



Protecting Montana's wildlife, land, waters, and hunting & fishing heritage for future generations.

Board Resolution on Conservation of Native Fish in Montana

Whereas Montana's native fish have declined in abundance and distribution in the last 100 years;

Whereas Montana's aquatic natural heritage includes 91 species of fish, 57 of those species are native to at least part of Montana;

Whereas Native fish are found throughout Montana;

Whereas Native fish fill a number of ecological roles, from prey for both aquatic and terrestrial predators, to controlling other aquatic species to sport fish;

Whereas many native fish have declined significantly in the last 100 years;

Whereas native fish may decline in abundance or distribution for a variety of reasons: mining, logging, road building, dam construction and operation, non-native fish introduction, overfishing, dewatering (particularly irrigation), pollution, climate change and habitat loss;

Whereas the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service retains authority over any species listed as Threatened or Endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act;

Whereas native fish abundance and distribution serve as aquatic habitat quality indicators;

Whereas native fish have evolved over thousands of years with specific genetics that may be important to withstand climate change and other ecological disturbances;

Whereas native fish may fill a variety of ecological roles such as prey, maintaining ecological communities or as sport fish;

Whereas some native fish are important to Montana's outdoor economy and way of life as sport fish;

Whereas isolation due to factors such as climate change, construction of dams and improper stream crossings, dewatering, and introduction of non-native fish species (legal and illegal) may lead to a loss of genetic health and increasing risk of local extinctions;

Whereas Montana must demonstrate it is a responsible steward of natural resources by maintaining healthy native fish populations for the present and future; and

Whereas managing native fish should remain Montana's responsibility. Listing of a native species as "Threatened" or "Endangered" transfers management authority to the US Fish and Wildlife Service; now, therefore, be it resolved that the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) urges the State of Montana to:



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1. Maintain a full suite of native species as part of Montana's natural heritage.
2. Maintain numeric water quantity and quality standards.
3. Ensure the highest standards of aquatic habitat protection in critical native fish habitat.
4. Maintain adequate stream flows to prevent isolation or extinction of native fish populations.
5. Ensure adequate funding to protect and enhance highest priority native fish populations.
6. When possible, restore native fish populations to historic waters once limiting factors are resolved or eliminated.
7. Evaluate all proposed fish introductions to ensure no impacts to native fish.
8. Prioritize information and enforcement efforts highlighting impacts of illegal fish introductions on native fish.
9. Maintain native fish under Montana management.

Moved: Logan Brower

Second: Kathy Hadley

Passed 14 for and 0 against

April 15, 2023, at the 87th Annual Meeting of the Montana Wildlife Federation