

A Tale of Temps & Flows

The Blackfoot Drought Response relies primarily on stream flows and water temperatures to determine the need for drought measures.

Water users may be asked to take action to maintain in-stream flows and anglers may be asked to restrict fishing if Blackfoot River flows drop below 700 cfs at the Bonner gage. Similar measures may be requested if water temperatures rise above 71 degrees in the Blackfoot or 65 degrees in bull trout tributaries.

Each year is unique and many factors play into enacting the Blackfoot Drought Plan. The dynamic nature of the plan and the willingness of both irrigators and anglers to take part have led to a successful program of "shared sacrifice."



Photo courtesy Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Our Native Fish

The Blackfoot is home to native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Many partners work to protect and improve habitat to ensure these fish will remain a part of the Blackfoot ecosystem. Take special care when handling these fish to ensure their survival.

Collaboration is Key

The Blackfoot Drought Response relies largely on voluntary water use reductions by irrigators and landowners. But participation by fishing outfitters and anglers is also critical — as we demonstrate a shared commitment to the future of the Blackfoot Watershed.

Working *together* for the health
& future of the Blackfoot Watershed

A N G L I N G
for *the* future



For more information about how you can get involved in Blackfoot Drought Response and stewardship of the Blackfoot Watershed, please contact:



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Thanks to our supporting partner ...



The Angler's Guide
to *Blackfoot* Drought Response

The Blackfoot Drought Response Plan

In 2000, the Blackfoot Drought Committee was formalized to coordinate the development and implementation of a voluntary drought response effort in the Blackfoot Watershed. The drought response is intended to minimize the adverse impacts of drought on fisheries resources and to aid in the equitable distribution of water resources during low flow summers.

Coordinated by the Blackfoot Challenge, the Blackfoot Drought Response Plan is based on the premise of "shared sacrifice" with the goal that all Blackfoot water users (agricultural, irrigators, outfitters, anglers, recreational users, government agencies, homeowners associations, businesses, conservation groups, and others) voluntarily agree to take actions that will result in water savings and/or the reduction of stress to fisheries resources during critical low flow periods.



"Our world-class **success** comes with everybody committing to do the right thing. Because we rely on the agricultural community to do their part, they should expect us to do our part." ~ Paul Roos, retired outfitter and longtime Blackfoot resident



How Anglers Can Help

During times of low river flows and high water temperatures, anglers play an important role in protecting our fisheries. The first step is always staying aware of the current habitat conditions. As drought conditions stress native fish, a few changes in technique can make a big difference.

Catch & Release Angling

During drought conditions, consider the following in order to give the fish you release the best possible chance to survive:

- **Artificial lures** are preferred over bait to reduce deep hooking and catch and release mortality.
- **Single hooks** are preferred over treble or multiple hooks because they are easier and quicker to remove.
- **Barbless hooks** are recommended over barbed hooks because they are easier to remove and reduce release time.
- **Heavier gear** is preferred over lighter gear because it makes it easier to land fish.
- **Rubber or neoprene nets** are preferable because they are less likely than nylon nets to catch hooks, which increases release time.

To ensure a released fish has the best chance for survival:

- **Play the fish as rapidly as possible.** Do not play it to total exhaustion.
- **Keep the fish in water** as much as possible when handling and removing the hook.
- **Remove the hook gently.** Do not squeeze the fish or put your fingers in its gills. There are release devices available from most sporting/fishing stores to assist you, and the use of barbless hooks makes releasing fish easier.
- **Set the hook quickly** to avoid deep hooking the fish. If the fish is deeply hooked and must be released by regulation, cut the line inside the mouth opening. Do not yank the hook out, as some fish will survive with hooks in them. Anglers should strongly consider keeping fish deeply hooked in the throat or gills if allowed by regulations on that water body.
- **Release the fish only after it has gained its equilibrium.** If necessary, gently hold the fish upright in the current facing upstream and move it slowly back and forth.
- **Release the fish in quiet water** close to the area where it was hooked.
- **When drought hits, consider fishing less** drought-affected waters, using cooler stretches of river or starting earlier to avoid rising temperatures.

