



BIG HOLE
WATERSHED COMMITTEE
Conservation Through Consensus.

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Rancher - Middle Big Hole

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Rancher - Middle Big Hole

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Andy Suenram

Resident and Sportsman

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Rancher- Lower Big Hole

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Rancher- Upper Big Hole

11/29/2021

Dear Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission and Leadership,

The Big Hole Watershed Committee and partners in the Big Hole Watershed want to commend the Commission for taking measures in August of this year to protect the fishery of the Big Hole River. While we remain supportive of these measures, we have heard significant concern that the selected closure and opening dates chosen for the Maiden Rock to Brown's Bridge section of the river pose undue hardship on our recreation-based businesses, without providing additional protection for the fishery.

Brown trout are regularly observed spawning in this section of the Big Hole as early as October 1st. In the spring, flows are typically so high and temps so cold that we don't see fishing pressures that would impact spring spawning redds. Based on the recommendations of our local fisheries biologist and backed by dozens of years of local knowledge of the fishery, we urge the Commission to adopt an opening date of March 31st and a closing date of October 1st for the Maiden Rock to Browns Bridge section of the river. These dates are the most protective of the fishery while still allowing our local businesses to operate profitably, which greatly benefits our local economies.

We urge that you take up and support this request at your December 14th meeting.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we appreciate what all your staff do for the natural resources of the Big Hole!

Pedro Marques
Executive Director

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