



BIG HOLE RIVER DROUGHT MANAGEMENT PLAN – VERSION 2023 QUICK REFERENCE

SECTION	FLOW TRIGGERS APR. 1 – OCT. 31	TEMPERATURE TRIGGERS
I: Saginaw Bridge on Skinner Meadows Road to North Fork Big Hole River mouth	160 cfs - April 1 to June 30 target for Arctic grayling spawning. 60 cfs – Prepare for Conservation 40 cfs - Conservation 20 cfs - MFWP River Closure Measured at USGS Wisdom Gage (06024450)	<p>Step 1: MFWP Hoot-Owl Fishing Restrictions: Hoot-owl fishing restriction will be in place when daily maximum water temperature reaches or exceeds 73° F (23° C) for at least some period of time during three consecutive days. Hoot-owl fishing closure prohibits fishing between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. (Midnight). They will remain in place until September 15 or until re-opening criteria are met.</p> <p>Step 2: MFWP River Closure Due to High Temperatures: River closure based on water temperature may be implemented if hoot-owl restrictions are inadequate to protect the fishery (e.g., prolonged period where water temperatures exceed 73° F and forecasts are not favorable for cooler temperature, thermal stress in fish observed by biologist, etc.). Closure will remain in place until September 15 or until re-opening criteria are met. <i>Section temperature measured at flow gages (left).</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">MFWP Current Waterbody Restrictions</p>
II: North Fork Big Hole River mouth to Dickie Bridge	450 cfs - April 1 to June 30 target for Arctic grayling spawning. 170 cfs – Prepare for Conservation 140 cfs - Conservation 100 cfs - MFWP River Closure Measured at DNRC Big Hole River near Wise River Gage (41D 08000)	
III: Dickie Bridge to MFWP Maiden Rock Fishing Access Site (FAS)	250 cfs – Prepare for Conservation 200 cfs - Conservation 150 cfs - MFWP River Closure Measured at USGS Maiden Rock Gage (06025250)	
IV: MFWP Maiden Rock FAS to Tony Schoonen FAS	250 cfs – Prepare for Conservation 200 cfs - Conservation 150 cfs - MFWP River Closure Measured at LOWEST of USGS Glen Gage (06026210) or Melrose Gage (0602550)	
V: Tony Schoonen FAS to confluence with Jefferson River	200 cfs – Prepare for Conservation 150 cfs - Conservation 100 cfs - MFWP River Closure Measured at USGS Big Hole River below Hamilton Ditch near Twin Bridges Gage (06026420)	

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VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR ANGLERS DURING PERIODS OF DROUGHT AND SPAWNING

The following are voluntary actions anglers can take to protect the Big Hole River fishery during periods of drought:

- ❖ Use a stream thermometer when you fish, available at your local fly shop. Water temperatures change throughout the day with the coldest water occurring in the early morning. Take the temperature frequently throughout the day and when water temperatures rise above 67F, stop fishing.
- ❖ Always keep fish wet and release them quickly.
- ❖ Use heavier tippet and land fish quickly. Prolonged fight times in warm water place a high amount of stress on the fish and increase hooking mortality.
- ❖ Consider exploring high mountain streams and mountain lakes, where water temperatures stay cooler and give the river fish a break.
- ❖ Consider taking a break from fishing during hot weather and find other ways to enjoy the Montana outdoors.

The following are voluntary actions anglers can take to protect the Big Hole River fishery during periods of spawning:

- ❖ Choose to fish elsewhere if you can, or for a different species.
- ❖ Don't walk or fish in areas with clean gravels (redds).
- ❖ Don't use flies, lures, or bait that resemble fish eggs, including glo-bugs, egg flies, florescent colored scuds, or beads.
- ❖ Educate yourself. Learn what a redd (fish nest) looks like and how to avoid them.
- ❖ Use polarized glasses so you can see areas where fish are spawning.
- ❖ Use extra caution when wading through tailouts and shallow riffles, as these are where brown trout spawn, and they are common areas at which to ford the river.

NEW REGULATIONS TO PROTECT DECLINING BROWN TROUT POPULATIONS

The following fishing regulations are in effect for the Big Hole River after they were passed by the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission in August, 2021 and updated in December 2021. These include:

- ❖ Catch and release only for brown trout from Dickie Bridge to the river's mouth near Twin Bridges.
- ❖ A seasonal fishing closure between the Bureau of Land Management's Maiden Rock site and Brownes Bridge Fishing Access Site from October 1 until March 31.
- ❖ Artificial lures and single-pointed hooks only from Dickie Bridge to the river's mouth near Twin Bridges. No treble or double hooks allowed. Anglers may remove treble or double hooks.

For more information about fishing regulations or waterbody closures, visit fwp.mt.gov/fish.