

Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

389 Rick Oshay Road
Kalispell, Montana 59937
amyclint@montanasky.us
July 12, 2005

Bruce Farling
Montana Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 1786
Missoula, MT 59807

Dear Mr. Farling:

I am writing in response to the letter dated 12 April 2005. I apologize for the delay, but I was just informed that it was sent to the Montana Chapter American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) for response.

As you are aware, the MCAFS is an organization of professional fisheries scientists and students from multiple agencies, universities and the private sector across Montana. One of our objectives is the conservation, development and wise utilization of Montana's fisheries. As a result, our Chapter has been an advocate for collection of fish resource information; conservation and restoration of native fishes; protection and conservation of high quality aquatic habitats; and wise management of land, water and fish resources in the state of Montana. As such, we are keenly interested in the conservation and protection of the westslope cutthroat trout, and we support the continued use of the Memorandum of Understanding as a mechanism to bring agencies and organizations together for the benefit of the fish.

The MCAFS provides a venue for dissemination of data and discussion of scientific issues surrounding the conservation of WCT in Montana. Both the 2004 and 2005 annual meetings had sessions related to cutthroat trout conservation. At the 2005 meeting there were 10 sessions with topics on *Barriers to Aquatic Movement*, *Land Management and Restoration Techniques*, *Tools of the Restoration of Inland Fisheries* and many others. In all, there were 48 papers presented at the meeting, most of which have some indirect or direct applicability to westslope cutthroat conservation. In addition to the meetings, continuing education sessions have been positive forums for learning more about specific issues that also affect cutthroat conservation, including the 2005 session that addressed aquatic nuisance species, which is a very significant issue for WCT in Montana.

Our organization allows for scientific reviews of project proposals, policy decisions and conservation strategies that focus on the needs of the species and allow us to leave the agency positions out of the reviews. Since 2002, the Chapter has commented on 48 issues or projects, many of which have a direct relationship to cutthroat conservation.

In addition to the technical reviews and professional forums for discussion, the MCAFS has funded several projects for the restoration of westslope cutthroat through our Resource Action Fund (RAF). Thousands of dollars have been awarded to important recovery and conservation efforts, including habitat restoration and protection projects, brood stock development, and non-native species eradication and prevention programs.

We look forward to participating in the effort to update and renew the commitments with the Conservation Strategy and MOU for westslope cutthroat trout.

Sincerely,

Clint Muhlfeld
President, Montana Chapter AFS