the upper thirteen miles as temperatures are not a factor on this tailwater fishery. Such regulations below Barrett's diversion dam might be helpful. The FWP needs to look at obtaining water in Clark Canyon Reservoir to avoid fish population crippling low flows in the winter.
Small river that is over fished Too many guided trips
Extensive closures to protect spawning brown trout does not go far enough. Close brown trout fishing/possessing period.
Close the upper river from the Reservoir to Pipe organ Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only from Reservoir to Pipe organ Single barbless hooks And maintain a winter flow of no lower than 75 CFS
Because the uppermost section is already closed to fishing for a good portion of the year. Leave the rest of the river open year round. Some of the best fishing I have and my favorite time is early spring before the crowds flood the area. Focus on flows not limiting anglers.
Limit guide trips on the Beaverhead.
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.
Implement all proposed regulation changes above. Make the upper beaverhead from Dam to High Bridge catch and release for all fish. Limit days for out of state fishing. Strengthen relationship between Wildlife dept and outfitters to better ensure regulation compliance and reporting of violators. More wildlife resources committed to enforce compliance on these rivers.
Follow biologist recommendations.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
All of these need implementation. Establish minimum streamflow regulations. This "drought" is created by agriculture.
The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.
Catch and release, I'm in favor of it. We need legislation to maintain minimum stream flows.
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
Minimum flow standards, Hoot Owl restrictions
INCREASED WINTER FLOWS. No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
Regulate
Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Beaverhead River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.
As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.
Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.
You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.
Catch and release, minimum stream flows.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Beaverhead. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.

Beaverhead River Survey Comments

You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!" catch and release for brown trout
Minimum streamflow requirements
hoot owls for this river and further reduce guides/outfitters on the river. Paying clients kill fish in photos and outfitters could care less.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
I'd follow the recommendations of FWP biologists. They know the fishery better than anyone and are the only people in position to have a good idea on what might work.
Same as big hole and Jefferson Seasonal closures-yes Catch and release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl closures-no maintain current hoot owl thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!
Change the rules stopping bait fishing. Catch and release for browns and rainbows. Require a minimum flow of 150 in the winter.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:

The big hole needs to be more closely regulated. Undoubtedly...popularity of fishing this river has increased leading to more stress on the fish. All regulations necessary should be taken to protect the fish population especially in years of extreme heat and low run off.

The river is dying. Do something!

I favor a combination of all three restrictions

Yes on seasonal closure it is long over due. Yes on catch and release. Yes to hoot owl No to status quo Need to limit how the guides are exploiting their user days and their overall use. Way to many outfitters and guides. How many times can one fish be caught and released? All to make money. Is this really necessary? A lot of whining by them this year as if they were the only ones to suffer. Now thanks to FWP leniency towards guides and outfitters, the fish are suffering too. Also you should not have let them have their way on the new Madison restrictions. This response is applies to all rivers in question. Bob Butala, Butte and Dewey 498-2128

I think the first three items should be implemented. We have to to limit the number of fisherman, especially the commercial outfitter operations. The river is being sold to the highest bidder and driving local residents away.

Status quo is not an option. But, in addition to the seasonal fishing closure outlined, catch & release only and hoot owl restrictions, water rights need to be addressed immediately in addition to the number of crops allowed. The more crops per season, the water is needed. Over 85% of water rights on the Big Hole were in place before the Great Depression. Illegal diversion of water needs to be explored. New irrigation ponds/water storage are easily visible on Google Earth which covers at least the last 15. years. What gives?

Agree with closing the Big Hole DURING SPAWNING SEASON from September 30 to December 31. Agree with "catch and release" for brown only. Support standing "Hoot Owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15 on the Big Hole. Additionally, the WATER QUALITY Study being conducted by The Big Hole River Foundation is critical in any determinations of fish and aquatic stress on this river. One year of results have been completed with two years more coming. The testing is being conducted by unbiased respected third party university researchers. PLEASE pay close attention to the findings. In my opinion, WATER QUALITY may be the single most important issue affecting the health of the Big Hole and brown trout in particular.

implement the top three above. In addition use single barbless hooks on lures,

First 3 ONLY

Do something now. There are lots of dead fish showing in the river this last week. Close the river down now. It's time to do something to save this river. The ranchers are sucking the river dry - we need mandatory minimum.flow rules for the ranchers to stop taking water.

I support implementing options 1-3. The status quo is clearly not working.

I have been a full time guide in the area for 14 years. I completely agree with these measures to protect the brown trout and the Big Hole fishery. Additionally, I would like to see stricter safe minimum flows established for all of the rivers in SW Montana. Reduced or eliminated irrigating during heavy drought times. We cannot continue to sacrifice an entire ecosystem to sustain irresponsible irrigation practices in a high desert. I understand irrigation is pivotal to life here but we can't ignore the consequences on our home.

I support seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only; and implementing hoot-owl restrictions.

All of these are great ideas. I own a cabin in Melrose and I'm in favor of doing all of them at once. I've seen the fishery decline dramatically in my 15 years of fishing it and I don't want that to continue. Guides operating out of Melrose hound those fish year round, in the slow water when flows are high, and even when the river flows 250 (or less) CFS in late summer. The relentless pressure is too much. They can still guide clients in the morning with Hoot Owl, but the spawning protections are needed to stop them and everyone in the fall. Also, the catch and release requirement will work to ensure that "meat fishing" which has become more popular thanks to promotion by Rinella, etc. doesn't remove the fish we love to catch.

I am in favor of the commissions recommendations.

I believe that all three restrictions are necessary to implement to protect the population of brown trout in the Big Hole

I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.

Please implement all three

agree with all options

Adopt all proposed regulation changes. Continue looking for other biological and water quality causes.

Yes, It is time to protect this valuable species and do not feel that maintaining the status quo is acceptable. I am in favor of seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout and catch and release only for Brown Trout on the entire river. Also in favor of hoot owl restrictions and making treble hooks illegal on the river.

I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Seasonal closure of certain sections makes sense to keep people away from the redds. Catch and release would be fine with me. As would a debarbing hooks requirement. Automatic Hoot Owl would be fine but why not through 8/31 and also, provide the option of not putting Hoot Owl in effect during high runoff, cold water years.
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only for brown trout; and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15. I also support the use of barbless hooks which will make it much easier to release fish.
Fully support all catchand release for brown trout on Big Hole and seasonal closures for spawning. Would also like to see use of barbless hooks mandated. Standing hoot owl restrictions also a good idea.
In favor of implementing all three options. But I think #1 and #3 should be done first.
1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout.. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks or single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15. Status quo is not an option.
All of these need implementation.
Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.
I am in support of all proposed changes that protect fish and wildlife in or near Montana rivers.
No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
I am in favor of all options FWP is recommending except Status Quo. Also FWP should add fines for cell phone photos posted online by Fly Shops and individuals. I have witnessed fish out of water for long periods of time in hot weather! My comments are not only for the Big Hole, but all of the rivers affected.
Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit Seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen.
Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the Big Hole's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release fishing only for brown, and implement standing hoot owl
I support all but please add Barbless Hooks Only if not already done so
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Big Hole. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
All are good changes
I support new protective regulations
You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated.
Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
I support all the proposals you've listed.
I am in favor of top three options.
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT stats quo
Absolutely adopt seasonal fishing closure for spawning browns. Absolutely implement catch and release fishing for brown trout. For sure implement hoot owl restrictions beginning July 1 but extend them to October 1st.
agree with all
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release, implement hoot-owl.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.
Since the fishery has seen drastic decreases in counts, I feel that regulations such as these are needed. Catch and release only, seasonal fishing closures for fish spawning and hoot owl if the water is hotter than 67 degrees.
Catch and real ease and Standing hoot-owl restrictions and seasonal closure all would be OK with me. A careful study would have to be implemented to determine the effectiveness of these measures.
In favor of: seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout, catch n release fishing for all brown trout, and standing Hoot Owl restrictions to protect all fish during hottest times of the year. Not in favor of status quo/ current regulations.
I think we should implement all of these options. We can give up some fishing now to help the future of the big hole river.

Catch and Release Comments

Please consider this comment for all rivers. Please only consider regulation changes that are expected to facilitate measurable population response. Any changes with unknown population response should be implemented using scientific approaches that will improve future understanding. I don't support catch-and-release-only regulations. The best science suggests downward population trends are most influenced by habitat conditions and removal of existing harvest is unlikely to facilitate population recovery. I'm addimately opposed to removing harvest take while continuing to allow exponentially-growing fisherman pressure to facilitate unlimited catch-and-release fish mortality. Limited harvest of wild trout is an important part of my foodsource. Please manage our wild trout in a manner that prioritizes: 1. the sustainability of the fish populations; and 2. Montana residents' opportunity to harvest fish for food. Commercial interests and non-resident recreation should be a distant third. Thank you for considering my comments.
Catch and release would be enough to gain back brown trout populations on the Big Hole.
Catch and release for brown trout
Why hoot owl if not needed. We already have rules in place. Catch and release for all fish. The river is not healthy. Rainbow numbers crashed in the Jerry Creek stretch. Whitefish numbers are also way down. The river needs help!!,
I am in full support of catch and release for Brown trout. Not in support of a seasonal closure but would rather see FWP lower the possession limit from 5 to 3 trout for the entire stretch. I would also recommend enforcing or mandating single hook lures, or barbless hook lures. 3-prong hook spinners (panther martin, Rappala) do more damage than any other means of catching fish! There is no reason for them.
As a recreational angler I overwhelmingly support strict catch and release in the Big Hole, as well as standing hoot-owl and seasonal closures. Action must be taken quickly! The pressure these rivers face is enormous and will only get worse between recreational anglers, outfitters, and irrigation.
Need to proceed with Catch and Release for Browns only on the entire Big Hole and eliminate Treble Hooks. Also a seasonal closure Sept 30th for sections of the river should be implemented. Melrose to Pennington makes the most sense.
I think it should be barbless hooks, artificial only, catch and release for browns. This would include both spin fishing and flies. And, seasonal restrictions to protect spawning browns.
Fall fishing is too important to the local community economic health. Keep it open Educate the public on reds and handling fish. Measure the water quality and how much the ranchers use. Make certain stretches catch and release. These could rotate as trout numbers dictate. Implement Hoot Owl as determined by annual conditons
Catch and release for brown trout and rainbow trout year round. Implement it ASAP. Follow the current Big Hole River drought management plan for hoot owl and fishing closures. For the fall brown trout spawn take 1 section Melrose to Brownes bridge and close it starting September 15th - May 15th to protect the spawning brown trout. Study this section for 4 years and see if the closure helps the population. Leave the rest of the river open during the spawn. Also, we need to maintain minimum streamflows. Ranchers need to keep more water in the river during drought conditions.
I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed.
I have fished the big hole for over forty years and have personally witnessed the fall spawn carnage. Bait fisherman throwing egg sacks on top of the redds, then milking the females of their eggs in order to get more eggs for steelhead fishing etc. These guys will typically catch 50 fish in a day and this is not an exaggeration. I have also witnessed guides stacking clients next to each other standing in spawning runs fishing egg patterns, so they are also complicit. So the fall closure is an absolute no brainer! Should have been done years ago! I am also for closing season till may, until there is improvement. Catch and release for browns all the time, is another no brainer. If you want to keep fish, go to a stocked lake. You also need to make it mandatory to use a single barbless hook. There are a lot of rapala guys catching a lot of fish and never pinching a barb. These lures have 6 hooks and the only way these guys remove them is by large pliers and using force. Make them remove all hooks but one and make them barbless. I am all for implementing hoot owl restrictions until ther is a solid improvement of the fishery! You decision makers need to make the hard choices for the future of the fishery and not be scared of the special interest of a few outfitters/businesses!
Protect the browns by closing the river Oct 1. Catch and release only on the Big Hole River. Artificial only would be a big help too.
Definitely adopt seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only for browns.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Catch and release brown trout.
Although I think most people practice C&R, I feel it would be beneficial to the trout to make C&R a requirement.
year round Catch and Release for Brown trout and Rainbow Trout. Close 1 section of the Big Hole from September 15th - May 15th. I think this section should be Melrose - Brownes bridge during this period for 4 years. Take the data from the 4 years and see if the Brown trout population has increased so we then will know if this is helping the population. Maintain the current Big Hole River Drought Management plan for Hoot Owl and fishing closures due to low flows. Also, we need to maintain minimum streamflows during drought conditions. Part of maintaining minimum streamflows will require ranchers keeping some water in the river. We also need to get funding to study the brown trout decline. FWP needs state and federal funding to develop a department within FWP that focuses on the Brown Trout in Southwest Montana.
I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Supportive of catch and release fishing only. Not supportive of seasonal closure. Supportive of hoot-owl restriction. Seasonal closure is too restrictive. Consider overall angling pressure in peak season over closure.
1)I would like to see the Big hole regulated as it was years ago, meaning close it from Wise River to Melrose COMPLETELY, no fishing NOV 30 to the Third Saturday in May 2)I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the Big Hole is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning Desperate times call for desperate measures
I think we should protect the spawning habitats from September 30th to May 15th and catch and release is a great idea till the numbers come back. But we should listen to our local FWP biologist
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Big Hole River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
I want closure to brown trout spawning. Catch and release for brown trout. If not, going to have another steel head situation. I also want to FWP to Pushmore to encourage farmers to be actual stewards of the land into teach people about climate change.
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
Catch and release only year rounf
I floated the river last weekend and saw 20-30 dead fish. Mostly whitefish, but a few large browns. I also caught fis with signs of saprolegnia. The river should be catch and release for all fish. Not a bad idea to close the entire river October 1 to protect spawning browns. Open it up the first of April to have minimal impact of the closure.
I would be fine with a closure, catch and release should be mandatory. Hoot owls should remain as they are.
I like the catch and release only option, and the standing hoot owl option
I support seasonal fishing closures and catch and release fishing only. Hoot-owl restrictions should be looked at annually. If there are years where the water temperatures remain low enough throughout July and August, hoot-owl restrictions may not be necessary.
Catch and release only all year.
Absolutely agree with 1)Catch and Release fishing only for Brown Trout2)Seasonal Fishing closure from Melrose to Pennington from September 30th until 3rd Saturday in May3)Eliminate treble hooks 4) Status Quo is not acceptable at this point regardless of questions over reason for Brown Trout decline. Angling pressure is clearly having an impact on this and other fisheries in Montana.
I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

<p>I think we should adopt the seasonal closure on the Bighole to protect spawning trout. The standing hoot owl restriction is not needed as there already is a drought management plan for the Bighole in place. I am for catch and release for brown trout. My biggest concern is why are we not changing the regulation to single barbless hooks (one hook per fly/lure, barbless) to reduce fish handling time? This goes hand in hand with a catch and release regulation and without this, the catch and release reg is not as effective.</p>
<p>Close the upper river seasonally Dickey bridge - George Grant Maiden Rock (Dead Zone) to browns bridge October 1- April 1 Catch and release only for Brown trout Barbless single hooks and no larger than size 8 And fund more projects to start fixing tributaries that are historical spawning grounds like what has happened in the lower river from Glen to the Jefferson confluence where there is not a recruitment issue after a few different tributaries spawning habitats were revived Rewrite the Recreation plan to stop forcing over crowding in high and low water scenarios</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closure for all species from Sep 30 until third Saturday in May. Catch and release Fly only</p>
<p>Southwest Montana , especially the big hole, has suffered from drought but fish numbers have been higher than current population trends. This points to other factors that are unknown which have contributed to the current decline. Certainly keeping water in the river helps, but there is more than that going on. FWP recent studies have suggested brown trout numbers to be dropping while rainbows have remained better, but normally rainbows are just as susceptible to dewatering, which again points to other factors, maybe yet unknown. More data should be gained first. Until then, current hoot owl restrictions need to be enforced. Catch and release extended seasons are important to anglers who like to enjoy themselves without the summer crowds. Leave opportunities open for them please. The bug hole obviously is in need of a reservoir in the headwaters to catch water in better water years even if it cost 40 million.</p>
<p>Catch & release fishing for all trout</p>
<p>Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!</p>
<p>Seasonal closures of the nature suggested are over-kill and have grave consequences on business, outfitters, guides and local fishers. Catch & release is recommended and supported. And, no bait fishing would reduce mortality.</p>
<p>support seasonal fishing closures (1) Support catch and release (2)</p>
<p>Catch and release seems easy and should be done. Hoot owl depending on temps.</p>
<p>Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing only for browns and hoot owl restrictions. Fixing the water flow is a greater issue thought.</p>
<p>I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout, no treble hooks</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing only for brown trout.</p>
<p>Not enough people fishing during the winter to warrant fish closures. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout. Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions</p>
<p>The Big Hole should be catch and release for brown trout. This option maintains the greatest level of access to anglers while ensuring fish are protected year-round.</p>
<p>Catch and release</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing for brown trout, cutthroat and grayling year round. Implement hoot-owl restrictions only as necessary. There is no scientific reason to close the entire river from September 30th to the 3rd Saturday in May. This action would eliminate fishing opportunity's for local fisherman who have already been pushed off the river in the summer months due to overcrowding. Change the fishing outfitter season from the 3rd Saturday in May thru August. Global warming has created a situation where our rivers are ice free for longer periods through the winter months. The outfitting industry has been encouraging clients to book in the winter months, thus exacerbating the situation and again reducing opportunity for locals.</p>
<p>I feel that closures during spawn would be helpful dates Oct 1st to April 15th as well as catch and release for brown trout. I also believe that single hook and barbless could be beneficial.</p>
<p>Please accept the biologist recommendations for catch and release only on the entire river and seasonal closures on entire river below Melrose. Also single barbless hook should be added.</p>
<p>I support hoot owl and C&R for browns</p>
<p>No harvest for brown trout</p>

Big Hole River Survey Comments

strongly support seasonal closure. this was recommended to the Big Hole Watershed Committee about 15 years ago but failed in subcommittee. This is long overdue to help mitigate climate change and vast increases in late fall and early spring fishing pressure. Strongly oppose catch and release for brown trout. there is no evidence that harvest of brown trout has increased or is a factor of significance in population declines. in fact comparative special regulations analysis on the Big Hole in the 1980's and 1990's indicated the opposite. this would be a needless restriction of opportunity and result in the wasteful release of fish that are obviously mortality wounded. Don't support "hoot owl" hours. you don't mitigate the 24 - 7 stress of low flow induced loss of cover, behavioral interaction, competition, predation, diminished food availability and high temperature by giving the fish "a few hours off" from the stress of catch and release fishing and boat disturbance. Angling closures are much more effective in stress reduction.

Catch and Release is a good option

Yes, implement seasonal closure to protect the spawn, and implement catch and release only. These will make a significant impact. Should have been done years ago.

This can't continue as status quo, I support seasonal closures and catch and release. Hoot owl should be used as is, when water temps rise above a certain temp. Implementing that as a permanent rule will only drive traffic to other waters, increasing competition and pressure on the fisheries.

Please avoid total closure. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

Would be okay with a Hoot Owl closure , July 1 to August 15. Catch and release fishing as well as spawning considerations.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees as opposed to the current 73 degrees, which is too warm.

catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout.

Big Hole River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Big Hole River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon, Melrose, and Butte, as well as Beaverhead, Silverbow, and Madison counties. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to Protect spawning brown trout. Catch and release fishing

Catch and release only/Implement Hoot owl

I am in agreement with catch and release for Brown trout. The biggest issue is stream flow. Without some agreement and enforcement of maintaining minimum stream flows everything else is folly.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.
I live in Melrose and spend a lot of time on the Big Hole. I am for catch and release for brown trout. I am also for closing the river during the spawn. I am not sure it makes that much difference but we should see if it helps. I am not for closing it until the third week of May. I would close it October and November. That gives the Brown Trout plenty of time to spawn. There is hardly any fishing pressure during the winter months but it is fun for us diehards willing to brave the elements.
Catch and release seems great option for Browns. Don't support hoot owl, stressed trout don't bite and get caught away
You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Big Hole and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.
Seasonal closures and catch and release for browns.
Catch and release only. Adopt seasonal fishing closure.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure from October 1 through March 15 throughout the entire river. Catch and release only for all fish year around. Adopt minimal streamflows based on historical averages. Keeping water in the river is of utmost importance. Single hooked flies and lures only. No more treble hooks. No bait fishing of any sort allowed
Catch and release only
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies or lures containing one single barbless hook.
C&R for browns on Big Hole
Catch and release, minimum stream flows.
In favor of seasonal fishing closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flow requirements
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
Catch and Release fishing for brown trout. There should be a spot for "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!"
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for the recommended Hoot Owl restrictions. I am also for catch and release only. I am hesitant to say I am for fishing
Catch and release for all trout, no fishing during the rainbow, cutty, and brown trout spawn, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS FOR ALL TROUT FISHING IN THE STATE
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
I have personally seen guided anglers being directed on how to target spawning brown trout in this drainage. It has to stop or the brood stock will be decimated irreversibly. Catch and release is not only necessary. It is vital. I believe that the lack of education for many anglers (i/e. going barbless, keeping fish in the net and water, not taking photos of fish when gripping them and a host of other educational techniques) is causing angler induced mortality. This may sound radical but a moratorium on fishing for a year to study the lack of impact would be very useful.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Catch and release of Brown Trout should have been implemented 50-years ago. I am amazed it has taken this long for FWP to figure this out.
First, consult with FWP biologists and ask them what they think the course of action should be. If I had to pick, I'd try catch and release for browns and hoot owl from July 1 to Aug 15.
Strongly agree with adopting seasonal fishing closures. Strongly agree implementing catch and release. DISAGREE with standing hoot owl, and maintain current hoot owl triggers MINIMUM IN-STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!
Catch and release plus closure of spawning times until population snaps back
Adopt a seasonal closure, catch and release only, and artificial lures only. Only 1 hook allowed per lure.. No double or treble hooks.
I believe this water should be catch and release only for brown trout and should also close during brown trout spawning.
Catch and release for all trout. Closed to protect spawning fish in the fall. Good ideas. Hoot owl rules should only be applied as needed. Last year the hoot owl closure on July 1 would have been a mistake. Every summer is different with regard to hoot owl.
The Big Hole River should be closed after September 30th and should be catch and release ONLY during the fishing season.
Catch and release brown trout
All rivers should be catch and release and single barbless hook. Single barbless means less time out of the water for the fish resulting in better survival rates.

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:
First of all, I'm a lifetime, 5th generation resident of Big Hole and what I've seen happen to this river is devastating. It's been abused and trashed by so many outfitters over the years and it's time for the inevitable. We desperately need seasons back to give those poor fish a rest. Not only that, further regulations need to be implemented to relieve pressure on this river. Next, I firmly believe fertilizers are harming the salmon fly population. Further studies are needed. Finally, not completely closing the river when it is below 300cfs is idiotic. All you're doing is dragging the whole entire way except for the pools. Even if it's cool in the morning you're doing harm to that fish. Catch and release at those levels might as well be catch and kill because that's essentially what you're doing. In summary, bring the seasons back and implement stricter regulations or this fishery will be destroyed.
How about some test closures like Oct 1 to opening day on the stretches most affected. Catch and release is fine or lower the limit to 1 fish in a slot limit. No need to change the current hoot owl rules - they are working.
Close season during spawning, no treble hooks
Close all sections of the Bighole in the fall during Brown trout spawning season
Need to proceed with Catch and Release for Browns only on the entire Big Hole and eliminate Treble Hooks. Also a seasonal closure Sept 30th for sections of the river should be implemented. Melrose to Pennington makes the most sense.
Catch and release for brown trout and rainbow trout year round. Implement it ASAP. Follow the current Big Hole River drought management plan for hoot owl and fishing closures. For the fall brown trout spawn take 1 section Melrose to Brownes bridge and close it starting September 15th - May 15th to protect the spawning brown trout. Study this section for 4 years and see if the closure helps the population. Leave the rest of the river open during the spawn. Also, we need to maintain minimum streamflows. Ranchers need to keep more water in the river during drought conditions.
The brown trout should be protected during spawning. The water is low and warm and the fish are easily accessible. The brown trout spawn starts in early October through mid November. I don't think that closing the river in the spring is necessary as there are very few anglers and the water is high, cold, and muddy. This protects the eggs in the spring. Bait fishing should be illegal. When fish eat bait they often swallow the hook which is fatal whether they are released or not. Treble hooks are also hard on fish and unnecessary. Single barbless hooks would also help with fish mortality. Standing hootowl restrictions are silly. When the water is cold and there is plenty of it the fish are not stressed, and less susceptible to fatal catch and release. Lowering the temp on hoot owl would help. Currently hoot owl is put on after the river reaches 73 for 3 days in a row, the fish are already dying at this point. The restrictions could be put on at 70 degrees, which would reduce mortality.
I have fished the big hole for over forty years and have personally witnessed the fall spawn carnage. Bait fisherman throwing egg sacks on top of the redds, then milking the females of their eggs in order to get more eggs for steelhead fishing etc. These guys will typically catch 50 fish in a day and this is not an exaggeration. I have also witnessed guides stacking clients next to each other standing in spawning runs fishing egg patterns, so they are also complicit. So the fall closure is an absolute no brainer! Should have been done years ago! I am also for closing season till May, until there is improvement. Catch and release for browns all the time, is another no brainer. If you want to keep fish, go to a stocked lake. You also need to make it mandatory to use a single barbless hook. There are a lot of rapala guys catching a lot of fish and never pinching a barb. These lures have 6 hooks and the only way these guys remove them is by large pliers and using force. Make them remove all hooks but one and make them barbless. I am all for implementing hoot owl restrictions until there is a solid improvement of the fishery! You decision makers need to make the hard choices for the future of the fishery and not be scared of the special interest of a few outfitters/businesses!
Protect the browns by closing the river Oct 1. Catch and release only on the Big Hole River. Artificial only would be a big help too.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

<p>Please close the river to all fishing October 1 through March 31 to protect the fish. You say it won't make a difference, let's try it for 3-5 years and see. Remember closing the Zmadison in the 70's? It made a difference. The Madison in the 90s? It made a difference. Let's try it on the Big Hole.</p>
<p>Definitely adopt seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only for browns.</p>
<p>I love fishing the Big Hole River year round, but with the new information that has been provided to GGTU, I think that some sections of the river should be closed for spawning. We need to re-populate this river with brown trout and the spawn is key to a healthy river. I have spoken to some of the outfitters that fish this river year round and a majority agree that regulations in this affect are crucial to keeping their clients coming back, which has a direct effect on the economy. If the outfitters are on board, we aren't hurting the economy because they could pitch the reason why new regulations are being set in place. If you are an avid fishermen and care about connecting on great trout they should be supportive and advocate for the new regs.</p>
<p>I grew up in wise river, my father was an outfitter and I started guiding on the big hole and beaverhead in 1995. I don't guide anymore but I spend a lot of time on both rivers. I don't have much faith in fwp's management of our resources but I'll throw in my 2 cents on deaf ears anyway. The big hole doesn't get as much fall pressure as other rivers, but I have no issue with fall closures. I don't support catch and release only for brown trout but I think the bag limit should be 1 over 24inches. Hoot owl restrictions are needed when they are needed, July 1 can be a bit early in some years. A moratorium on outfitter use days would be the best thing you could do. No outfitter needs to be putting 16 boats a day on regardless of having the historical use or deep enough pockets to do so. Every outfitter an make a living at 3-5 boats a day, if not they can go rape some other states water.</p>
<p>year round Catch and Release for Brown trout and Rainbow Trout. Close 1 section of the Big Hole from September 15th - May 15th. I think this section should be Melrose - Brownes bridge during this period for 4 years. Take the data from the 4 years and see if the Brown trout population has increased so we then will know if this is helping the population. Maintain the current Big Hole River Drought Management plan for Hoot Owl and fishing closures due to low flows. Also, we need to maintain minimum streamflows during drought conditions. Part of maintaining minimum streamflows will require ranchers keeping some water in the river. We also need to get funding to study the brown trout decline. FWP needs state and federal funding to develop a department within FWP that focuses on the Brown Trout in Southwest Montana.</p>
<p>I strongly support a fishing closure on the Big Hole from September 30th through April 1st, rather than the 3rd weekend in may, and would recommend bounding it to the Glen Boat launch upstream to the Jerry Creek boat launch. This is based on the assumption that these are the primary spawning grounds. I also support turning the fishery into a catch and release fishery for all species, and would additionally recommend making the fishery single hook, no bait. If standing hoot-owl were to be implemented I would reccomend the time frame be set at August 1-September 15, or when flow metrics are achieved.</p>
<p>I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.</p>
<p>Should be closed in the fall for spawning browns</p>
<p>1)I would like to see the Big hole regulated as it was years ago, meaning close it from Wise River to Melrose COMPLETELY, no fishing NOV 30 to the Third Saturday in May 2)I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the Big Hole is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning Desperate times call for desperate measures</p>
<p>I think we should protect the spawing habitats from September 30th to May 15th and catch and release is a great idea till the numbers come back. But we should listen to our local FWP biologist</p>
<p>I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Big Hole River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.</p>
<p>I want closure to brown trout spawning. Catch and release for brown trout. If not, going to have another steel head situation. I also want to FWP to Pushmore to encourage farmers to be actual stewards of the land into teach people about climate change.</p>
<p>I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)</p>

Big Hole River Survey Comments

<p>A localized spawning closure for brown trout would have the most effect on the Big Hole. Signs closing sections of the river where the are reads will reduce the constant pressure that spawning fish endure on the Big Hole. The fish are quite vulnerable on these visible large redds. For the last decade or more it is not uncommon to see anglers perched on these spawning areas every day in October. Localized closures on 100-400 yard sections of the river that are signed as no fishing will help reduce this unsportsmanlike behavior without closing the entire river. As a guide and outfitter on the Big Hole for the last 31 years, I'm immensely concerned about the decline in the Big Hole's brown trout population. Myself and my peers would like to offer our time and financial support to help.</p>
<p>I floated the river last weekend and saw 20-30 dead fish. Mostly whitefish, but a few large browns. I also caught fish with signs of saprolegnia. The river should be catch and release for all fish. Not a bad idea to close the entire river October 1 to protect spawning browns. Open it up the first of April to have minimal impact of the closure.</p>
<p>Seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout would be good as I've seen people fishing redds hard.</p>
<p>I would be fine with a closure, catch and release should be mandatory. Hoot owls should remain as they are.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout as well as implement hoot owl restrictions from July 1-15.</p>
<p>I support seasonal fishing closures and catch and release fishing only. Hoot-owl restrictions should be looked at annually. If there are years where the water temperatures remain low enough throughout July and August, hoot-owl restrictions may not be necessary.</p>
<p>Absolutely agree with 1) Catch and Release fishing only for Brown Trout 2) Seasonal Fishing closure from Melrose to Pennington from September 30th until 3rd Saturday in May 3) Eliminate treble hooks 4) Status Quo is not acceptable at this point regardless of questions over reason for Brown Trout decline. Angling pressure is clearly having an impact on this and other fisheries in Montana.</p>
<p>I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.</p>
<p>I think we should adopt the seasonal closure on the Bighole to protect spawning trout. The standing hoot owl restriction is not needed as there already is a drought management plan for the Bighole in place. I am for catch and release for brown trout. My biggest concern is why are we not changing the regulation to single barbless hooks (one hook per fly/lure, barbless) to reduce fish handling time? This goes hand in hand with a catch and release regulation and without this, the catch and release reg is not as effective.</p>
<p>Please close fishing on the big hole river during the hot summer months. Climate change along with all the fishing pressure the river endures is slowly adversely impacting its ability to maintain a fishery. So I guess I am supporting seasonal closers. However, make them extensive</p>
<p>Close the upper river seasonally Dickey bridge - George Grant Maiden Rock (Dead Zone) to browns bridge October 1- April 1 Catch and release only for Brown trout Barbless single hooks and no larger than size 8 And fund more projects to start fixing tributaries that are historical spawning grounds like what has happened in the lower river from Glen to the Jefferson confluence where there is not a recruitment issue after a few different tributaries spawning habitats were revived Rewrite the Recreation plan to stop forcing over crowding in high and low water scenarios</p>
<p>Since the main limiting factor for the populations are flow and temperature not angling pressure I am completely AGAINST a seasonal closure to fishing. Such a closure would limit fishing to just a few months a year with no evidence backing it being helpful. Why would anyone buy a "year long" fishing license if the rivers and streams are only open for a very few months out of the year.</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closure for all species from Sep 30 until third Saturday in May. Catch and release Fly only</p>
<p>If you truly are concerned about giving small trout the ability to grow into large trout, then the best way to do this without severely limiting angler opportunity is to close the fishery when the trout are most vulnerable - during the spawn. I am in favor of seasonal fishing closures on the Big Hole. I am not in favor of permanent hoot owl regulations because it is unnecessary to make something permanent that can easily be surgically applied under current parameters that are well established.</p>
<p>Seasonal closures of the nature suggested are over-kill and have grave consequences on business, outfitters, guides and local fishers. Catch & release is recommended and supported. And, no bait fishing would reduce mortality.</p>
<p>support seasonal fishing closures (1) Support catch and release (2)</p>
<p>Not enough people fishing during the winter to warrant fish closures. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout. Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closures and implement standing hoot-owl restrictions.</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing for brown trout, cutthroat and grayling year round. Implement hoot-owl restrictions only as necessary. There is no scientific reason to close the entire river from September 30th to the 3rd Saturday in May. This action would eliminate fishing opportunity's for local fisherman who have already been pushed off the river in the summer months due to overcrowding. Change the fishing outfitter season from the 3rd Saturday in May thru August. Global warming has created a situation where our rivers are ice free for longer periods through the winter months. The outfitting industry has been encouraging clients to book in the winter months, thus exacerbating the situation and again reducing opportunity for locals.</p>
<p>I feel that closures during spawn would be helpful dates Oct 1st to April 15th as well as catch and release for brown trout. I also believe that single hook and barbless could be beneficial.</p>

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Please accept the biologist recommendations for catch and release only on the entire river and seasonal closures on entire river below Melrose. Also single barbless hook should be added.
I support seasonal fishing closures and Hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
strongly support seasonal closure. this was recommended to the Big Hole Watershed Committee about 15 years ago but failed in subcommittee. This is long overdue to help mitigate climate change and vast increases in late fall and early spring fishing pressure. Strongly oppose catch and release for brown trout. there is no evidence that harvest of brown trout has increased or is a factor of significance in population declines. in fact comparative special regulations analysis on the Big Hole in the 1980's and 1990's indicated the opposite. this would be a needless restriction of opportunity and result in the wasteful release of fish that are obviously mortality wounded. Don't support "hoot owl" hours. you don't mitigate the 24 - 7 stress of low flow induced loss of cover, behavioral interaction, competition, predation, diminished food availability and high temperature by giving the fish "a few hours off" from the stress of catch and release fishing and boat disturbance. Angling closures are much more effective in stress reduction.
Adopt seasonal
Yes, implement seasonal closure to protect the spawn, and implement catch and release only. These will make a significant impact. Should have been done years ago.
I think it may be time to adopt closures, possibly state wide and possibly not every year, so for instance if it was on a 3 year rotation where every third year each of the rivers closed seasonally. if the big hole was closed the ruby and the Beaverhead could be open, If you close them all the guide community will scream, even if it is what needs to happen.
This can't continue as status quo, I support seasonal closures and catch and release. Hoot owl should be used as is, when water temps rise above a certain temp. Implementing that as a permanent rule will only drive traffic to other waters, increasing competition and pressure on the fisheries.
I support options 2 and 3.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Big Hole River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Big Hole River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon, Melrose, and Butte, as well as Beaverhead, Silverbow, and Madison counties. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to Protect spawning brown trout. Catch and release fishing
Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
I endorse the seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning trout
I live in Melrose and spend a lot of time on the Big Hole. I am for catch and release for brown trout. I am also for closing the river during the spawn. I am not sure it makes that much difference but we should see if it helps. I am not for closing it until the third week of May. I would close it October and November. That gives the Brown Trout plenty of time to spawn. There is hardly any fishing pressure during the winter months but it is fun for us diehards willing to brave the elements.
Seasonal closure
Seasonal closures and catch and release for browns.
Catch and release only. Adopt seasonal fishing closure.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure from October 1 through March 15 throughout the entire river. Catch and release only for all fish year around. Adopt minimal streamflows based on historical averages. Keeping water in the river is of utmost importance. Single hooked flies and lures only. No more treble hooks. No bait fishing of any sort allowed
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl would be a good step forward
I agree with adding hoot owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15 and adding a seasonal fishing closure.
In favor of seasonal fishing closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flow requirements
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Adopt seasonal closures and further reduce number of outfitters/guides who can float this river with guests, and charge an additional per boat fee like the invasive fee that nonresidents pay
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
I favor Adopt seasonal fishing closure
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
Catch and release for all trout, no fishing during the rainbow, cutty, and brown trout spawn, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS FOR ALL TROUT FISHING IN THE STATE
Strongly agree with adopting seasonal fishing closures. Strongly agree implementing catch and release. DISAGREE with standing hoot owl, and maintain current hoot owl triggers MINIMUM IN-STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!
Catch and release plus closure of spawning times until population snaps back
Adopt a seasonal closure, catch and release only, and artificial lures only. Only 1 hook allowed per lure.. No double or treble hooks.
Seasonal fishing closure
I believe this water should be catch and release only for brown trout and should also close during brown trout spawning.
Seasonal closure sounds perfect
Close the river for the spawn. People can't walk on the reds anymore.
I think closing the fishing for part of the year while fish spawn is the most logical and effective option. Let's protect the fish
Adopt closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Closure to protecting spawning trout seems to be a really good idea. I don't agree with 45 days of afternoon closures, but would rather see FW&P continue with closures based on current conditions.
Catch and release for all trout. Closed to protect spawning fish in the fall. Good ideas. Hoot owl rules should only be applied as needed. Last year the hoot owl closure on July 1 would have been a mistake. Every summer is different with regard to hoot owl.
The Big Hole River should be closed after September 30th and should be catch and release ONLY during the fishing season.
my concern is for the lower reaches of the Big hole. if we adopt the seasonal closures oct 1 to 3rd sat in may then you may as well close the lower (Notch to the confluence) river year round as they are a spring and fall fishery. The reason they are not a summer fishery is 2 fold. first water temp, the water temp is typically 4 or 5 degrees warmer on the lower big hole as compared to the melrose gauge, after mid aug. water temp is no longer the issue but low flows are, if you've got 300 cfs at melrose then there will be less than 200 cfs down low, to low to access by boat. The flow finally comes back right at the end of sept, right when the closure starts. As stated before if you adopt the seasonal closures you may as well adopt a year round closure down low on the big hole. Bob Flynn Twin Bridges

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:
Implement standing hoot owl from July 1 to August 15. I have lived near the Big Hole for 20+ years. I have personally seen the decline in fish of all species in the last few years and fully support a restriction.
I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

Supportive of catch and release fishing only. Not supportive of seasonal closure. Supportive of hoot-owl restriction. Seasonal closure is too restrictive. Consider overall angling pressure in peak season over closure.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout as well as implement hoot owl restrictions from July 1-15.
I like the catch and release only option, and the standing hoot owl option
I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.
I recommend implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions on the Big Hole.
If you truly are concerned about giving small trout the ability to grow into large trout, then the best way to do this without severely limiting angler opportunity is to close the fishery when the trout are most vulnerable - during the spawn. I am in favor of seasonal fishing closures on the Big Hole. I am not in favor of permanent hoot owl regulations because it is unnecessary to make something permanent that can easily be surgically applied under current parameters that are well established.
Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!
I think in absence of measures to ensure adequate flow and thriving stream and riparian habitat that helps maintain cool temperatures standing hoot owl restrictions should be implemented. on this river i feel that the added pressure this will create in the morning that guiding should be more regulated and allowing Montanan floaters days where the water will be less crowded.
Catch and release seems easy and should be done. Hoot owl depending on temps.
Catch and release fishing only for browns and hoot owl restrictions. Fixing the water flow is a greater issue thought.
Not enough people fishing during the winter to warrant fish closures. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout. Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
Adopt seasonal fishing closures and implement standing hoot-owl restrictions.
I support seasonal fishing closures and Hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
I support hoot owl and C&R for browns
strongly support seasonal closure. this was recommended to the Big Hole Watershed Committee about 15 years ago but failed in subcommittee. This is long overdue to help mitigate climate change and vast increases in late fall and early spring fishing pressure. Strongly oppose catch and release for brown trout. there is no evidence that harvest of brown trout has increased or is a factor of significance in population declines. in fact comparative special regulations analysis on the Big Hole in the 1980's and 1990's indicated the opposite. this would be a needless restriction of opportunity and result in the wasteful release of fish that are obviously mortality wounded. Don't support "hoot owl" hours. you don't mitigate the 24 - 7 stress of low flow induced loss of cover, behavioral interaction, competition, predation, diminished food availability and high temperature by giving the fish "a few hours off" from the stress of catch and release fishing and boat disturbance. Angling closures are much more effective in stress reduction.
I support hoot-owl restrictions. Nothing else.
This can't continue as status quo, I support seasonal closures and catch and release. Hoot owl should be used as is, when water temps rise above a certain temp. Implementing that as a permanent rule will only drive traffic to other waters, increasing competition and pressure on the fisheries.
I support options 2 and 3.
Please avoid total closure. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
Would be okay with a Hoot Owl closure , July 1 to August 15. Catch and release fishing as well as spawning considerations.
I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees as opposed to the current 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

<p>Big Hole River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Big Hole River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Dillon, Melrose, and Butte, as well as Beaverhead, Silverbow, and Madison counties. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.</p>
<p>Catch and release only/Implement Hoot owl</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.</p>
<p>I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout</p>
<p>the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.</p>
<p>Catch and release seems great option for Browns. Don't support hoot owl, stressed trout don't bite and get caught away</p>
<p>You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Big Hole and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.</p>
<p>Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Big Hole River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.</p>
<p>I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl would be a good step forward</p>
<p>I agree with adding hoot owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15 and adding a seasonal fishing closure.</p>
<p>In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.</p>
<p>Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.</p>
<p>In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.</p>
<p>Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!</p>
<p>I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.</p>
<p>I am for the recommended Hoot Owl restrictions. I am also for catch and release only. I am hesitant to say I am for fishing</p>
<p>First, consult with FWP biologists and ask them what they think the course of action should be. If I had to pick, I'd try catch and release for browns and hoot owl from July 1 to Aug 15.</p>
<p>Strongly agree with adopting seasonal fishing closures. Strongly agree implementing catch and release. DISAGREE with standing hoot owl, and maintain current hoot owl triggers MINIMUM IN-STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!!</p>

Catch and release for all trout. Closed to protect spawning fish in the fall. Good ideas. Hoot owl rules should only be applied as needed. Last year the hoot owl closure on July 1 would have been a mistake. Every summer is different with regard to hoot owl.

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:

No bait, and single hook would also help. Found a dead brown last week that had obviously been foul hooked by a treble hook.

I am in full support of catch and release for Brown trout. Not in support of a seasonal closure but would rather see FWP lower the possession limit from 5 to 3 trout for the entire stretch. I would also recommend enforcing or mandating single hook lures, or barbless hook lures. 3-prong hook spinners (panther martin, Rappala) do more damage than any other means of catching fish! There is no reason for them.

Close season during spawning, no treble hooks

Need to proceed with Catch and Release for Browns only on the entire Big Hole and eliminate Treble Hooks. Also a seasonal closure Sept 30th for sections of the river should be implemented. Melrose to Pennington makes the most sense.

I think it should be barbless hooks, artificial only, catch and release for browns. This would include both spin fishing and flies. And, seasonal restrictions to protect spawning browns.

I support all new regulations and suggest Tenkara Only fishing portions of the Big Hole.

The brown trout should be protected during spawning. The water is low and warm and the fish are easily accessible. The brown trout spawn starts in early October through mid November. I don't think that closing the river in the spring is necessary as there are very few anglers and the water is high, cold, and muddy. This protects the eggs in the spring. Bait fishing should be illegal. When fish eat bait they often swallow the hook which is fatal whether they are released or not. Treble hooks are also hard on fish and unnecessary. Single barbless hooks would also help with fish mortality. Standing hootowl restrictions are silly. When the water is cold and there is plenty of it the fish are not stressed, and less susceptible to fatal catch and release. Lowering the temp on hoot owl would help. Currently hoot owl is put on after the river reaches 73 for 3 days in a row, the fish are already dying at this point. The restrictions could be put on at 70 degrees, which would reduce mortality.

I believe the catch and release for Brown Trout and standing Hoot Owl regulations would be helpful, but as long as people keep fishing with bait and treble hooks, the fish will die anyways after being caught. Please also consider implementing fly-fishing only sections since those hooks won't tear out a trout's gills when being removed.

I have fished the big hole for over forty years and have personally witnessed the fall spawn carnage. Bait fisherman throwing egg sacks on top of the redds, then milking the females of their eggs in order to get more eggs for steelhead fishing etc. These guys will typically catch 50 fish in a day and this is not an exaggeration. I have also witnessed guides stacking clients next to each other standing in spawning runs fishing egg patterns, so they are also complicit. So the fall closure is an absolute no brainer! Should have been done years ago! I am also for closing season till may, until there is improvement. Catch and release for browns all the time, is another no brainer. If you want to keep fish, go to a stocked lake. You also need to make it mandatory to use a single barbless hook. There are a lot of rapala guys catching a lot of fish and never pinching a barb. These lures have 6 hooks and the only way these guys remove them is by large pliers and using force. Make them remove all hooks but one and make them barbless. I am all for implementing hoot owl restrictions until there is a solid improvement of the fishery! You decision makers need to make the hard choices for the future of the fishery and not be scared of the special interest of a few outfitters/businesses!

Protect the browns by closing the river Oct 1. Catch and release only on the Big Hole River. Artificial only would be a big help too.

1)I would like to see the Big hole regulated as it was years ago, meaning close it from Wise River to Melrose COMPLETELY, no fishing NOV 30 to the Third Saturday in May 2)I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the Big Hole is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning Desperate times call for desperate measures

I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Big Hole River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.

Big Hole River Survey Comments

I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
implement the top three above. In addition use single barbless hooks on lures,
Absolutely agree with 1)Catch and Release fishing only for Brown Trout2)Seasonal Fishing closure from Melrose to Pennington from September 30th until 3rd Saturday in May3)Eliminate treble hooks 4) Status Quo is not acceptable at this point regardless of questions over reason for Brown Trout decline. Angling pressure is clearly having an impact on this and other fisheries in Montana.
I think we should adopt the seasonal closure on the Bighole to protect spawning trout. The standing hoot owl restriction is not needed as there already is a drought management plan for the Bighole in place. I am for catch and release for brown trout. My biggest concern is why are we not changing the regulation to single barbless hooks (one hook per fly/lure, barbless) to reduce fish handling time? This goes hand in hand with a catch and release regulation and without this, the catch and release reg is not as effective.
Close the upper river seasonally Dickey bridge - George Grant Maiden Rock (Dead Zone) to browns bridge October 1- April 1 Catch and release only for Brown trout Barbless single hooks and no larger than size 8 And fund more projects to start fixing tributaries that are historical spawning grounds like what has happened in the lower river from Glen to the Jefferson confluence where there is not a recruitment issue after a few different tributaries spawning habitats were revived Rewrite the Recreation plan to stop forcing over crowding in high and low water scenarios
Seasonal fishing closure for all species from Sep 30 until third Saturday in May. Catch and release Fly only
Seasonal closures of the nature suggested are over-kill and have grave consequences on business, outfitters, guides and local fishers. Catch & release is recommended and supported. And, no bait fishing would reduce mortality.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout, no treble hooks
I feel that closures during spawn would be helpful dates Oct 1st to April 15th as well as catch and release for brown trout. I also believe that single hook and barbless could be beneficial.
No treble hooks or bait fishing on any stretch of the big hole. People don't know how fragile trout are. Everything above needs to happen on the big hole .
Please accept the biologist recommendations for catch and release only on the entire river and seasonal closures on entire river below Melrose. Also single barbless hook should be added.
Seasonal closure of certain sections makes sense to keep people away from the redds. Catch and release would be fine with me. As would a debarbing hooks requirement. Automatic Hoot Owl would be fine but why not through 8/31 and also, provide the option of not putting Hoot Owl in effect during high runoff, cold water years.
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only for brown trout; and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15. I also support the use of barbless hooks which will make it much easier to release fish.
Fully support all catchand release for brown trout on Big Hole and seasonal closures for spawning. Would also like to see use of barbless hooks mandated. Standing hoot owl restrictions also a good idea.
1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout.. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks or single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15. Status quo is not an option.
No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure from October 1 through March 15 throughout the entire river. Catch and release only for all fish year around. Adopt minimal streamflows based on historical averages. Keeping water in the river is of utmost importance. Single hooked flies and lures only. No more treble hooks. No bait fishing of any sort allowed
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies or lures containing one single barbless hook.
I support all but please add Barbless Hooks Only if not already done so
Catch and release for all trout, no fishing during the rainbow, cutty, and brown trout spawn, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS FOR ALL TROUT FISHING IN THE STATE
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
Adopt a seasonal closure, catch and release only, and artificial lures only. Only 1 hook allowed per lure.. No double or treble hooks.

People fishing the spawn are fewer and much more limited to the massive quantities of people throwing panther martins, repalas, etc. with multiple treble hooks that if not kill, seriously injur majority of the fish that are hooked up. A single hook with an egg does SIGNIFICANTLY less damage to a fish than any options that are used spin fishing. If you want to seriously get to this problem then the use of treble hooks needs to be addressed. Those fish get pounded May-July with treble hooks on spinners with no pinched barbs. Implementation of hoot owl on the entire river from July-August 15 seems like a grasp at straws. Multiple days at water levels at 73 degrees is more of a death sentence on trout. You have the resources to take temperature readings at stream gauges, use them. But instead of 73 degrees, it should be closer to 68-70. That way, instead of automatic hoot owl, let the river and resources dictate the implementation.

BARBLESS HOOKS!

All rivers should be catch and release and single barbless hook. Single barbless means less time out of the water for the fish resulting in better survival rates.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:

I have been fishing the Big Hole for some time. I have not seen a decline in the fishery w/ plenty of fish of all sizes, large and small and I think the regulations should remain .as is. Fishing from October thruMay gives me the opportunity to get on the river when it is not crowded which is something many of us residents enjoy.

I regularly fish this river and recommend maintaining the status quo. I haven't seen the problem that you are describing. Current regulations provide for hoot owl closures, as needed. There is no need for standing closure schedules, harvest limitations, or least of all Sep-May closures. Such spawning closures already limit access today to the Boulder of the Jefferson and Prickly Pear of the Missouri.

Fine as is

Since Department personnel have said fishing activity likely has little to do with the current brown trout situation, I oppose all your proposed options unless they can be verified by science as beneficial.

I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.

Status quo

Status quo

Status quo

Status quo

Status quo

status quo, since brown trout

Other

Enter your comments for the Big Hole River:

Non native Brown trout are direct competition for the NATIVE grayling. The Brown trouts' only purpose In the Big Hole is so the floaters can fight a big fish. Their decline is probably due to the overfishing on the big hole which is constantly over 68 degrees F. Please let the grayling recover so my 1 year old daughter can see them in their native habitat before they're gone.

you poisoned 40 miles of tributaries and wonder why the fish numbers are down. maybe look at your past policies, take responsibility and apologize to the public land owners of this state

Given the 2021 current discharge and drought conditions I believe the river should be ENTIRELY CLOSED to all fishing this year. Give the fish a break.

I wade fished the Big Hole June 19-21, 2021 and was appalled at the traffic on guided fishing and recreational floating on the river which was so low, I could wade across it just above Maiden Rock. I am not isolationist by any means however the commercialization of fishing with shops, guides and boats is putting incredible pressure on an already stressed system in this year's dry conditions.

have record cold subzero lows in october 2019 and 2020 possibly affected spawning succes and younger brown trout?

Some additional regulation my be needed on the "lower" Big Hole River (Divide Bridge south) but not the "Upper" Big Hole River - the Brown Trout that have invaded the upper river reaches are displacing the historical species: Brood Trout, Grayling, Whitefish, and Rainbows.

The Big Hole River and it's fish deserve better water conditions (flow and quality) throughout the year.

Year to year river conditions are not considered when it comes to irrigation

I have fished the Big Hole from 1970 through this year. With ranchers pulling water and low snow years combined with too many anglers, fish populations are under stress and this should be considered when focusng on any new regulations

Let's give the fish a break, love fishing but the heat is tough in ANY trout let alone the Brown trout!
Limited guides and guide trips on the river.
Why not use the decline in the Brown trout as a tool for expanding efforts to restore Arctic grayling and cutthroat within the river above Divide.
Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.
Set minimum flow standards
Since millions of dollars have been spent trying to bolster the grayling population in the Big Hole, I do not believe we want to encourage growth within the brown trout population.
Regulate! Especially out of state
As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.
Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.
Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.
You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.
All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.
Minimum streamflow requirements as well.
I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.
I have caught more browns this year than in the last 15 years. I fish 1 to 2 times a week. Bait selection is key. Worms in the deep holes. They aren't after flies this year due to weather and low stream flows. Irrigation has hurt the stream more than hot weather this year. Pivots hurt ground saturation water can't return to streams like flood irrigation does. Cut irrigation down a little and implement hoot owl please. keep regs same.
Close river to floating by July 1st.
Closed to wading/ non residents during spawning periods. Boaters and guides only after September
I am in support of implementing the following rules: -single, barbless hooks only -mandatory "no fishing" when river reaches 67 degrees. (Instead of hoot owl, you just aren't allowed to fish when river gets to 67, whatever time of day that maybe and whatever time of year that may be.) -adopt seasonal closure for spawning time in the fall. Most importantly, please fund a task force made up of biologists to fully investigate water quality, fungus, herbicides, and potential disease in the Big Hole River. Base the new rules off science. If there is something we can fix, great! if it's overfishing, that's an easy fix - limit fishing. If it's a disease or water quality issue we need to fix it.
Who's going to reimburse the Guides for less hours allowed on the river? First you build dams along Mill Creek highway to poison our creeks and now this. Who's the liberal that's trying to ruin Montana?
The problem is too obvious. Too many fishermen. To believe that you can catch and release 40 fish a day per fly fisherman and not effect the numbers is pure fantasy. If the goal is to have 1,000 floaters per mile the present course is on target.
Looking at the significant increase in fishing pressure and the proliferation of guides/outfitters on the river over the last decade, the decline of fish numbers is not surprising. I find it hard to believe that this is not a primary factor in the fish number decline. The primary concern should be for the "resource" and not whether any change will affect the outfitting/guiding business. This industry should not dictate what happens to our fishing --- they have a biased conflict of interest and lack objectivity. Do what's best for the fish and the river!!

Boulder River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):
Again, completely agree with angling restrictions. I would also like to see this river protected. It is an incredible and under valued resource and it is heartbreaking to float it and see a ranch taking the liberty to drive an excavator through the river to divert 90% of the flow into a headgate by destroying the river bottom and placing concrete highway dividers in the river.
Implement all regulatory proposals above.
Adopt all suggested changes.
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Boulder River I though the lower river was closed on 9/30 but that may have been in the past. I'm OK with that. Catch and Release = sure Standing Hoot Owl - likely necessary since no dam is in place.
I support all the above options except Status Quo.
For Boulder I support all actions
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.
Spawning restrictions, catch and release for brown trout, and hoot owl closures.
Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.
I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
I believe all the options should be implemented on different sections of the Boulder to provide for a better experimental window of preserving and bolstering brown trout numbers.
I agree with all of FWP's options except Status Quo.
Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.
Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the Bolder River's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release only, and standing hoot owl
All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only.
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Boulder. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows

Boulder River Survey Comments

All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.
All are good changes
I support new protective regulations
You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated.
Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
Adopt all proposals— do not wait for things to worsen more than they have.
I am in favor of three options for the Boulder River
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT status quo
Seasonal closing, catch and release and hoot owl restrictions all should be implemented.
I'd abide by the recommendations of the FWP biologists for the Boulder.
agree with all
Adopt seasonal fishing closure; catch and release fishing; implement hoot-owl on the Boulder River

Catch and Release

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):
The Boulder river is a gem that can be protected as it is mostly wade accessible with little to no guided float traffic. However it should be totally catch and release as well as dry fly only. Catch and release only with artificial only (either spinning or flies). Barbless hooks, and I would endorse seasonal restrictions for spawning browns.
I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hook, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning
First of all we need to listen to our biologist. Protecting the spawning is a great idea and closures from September 30th through May 15th is a great idea with catch and release
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list as catch and release only. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
Catch and release only

Boulder River Survey Comments

Having seen what happens to the boulder river during the summer and the drastic change that occurs when draft begins for irrigation it is clear that the only real way to enact change is to reduce irrigation use. Limiting fishing opportunities will not do this. The only change I am in favor of is making the river catch and release for browns. Leave the river open to fishing year round.

Seasonal Catch and release only Hoot owl Fly only

Catch & release for all trout.

Catch and release, single hook and barbless closure Oct 1 To April 15th.

Should be catch and release for all fish on that river, not only brown trout! Very few brown trout upstream of the town of Boulder.

Catch and Release is a good option

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout.

Boulder River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing only for brown trout

Catch and release

Legislation is needed for minimum stream flows. I am in favor of catch and release at this time.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

Boulder River Survey Comments

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.
Catch and release brown trout
Catch and release
You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Boulder and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.
Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Boulder River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Catch and release only
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.
C&R for browns on Boulder
Catch and release, minimum stream flows.
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!" catch and release for brown trout
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release and Seasonal Closure to protect spawning if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!

Boulder River Survey Comments

Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure (which already exists on portions of this river), open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
Same as big hole Seasonal closures yes C&R yes Standing hoot owl- no Me Maintain current thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!
Catch and release
I fish the Boulder River below Town of Basin Mt. Catch and release with flies. Fished this stream for 50 years. I believe the hoot owl restrictions should be in place on this stream with catch and release on brown trout in all streams where the fish count is below normal habitat numbers. Fwp fish restoration projects are a cause of low brown trout numbers. If you want to interduce west slope cutthroat, then do this without damaging the population of the other fish, which I have been catching for 60 years in Montana waters. Poisoning streams to lower brook trout, brown trout, others has caused a drop in fish per mile on major streams, and rivers. This is very obvious in the bighole, and Madison, where the streams that feed both rivers have fish restoration projects. That have. Caused damage to fish numbers. Back on track! Adapt seasonal fish closures to protect spawning.

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):
Include spawning closure and seasonal restrictions
Catch and release only with artificial only (either spinning or flies). Barbless hooks, and I would endorse seasonal restrictions for spawning browns.
I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hook, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning
First of all we need to listen to our biologist. Protecting the spawning is a great idea and closures from September 30th through May 15th is a great idea with catch and release
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list as catch and release only. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.

Boulder River Survey Comments

I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks
2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)

Having fished this river for years, I have a lot to say about this river. Almost like clockwork, the second week of June this river gets hammered by irrigation needs. Thus river used to fish incredible being able to boost over 100 fish days in times past history. Now, once the second week of June hits, it is obliterated. This river has significant spawning grounds for fish from the Jefferson, with large numbers of browns coming upriver to spawn. It should be closed September 30. Something HAS to be done about the amount of irrigation that is allowed.

I think both hoot owl and seasonal closures are appropriate here. The main issue on this river is excess sediments that are affecting spawning habitat, a lack of riparian vegetation, and an overwidening and shallowing of the stream. until these are corrected through restoration and protection seasonal closures and hoot owls will help.

Seasonal closure

Catch and release, single hook and barbless closure Oct 1 To April 15th.

No treble hooks no bait fishing river wide. The Jeff reaches well above 70 every year and gets looked over it's always the last to get out on hoot owl. This river will never be safe until the irrigation is curbed. There's no reason on the worst drought year that they need to be still irrigating... they have insurance for years like this. Boulder needs to be closed all winter from oct1-March 1.

I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.

Adopt seasonal fishing closures

Smaller river in basin, to me makes sense to close seasonally

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Boulder River Survey Comments

<p>Boulder River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing only for brown trout</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.</p>
<p>I endorse seasonal fishing closure</p>
<p>Seasonal closure</p>
<p>You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Boulder and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.</p>
<p>Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only</p>
<p>Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout</p>
<p>No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.</p>
<p>I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.</p>
<p>seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible</p>
<p>I agree with a seasonal closure during spawning season and adding hoot owl restrictions</p>
<p>I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.</p>
<p>In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release and Seasonal Closure to protect spawning if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.</p>
<p>implement seasonal closures, and reduce guides/outfitter pressure. Fish photos kill fish and guides dont care</p>
<p>Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.</p>
<p>I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.</p>
<p>Hi favor adopting seasonal fishing closures</p>

Boulder River Survey Comments

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!

I am opposed to the seasonal closure (which already exists on portions of this river), open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Same as big hole Seasonal closures yes C&R yes Standing hoot owl- no Me Maintain current thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!

Seasonal fishing closure

Seasonal fishing closure

I fish the Boulder River below Town of Basin Mt. Catch and release with flies. Fished this stream for 50 years. I believe the hoot owl restrictions should be in place on this stream with catch and release on brown trout in all streams where the fish count is below normal habitat numbers. Fwp fish restoration projects are a cause of low brown trout numbers. If you want to interduce west slope cutthroat, then do this without damaging the population of the other fish, which I have been catching for 60 years in Montana waters. Poisoning streams to lower brook trout, brown trout, others has caused a drop in fish per mile on major streams, and rivers. This is very obvious in the big hole, and Madison, where the streams that feed both rivers have fish restoration projects. That have. Caused damage to fish numbers. Back on track! Adapt seasonal fish closures to protect spawning.

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):

I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list as catch and release only. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.

Boulder River Survey Comments

<p>I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)</p>
<p>Seasonal Catch and release only Hoot owl Fly only</p>
<p>I think both hoot owl and seasonal closures are appropriate here. The main issue on this river is excess sediments that are affecting spawning habitat, a lack of riparian vegetation, and an overwidening and shallowing of the stream. until these are corrected through restoration and protection seasonal closures and hoot owls will help.</p>
<p>I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.</p>
<p>Hoot owl</p>
<p>Implement hoot-owl</p>
<p>Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.</p>
<p>I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.</p>
<p>I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.</p>
<p>Boulder River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.</p>
<p>the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.</p>

Boulder River Survey Comments

<p>You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Boulder and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.</p>
<p>Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Boulder River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.</p>
<p>No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.</p>
<p>I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.</p>
<p>seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible</p>
<p>I agree with a seasonal closure during spawning season and adding hoot owl restrictions</p>
<p>In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release and Seasonal Closure to protect spawning if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.</p>
<p>Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.</p>
<p>In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.</p>
<p>Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!</p>
<p>I am opposed to the seasonal closure (which already exists on portions of this river), open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.</p>
<p>I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.</p>
<p>Same as big hole Seasonal closures yes C&R yes Standing hoot owl- no Me Maintain current thresholds MINIMUM IN STREAM FLOW LEGISLATION!!!</p>
<p>I fish the Boulder River below Town of Basin Mt. Catch and release with flies. Fished this stream for 50 years. I believe the hoot owl restrictions should be in place on this stream with catch and release on brown trout in all streams where the fish count is below normal habitat numbers. Fwp fish restoration projects are a cause of low browntrout numbers. If you want to interduce west slope cutthroat, then do this without damaging the population of the other fish, which I have been catching for 60 years in Montana waters. Poisoning streams to lower brooktout,browntrout ,others has caused a drop in fish per mile on major streams, and rivers. This is very obvious in the bighole,and Madison, where the streams that feed both rivers have fish restoration projects. That have. Caused damage to fish numbers. Back on track! Adapt seasonal fish closures to protect spawning .</p>

Boulder River Survey Comments

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):

The Boulder river is a gem that can be protected as it is mostly wade accessible with little to no guided float traffic. However it should be totally catch and release as well as dry fly only. Catch and release only with artificial only (either spinning or flies). Barbless hooks, and I would endorse seasonal restrictions for spawning browns.

I agree with catch and release for brown trout, I agree with barbless hook, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning

I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)

Seasonal Catch and release only Hoot owl Fly only

Catch and release, single hook and barbless closure Oct 1 To April 15th.

No treble hooks no bait fishing river wide. The Jeff reaches well above 70 every year and gets looked over it's always the last to get out on hoot owl. This river will never be safe until the irrigation is curbed. There's no reason on the worst drought year that they need to be still irrigating... they have insurance for years like this. Boulder needs to be closed all winter from oct1-March 1.

Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!

No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.

All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only.

Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):

I regularly fish this river and recommend maintaining the status quo. I haven't seen the problem that you are describing. Current regulations provide for hoot owl closures, as needed. There is no need for standing closure schedules, harvest limitations, or least of all Sep-May closures. Such spawning closures already limit access today to the Boulder of the Jefferson and Prickly Pear of the Missouri.

I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.

Boulder River Survey Comments

Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Other
Enter your comments for the Boulder River (tributary to the Jefferson):
How do you fight farmers, especially on this river. Go look at the random diversions that have been put in the Boulder. There's one in particular a Cardwell just up from the kiosk and bridge.
Stopping the chronic dewatering is a good start.
See previous comments, I think we are well past the time that our rivers can consistently run at minimum flows and expect the fish populations to endure these conditions every year, attributing their decline to anything else in order to not discuss water levels
Having seen what happens to the boulder river during the summer and the drastic change that occurs when draft begins for irrigation it is clear that the only real way to enact change is to reduce irrigation use. Limiting fishing opportunities will not do this. The only change I am in favor of is making the river catch and release for browns. Leave the river open to fishing year round.
Having fished thus river for years, I have a lot to say about this river. Almost like clockwork, the second week of June this river gets hammered by irrigation needs. Thus river used to fish incredible being able to boost over 100 fish days in times past history. Now, once the second week of June hits, it is obliterated. This river has significant spawning grounds for fish from the Jefferson, with large numbers of browns coming upriver to spawn. It should be closed September 30. Something HAS to be done about the amount of irrigation that is allowed.
Again, completely agree with angling restrictions. I would also like to see this river protected. It is an incredible and under valued resource and it is heartbreaking to float it and see a ranch taking the liberty to drive an excavator through the river to divert 90% of the flow into a headgate by destroying the river bottom and placing concrete highway dividers in the river.
Follow biologist recommendations.
Pursuing more instream flows are the key.
Set minimum flow standards
Regulate
As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.
Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.
Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.

You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.

Minimum streamflow requirements.

I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.

I believe the Boulder is closed for the spawn. Another river where water flows can be an issue. Trout don't like living in rivers that are barely a trickle.

Madison River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the Madison River:

I support all of these options, other than status quo. Consider implementing hoot-owl restrictions on an annual basis instead of a standing restriction.
I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.
I support implementing options 1-3. The status quo is not working.
I agree with all angling restrictions on the Madison as well. Additionally I think the upper and lower stretches should be fully opened to float fishing better distribute boat traffic and angling pressure.
I support seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only; and implementing hoot-howl restrictions.
I believe that these three restrictions are necessary to implement to prevent a crash in the brown trout population
I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.
please implement all three
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout (and hopefully other species), catch and release fishing only for brown trout under 20", implement standing hootowl restriction from July 1-September 1.
definitely for the Madison - all options
Implement all of the above requested regulation changes.
Adopt all suggested changes.
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
I support all the above options except Status Quo. I also support the use of barbless hooks to lessen fish-release mortality.
For Madison I support all options listed
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
Need all of these regulations.
Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.
I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
I agree with all of FWP's options except Status Quo.
Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release, and implement standing hoot-owl
All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
Catch and release, minimum stream flows, seasonal fishing closure
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Madison. While trout and river ecosystems die, irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows

Madison River Survey Comments

All are good changes
I support new protective regulations
You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
implement seasonal closures, catch and release only and hoot owl times. Further reduce number of guides and outfitters that can use river. Their attitude is if someone pays \$600 to sit their ass in one of our boats, they can damn well do what they please--per John Way
I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated. The madison could be the single most over fished river in Montana, with the exception of the Missouri, right now. You'll have to come up with some sort of lottery for fishing if you limit the hours allowed for fishing.
Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release fishing for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
Same thing here— immediately implement all proposals. Waiting will only make things worse.
i am in favor of the top three options for the Madison River
First 3 options to protect the fish
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT status quo. The Madison is waaaaay over-fished!
I support seasonal closures, catch and release for brown trout and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.
The regulations above are needed for healthy fish populations.

Catch and Release

Enter your comments for the Madison River:
I like the hoot owl and catch and release only option
Catch and release only all year AND hoot owl restrictions
Include all recommendations for seasonal closure and catch and release fishing only for Brown Trout.
Close section historically known for spawning habitat seasonally Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Fund more projects restoring spawning habitat for tributaries
Seasonal Catch and release
The Madison has been very resilient over the years. It wasn't that many years ago we falsely thought that whirling disease would end all rainbow fishing in the Madison as we know it. Continue catch and release fishing. While highly political, float fishing in the lower and upper wade sections, could certainly disperse pressure, and leave many angling opportunities for wading anglers. The beaverhead is much more narrow and wade anglers and boats share the river. Having dams seems to mitigate water flows much better than the freestone bighole. We know that brown numbers have dropped while rainbow numbers have done better. Other factors other than low water are making this happen and more study shod be done to determine the difference.
Catch & release for all trout.
Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!
Please rely upon actual, documented and verifiable fish statistics for making any decisions. "Public Concerns" may be misplaced and unreliable for purposes of making and implementing major regulatory changes. Please share the underlying data and scientific information on brown trout populations, historical fluctuations, and possible environmental factors. Seasonal closure of the time suggested would be devastating to local business environment and would be dramatic overkill. It would also severely and negatively impact the local fishing population who enjoy the shoulder seasons away from the summer tourist rush. Suggest catch and release, no bait, and require flies and artificial lures on all waters.

Madison River Survey Comments

Adopt Catch and release. Hoot owl when water temp is over 70. Limit out of state fishing.
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.
Catch and release fishing for browns and hoot owl restrictions. Water temps keep getting warmer and fishing pressure is insane on this river. Hoot owl restrictions are only a beginning...
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.
No enough angling pressure during that time frame to warrant a fishing closure. Virtual no mortality in the winter due to angling. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions.
The Madison should be catch and release for brown trout as it maintains access for anglers while protecting fish year-round.
Catch and release, single hook barbless closure from Oct 1 to April 15th
Madison Seasonal Closure - yes but only certain sections C&R = yes Hoot Owl - I think they're now in place on the Lower and should be. But the Upper should remain under the current rules. For example, this lowest of low water years should not result in the Upper Madison being automatically shut down on 7/1. That date is too early in most years.
Catch and release Hoot owl on the lower river
Catch and Release is a good option
Adopt seasonal fishing to protect the spawn and implement catch and release only. I have fished the Madison for over 40 years and the river is being loved to death.
I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.
Please avoid total closure. I would support Hoot Owl and C&R
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Catch and release for brown trout. Adopt seasonal closures for spawning.
catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job
In favor of catch and release for brown trout

Madison River Survey Comments

Madison River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Madison River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Ennis and West Yellowstone communities as well as Madison County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall. With the Madison River currently going through a recreation management plan process, closing the river to angling for 8 months and unwarranted hoot owl closures – especially when no such closure was ever necessary in the upper Madison – is excessive. The communities of West Yellowstone and Ennis would be greatly adversely affected by these extreme regulation changes. Lets implement moderate effective fishing regulation changes.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release/Implement hoot owl restrictions

Minimum stream flow legislation is needed. I favor catch and release. O favor catch and release. Minimum stream flow legislation is needed.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.

Catch and release brown trout

Catch and release

I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.

You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Madison and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.

Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.

Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

Catch and release only

Catch and release on all trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook. The use of dropper flies will be permitted.

C&R for browns on the Madison

Madison River Survey Comments

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
All trout should be catch and release including Browns
Seasonal closures – yes Catchin release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl-no Maintain current hoot owl triggers
Catch and release
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only for brown trout

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the Madison River:
Include all recommendations for seasonal closure and catch and release fishing only for Brown Trout.
Close brown trout fishing period for at least one year. You must get a jump start on preserving brown trout. Flattening the pressure curve is a good place to start.
Close section historically known for spawning habitat seasonally Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Fund more projects restoring spawning habitat for tributaries
The main limiting factor is temperature and stream flow. DO NOT close the river between september and may. This is the only real time to enjoy the river outside of the crowded summer season.

Madison River Survey Comments

<p>The change in regulations this year was kind of a joke. Limiting guides to the number of days they fished AFTER overfishing was already a problem? How does that take pressure off the fishery. We need season closures. That way everyone is subject to the same rules and the fish can rest up for the long summer season.</p>
<p>Seasonal fishing closure.</p>
<p>Consideration should be given to protecting spawning fish through seasonal closures on the Madison that are surgically applied to sections where spawning is prevalent.</p>
<p>Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!</p>
<p>Please rely upon actual, documented and verifiable fish statistics for making any decisions. "Public Concerns" may be misplaced and unreliable for purposes of making and implementing major regulatory changes. Please share the underlying data and scientific information on brown trout populations, historical fluctuations, and possible environmental factors. Seasonal closure of the time suggested would be devastating to local business environment and would be dramatic overkill. It would also severely and negatively impact the local fishing population who enjoy the shoulder seasons away from the summer tourist rush. Suggest catch and release, no bait, and require flies and artificial lures on all waters.</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout.</p>
<p>No enough angling pressure during that time frame to warrant a fishing closure. Virtual no mortality in the winter due to angling. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions.</p>
<p>Catch and release, single hook barbless closure from Oct 1 to April 15th</p>
<p>I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.</p>
<p>Madison Seasonal Closure - yes but only certain sections C&R = yes Hoot Owl - I think they're now in place on the Lower and should be. But the Upper should remain under the current rules. For example, this lowest of low water years should not result in the Upper Madison being automatically shut down on 7/1. That date is too early in most years.</p>
<p>fishing closure and standing hoot-owl</p>
<p>Adopt seasonal fishing to protect the spawn and implement catch and release only. I have fished the Madison for over 40 years and the river is being loved to death.</p>
<p>seasonal closure will push a lot of use to other rivers, not going to decrease use, so the closure needs to be widespread and perhaps on a rotational basis so commercial interests have some where to take clients on the years when the Mad Closes. I don't want them on my home streams but they will spread out if locked out</p>
<p>Please avoid total closure. I would support Hoot Owl and C&R</p>
<p>Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.</p>
<p>I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.</p>
<p>Catch and release for brown trout. Adopt seasonal closures for spawning.</p>
<p>I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.</p>

Madison River Survey Comments

Madison River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Madison River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Ennis and West Yellowstone communities as well as Madison County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall. With the Madison River currently going through a recreation management plan process, closing the river to angling for 8 months and unwarranted hoot owl closures – especially when no such closure was ever necessary in the upper Madison – is excessive. The communities of West Yellowstone and Ennis would be greatly adversely affected by these extreme regulation changes. Lets implement moderate effective fishing regulation changes.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only

Minimum flow standards. July through September closure

Seasonal closure

I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.

Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.

Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1.

Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.

seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible

I agree with a seasonal closure and hoot owl restrictions for the Madison river.

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.

Protect spawning and catch and release only.

Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

Madison River Survey Comments

I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
I favor adopting fishing seasonal closures
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Seasonal closures – yes Catchin release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl-no Maintain current hoot owl triggers
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only for brown trout
Seasonal fishing closure

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the Madison River:
I like the hoot owl and catch and release only option
Catch and release only all year AND hoot owl restrictions
Are the brown trout in trouble on the Madison? Closures are probably necessary for below Ennis Lake. Single barbless hooks should be also implemented to support the catch and release regulation. Hoot owl regulations should be imposed when water temps exceed 68 F.
Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions on the Madison.
Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!
I think in absence of measures to ensure adequate flow and thriving stream and riparian habitat that helps maintain cool temperatures standing hoot owl restrictions should be implemented. on this river i feel that the added pressure this will create in the morning that guiding should be more regulated and allowing Montanan floaters days where the water will be less crowded.
Adopt Catch and release. Hoot owl when water temp is over 70. Limit out of state fishing.
Catch and release fishing for browns and hoot owl restrictions. Water temps keep getting warmer and fishing pressure is insane on this river. Hoot owl restrictions are only a beginning...
No enough angling pressure during that time frame to warrant a fishing closure. Virtual no mortality in the winter due to angling. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout
Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions.
I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.

Madison River Survey Comments

<p>Madison Seasonal Closure - yes but only certain sections C&R = yes Hoot Owl - I think they're now in place on the Lower and should be. But the Upper should remain under the current rules. For example, this lowest of low water years should not result in the Upper Madison being automatically shut down on 7/1. That date is too early in most years.</p>
<p>Catch and release Hoot owl on the lower river</p>
<p>fishing closure and standing hoot-owl</p>
<p>I support the hoot-owl restrictions. I do NOT support any of the other proposals.</p>
<p>Do NOT adopt hoot owl as a permanent measure on the measure, use as it currently exists.</p>
<p>I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.</p>
<p>Please avoid total closure. I would support Hoot Owl and C&R</p>
<p>I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.</p>
<p>Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.</p>
<p>I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.</p>
<p>I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.</p>
<p>Madison River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the Madison River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Ennis and West Yellowstone communities as well as Madison County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall. With the Madison River currently going through a recreation management plan process, closing the river to angling for 8 months and unwarranted hoot owl closures – especially when no such closure was ever necessary in the upper Madison – is excessive. The communities of West Yellowstone and Ennis would be greatly adversely affected by these extreme regulation changes. Lets implement moderate effective fishing regulation changes.</p>
<p>Catch and release/Implement hoot owl restrictions</p>

Madison River Survey Comments

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Madison and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.
Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Madison River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.
seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible
I agree with a seasonal closure and hoot owl restrictions for the Madison river.
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Seasonal closures – yes Catchin release for brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl-no Maintain current hoot owl triggers

Gear Restriction

Madison River Survey Comments

Enter your comments for the Madison River:
No spin fishing Limit guide fishing
Are the brown trout in trouble on the Madison? Closures are probably necessary for below Ennis Lake. Single barbless hooks should be also implemented to support the catch and release regulation. Hoot owl regulations should be imposed when water temps exceed 68 F.
Close section historically known for spawning habitat seasonally Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Fund more projects restoring spawning habitat for tributaries
Please rely upon actual, documented and verifiable fish statistics for making any decisions. "Public Concerns" may be misplaced and unreliable for purposes of making and implementing major regulatory changes. Please share the underlying data and scientific information on brown trout populations, historical fluctuations, and possible environmental factors. Seasonal closure of the time suggested would be devastating to local business environment and would be dramatic overkill. It would also severely and negatively impact the local fishing population who enjoy the shoulder seasons away from the summer tourist rush. Suggest catch and release, no bait, and require flies and artificial lures on all waters.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.
I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.
Catch and release, single hook barbless closure from Oct 1 to April 15th
I support all the above options except Status Quo. I also support the use of barbless hooks to lessen fish-release mortality.
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only
No live bait, no treble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
Catch and release on all trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook. The use of dropper flies will be permitted.
All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the Madison River:
Status Quo
I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.
Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
STATUS QUO - DO NOT FURTHER RESTRICT FISHING OPPORTUNITY!
Status Quo

Other
Enter your comments for the Madison River:
No spin fishing Limit guide fishing
The Madison has been very resilient over the years. It wasn't that many years ago we falsely thought that whirling disease would end all rainbow fishing in the Madison as we know it. Continue catch and release fishing. While highly political, float fishing in the lower and upper wade sections, could certainly disperse pressure, and leave many angling opportunities for wading anglers. The beaverhead is much more narrow and wade anglers and boats share the river. Having dams seems to mitigate water flows much better than the freestone bighole. We know that brown numbers have dropped while rainbow numbers have done better. Other factors other than low water are making this happen and more study shod be done to determine the difference.
The change in regulations this year was kind of a joke. Limiting guides to the number of days they fished AFTER overfishing was already a problem? How does that take pressure off the fishery. We need season closures. That way everyone is subject to the same rules and the fish can rest up for the long summer season.
Same as Yellowstone. Friends who come to fish spend \$500-700 per day. Another \$200 to make up for less guides will not stop them!
I think in absence of measures to ensure adequate flow and thriving stream and riparian habitat that helps maintain cool temperatures standing hoot owl restrictions should be implemented. on this river i feel that the added pressure this will create in the morning that guiding should be more regulated and allowing Montanan floaters days where the water will be less crowded.
support the first two measures or options
Close section to guides. Limit the # of guides allowed on the river in July and August.
Adopt Catch and release. Hoot owl when water temp is over 70. Limit out of state fishing.
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.
The Madison desperately needs regulations I'm a full time guide and I want to see regs put on even if it hurts my season. The rivers health is more important. That poor river is getting raped and pillaged. We need similar restrictions as the big hole. Only 2 boats per outfitter per launch etc..
Keep the brown trout below Ennis Lake and use this down fall in population to restore WCT into the system.
Follow biologist recommendations.
In addition the number of fishermen with or without guides needs to be limited.
I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.
Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.
Minimum stream flow legislation is needed. I favor catch and release. O favor catch and release. Minimum stream glow legislation is needed.
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
Minimum flow standards. July through September closure
Regulate

Madison River Survey Comments

Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Madison River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.

Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the Madison River's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.

As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.

Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.

Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.

Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.

The best thing FWP can do on the Madison besides leasing water for instream flows is to get rid of the useless Ennis dam. It produces very little electricity, backs up a world-famous trout stream into a shallow lake with warm water fish in it and then sends HOT water downstream, basically eliminating the ability of the lower Madison to achieve the blue ribbon status on 40 MILES of river. It's outrageous, has been going on for far too long and there's simply no reason not to move ahead and begin negotiations to remove the dam and restore the Madison. Given the ever-hotter and longer summers, closing fishing won't do anything for the river or the fish. You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.

PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Madison. While trout and river ecosystems die, irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.

All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.

We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!" catch and release for brown trout

Minimum streamflow requirements

implement seasonal closures, catch and release only and hoot owl times. Further reduce number of guides and outfitters that can use river. Their attitude is if someone pays \$600 to sit their ass in one of our boats, they can damn well do what they please--per John Way

Madison River Survey Comments

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated. The madison could be the single most over fished river in Montana, with the exception of the Missouri, right now. You'll have to come up with some sort of lottery for fishing if you limit the hours allowed for fishing.

I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.

the first three and minimum stream flow legislation

This was my home river almost a half century ago. It was filled with healthy trout that spawned freely in the channels, housed a strong population of rainbows that migrated up from the lake and never felt like a bumper car ride. While the outfitting/guide community has managed to convince FWP to defer any regulation for the next few years, it is not in the public interest to function like an ostrich with respect to a drainage that has rightfully held an international reputation for nearly a century. Respectfully, the number of guides and float days has to be curtailed to a manageable level. True also of privates. The experience of fishing the Madison has lost all aesthetic value, not to mention have to tolerate the discourteous behavior that invariably comes with overcrowded conditions. There is never a reason to hook and handle a spawning fish. Ever.

The Madison gets a lot of fishing pressure. I'd follow the recommendations of FWP biologists. Even though I love fishing and think I know something about it, they are fishery professionals know much more about fisheries than I do.

Ruby River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:

I support implementing options 1-3. The status quo is not working.
Again, I am completely for these angling restrictions to protect the Ruby. Equally important though, I believe a safe minimum flows should be established and enforced. It's borderline criminal that 400 CFS should be released from the dam and only 10 CFS reach the Beaverhead.
I support seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout; catch and release fishing only; and implementing hoot-howl restrictions.
I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.
please implement all three
agree with all options
Implement all proposed regulatory changes.
Adopt all suggested changes .
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
This river needs protection from irrigation more than anything. But all the above are only going to help it.
I support all of the above options except Status Quo
For ruby I support all actions
Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!
All of the above, especially minimum streamflow regulations. MT is in a moderate drought, yet its trout stream are already dry? Dewatered to feed cattle.
Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.
I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.
Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the Ruby River fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
Adopt seasonal closure, catch and release only and hoot owl
All but status quo. Please add barbless hooks only.
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Ruby. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
All are good
I support new protective regulations

Ruby River Survey Comments

You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated. The Ruby is in rough shape as it is and in need of serious restoration all at the same time that it is being pounded on by anglers. I'm an angler and I hate to see it. Fishing used to be good in southwest montana. We've almost destroyed it.
Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
Same thing—I support all the proposals you are offering up.
I am in favor of three options for the Big Hole
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT stats quo
same as above for the Big Hole but obviously dewatering is a major issue. 50 cfs at the mouth will undoubtedly have a tremendously adverse impact not only on recruiting fish but on biomass. Again, I advocate a year long moratorium and a concerted effort to assist water users in H2O conservation.
agree with all
Adopt seasonal fishing closure; catch and release; and implement hoot-owl for the Big Hole and Ruby River

Catch and Release

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:
I support seasonal closures for spawning habitat. I don't think the whole river needs to be shut down to fishing. I support catch and release for the whole river. I don't see the need for hoot-owl below the dam but it makes sense to start hoot-owl where the water starts warming up.
Yes, please adopt seasonal fishing closures in specific, known brown-trout spawning areas; yes, implement catch and release fishing for Brown Trout; and Implement a standing hoot-owl restriction from when hoot-owl triggers are met until conditions improve (typically toward the fall - Sep.15th- when evening temperatures drop)
I strongly support a fishing closure on the Ruby River from September 30th through April 1st, rather than the 3rd weekend in may. I also support turning the fishery into a catch and release fishery for all species, and would additionally recommend making the fishery single hook, no bait. If standing hoot-owl were to be implemented I would reccomend the time frame be set at August 1-September 15, or when flow metrics are achieved.
I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Supportive of catch and release. Not supportive of seasonal closure Supportive of hoot owl restrictions.
I agree with catch and release and barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
Catch and release only
The Ruby River should immediately go to catch and release regulations for Brown Trout, as should all of the affected streams. In addition only artificial lure should be allowed.
Catch and release for all fish.
Close the upper river above the Reservoir and from the Reservoir to Vigilante for spawning Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Close all tributaries for spawning
Catch & release for all trout
Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!

Ruby River Survey Comments

Seasonal closures is over-kill. Recommend catch & release only, and no bait fishing. Artificial flies and lures only.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.
Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant fishing closures during that time frame. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
Catch and release, single hook barbless closing Oct 1st to April 15th.
These comments are for the Ruby. Seasonal fishing closure is not needed on the Ruby. Catch and release - OK. Standing Hoot Owl = no unless you're only talking about the lower (below Duncan District). Otherwise the existing regs are fine.
Fully support all catchand release for brown trout on Big Hole and seasonal closures for spawning. Would also like to see use of barbless hooks mandated. Standing hoot owl restrictions also a good idea.
Catch and release and hoot owl
Adopt seasonal closure to protect the spawn, and implement catch and release for all species of trout. Should have been implemented years ago. The fishing pressure on the stream below the dam is unbelievable today. I have fished that stretch for over 20 years, there is significant pressure, even during the spawn.
With the smaller size and limited public access it seems seasonal closures as well as catch and release make sense, hoot owl should be managed as it is based on flow and temp
Please avoid total closure. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seaonsal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase amd maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Hoot owl restrictions. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning are's closure.
catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout.

Ruby River Survey Comments

Ruby River Currently the Ruby River is at extremely low flows and high water temperatures. The river is closed to angling at this time as current conditions certainly warrant closures. However, just as with the Big Hole, FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning trout Catch and Release fishing

Catch and release

I favor catch and release. Minimum stream flows must be set and enforced. Legislation is needed.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.

Catch and release brown trout

Catch and release

You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Ruby and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.

Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Ruby River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.

Catch and release only. Adopt seasonal fishing closure.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only.

Catch and release only

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.

C&R for browns on Ruby

Ruby River Survey Comments

Catch and release, minimum stream flows.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows.
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
Catch and Release fishing for brown trout. We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!"
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Catch and release, protect the browns, and limit harmful lures.
Ditto, catch and released should have Ben done 50-years ago
I would say first and foremost follow the recommendations of FWP biologists. They know the fishery. If I had to choose between the options above for the Ruby, I'd select catch and release for brown trout and the hoot owl from July 1 to Aug 15.
Seasonal river closures – yes Catch and release brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl – no. Maintain current hoot owl regulations and triggers MUNIMUM IN STREAM FLOW
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:

I support seasonal closures for spawning habitat. I don't think the whole river needs to be shut down to fishing. I support catch and release for the whole river. I don't see the need for hoot-owl below the dam but it makes sense to start hoot-owl where the water starts warming up.
Yes, please adopt seasonal fishing closures in specific, known brown-trout spawning areas; yes, implement catch and release fishing for Brown Trout; and Implement a standing hoot-owl restriction from when hoot-owl triggers are met until conditions improve (typically toward the fall - Sep.15th- when evening temperatures drop)
Adopting a seasonal fishing closure may be needed on this River.

Ruby River Survey Comments

I strongly support a fishing closure on the Ruby River from September 30th through April 1st, rather than the 3rd weekend in May. I also support turning the fishery into a catch and release fishery for all species, and would additionally recommend making the fishery single hook, no bait. If standing hoot-owl were to be implemented I would recommend the time frame be set at August 1-September 15, or when flow metrics are achieved.
I think there should be catch and release only for brown trout in this water. Possibly consider seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Supportive of catch and release. Not supportive of seasonal closure Supportive of hoot owl restrictions.
I agree with catch and release and barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning
We need to protect our spawning grounds. I think from September 30th to May 15th is a great idea and catch and release till numbers come back up. But we need to listen to our biologists
I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Ruby River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.
I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)
Close the upper river above the Reservoir and from the Reservoir to Vigilante for spawning Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Close all tributaries for spawning
Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!
Seasonal closures is over-kill. Recommend catch & release only, and no bait fishing. Artificial flies and lures only.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout.
Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant fishing closures during that time frame. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout and implement standing hootowl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Seasonal closure
I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
These comments are for the Ruby. Seasonal fishing closure is not needed on the Ruby. Catch and release - OK. Standing Hoot Owl = no unless you're only talking about the lower (below Duncan District). Otherwise the existing regs are fine.
Fully support all catchand release for brown trout on Big Hole and seasonal closures for spawning. Would also like to see use of barbless hooks mandated. Standing hoot owl restrictions also a good idea.
Adopt seasonal fishing closures

Ruby River Survey Comments

Adopt seasonal closure to protect the spawn, and implement catch and release for all species of trout. Should have been implemented years ago. The fishing pressure on the stream below the dam is unbelievable today. I have fished that stretch for over 20 years, there is significant pressure, even during the spawn.

With the smaller size and limited public access it seems seasonal closures as well as catch and release make sense, hoot owl should be managed as it is based on flow and temp

Please avoid total closure. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

Hoot owl restrictions. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning are's closure.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Ruby River Currently the Ruby River is at extremely low flows and high water temperatures. The river is closed to angling at this time as current conditions certainly warrant closures. However, just as with the Big Hole, FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to to protect spawning trout Catch and Release fishing

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse the seasonal fishing closure

Seasonal closure

Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.

Catch and release only. Adopt seasonal fishing closure.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only.

Ruby River Survey Comments

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.
seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible
I agree with adding hoot owl restrictions on the ruby river and adding a seasonal closure.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows.
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
I favor Adopt seasonal fishing closures
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Seasonal river closures – yes Catch and release brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl – no. Maintain current hoot owl regulations and triggers MUNIMUM IN STREAM FLOW
Seasonal fishing closure
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.
Adopt seasonal closure to protect spawning brown trout

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:
I support seasonal closures for spawning habitat. I don't think the whole river needs to be shut down to fishing. I support catch and release for the whole river. I don't see the need for hoot-owl below the dam but it makes sense to start hoot-owl where the water starts warming up.
Yes, please adopt seasonal fishing closures in specific, known brown-trout spawning areas; yes, implement catch and release fishing for Brown Trout; and Implement a standing hoot-owl restriction from when hoot-owl triggers are met until conditions improve (typically toward the fall - Sep.15th- when evening temperatures drop)
I strongly support a fishing closure on the Ruby River from September 30th through April 1st, rather than the 3rd weekend in may. I also support turning the fishery into a catch and release fishery for all species, and would additionally recommend making the fishery single hook, no bait. If standing hoot-owl were to be implemented I would reccomend the time frame be set at August 1-September 15, or when flow metrics are achieved.
Supportive of catch and release. Not supportive of seasonal closure Supportive of hoot owl restrictions.

Ruby River Survey Comments

I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Ruby River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.

Implement stand hoot-owl restrictions on the Ruby.

Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout is a great idea. I am STRONGLY against a seasonal closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions!

Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant fishing closures during that time frame. Catch and release fishing only for brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout and implement standing hootowl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Implement standing hoot owl restrictions from July 1 to September 1.

I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.

These comments are for the Ruby. Seasonal fishing closure is not needed on the Ruby. Catch and release - OK. Standing Hoot Owl = no unless you're only talking about the lower (below Duncan District). Otherwise the existing regs are fine.

Catch and release and hoot owl

With the smaller size and limited public access it seems seasonal closures as well as catch and release make sense, hoot owl should be managed as it is based on flow and temp

Please avoid total closure. I would support C&R and Hoot Owl.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

Hoot owl restrictions. Catch and release for brown trout. Spawning are's closure.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Ruby River Survey Comments

Ruby River Currently the Ruby River is at extremely low flows and high water temperatures. The river is closed to angling at this time as current conditions certainly warrant closures. However, just as with the Big Hole, FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.

Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Ruby River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the Big Hole River since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.

seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible

I agree with adding hoot owl restrictions on the ruby river and adding a seasonal closure.

In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.

Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.

Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!

I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Ruby River Survey Comments

I would say first and foremost follow the recommendations of FWP biologists. They know the fishery. If I had to choose between the options above for the Ruby, I'd select catch and release for brown trout and the hoot owl from July 1 to Aug 15.

Seasonal river closures – yes Catch and release brown trout – yes Standing hoot owl – no. Maintain current hoot owl regulations and triggers **MUNIMUM IN STREAM FLOW**

Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:

I agree with catch and release and barbless hooks, I do not agree with outlawing treble hooks, the river is not only for fly fishers 3) Close it September 1, 2021 and protect the fish during the spawning

I am in support of adopting a seasonal fishing closure, although I feel like the proposed dates (30 Sept to 3rd Sat. in May) are excessive. Generally high water flows in April and May are enough to protect spawning beds. Brown trout are fall spawners, therefore, should be protected during that time. Early October through February would be better. In regards to a standing "Hoot Owl" restriction from July 1 - Aug 15; historically hoot owl restrictions are MOST important from mid August until Labor Day. If one looks at flow and temperature data from the past, you would notice that more often than not, water temperatures are stable for catch and release angling in July. I would support lowering the temperature trigger for Hoot Owl from 73 degrees to 70 degrees for three days in a row. If water temperatures are safe for angling (less than 68 degrees), why would we restrict anglers? This would adversely affect local businesses. I am in full support of catch and release only for brown trout. With that, I would add rainbow trout to the list. On the Ruby River in particular we are seeing a decline in both brown trout and rainbow trout. I would also be in support of implementing barbless hooks either statewide or on rivers with declining populations. Barbless laws are well documented, and I feel like Montana is behind on using these types of regulations to protect our fisheries. Lastly, I encourage the commission to not "maintain regulations currently in place." Local guides and fly shops are already seeing a downtick in business because of the current state of fish populations, low water and excessively high temperatures. When both local and non-local anglers aren't coming to fish on these rivers, not only are fly shops and guides affected, but so are the gas stations, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that serve people visiting the area.

I am strongly for the first two bullet points to see if this has a positive effect on brown trout populations. I believe the department's current "hoot owl" regs in place work well and would come into play in early July anyway. In regard to the "catch and release" point, the department MUST adopt the additional regulations: 1. Barbless, single Hooks only. No treble hooks 2. Artificial lures and flies only (no live bait)

The Ruby River should immediately go to catch and release regulations for Brown Trout, as should all of the affected streams. In addition only artificial lure should be allowed.

Close the upper river above the Reservoir and from the Reservoir to Vigilante for spawning Oct 1- May 15 Catch and release only for brown trout Single barbless hooks Close all tributaries for spawning

Seasonal closures is over-kill. Recommend catch & release only, and no bait fishing. Artificial flies and lures only.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.

I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.

Catch and release, single hook barbless closing Oct 1st to April 15th.

Fully support all catchand release for brown trout on Big Hole and seasonal closures for spawning. Would also like to see use of barbless hooks mandated. Standing hoot owl restrictions also a good idea.

Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!

No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only.

Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.

Ruby River Survey Comments

All but status quo. Please add barbless hooks only.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:
I regularly fish this river and recommend maintaining the status quo. I haven't seen the problem that you are describing. Current regulations provide for hoot owl closures, as needed. There is no need for standing closure schedules, harvest limitations, or least of all Sep-May closures. Such spawning closures already limit access today to the Boulder of the Jefferson and Prickly Pear of the Missouri.
Status Quo
Status quo. Need a reservoir, even if it cost 40 million.
I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.
Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status quote.

Other

Enter your comments for the Ruby River:
Flows must be improved. All other methods of trying to help these populations are meaningless if the river is constantly dewatered and warm throughout each summer.
Follow biologist recommendations as noted above.
Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.
Set minimum flow standards
Like the Big Hole, lots of money has been spent trying to establish grayling in the Ruby. Therefore, I do not believe we should attempt to bolster brown trout numbers in this triver.
Regulate
As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.
Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.
Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.

You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.

PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Ruby. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.

All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.

Minimum streamflow standards.

restrict all guide/outfitter and their paying clients on the Ruby. Since restrictions on the madison were put into place, guides now bring clients to the Ruby and the fishing is declining rapidly. Yes, hoot owl times

I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.

Irrigation is killing stream flows. Hay is important yes but there must be balance for fish ecosystems on dry hot conditions.

I think flows are a problem on this river, especially down low for trout population.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!

Need all of these regulations.

The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.

Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.

I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.

I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout

No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.

I agree with all of FWO's options except Status Quo.

Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.

Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release, and implement standing hoot-owl

All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only.

We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.

Catch and release, minimum stream flows, seasonal fishing closure

PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the upper Stillwater. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.

In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows

All are good changes.

I support new protective regulations

You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately

I favor adopting fishing seasonal closures

I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated.

Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release fishing for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15

I support all proposals.

I am in favor of the top three options for the Stillwater

First three options to protect the fish

the first three and minimum stream flow legislation

Implement all EXCEPT status quo

Catch and Release

Stillwater River Survey Comments

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

Adopt seasonal fishing to protect the spawn and implement catch and release only for all species. Protect the fishing in this true gem of a river. I have fished this river for over 40 years, raised my kids on it rafting and fishing. Fishing has become less and less productive each year.

I grew up in Billings and fished this river as a kid and young adult, I have not fished it for 20 plus years so my comments are not specific to the situation today. Should it be closed seasonally, I sure think so as large browns migrate from the Yellowstone into the lower river to spawn, perhaps it could be just the bottom that closes seasonally? Catch and release makes sense but mortality is still an issue especially with larger streamer fishing. Hoot owl should be managed as is by temp and flow.

I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.

Avoid total closure. I support Hoot Owl and C&R.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job

I'm in favor of catch and release for brown trout

Stillwater River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release

I favor catch and release. Minimum stream flow legislation is needed.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.
the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.
Catch and release brown trout
Catch and release
I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.
You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Sitllwater and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.
Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Catch and release only
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.
C&R for browns on the Stillwater
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Catch and release

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

Adopt seasonal fishing closure

Adopt seasonal fishing to protect the spawn and implement catch and release only for all species. Protect the fishing in this true gem of a river. I have fished this river for over 40 years, raised my kids on it rafting and fishing. Fishing has become less and less productive each year.

I grew up in Billings and fished this river as a kid and young adult, I have not fished it for 20 plus years so my comments are not specific to the situation today. Should it be closed seasonally, I sure think so as large browns migrate from the Yellowstone into the lower river to spawn, perhaps it could be just the bottom that closes seasonally? Catch and release makes sense but mortality is still an issue especially with larger streamer fishing. Hoot owl should be managed as is by temp and flow.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

Stillwater River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse seasonal fishing closure

Seasonal closure

I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.

Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.

Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.

seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.

Seasonal closures, YES!

Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!

Stillwater River Survey Comments

I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

I support the hoot-owl restrictions. I do NOT support any of the other proposals.

Do NOT adopt hoot owl as permanent, most years the Stillwater isn't fishable until after mid July. This would only increase pressure and crowding on other rivers.

I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.

Avoid total closure. I support Hoot Owl and C&R.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

<p>Stillwater River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.</p>
<p>Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.</p>
<p>the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations). Upstream minimum flow maintenance rules would be helpful as well.</p>
<p>I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.</p>
<p>Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Stillwater River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.</p>
<p>No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.</p>
<p>I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.</p>
<p>seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible</p>
<p>The still water river needs hoot owl restrictions</p>
<p>In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED.</p>
<p>Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.</p>
<p>In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.</p>
<p>Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!</p>
<p>I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.</p>

Stillwater River Survey Comments

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

Yes, 1)Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. 2) Catch and release fishing only for brown trout, urge barbless hooks and single hooks for spinner fishermen. 3) Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 – August 15, Status quo is not an option!!

Stillwater River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

No live bait, no trebble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.

All but status quo. Please add use of barbless hooks only.

Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):

Status quo. I am much more concerned about the impact that mine has had on this river.

I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Other
Enter your comments for the upper Stillwater River (tributary to the Yellowstone):
As with my comments for the Yellowstone River, please do not restrict fishing opportunity just to be "doing something" when Department personnel have said low flows and increased water temperatures are likely the main causes of poor fry survival. Altering fishing opportunity will improve neither of those factors. In addition, once again there is no designation for "upper Stillwater River" so one can not comment without knowing which section(s) of the river may be designated. Finally, there is no discussion of restricting opportunities for other recreational users of the rivers in question. If anglers are going to have opportunities reduced then ALL recreational users should be restricted in order to reduce stress on brown trout. The Department has already shown a willingness to restrict ALL access as was done on the Yellowstone River following a die off of whitefish.
Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
I favor catch and release. Minimum stream flow legislation is needed.
Minimum stream flow standards
Regulate
Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Stillwater River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.
Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the upper Stillwater River's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.
As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.
Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.

Stillwater River Survey Comments

You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.

PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the upper Stillwater. While trout and river ecosystems die, flood irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.

All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.

We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!" catch and release for brown trout

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.

the first three and minimum stream flow legislation

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Do Anything, Do Something, Do All the Options

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:
I favor a combination of all three restrictions
Adopt the top three above. and adopt single barbless hooks
A, b, and c
I support adopting seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implementing standing hoot-owl restrictions.
I believe that these three restrictions are necessary to implement to prevent a crash in the brown trout population
Adopt all three
I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.
please implement all three
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout, and implement standing hootowl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
agree with all options
Implement all of the above regulation changes.
Adopt all suggested changes.
I support seasonal fishing closures to protect spawning brown trout, catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
I support all the above options except Status Quo
Need all of these restrictions. Limit irrigating and poison used by agriculture. Water quality issue, too many anglers.
Please implement the first three proposals to protect trout fisheries.
I am in support of all changes that better protect fish and wildlife dependent on Montana rivers.
I support the closure during spawning, standing hoot owl restrictions and catch and release only for brown trout
No live bait, no treble hooks, whoot owl catch and release , close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.
I do not believe catch and release will make a substantial difference in brown trout populations. However, the other three approaches should be implemented on several different reaches for comparative data.
I agree with all of FWP's options except Status Quo.
Implement regulatory changes as described. Revisit seasonal fishing closure after populations strengthen to target levels.
Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.
adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release and hoot owl
I agree with all but status quo. Please add barbless hooks only.
We need to protect our fisheries. I support seasonal fishing closures, catch and release for all species, standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 -Aug 15.
PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Upper Yellowstone. While trout and river ecosystems die, irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.
All are good changes
I support new protective regulations
You may believe that flow is a transitory factor in limiting the brown trout, but it is the new norm and guided angling fishing pressure increase over the last 5 years has tripled. Impose option 1, 2, & 3 immediately
I favor adopting regional fishing closures

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

I would do all of the above EXCEPT status quo. While mortality may be low due to the angling pressures, it's a pressure that isn't necessary while the science side of things is being evaluated. I'm sure the fish could use a summer off from all of the tourist.
Support seasonal fishing closure for brown trout Support catch and release for brown trout Support hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15
It's imperative to implement all proposals on this river. Do not wait.
I am in favor of the top three options for the Yellowstone River
First 3 options for protection of fish
the first three and minimum stream flow legislation
Implement all EXCEPT status quo
agree with all
Adopt seasonal fishing closure; catch and release; and implement hoot-owl to protect spawning brown trout
Adopt seasonal fishing closure, catch and release for all trout, and implement hoot owl restrictions as they currently are.

Catch and Release

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:
Catch and release for brown trout and rainbow trout.
Seasonal Catch and release
I own a home in paradise County and am on the Yellowstone 60-70 days per year. Water levels are low, too much water is being taken out and way too many boats! Fishing is still great early and late in year, but I believe the river should be closed for at least a few months of every year, catch and release only except for whitefish and fishing should be restricted when it gets hot from mid July to mid or late August. However, I think outfitters/guides should be restricted to the numbers of boats per day on each section. I do not think that charging \$200 a day more to make up for lost numbers of boats will impact their business.....tourists will gladly pay
What is the documented science and statistics on brown trout declines. Just relying on Public Concerns may be grossly misplaced. Rely on real data, please. Seasonal closures of the nature proposed would be the most drastic and probably over-kill for the current situation. Recommend catch and release, and flies and artificial lures only.
support the first two measures
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.
Catch and release fishing for browns and hoot owl restrictions.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.
Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant a fishing closure during that time frame. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
The Upper Yellowstone should be catch and release for brown trout as it maintains access for anglers while protecting fish year-round.
Catch and release
Catch and release, single hook barbless, closure from Oct 1to April 15th
Yellowstone Seasonal Fishing Closure - close the spawning stretches but not the whole river Catch and release - sure Hoot Owl - this is another river that should not be automatically Hoot Owl. Keep the existing rules for shut down in place.
Catch and release Hoot owl on lower sections
Catch and Release is a good option
I support options 2 and 3

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.

I want to avoid total closure. I support C&R or Hoot Owl is needed.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

Hoot owl restrictions if necessary. Catch and release fishing. Spawning restrictions during the fall.

catch and release only kills the fish that are caught. I have seen it all my life. Idiots catch the fish then pull their guts out and it kills them 90 percent of the time. Just stop fishing!! STOP IT. Do not allow catch and release. That type of crap is only for the Feel Good Tree Huggers. Get real and do your job

I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout.

Upper Yellowstone River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the upper Yellowstone River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Livingston and the other Paradise Valley communities as well as Park County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release

We need minimum stream flow legislation. I favor catch and release.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations).
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout.
Catch and release brown trout
Catch and release
You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Upper Yellowstone and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.
Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.
Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Catch and release only
Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.
C&R for browns on the Yellowstone
Catch and release, minimum stream flows.
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Protect spawning and catch and release only.
In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED. Get NPS to drop unlimited kill regulations for brown trout in key Yellowstone tribes — Gardner river and Bear Creek
Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
Option #2, catch and release only
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Catch and release only

Catch and release

Seasonal Closure

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:

Adopt a seasonal fishing closure

I own a home in paradise County and am on the Yellowstone 60-70 days per year. Water levels are low, too much water is being taken out and way too many boats! Fishing is still great early and late in year, but I believe the river should be closed for at least a few months of every year, catch and release only except for whitefish and fishing should be restricted when it gets hot from mid July to mid or late August. However, I think outfitters/guides should be restricted to the numbers of boats per day on each section. I do not think that charging \$200 a day more to make up for lost numbers of boats will impact their business.....tourists will gladly pay

I recommend the seasonal fishing closure

I am in favor of seasonal closures on the Upper Yellowstone to protect brown trout during the spawn, but only if surgically applied to allow for protection of spawning fish in sections where it is proven that they actively spawn. Broad closures across a whole river system do not allow a balance to be struck with protecting the resource and maximizing angler opportunity.

I strongly appose a seasonal fishing closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15!! There are rarely hoot-owl restrictions on the Yellowstone and you would kill the spring and fall business that rely on tourism if you adopted a seasonal closure on that river. It seems very unnecessary! What a horrible idea!

support the first two measures

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout.

Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant a fishing closure during that time frame. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout

Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions

Catch and release, single hook barbless, closure from Oct 1to April 15th

I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.

Yellowstone Seasonal Fishing Closure - close the spawning stretches but not the whole river Catch and release - sure Hoot Owl - this is another river that should not be automatically Hoot Owl. Keep the existing rules for shut down in place.

seasonal fishing closure and hoot-owl

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.

Hoot owl restrictions if necessary. Catch and release fishing. Spawning restrictions during the fall.

I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Upper Yellowstone River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the upper Yellowstone River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Livingston and the other Paradise Valley communities as well as Park County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

I endorse seasonal fishing closure and catch and release only

Seasonal closure

You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Upper Yellowstone and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.

Seasonal closures and catch and for browns.

Seasonal fishing closure. Catch and release only.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.
Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout
No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.
I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.
seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible
In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows
I'm in favor of catch and release fishing for brown trout and possibly in favor of seasonal closures to protect spawning brown trout if data shows spawning closures would help the population.
Yes to seasonal fishing closures, and hoot owl times, and reduce number of guides and outfitters who can use this river.
Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.
I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.
In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.
Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!
I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.
I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.
Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.
Seasonal fishing closure

Hoot Owl

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:
I strongly appose a seasonal fishing closure or standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1 to August 15!! There are rarely hoot-owl restrictions on the Yellowstone and you would kill the spring and fall business that rely on tourism if you adopted a seasonal closure on that river. It seems very unnecessary! What a horrible idea!
The water temperature and fishing pressure is tough on the fish. I believe the Hoot Owl should go into affect in July. Let's protect these fish!! Don't want ANOTHER fish kill happening!!
Catch and release fishing for browns and hoot owl restrictions.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Not enough people fishing in the winter to warrant a fishing closure during that time frame. Virtual no mortality by angling in the winter. Catch and release fishing only for Brown trout
Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions
Yellowstone Seasonal Fishing Closure - close the spawning stretches but not the whole river Catch and release - sure Hoot Owl - this is another river that should not be automatically Hoot Owl. Keep the existing rules for shut down in place.
Only support hoot owl. Upper Yellowstone(above Livingston) should be managed for native cutthroat in my opinion. Lower brown numbers a good thing.
Catch and release Hoot owl on lower sections
seasonal fishing closure and hoot-owl
Implement standing hoot owl restrictions
I support the hoot-owl restrictions. I do NOT support any of the other proposals.
Do NOT implement hoot owl as permanent on the Upper Yellowstone. Most years it isn't even fishable till mid July do to high water. Use Hoot Owl as it currently exists.
I support options 2 and 3
I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.
I want to avoid total closure. I support C&R or Hoot Owl is needed.
I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and implementation of standing hoot-owl restrictions from July 1-August 15.
Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.
I SUPPORT seasonal spawning closures AND catch & release for brown trout. I do NOT support standing hoot owl restrictions OR status quo.
Hoot owl restrictions if necessary. Catch and release fishing. Spawning restrictions during the fall.
I agree with seasonal closures during spawning and hoot owl restrictions from July 1 - August 15. Additionally, I think hoot owl restrictions should be initiated at 68 degrees instead of 73 degrees, which is too warm.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Upper Yellowstone River FWP knew brown trout populations were declining across SW Montana for at least a couple of years, to date no action has been taken. With public concern and discussion with FWP, FWP accepted that perhaps they should do something. I am glad that FWP is proposing fishing regulation changes; however, I think FWP went from not doing anything to perhaps proposing too much. Closures to fishing from Sept 30 to the third Saturday in May is simply too extreme. Localized, known brown trout spawning reach closures may be more effective, without shutting down the entire river completely for nearly 8 months. Catch and release fishing for brown trout, i.e., no kill brown trout regulations, may be an effective management tool to protect brown trout going forward. I, personally, fail to see how hoot owl restrictions, when applied to cool water with adequate flow, will protect brown trout. However, this year is shaping up to be a poor water year; therefore, if water temperatures or low flows dictate hoot owl restrictions, implement them at that time. However, I think they should not be implemented just to impose a restriction on anglers. Lastly, clearly the status quo has been ineffective at protecting brown trout populations so far. We need to do something, just not to the extreme, localized spawning closures, catch and release on brown trout, and perhaps artificial lures (flies only). Then see how moderate regulations work before implementing extreme measures such as closing the entire river to angling for 8 months. Closing the upper Yellowstone River during fall and implementing unwarranted hoot owl restrictions would greatly adversely affect outfitting on this river and therefore the economy of Livingston and the other Paradise Valley communities as well as Park County. Under the guise simply that FWP was pressured to 'do something.' Further, this would come as a surprise to outfitting clients as many have already booked their trips for fishing our rivers in the fall.

Catch and release fishing should be implemented in many of the SW Montana streams and rivers. The proposed seasonal fishing closures may be too much of an economic stress on some businesses; however, a shorter-term duration of closure may be beneficial. The current system for implementing hoot-owl restrictions as needed, are monitored well by the Montana FWP. Full-standing hoot-owl restrictions are not needed and a terrible idea.

the best option, in my opinion for brown trout support would be to implement catch and release for Brown Trout, a maintain current law practice of hoot owl rules (more flexible than mandatory standing hoot owl regulations).

Minimum flow standards, Hoot owl

You should consider catch and release for brown trout on the Upper Yellowstone and all other rivers you are proposing. If people don't kill the fish, they remain in the river and have a chance to spawn. It is pretty simple. There is no reason to adopt a fishing closure project or standing hoot-owl restrictions. Hoot Owl should only be imposed due to low water and high temperatures.

Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Yellowstone River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1. Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

I am in favor of both seasonal fishing closure and standing hoot owl.

seasonal fishing closures and standing hoot owl restrictions would be responsible

I agree with hoot owl restrictions on this river

In favor of standing hoot-owl restrictions and catch and release if river is well placarded and the restrictions are ENFORCED. Get NPS to drop unlimited kill regulations for brown trout in key Yellowstone tribes — Gardner river and Bear Creek

Catch and Release and standing hoot-owl are good first steps.

Yes to seasonal fishing closures, and hoot owl times, and reduce number of guides and outfitters who can use this river.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

Yes - Catch and Release fishing only for brown trout. Yes - Implement standing hoot-owl restrictions NO seasonal closure!

I am opposed to the seasonal closure, open to the hoot owl suggestion, and wholly in favor of catch and release. I would like to see efforts made to reduce irrigation usage/diversions.

I am for implementing Hoot Owl during these times. I am for catch and release. I am against closures during the brown trout spawn for the following reasons: 1) as of yet, we don't know that there is correlation between fishing for spawning brown trout is the cause of their decline. 2) if we have Hoot Owl already, which might be extended, another closure of similar length would cause undue harm to the fly fishing industry and others. 3) of all the possible reasons for brown trout decline, my belief is that this angling pressure has been relatively constant, while climate change and agricultural influences are more widespread and have accelerated over time. I would be willing to take a scientific approach to the solution of brown trout spawning closures, however. If we were to choose a few specific areas for temporary closures, and then monitor and collect data on brown trout populations in these areas, I would be willing to accept the results if they definitely proved that closures were of benefit to the brown trout populations, and I would be more willing to endorse them throughout the watershed. As it is now, I believe dewatering, siltation, and agricultural run-off are more to blame.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Gear Restriction

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:

Adopt the top three above. and adopt single barbless hooks

What is the documented science and statistics on brown trout declines. Just relying on Public Concerns may be grossly misplaced. Rely on real data, please. Seasonal closures of the nature proposed would be the most drastic and probably over-kill for the current situation. Recommend catch and release, and flies and artificial lures only.

I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout and no treble hooks.

I am fine with all three restrictions and adding only single barbless hooks.

Catch and release, single hook barbless, closure from Oct 1 to April 15th

No treble hooks no bait fishing.

Adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout Catch and release fishing Artificial lures only

Adopt minimum streamflows based on historical flow charts. Keeping the water running is of utmost importance. Catch and release only for all species Seasonal closure for entire river from October 1st through March 15th. Single hooked flies and lures only. Use of different, more environment friendly fertilizers.

No bait, single barbless hooks, no retention of brown trout. Hoot owl restrictions for periods when water temp hits 68 degrees F for 3 days straight. Seasonal closure Oct 15-March 1.

Not allowing fishing until May severely effects local businesses and guiding services, especially on low water years like this year.

Catch and release on brown trout. Limit fishing to artificial flies and lures containing one single barbless hook.

I agree with all but status quo. Please add barbless hooks only.

Closures during fall spawning, catch and release, single barbless hooks are all needed. "Studies conducted by FWP and the U.S. Geologic Survey suggest that flow is a primary limiting factor for many brown trout populations" The other option would be minimal stream flow legislation as all our main stem rivers are severally dewatered.

Adopt seasonal fishing, catch and release ALL TROUT, and SINGLE BARBLESS HOOKS. Hoot owl should be 70 degree water temps once.

Status Quo

Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:

Status Quo

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

I am for the status quo. Your studies point to reduced water flow as the problem. Work to keep water in the tributaries instead of watering land with it.
Status quo
Status quo
Status Quo
Status Quo
Status Quo

Other
Enter your comments for the upper Yellowstone River:
What part of the Yellowstone is considered upper Yellowstone?
Increased fishing pressure and low river flows are hurting the fish populations
Too much fishing pressure Regulate more
no comment on this river as I do not have enough knowledge of this system to provide a comment.
I own a home in paradise County and am on the Yellowstone 60-70 days per year. Water levels are low, too much water is being taken out and way too many boats! Fishing is still great early and late in year, but I believe the river should be closed for at least a few months of every year, catch and release only except for whitefish and fishing should be restricted when it gets hot from mid July to mid or late August. However, I think outfitters/guides should be restricted to the numbers of boats per day on each section. I do not think that charging \$200 a day more to make up for lost numbers of boats will impact their business.....tourists will gladly pay
I think in absence of measures to ensure adequate flow and thriving stream and riparian habitat that helps maintain cool temperatures standing hoot owl restrictions should be implemented. on this river i feel that the added pressure this will create in the morning that guiding should be more regulated and allowing Montanan floaters days where the water will be less crowded.
Limit guide trips on the Yellowstone. Close sections to guides.
Catch and release is a good idea But Let's get to the route of why the rivers are so low over the summer. Irrigation. Climate change. More people moving to Montana. Let's consider changes with those variables.
Increase bag limits to keep as many brown in the Upper main stem so that Yellowstone Cutthroat can reproduce and flourish!
Follow biologist recommendations
I support seasonal fishing closures and hoot owl restrictions from July 1-Aug 15.
First, "upper Yellowstone River" is not defined in your proposals. How can one respond if one does not know what portion(s) of the river are included in the proposal? Secondly, there is again no science to support fishing restrictions. Restricting fishing opportunity simply because it is the only thing over which the Department has control is not a valid option in my opinion. Department personnel admit that low flows and higher water temperatures are likely to be the main causes of reduced fry survival. Restricting fishing will not alter either low flows or higher water temperatures. Please do not restrict fishing opportunity just to "be doing something."
I support no harvest of browns. I believe hoot owl should be determined by current standards based on conditions, not standing dates. As stated instream flows are the key and need to be aggressively pursued.
Limit the guides and out of state anglers.
Need all of these restrictions. Limit irrigating and poison used by agriculture. Water quality issue, too many anglers.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

Montana fisheries managers and biologists have previously determined that Montana did not need a seasonal closure to benefit brown trout populations. We should have no need for a total fishing closure during the proposed timeframe as angler numbers / angler days are dramatically reduced during the fall, winter and spring as it is. It's increased angling pressure and the resulting handling of brown trout during the prime summer season that needs to be dealt with. Don't deny anglers the opportunity to fish responsibly with a seasonal closure that includes dates far beyond the typical brown trout spawning window, while not doing anything about the part of the year when they actually suffer from handling and depletion of their water source. Address this issue by first addressing the clear end of the problem, increased summer season angling pressure, the resulting handling of brown trout by anglers during the summer season and work to increase and maintain healthful water levels and get serious about minimum instream flows. Off-season angling pressure isn't the issue. I support catch and release fishing only for brown trout. To implement standing hoot-owl restrictions would be another example of gross over reach. There is no need to take action on a situation such as water temperature when we can; work off predictive forecasts, measurable real-time data and often see shifting weather patterns that stave off rising water temps. There is simply no need to pre-determine the taking of hoot owl restrictions. Again, these points of logic aren't new and are exactly why FWP has handle hoot owl restrictions as they have to this point.

The loss/reduction of younger age classes while older age classes remain stable is usually not an angling issue, but more likely a flow/temperature issue/change (as you have acknowledged). But I entirely support recommendations from the professional biologists that manage these rivers. Listen to the biologists, gather the data after these reg changes, the re-assess down the road with the new knowledge gained. Meanwhile, continue trying to do what you can to improve flows and maintain cool water temperatures.

We need minimum stream flow legislation. I favor catch and release.

Minimum flow standards, Hoot owl

No live bait, no treble hooks, hoot owl catch and release, close the river for spawning, more water flow and water quality.

Regulate

Please implement standing hoot-owl restrictions for all outfitters and guides on the Yellowstone River. The decline in fish numbers is directly related to the increased pressure from guides and outfitters. My brother and I have fished the river since we were kids and the people who are using or exploiting our natural resources for their own monetary gain have created this problem. More has to be done to stop the privatization of our public rivers by the outfitter and guide community. Limit the guide and outfitter pressure and don't handicap the general public by instituting regulations (catch and release only, single barbless hooks, eliminating bait fishing) that push the local fisherman or beginner fisherman further away from enjoying the river. The ever-growing guide and outfitter community is the biggest factor in creating this problem, creating changes that diminish the impact of their footprint on the rivers in SW Montana, not the folks who have used and enjoyed the rivers for generations.

Because our wild fisheries face extreme threats of ecological collapse brought on by commercialized and public recreational use, drought, rising water temperatures, increased cases of die-offs, and disease i.e whirling disease, it lies with the collective responsibility of Montanans and the representative agencies stewarding the wild lands and streams to implement reasonable measures to revive the ecological health of the upper Yellowstone's fish populations through the use of seasonal fishing closures, catch & release, and hoot-owl restrictions as described in the proposals. Doing nothing (ie. status quo) is an irresponsible act which will bring about dire consequences.

As someone who travels often to fish and has fished all the rivers listed my comments are the same for all of them. These regulation proposals all put the blame on anglers for the decline in brown trout fisheries when the science obviously points to the problem being poor water management. My preference would be to allow these fisheries to further decline for now, when they get bad enough maybe public pressure will be enough to change the way water is managed in Montana. Closing fishing and harvest opportunities unfairly puts all the burden on anglers. I am very supportive of instream flow purchases and habitat improvements. I know change is hard but the future of the economy in Montana is not cows and hay, it is fish, wildlife and recreation. We need to make a stand before these things are ruined.

Broodstock hatchery program, using wild fish spawning. Its a changing world we need to adapt.

Agree with the first three (not the status quo). Also, I would support a significant curtailment of guided fishing days, which is clearly a source of impact.

Brown trout are a non-native and invasive species. I do not think we should implement protections on them at all. Instead we should work on efforts to bolster the native trout species in all watersheds.

Yellowstone River Survey Comments

A good example of what needs to be done is the water lease on Big Creek. It's working -- and the creek reaches the mainstem, which it did not do for decades. Why not replicate that success on the other tributaries of the Upper Y-stone? You know what's necessary and it's not a fishing closure, hoot owl hours, or catch and release. It's FLOWS -- you said it twice in the intro, your biologists have been saying it for years and years. Let's face it, your "watershed councils" haven't succeeded or we wouldn't be having this crisis now, would we? So what you absolutely must do is lease water for instream flows. BUY the water or LOSE the fishery, it's that simple. The money is there, the law is there, and every day another ranch gets bought up by someone who doesn't want to raise cows -- but doesn't want to lose the water rights. Instream flow leases allow them to keep the water rights, make money, and keep the water instream. Where's the big mystery FWP? We've known this for more than 35 years -- time to get on the stick and put the tools we have to work on the problems we have -- namely, flows and temperatures and both can be addressed through water leasing.

Catch and release, minimum stream flows.

PLEASE adopt seasonal fishing closures, implement catch and release fishing only, and implement hoot-owl restrictions, but MOST critically, we MUST have minimum streamflow legislation to address the aggressive dewatering of the Upper Yellowstone. While trout and river ecosystems die, irrigation is going hogwild all around. This is insane.

In favor of seasonal closure, catch and release only, and minimum stream flows

All of the proposed solutions are inconsequential. Minimum instream flows are necessary to address the decline of trout populations.

We need "Minimum Stream flow standards" but more importantly "Limit out of state fisherman and commercial fisherman pressure!" catch and release for brown trout

Minimum streamflow requirements

Yes to seasonal fishing closures, and hoot owl times, and reduce number of guides and outfitters who can use this river.

I'm in favor of either catch and release fishing only for brown trout and/or adopt seasonal fishing closure to protect spawning brown trout. Also would like to see more creative options that work with ranchers to keep more water in the river, but I am aware of the complexities of this.

In favor of spawning closure in key areas- this was in place previously? Not in favor of catch and release, instead change general regs for rivers from 5 fish per day per angle to 2 fish under 15" per day per angler (some people do keep fish, and some still keep 5 per day!). Standing hoot-owl begin 7/15 not 7/1 on lower reaches. Additional suggestions that could make a difference: Ban lead anchors and lead weights and require barbless hooks, 2 max per lure. Ag producers continue to expand irrigated acreage. The 'efficiency' push to pivots is decreasing river flows because the water 'saved' is not returned to rivers but instead irrigates more acreage. This is a big problem that is getting worse.

I do not believe brown trout (an invasive species) warrant any form of protection. Native fish species should be the priority for protection.

the first three and minimum stream flow legislation

Follow recommendations of your biologists.