

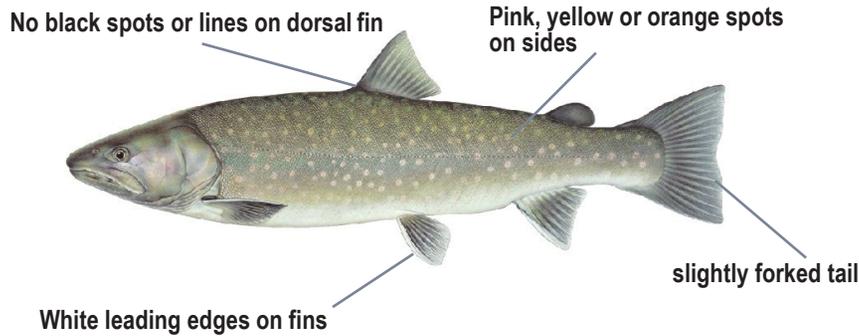
# Bull Trout Identification Guide



**MONTANA FISH,  
WILDLIFE & PARKS**



Adult Bull Trout with characteristics typical of fish from a lake and lengths generally greater than 20 inches.



## 2020 BULL TROUT REGULATIONS

Bull trout fishing is permitted in four western district waters of Montana: Hungry Horse Reservoir, South Fork Flathead River, Lake Koocanusa and Swan Lake. All other waters in Montana are closed to intentional fishing for bull trout. These four fisheries are very restrictive because bull trout are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. See pages 2 and 3 for water-specific regulations. It is hoped that this permitted angling will increase public support for management of stable bull trout populations, restoration of bull trout habitat, and for other management activities that will increase the distribution and abundance of bull trout populations throughout the state.

### BULL TROUT CATCH CARD

A FWP bull trout PERMIT on your fishing license and a separate catch card are required and must be in possession while intentionally fishing for bull trout in the mainstem South Fork Flathead River upstream from Hungry Horse Reservoir, Hungry Horse Reservoir and Lake Koocanusa. A catch card is not required for bull trout fishing on Swan Lake. Catch Cards will provide FWP with critical management information. Whether you fish for or harvest bull trout or not, your Catch Card should be kept until you have been surveyed by FWP and should be returned in the mail with your survey.

Bull trout Catch Cards are available through the FWP Region 1 office free of charge. Applications are available online at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) for no charge. You can help us better manage these fisheries by keeping accurate records while fishing for bull trout. Your catch card may not be transferred, borrowed, altered, or loaned to another person. Duplicate cards will not be issued, so take good care of your bull trout catch card.

**Immediately upon harvesting a bull trout, or if releasing a bull trout, you must record the following information in ballpoint pen on your catch card:**

- Month and day of harvest.
- Zone (A, B, C, D, E or F as indicated on waterbody maps.)
- Length of bull trout to the nearest 1/2" (estimated length for fish caught-and-released)
- Cut out one notch for each bull trout harvested from Hungry Horse Reservoir.

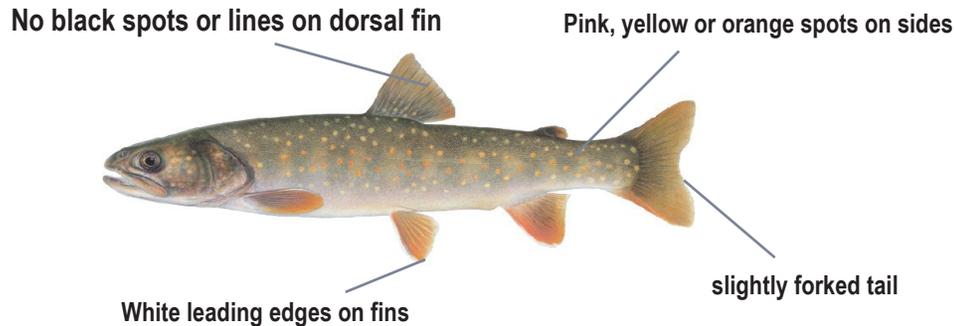
NOTE: Anglers are not allowed to harvest two bull trout on the same day.

## BULL TROUT SEASONS, LIMITS AND RESTRICTIONS

	Lake Koocanusa	Hungry Horse Res.	S. Flathead River	Swan Lake
<b>Bull Trout Harvest</b>	Closed to all harvest.	Open 3rd Sat. in May through Aug. 15. One bull trout per day and only 1 in possession. A maximum of 2 per season.	Closed to all harvest.	Closed to all harvest.
<b>Catch-and-Release</b>	Open entire year.	Open entire year.	Open 3rd Saturday in May through July 31.	Open entire year. No catch card required.

NOTE: It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason. Any bull trout being harvested must be killed immediately, all other bull trout must be released unharmed immediately. A valid permit and catch card is required to fish for bull trout everywhere except Swan Lake.

Juvenile Bull Trout with characteristics typical of stream fish and lengths generally less than 20 inches.



**Please Note:** Anglers that fail to properly validate their bull trout catch card, exceed the specified limits, violate the season restrictions, or possess a dead bull trout without a properly validated catch card, will be in violation of Montana fishing regulations and may also be prosecuted for violation of the Endangered Species Act.

## SEASONS, LIMITS, AND RESTRICTIONS FOR BULL TROUT

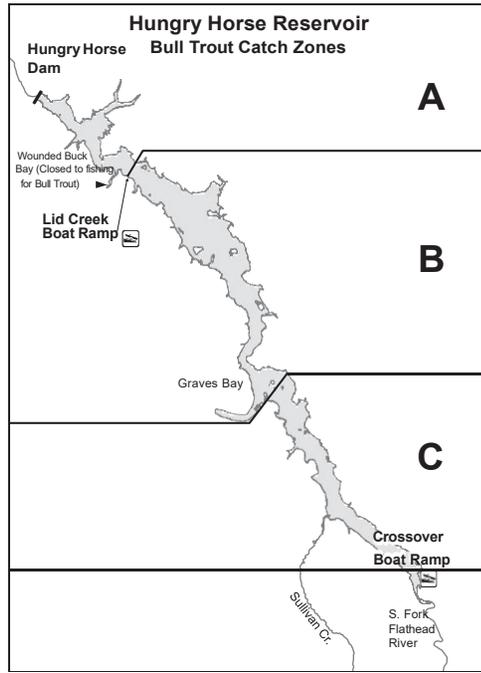
### Hungry Horse Reservoir

#### Season/Limits:

One bull trout daily and in possession from the third Saturday in May through August 15, maximum of 2 fish per license year. Catch-and-release the rest of the year with a Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead permit validation on fishing license. **A Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout.** See Special Licenses requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released immediately or killed and counted as your limit when harvest is allowed. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

#### Hungry Horse Catch Zones:

Identify zone (A, B, or C) on catch card where bull trout was taken.



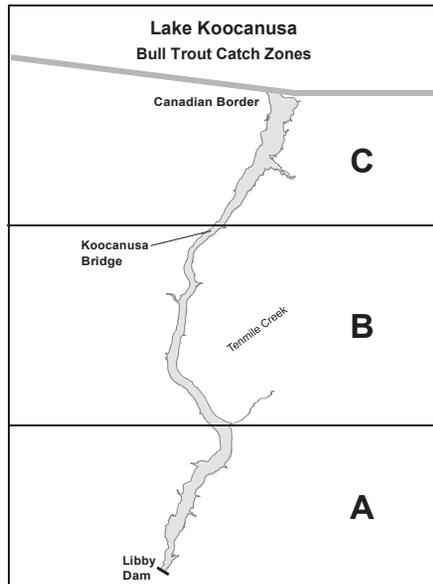
### Lake Koocanusa (Libby Reservoir)

#### Season/Limits: Catch and Release Only

**A Lake Koocanusa Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout.** See Special Licenses requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

#### Lake Koocanusa Catch Zones:

Identify zone (A, B, or C) on Catch Card where bull trout was taken.



### South Fork Flathead River

For Purposes of this regulation, the South Fork Flathead River extends from Crossover boat ramp south and upstream to the confluence of Youngs' and Danaher creeks. **Angling for bull trout is NOT allowed in South Fork tributaries or Big Salmon Lake.**

#### Season/Limits: Catch-and-release only

Catch-and-release fishing for bull trout from the third Saturday in May through July 31. A Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout. See Special License requirements for application information. All bull trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

#### South Fork Flathead Catch Zones:

Identify zone (D, E or F) on Catch Card where bull trout was taken.

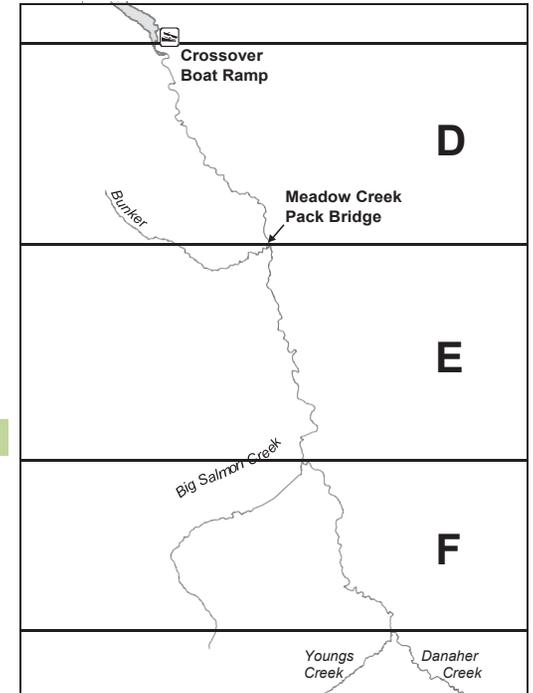
### Swan Lake

#### Season/Limits: Catch-and-release only

All bull trout must be released immediately. It is unlawful to possess a live bull trout for any reason.

**Only a valid fishing license is required.**

### South Fork Flathead River Bull Trout Catch Zones



## CATCH-AND-RELEASE FISHING

Use of proper handling techniques will improve the chance of survival for any fish released. A fish that is released may still die from deep hooking injury, internal organ damage from being squeezed, bacterial infections resulting from the handling process, effects of physical stress from being played too long, heat shock, or lack of oxygen from being held in warm or poorly oxygenated water.

#### Anglers can help fish survival by using the following techniques:

- Fish with artificial flies and lures with single, barbless hooks to reduce fish injury and handling time.
- Play the fish as rapidly as possible to minimize exhaustion.
- Keep the fish in water when handling and removing the hook. Needle-nose pliers or forceps are helpful.
- Remove the hook gently and do not squeeze the fish or place fingers in the gills.
- If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the line leaving about 1" of leader hanging out of the mouth. Do not pull the hook out as this could seriously injure the fish; the hook will degrade rapidly and will not harm the fish.
- Release the fish only after it has gained equilibrium. If necessary, hold it in a swimming position facing into the current or water moving it slowly back and forth until it recovers.
- Release the fish in quiet water close to the area where it was caught.

## PHOTOGRAPHING BULL TROUT

It is legal to photograph your trophy catch, however, it is essential that you minimize or eliminate the need to take the fish out of water. Ferguson and Tufts (1992) showed that nearly 40 percent of exhausted trout that were kept out of water for 30 seconds died; it rises to almost 70 percent if they are kept out of the water for 60 seconds. Have everything ready to take a photo before you handle the fish and try not to squeeze the fish or put your hands in its gills. Release the fish as quickly as possible.