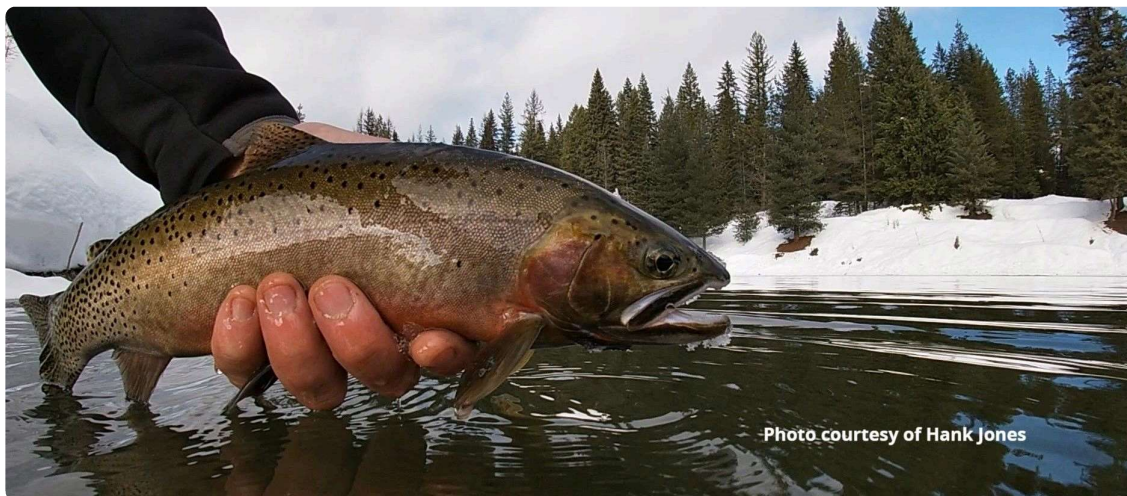


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Welcome to the Idaho Panhandle Chapter of Trout Unlimited's quarterly newsletter!

Each newsletter will bring you an article from the Panhandle Chapter, an article from the national project managers working on the Pend Oreille and Coeur d'Alene Basins, current events and more! Our new website should be ready by mid-summer, please visit www.northidahotu.org to learn more.



Fly-Fishing Open House

June 22, 2024 from 10 am until 2 pm (volunteer setup at 9 am)

Morning session: Fly-Fishing Fair

[Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge](#)

287 Westside Road, Bonners Ferry

Participants will be able to visit various stations at their leisure. Stations will include:

Afternoon session: Fly Casting & Fishing in the Pond

Lion's Den Rotary Park
2043 Lions Den Rd, Bonners Ferry

This session will focus on fly casting and fishing in the pond.

- Fly fishing gear
- Fishing Rules
- Stream walk on Myrtle Creek

Please contact Bill Love, PCTU President

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The Clark Fork Settlement Agreement - 25 Years of Successful Collaboration and Fish Conservation

Back in 1999, Avista Utilities held a celebration marking the signing of the [Clark Fork Settlement Agreement](#), culminating nearly 5 years of collaborative negotiations. Prominent among those signatories was Trout Unlimited; the Settlement Agreement provided the foundation for Avista to continue operating its two Clark Fork River hydroelectric projects (Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge dams) under a newly issued license from the [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission \(FERC\)](#). In an era of stalled relicensing efforts by power companies nationwide, Avista's effort was unique because it invited stakeholders to participate in a collaborative fashion, rather than through the seemingly endless legal battles that were bogging down every other utility's effort to renew their licenses.

Those collaborative efforts continue to this day, 25 years into the 45-year license granted by FERC based on the Settlement Agreement. The Panhandle Chapter of Trout Unlimited (PCTU), primarily represented by Bob Dunnagan and Loren Albright and assisted by national TU representatives and legal counsel, played a key role in the negotiations to achieve mitigation outcomes that would have significant benefits for coldwater fisheries in Idaho and Montana. Overall there were 27 signatories to the Settlement Agreement, including state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, elected officials, and 5 regional Native American Tribes.

Negotiations were challenging, but all participants had a say. Along with modifications to dam operations, Avista committed millions of dollars annually to improving conditions for fisheries and other affected natural resources. All agreed on protocols for choosing mitigation projects and adapting the program to changing conditions, as well as a process to implement mitigation and measure the outcomes. PCTU emerged as one of the implementers of the Bull Trout Enforcement and Education program, taking on development and implementation of educational materials and programs to inform people about bull trout and to reduce illegal harvest of this ESA listed native species. PCTU works closely with Idaho and Montana fisheries and enforcement staff, and Avista biologists, to make this program successful – illegal harvest of bull trout has declined substantially and bull trout populations are healthy.

status as one of the finest trout lakes on the planet, and restored connectivity within the watershed by providing [fish passage at the dams](#). In addition, an impressive amount of scientific work has come out of the program, contributing to the ability of fisheries managers all over the west to improve conditions for native bull and cutthroat trout.

Remarkably, after 25 years, the collaborative approach remains strong and thriving. The status of coldwater fisheries in the lower Clark Fork/Pend Oreille basin has seen marked improvement over the past quarter century as a result of these efforts...and thanks in no small part to the efforts of the Panhandle Chapter.



Trout Unlimited's National Team in North Idaho

Did you know that Trout Unlimited's national team has two project managers working in North Idaho? This program started in 2020 with Erin Plue and grew in 2023 with the addition of Cathy Gidley. These two work on stream restoration, fish passage, and road decommissioning projects throughout the Pend Oreille and Spokane River systems in Idaho (and a little in northeastern Washington). The TU Project Managers work with public and private landowners to improve cold-water fish habitat and water quality. They often find funding, support design, and implement construction for these projects. In each of these newsletters there will be an article that features one of their recent or current stream projects.

This summer there is also a seasonal summer crew running around the St. Joe and St. Maries basins assessing whether culverts or bridges are barriers to fish passage at road crossings. They hope to complete assessments on 500-700 road crossings this summer. This data will help to prioritize projects that will improve fish movement throughout a watershed. The crew will also be sampling some points for eDNA which will be sent to a lab to analyze whether concerning non-native species are present. This is a highly collaborative project including partnerships with Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game and the US Forest Service.

Cathy Gidley and Erin Plue, North Idaho Project Managers, monitoring a culvert for fish passage.



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