



Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Hauser Reservoir

2021 Proposed Walleye Regulation Changes

Fisheries management on Canyon Ferry and Hauser Reservoirs is directed by the Fish & Wildlife Commission approved 2020 Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan (Plan). Annual standardized population surveys are conducted by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to evaluate these fisheries and allow comparison to species goals and strategies outlined in the Plan.

Recent netting data showed Walleye relative abundance and size structure (Proportional Stock Density (PSD)) were below goal ranges in Canyon Ferry Reservoir and PSD was below goal ranges in Hauser Reservoir. After review of the data, FWP developed Walleye harvest restriction alternatives and propose to the commission to decrease daily Walleye limits in both Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Hauser Reservoir to 10 daily, only 1 over 15-inches, with possession limit being twice the daily limit.

Current Walleye regulations for Canyon Ferry (20 daily, only 1 over 20 inches; possession limit is twice the daily limit) and Hauser Reservoir (20 daily, only 1 over 25 inches; possession limit is twice the daily limit) were implemented in response to high Walleye relative abundance levels that were above Plan goal ranges in both reservoirs in 2017. Intent of the current regulations were to decrease Walleye abundance to levels within the Plan goal ranges. The regulations appear effective based on objectives and 2020 survey data that showed decreased relative abundance to levels within goal ranges or slightly below. Both reservoirs are below Plan goal ranges for PSD.

In response to observed Walleye relative abundance, FWP proposes decreasing the Walleye daily limit in Canyon Ferry and Hauser Reservoirs from 20 to 10 with intent to decrease total Walleye harvest. Both reservoirs appear to have abundant levels of reproduction and the daily limit of 10 Walleye is higher than standard Central District regulation and intended to allow adequate harvest to stay within Plan goal ranges.

In response to Walleye PSD below goal ranges, FWP proposes Walleye length harvest restrictions on Canyon Ferry and Hauser Reservoirs of 1 over 15 inches with intent to decrease the number of larger fish harvested. With decreased harvest of Walleye 15-inches and larger, intent is to increase abundance of Walleye over 15 inches thereby increasing PSD towards goal ranges. Additionally, the 10 daily, only 1 over 15 inches is intended to direct harvest towards smaller-sized, more abundant Walleye.

FWP is pursuing a condensed timeline for the regulation modification in attempt to be responsive to recently collected data and allow implementation of the potential regulations prior to the 2021 open water fishing season, which correlates with most of the Walleye harvest on these waters.

If adopted, the department will continue monitoring the fishery and will reevaluate the effectiveness of the regulations. Regulations will be adjusted if Walleye abundance and size (PSD) reach goal ranges. Other management alternatives will be considered, including further adjustment to fishing regulations,

if management goals are not met. Fisheries trends and discussion of the effectiveness of regulations in place will be discussed annually.

Below are current Walleye regulations, proposed Walleye regulations, Plan goal ranges for Walleye relative abundance and PSD and observed Walleye relative abundance and PSD for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Hauser Reservoir.

Canyon Ferry Reservoir:

Current: 20 daily, 1 over 20 inches; possession is twice the daily limit.

Proposed: 10 daily, 1 over 15 inches; possession is twice the daily limit.

per net – 4.5 in 2020 (UMRRFMP Goal Range – 5 to 7)

PSD – 21 in 2020 (UMRRFMP Goal Range – 30 to 60)

Hauser Reservoir:

Current: 20 daily, 1 over 25 inches; possession is twice the daily limit.

Proposed: 10 daily, 1 over 15 inches; possession is twice the daily limit.

per net – 5.1 in 2020 (UMRRFMP Goal Range – 4 to 6)

PSD – 3 in 2020 (UMRRFMP Goal Range – 30 to 60)