



## 431 Idaho Panhandle Chapter of Trout Unlimited

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Allan Songstad, Chair  
Bonner County Planning Commission  
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November 13, 2023

Dear Chair Songstad:

The mission of the Idaho Panhandle Chapter of **Trout Unlimited** for over 40 years has been to conserve, protect and restore the cold-water fisheries and their habitats within Bonner, Boundary and Kootenai Counties. We offer the following comments regarding *Chapter 1, Section 1.5 Fisheries* within the *Natural Resources Component* of the proposed revision of the *Bonner County Comprehensive Plan*.

First of all, we thank you for acknowledging Trout Unlimited among the agencies and organizations actively engaged in protecting and enhancing the fisheries of Bonner County (*Section 1.5 Fisheries*). Although this is not intended to be a comprehensive listing, we encourage you to consider adding several other organizations who play vital roles including the Kalispel Tribe, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bonneville Power Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, Idaho Conservation League and the Selkirk Conservation Alliance. We recommend reaching out to all of these entities as you move forward updating the plan.

In comparing the current Natural Resources component (12/13/2003) to the proposed update (11/1/2023), we recognize and agree with the desire to shorten this section. State, federal, and tribal entities with designated authorities for the stewardship of fish and fisheries habitat have detailed plans for conserving and managing fishery resources that are readily accessible. These include the Idaho Fisheries Management Plan (IDFG) and US Fish and Wildlife Service Bull Trout Recovery Plan. As part of Avista's mitigation responsibilities under their Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license, the Clark Fork Collaborative developed a Native Salmonid Restoration Plan. Bonneville Power Administration is also engaged in planning for their mitigation responsibilities resulting from Albeni Falls Dam. All of these are periodically revisited and updated to keep up with new information. All of these plans are developed and updated in public forums with public input. We recommend the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan reference these plans with the language above (or similar), along with a statement such as "Bonner County recognizes the importance and value of the County's fisheries to the culture and economy of the Bonner County citizens, and will coordinate with citizens, and management and regulatory agencies, to conserve and enhance these resources".

We also strongly recommend a paragraph that explicitly recognizes that Bonner County's fisheries are significant contributors to the economy and enjoyment of the county's waters by citizens and visitors alike. Bonner County waters support hundreds of thousands of recreational fishing days, a number of businesses directly tied to fishing, and contribute to a much broader segment of the business community to include a considerable portion of the tourism economy. Bonner County waters also support ecologically valuable fishery resources, and are ancestral fishing waters of the Kalispel Tribe.

We encourage expanding the current draft of the *Fisheries* section to include a linkage between land uses activities and water quality. This should emphasize that fish are important indicators of water quality. Our native fish species, especially bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, require abundant clean, cold water for their survival...the same attributes that make Bonner County waters, such as Priest and Pend Oreille Lakes, so desirable for citizens and visitors alike.

Thank you again for listing Trout Unlimited in the draft document. To honor that acknowledgment, please don't hesitate to call upon us as you proceed in updating the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

*Bill Love*

Bill Love, President

Idaho Panhandle Chapter – Trout Unlimited