



CORRIGENDUM

DECISION NOTICE

Lake Trout Suppression at Swan Lake to Improve Bull Trout and Kokanee Salmon Populations

(FWP-DN-FSH-R1-24-011)

This corrigendum is issued to correct a discrepancy between the text found in Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) August 16, 2024, Decision Notice (DN) and Sections II, III, and VI of the May 30, 2024, Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) concerning the funding source to be used for the approved lake trout suppression action in Swan Lake. The purpose of the approved project is to improve bull trout and kokanee salmon populations in the lake and represents a progression of previous lake trout suppression efforts in Swan Lake. A copy of the DN and Draft EA are available for reference here:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices/news/2024/aug/0816--lake-trout-suppression-at-swan-lake-decision-notice>.

FWP plans to fund the first seven years of the project using annual State Wildlife Grant funds. The cited sections of the DN and Draft EA incorrectly noted FWP had secured funding for the first seven years of the project. Below is a summary of corrections to the Decision Notice and responses to relevant comments.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project represents a progression of previous lake trout suppression efforts in Swan Lake. FWP proposes to conduct a lake trout removal effort in Swan Lake, Montana, to reduce the lake trout population. This action is consistent with the management direction in the Statewide Fish Management Plan Section 2.03 (2023), USFWS/FWP Section 6 Cooperative Agreement, 2024 (Appendix B) and is an action supported in the USFWS Recovery Unit Implementation Plan for bull trout in the Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit. The proposed action would involve contracting with professional fishery consultants to conduct gillnetting beginning 2025. These activities would be conducted annually until lake trout numbers are sufficiently low to improve bull trout and kokanee salmon numbers. FWP plans to fund the first seven years of the program using State Wildlife Grant funds (SWG); Funding has been secured for the first seven years of the project and will be pursued for future efforts. Funding will be pursued for future efforts, as deemed appropriate. Obtaining additional funding will likely depend on the relative success. FWP will assess success of the project through independent index netting for lake trout, as well as bull trout and kokanee redd counts. All lake trout netted during the project will be killed; those that are salvageable and of suitable size for consumption

will be field dressed and donated to food banks or other organizations; those that are not suitable for human consumption will either be donated to wildlife rehabilitation facilities or placed in landfills (for larger carcasses associated with higher mercury levels). No carcasses will be intentionally sunk during suppression activities. A very small number of partially caught (generally by the teeth) lake trout will fall off the net when it is retrieved.

~~FWP plans to fund the first seven years of this program using SWG funds; funding~~ Funding has been secured for the first seven years of the proposed project and will be pursued for future efforts, as deemed appropriate. Obtaining additional funding will likely depend on the relative success. FWP will assess success of the project through independent index netting for lake trout, and bull trout and kokanee salmon redd counts. All lake trout netted during the project will be killed; those that are salvageable and of suitable size for consumption will be field dressed and donated to food banks or other organizations; those that are not suitable for human consumption will either be donated to wildlife rehabilitation facilities or placed in landfills (for larger carcasses associated with higher mercury levels). No carcasses will be intentionally sunk during suppression activities. A very small number of partially caught (generally by the teeth) lake trout will fall off the net when it is retrieved.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

Falls short on what long term management of the lake will look like (SEVEN YEARS IS TOO SHORT) (9)

- Success of the program will be measured by achieving specific benchmarks. Examples from other lake trout suppression programs (Yellowstone Lake and Lake Pend Oreille) have shown benefits to native fish when lake trout harvest has exceeded 1.5 kg/ha on juvenile lake trout, and 2.0 kg/ha on adult lake trout. These targets will be used to evaluate whether contracted netting is removing enough lake trout biomass. Annual SPIN netting results will also be used to evaluate efficacy of lake trout removal. This survey was initiated in 2017 after the suppression project from 2009-2016 had ended. The lake trout density in 2017 will be used as a target to reduce current density to that level or lower. The final measure of success will be a stabilization or increase in the trend of bull trout redds in the Swan system. Bull trout redds have declined since the previous suppression project was completed in 2016, and future trends will be measured against the record low numbers observed in 2023. ~~FWP plans to fund the lake trout suppression program is to be funded~~ using State Wildlife Grant (SWG) dollars. This funding is dedicated toward native species conservation, and efforts to recover bull trout make this a good fit. Currently FWP will be using plans to use SWG dollars to pay for an annual gillnetting contracts that will have an option to renew annually for seven years. and is secure for seven years. Obtaining additional funding will likely depend on the relative success. FWP will assess success of the project through independent index netting for lake trout, and bull trout and kokanee salmon redd counts.

Are you going to use the Robertson Pittman (Pittman Robertson) money for this project.

- ~~FWP is planning plans to fund the Swan Lake, lake trout suppression program will be funded by the~~ using the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program. The SWG Program provides Federal grant funds to State fish and wildlife agencies for developing and implementing programs that benefit fish and wildlife and their habitats.

- **Source of Funds:** Congress appropriates funds for the SWG Program on an annual basis. Funds are apportioned to States, Commonwealths, and U.S. Territories (States) based on a formula that considers each State's population and total geographical area.
- Grant funds are disbursed to States for approved grants at a maximum Federal share of 75% for planning grants and 65% for Plan implementation grants. ~~Congress also allocates a portion of appropriated funds to the Competitive SWG Program.~~

How much will the Netting cost the public Sportsman.

- ~~FWP plans to fund the~~ **The lake trout suppression program is to be funded** using State Wildlife Grant (SWG) dollars. This funding is dedicated toward native species conservation, and efforts to recover bull trout make this a good fit. ~~Currently FWP is planning plans to use will be using~~ SWG dollars to pay for an annual gillnetting contracts (~\$150,000/year) and 1 additional FTE for a full-time fisheries technician to collect data, coordinate volunteers, and oversee general operations of the suppression program. This new employee will be hired as a Fisheries Technician 5 (Biologist 1), at a salary of \$25.94/hour.

This type of action is appropriate for changes that do not affect FWP's reasoning or justification for the decision and does not present new, material, and significant information that would significantly change the public's opportunity to understand and comment on the proposed project.

This corrigendum is hereby issued on August 28, 2024.

Sincerely,

Lee Anderson

Lee Anderson
Region 1 Supervisor