

# Fisheries Conservation Through Instream Flow Protection and Angling Closures

Bill Schenk

Montana Department of Fish,  
Wildlife and Parks

# Instream Protection Methods

- Murphy Rights (Statutory Designation)
- Water Reservations
- Water Leasing
- Storage
- Basin Closures



- **Yellowstone River Basin**

- 8 municipalities
- 14 conservation districts, and
- 6 state and federal agencies

(Priority date December 15, 1978)

- **Upper Missouri River Basin**

(Above Fort Peck Dam)

- 17 municipalities,
- 15 conservation districts, and
- 4 state and federal agencies.

Priority date July 1, 1985

- **Lower Missouri River Basin**

(Below Fort Peck Dam)

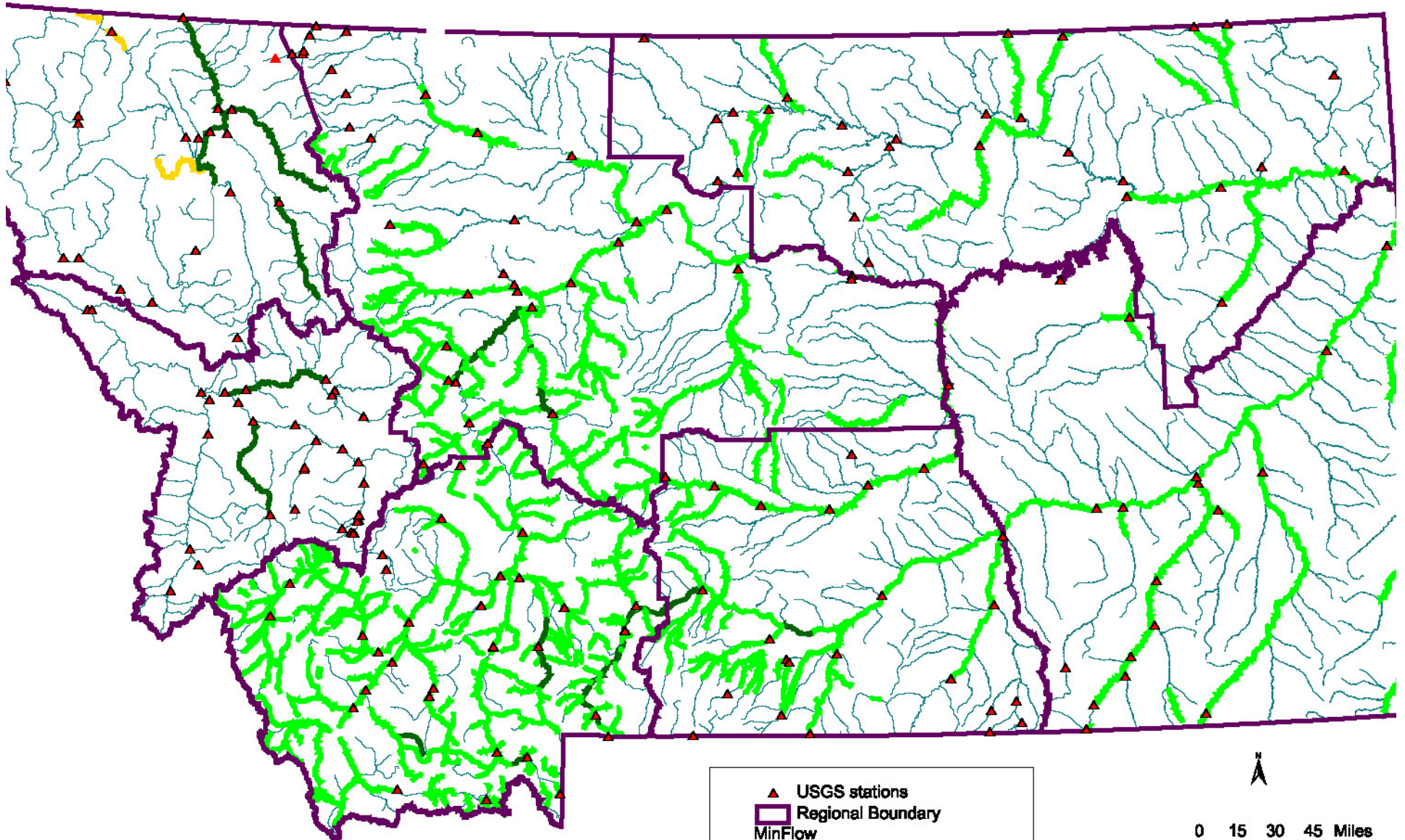
- 9 municipalities,
- 8 conservation districts, and
- 1 state agency.

- **Little Missouri River basin**

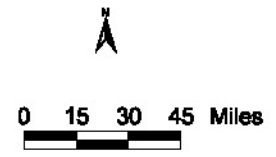
Water Reservations granted to:

- 2 municipalities,
- 3 conservation districts, and
- 1 state agency.

(Priority date July 1, 1985)

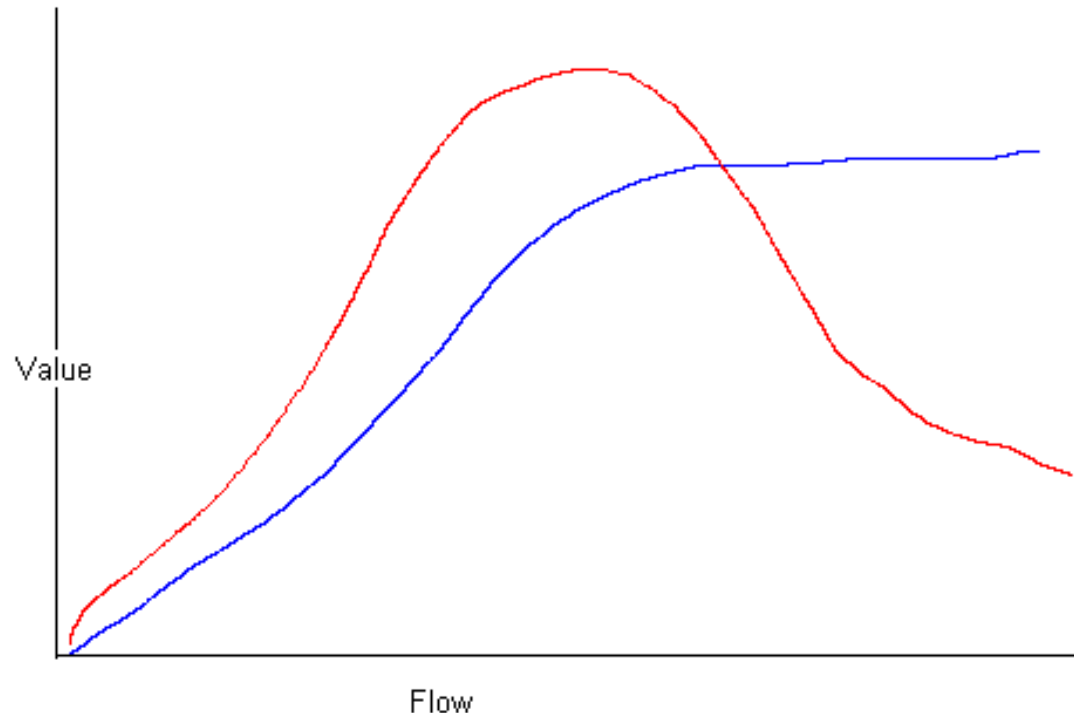


▲ USGS stations  
 □ Regional Boundary  
 MinFlow  
 ▾ Murphy Right Filed  
 ▾ Other Water Rights  
 ▾ Water Reservation Granted  
 ▾ Other Streams



# Instream Flow Needs

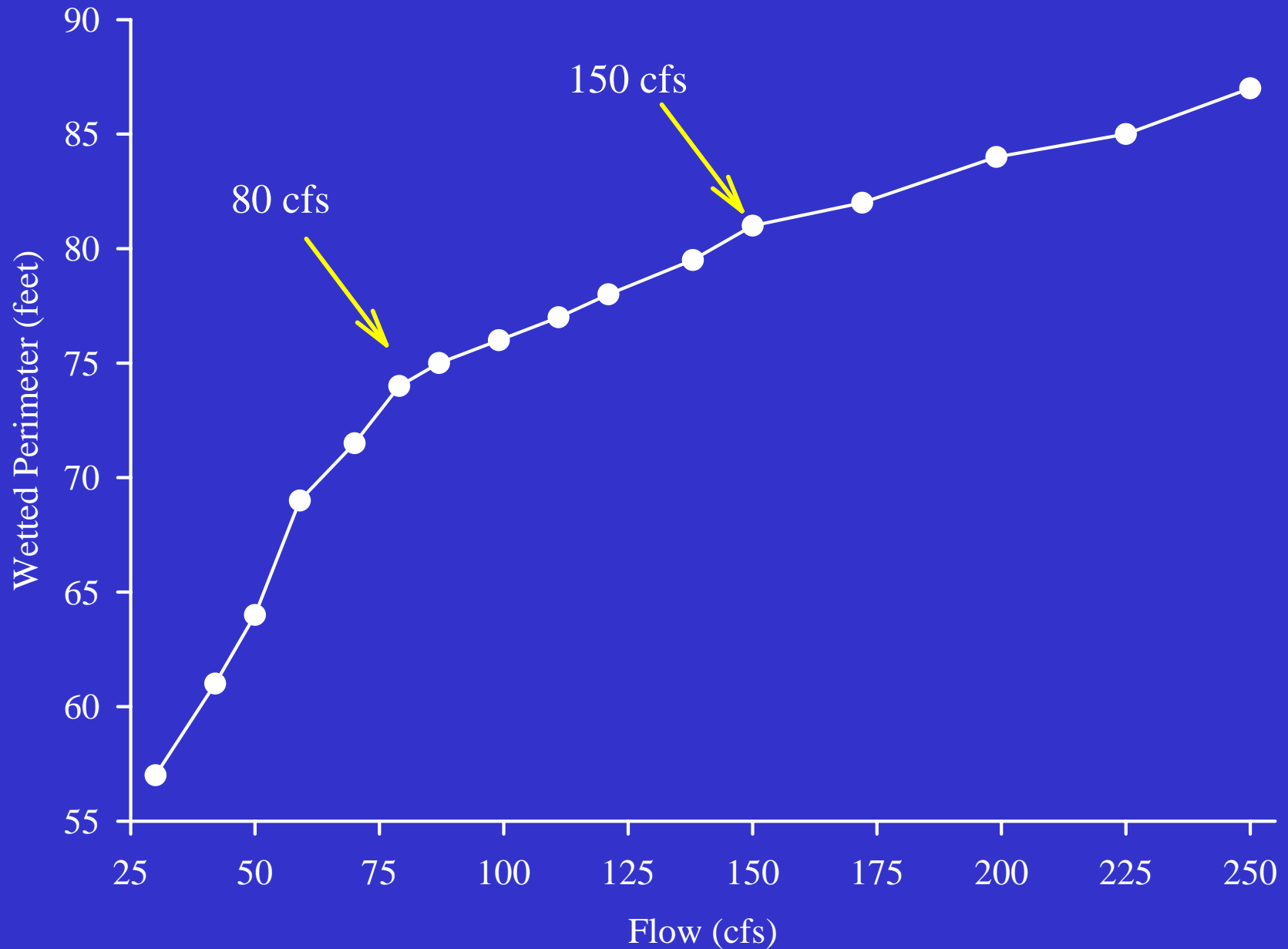
- Assumption that there is a relationship between flow and instream resource values (e.g., fish, recreation, navigation, etc.)



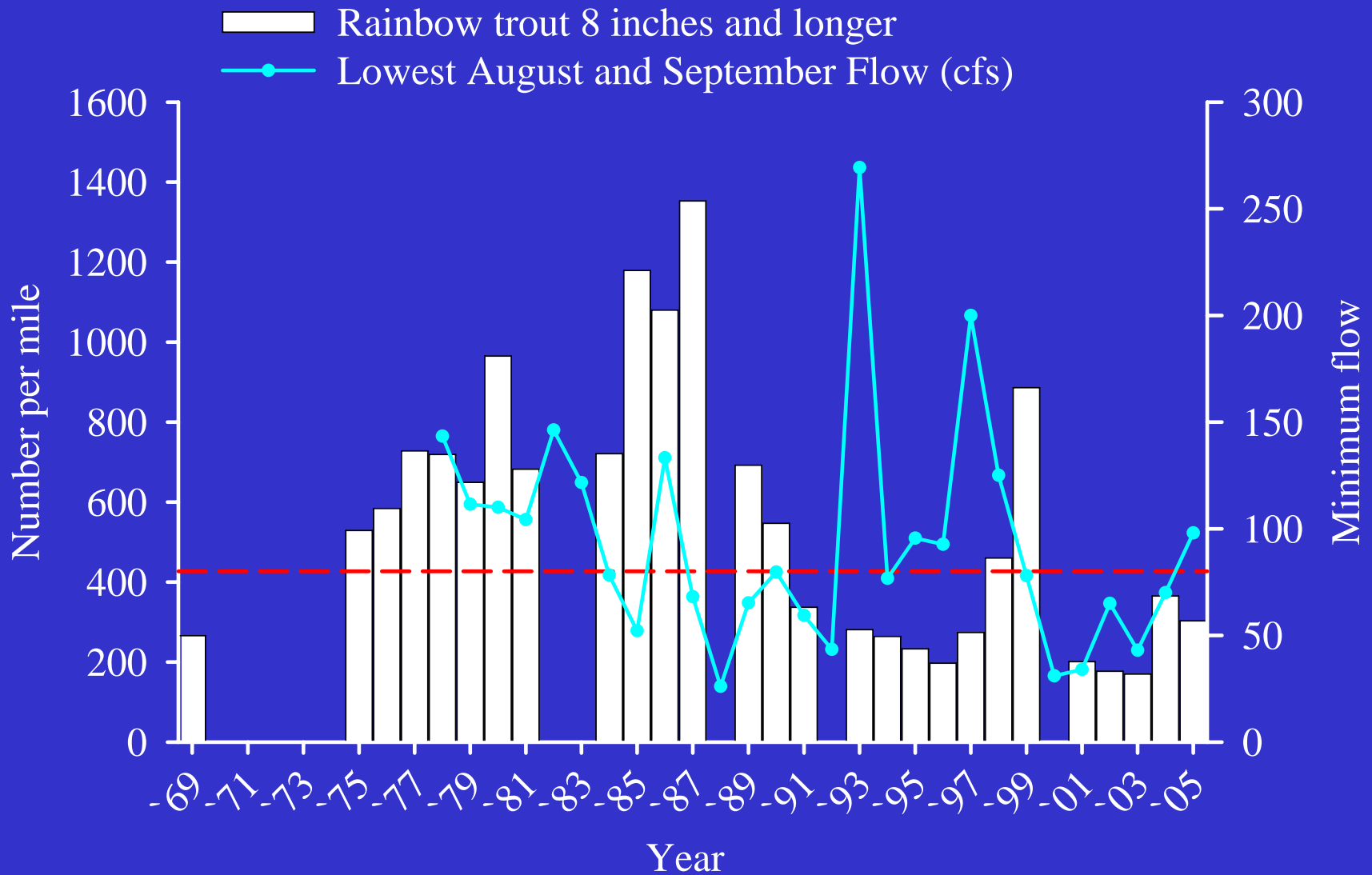
# Smith River

Recruitment and Summer Flows

## Relationship between available habitat in riffles (wetted perimeter) and flow in the Smith River

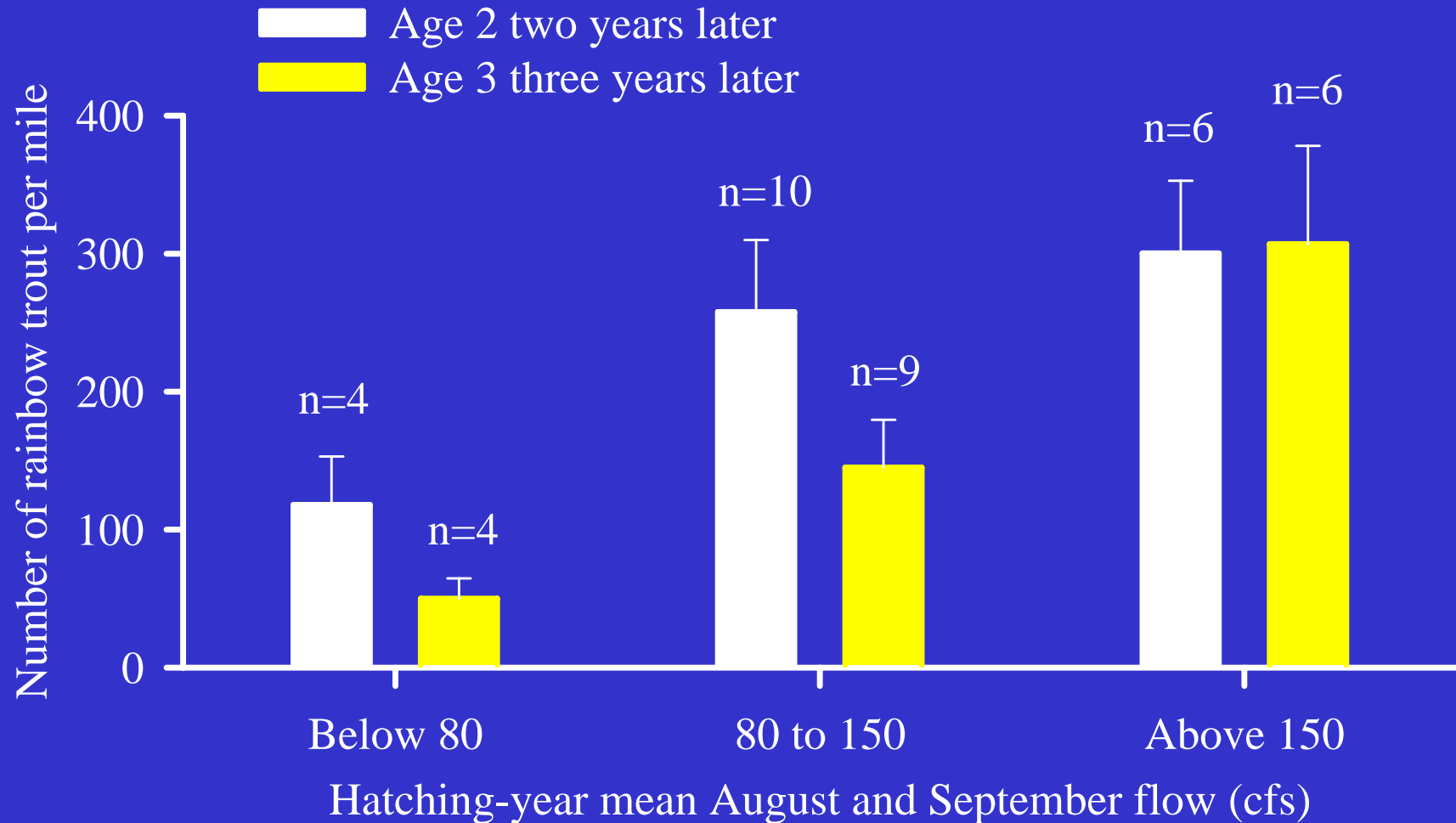


# Adult rainbow trout and low summer flows



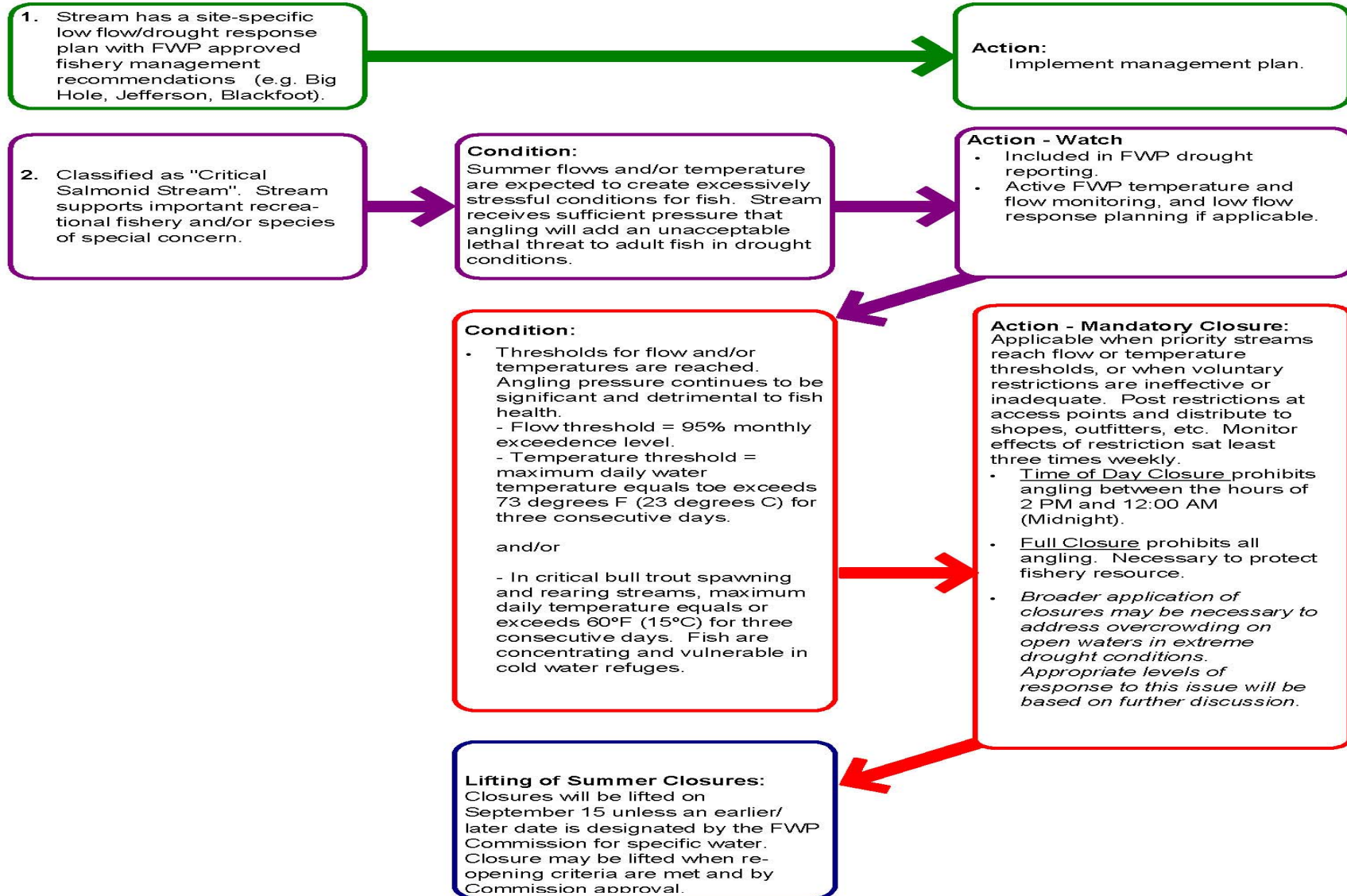


## Relationship between rainbow trout recruitment and average hatching-year flow during August and September in the Smith River

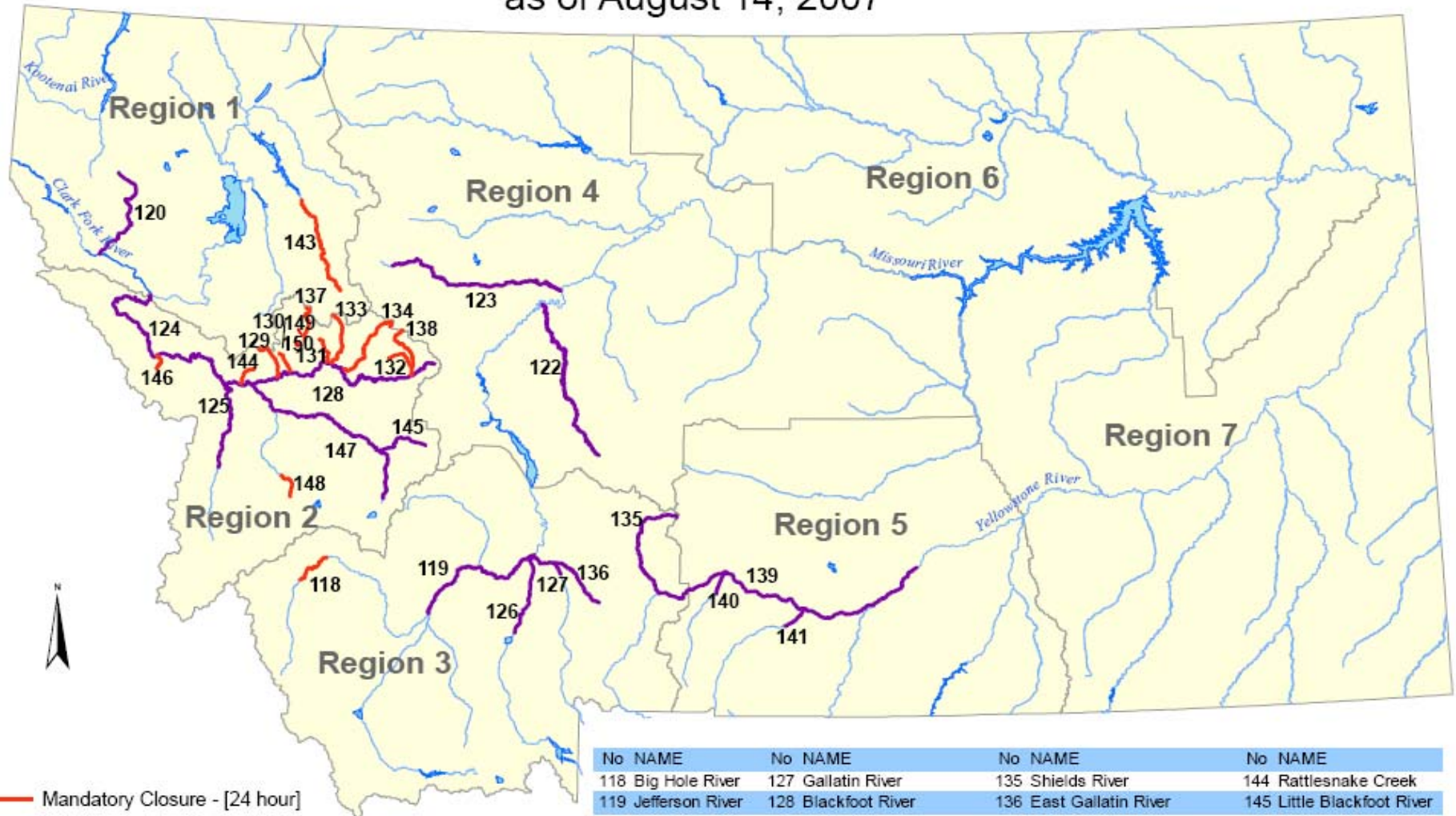


# FWP Fishing Closure Considerations Flow Chart

For Cold Water Streams in Summer Low Flow Conditions



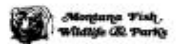
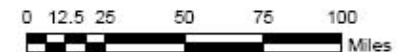
# Fishing Restrictions and Closures as of August 14, 2007\*



- Mandatory Closure - [24 hour]
- Mandatory Closure - 2 PM to Midnight
- ⊕ Lake Mandatory Closure - 24 hours
- Streams
- FWP Region

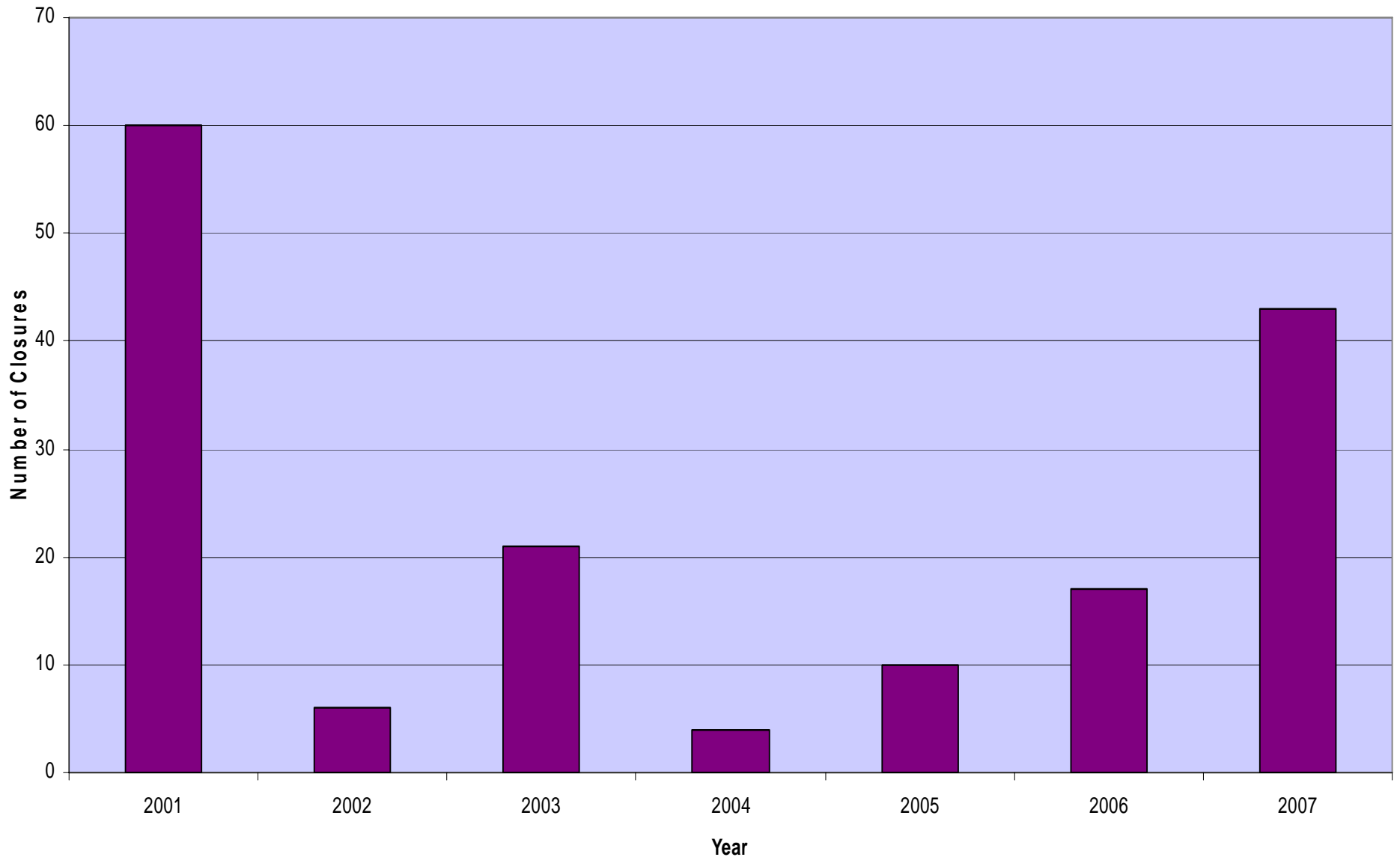
No	NAME	No	NAME	No	NAME	No	NAME
118	Big Hole River	127	Gallatin River	135	Shields River	144	Rattlesnake Creek
119	Jefferson River	128	Blackfoot River	136	East Gallatin River	145	Little Blackfoot River
120	Thompson River	129	Gold Creek	137	Morrell Creek	146	Fish Creek
122	Smith River	130	Belmont Creek	138	Landers Fork	147	Clark Fork River
123	Sun River	131	Cottonwood Creek	139	Yellowstone River	148	Rock Creek
124	Clark Fork River	132	Copper Creek	140	Boulder River	149	Seely Lake
125	Bitterroot River	133	Monture Creek	141	Stillwater River	150	Placid Lake
126	Madison River	134	North Fork Blackfoot R.	143	South Fork Flathead River		

\*Map is updated as new closures are posted.  
Refer to <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/waterclosure.aspx> for a current list of all active closures.  
Rev.14



## Fishing Closures - Recent History

■ Number of Fishing Closures



# Local Planning Areas

- Nearly 50 local planning groups / watershed groups.
- Collaborative, multi-stakeholder & often consensus based decision making.
- Management focus vs. quantification of rights.

## Watershed Group List

[Big Hole Watershed Committee](#)  
[Big Spring Creek Watershed Partnership](#)  
[Bitter Root Water Forum](#)  
[Blackfoot Challenge - Blackfoot River Watershed](#)  
[Bobtail Creek Watershed Group](#)  
[Buffalo Rapids Watershed Project](#)  
[Bullhead Water Quality Project](#)  
[Careless Creek Watershed](#)  
[Cedar Creek Watershed Project](#)  
[Deep Creek Watershed](#)  
[Devil's Kitchen Management Team](#)  
[East Pioneer Experimental Stewardship Committee](#)  
[Elk Creek Watershed Council](#)  
[Flathead Basin Commission](#)  
[Flint Creek Watershed](#)  
[Kootenai River Network, Inc.](#)  
[Lake Creek Partnership](#)  
[Lonesome Lake Coordinated Resource Management Group](#)  
[Lower Missouri River - Coordinated Resource Management](#)  
[Milk River Watershed](#)  
[Nevada Creek Watershed](#)  
[Prospect Creek](#)  
[Rock Creek Trust](#)  
[Ruby Valley Watershed Program](#)  
[Snowline Grazing Association - CRM](#)  
[Sourdough Creek](#)  
[Stone Creek](#)  
[Sun River Watershed](#)  
[Sweathouse Creek](#)  
[Teton River Watershed Group](#)  
[Tri-State Implementation Council](#)  
[Upper Clark Fork River Basin Steering Committee](#)  
[Upper Shields](#)  
[Upper Tennile Watershed Steering Group](#)  
[Upper Yellowstone River Task Force](#)  
[White Pine Creek](#)

# Blackfoot Emergency Drought Response Plan





# Basin Water Use

- **3,185 surface water rights in basin.**
- **40% (1,270 water rights) > 1 cfs (448 gpm)/65% irrigators.**
- **10% of these water rights are on the Blackfoot river mainstem.**

**DNRC water rights data base - 2000**

# Plan Premise:

- Shared Sacrifice
- Voluntary actions
- Equity and Parity in participation:
  - Junior and Senior water users
  - Multiple users and uses
  - Basin-wide participation





# Flow Trigger

## 700 cfs

- **In-stream flow water right at Bonner, MT**
- **Contact Plan Participants to implement Conservation Plans.**
- **Confer with FWP regarding low flow & temperature conditions.**
- **FWP/DNRC begin monitoring river/streams**
- **Drought Committee recommends “Call List” to FWP.**
- **FWP reviews/issues Murphy Right “Call.”**



# Flow Trigger 600 cfs

- Committee convenes and confirms participation.
- Voluntary fishing restrictions implemented.
- Anglers & Outfitters asked to reduce fishing pressures
- Based upon temperatures mandatory restrictions on fishing & angling.
- Additional “Call” on core “bull trout” tributaries

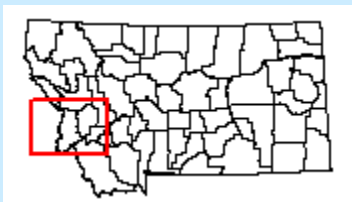


# Flow Trigger 450 cfs

- **Emergency Meeting of Drought Committee called.**
- **Close core Bull Trout streams and reaches to all fishing.**
- **Request participation or additional participation, especially to senior water users.**
- **Evaluate junior users and determine if additional “Calls” should be made by FWP.**

# Storage

- 10,000 A.F.  
Dedicated storage  
in Painted Rocks;  
2,000 in Como
- Goal: 402 cfs at  
Bell Crossing



Lake Como  
Painted Rocks  
Reservoir

