

Outlet



MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

June 2019

Reflections by Brian Ertel MTAFS president



Brain getting his hands wet in YNP.

As summer approaches and field season rolls into full swing, I can't help but think back on the success of our most recent annual meeting. The input Chapter Members gave on how to make our organization more effective and better serve membership was extremely helpful and MTAFS is working to implement some of those changes. The best attended Friday morning session we have had in years started with Brad Shepard giving us a window into his life, philosophy, and the bigger picture we all need to consider, and ended with an incredibly insightful discussion on Walleye and their status in the state.

This year's banquet had some of the tastiest food I have ever had at a MTAFS meeting, but it will be most remembered for the fun, laughter, and tears. Career Achievement Award winners, Ken Frazer, Ron Pierce, and Don Skaar were recognized for their outstanding achievements over the course of their years in Montana. All being great leaders who have helped shape the status of fisheries throughout the state. Thank you all for your service, friendship, and protecting our precious resources. Matt Boyer carried home, or had someone else carry it home to him, the Outstanding Fisheries Professional Award. Matt is a leader in native fish protection and restoration. He has developed many innovative techniques to conduct restoration work in a more effective, efficient, and safe manner in remote locations. His work is now being mimicked in many areas throughout the intermountain west. Thank you Matt, for making our work safer, more successful and protecting our native fish.

Many members stood before us and let their emotions show as they paid tribute to George Holton, a true Montana Icon and first President of the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. George blazed the path for many of our current management practices years before they were even a thought for anyone else. His ability to see what fisheries managers were going to be facing years into the future was almost uncanny. George will be missed by all those who knew him. Our Chapter, and the fish of Montana, Wyoming, and West Virginia will be forever grateful for his service and the man he was.

The incredible work being conducted throughout our state makes me so excited to get back into the field and get my hands wet again. Thank you all for making this year's meeting such a great success, especially, Steve Dalbey, Amber Steed, and Marc Terrazas. I'm already looking forward to 2020 in Kalispell.

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IMPORTANT DATES

-**FEBRUARY 24, 2020**

ANNUAL MTAFS MEETING IN
KALISPELL, MT

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Update: MTAFS Financial Sustainability Plan by Marc Terrazas MTAFS treasurer

The first draft of the Financial Sustainability Plan has been reviewed by committee members and ExCom, with comments sent back to me for revision. I plan to have another version of the plan put together in early June, and will solicit comments from all members prior to putting the plan into use.

If you attended our business meeting in Billings you may recall that our first piece of business with the new plan is to move our ex-

isting investments (Wally McClure scholarships and Chapter money) into one brokerage that handles non-profit investments. We are currently invested in two different brokerages (Waddell & Reed and Pax Funds) that are not as competitive on cost or investment offerings as brokerages like Vanguard, TD Ameritrade, or Charles Schwab. The financial sustainability plan will then help the committee decide on investment decisions. We are

currently over-exposed to corporate debt as both accounts are nearly all invested in junk bonds. As soon as the accounts are switched over there will be a much more reasonable mix of investments, which will hopefully mean a more reasonable risk structure and higher returns over time. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to join the committee, the plan will be available soon, and I am always available at 406-382-3034 or mterrazas@mt.gov.

“OUR FIRST PIECE OF BUSINESS WITH THE NEW PLAN IS TO MOVE OUR EXISTING INVESTMENTS (WALLY MCCLURE SCHOLARSHIPS AND CHAPTER MONEY) INTO ONE BROKERAGE THAT HANDLES NON-PROFIT INVESTMENTS. “



Jim enjoying a great day of Coho fishing.

Hello fellow members of MTAFS. I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself and explain why I wanted to become President Elect of our Chapter. The fisheries profession is the only one I know. I've been fortunate to have worked in fisheries my entire career, including high school and college

Greetings from Jim Dunnigan incoming MTAFS president

summer jobs. I've been an AFS member since my early college student years where I served as Co-President of the Palouse Subunit of the Idaho Chapter while attending graduate school at the University of Idaho. It was here that I got my first taste of how rewarding professional service can be. I have worked as a biologist with MT FWP for over 17 years in Libby, and while I have accomplished a fair bit of work to offset the impacts to our local fisheries caused by Libby Dam including habitat restoration projects and applied research efforts, I have always found a sense of reward in professional service that exceeds satisfaction from the job alone. I recently reflected

and realized that I am over halfway through my professional career. I have always envisioned myself volunteering to serve on the executive committee of our Chapter, but never quite thought the time was right. I'm probably not alone with this thought. After all, we see similar trends in society today with involvement in our local civic and sporting groups declining across the state and nation. I suspect the reasons are varied, but like so many things in life, there simply isn't a perfect time. Sometimes you just have to do it! Because chances are, that perfect time will never come. Professional service can be a fun and rewarding experience, and I encourage those who may be considering an office in our

Chapter to give it a try. I am honored to be the President Elect and look forward to serving the MT Chapter over the next three years as I progress through the chairs. The Executive Committee and I are already planning the 2020 Chapter meeting. I am pleased to announce that the 2020 Meeting will be in Kalispell at the Hilton Garden Inn the week of February 24th. If anyone has any ideas to improve our annual meeting, would like to volunteer, or has an idea for a symposium please don't hesitate to reach out to me or anyone else on the ExCom. Be sure to stay tuned for future announcements regarding the 2020 meeting.

Fish Talk Featuring Leanne Roulson by Sam Bourret Outlet editor

“Fish Talk” is a section in the Outlet I started in 2017 to highlight the perspectives and accomplishments of outstanding fisheries professionals from the Montana Chapter of AFS. For the fifth Fish Talk interview I sat down with Leanne Roulson on the campus of beautiful Montana State University to chat about her prolific career accomplishments and her outstanding contributions to AFS on the local and national levels. **Outlet: Congratulations on becoming the 2nd vice president of National AFS this year. Can you explain this position and your motivation for serving in office?**

LR: The parent society has a 5-year presidential term commitment similar to the 3-year term with the Montana Chapter. The second vice president is the first year of the term. My motivation for serving comes from my past roles in AFS, and the energy that I have gathered through those experiences. I was excited to make more personal connections in AFS throughout the country and help weave my vision for increasing diversity and communication in fisheries science through the position.

Outlet: What have you learned?

LR: I have been learning about the business side of AFS, particularly how chapters can stay solvent. I am currently on the AFS meetings coordination committee, and we are looking at where the meetings are held, and the tradeoffs between

the goals of the meetings in terms of networking vs. making money. It’s interesting how the same issues that are apparent in the state chapter also are relevant on the national level.

Outlet: What other offices have you held with AFS?

LR: I have served as president of the Montana Chapter, and Western Division AFS.

Outlet: What experiences have helped you excel as a communicator / facilitator and, how has this been important in your career?

LR: I was a public school teacher before I was a biologist, where I worked with a variety of groups from small children to adults. I found that it is important to be aware of your audience and know what information they already have, and what they want to understand, in order to get your message across. I learned that the responsibility of the audience understanding something falls on the educator; we should make topics easily digestible and listen for understanding. I believe that this is important for scientists. I teach a science communication seminar at MSU, and we are talking about how to deal with people that have misinformation and misconceptions. This is one of the biggest challenges we have as resource managers. Listening and picking up on cues is one of the most important parts. Communicating why decisions are made and the science that backs up the decisions, is a huge challenge that resource

managers face perpetually. It is important to target misinformation and get accurate information out proactively. **Outlet: Why is it important for the fisheries field to diversify in its professional representation?**

LR: The literature finds that diversity in a work team increases productivity and creativity. You don’t know what value someone from a different background can contribute to a project or an issue until they are included. For example, on a recent project for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in California we were talking about how they increased numbers and diversity at their public meetings. They found that by adapting their public meetings with food and outdoor spaces, folks from the backgrounds and cultures in their community were better represented and involved. This allowed the USFS to engage a diversity of user groups and work with them on recreation planning.

Outlet: What has been the largest motivator in your career.

LR: My biggest motivator is the idealistic viewpoint to “make a difference.” I started out in outdoor education which was tied to my ecological ethic including getting people to value ecosystem services and ecology in general. Working across jurisdictional boundaries as a consultant in the fisheries field has been motivating to help



Leanne Roulson—
Incoming National
AFS President.

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“POLICY DECISIONS IMPACT WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT DO AS SCIENTISTS.”

Fish Talk *continued...*

people get answers and understand the systems. I have recently been more involved in policy because it makes a huge difference in terms of ecological benefits.

Outlet: What is your opinion on the role of scientists in policy?

LR: I believe that scientists need to be involved in policy because it makes such a difference in our job efficacy. Policy decisions impact what we can and cannot do as scientists. I feel strongly that we should use science to inform policy. Take for example the WOTUS revision, without scientific input the layer of protection for many critically important waterbod-

ies for fish, wildlife, and clean water could be in jeopardy.

Outlet: What is one item you could communicate to young professionals that you wished you knew when you were starting your career?

LR: I think it is important to work at an establishment where you feel welcome and engaged with whom you work with or the focus of the work grows you professionally or intellectually. If you are in a job where you have mismatch either with the personnel, the organization’s mission statement, or the way they work, listen to your gut and make a change because there are career paths available for young professionals to

effect change and be rewarded.

One thing I found apparent about Leanne is her eloquent answers to all the thought provoking questions I asked her. Her diverse background as an educator, FWP technician, MSU lecturer, and consultant have solidified an amazing ability to communicate complex topics in a fun and inspiring way. Leanne’s dedication to the American Fisheries Society speaks to the benefits and opportunities the professional society has to offer, and I hope it inspires you. Thanks for reading.

Smith Slough Restoration *by Jim Olsen*



A restored spawning channel on Smith Slough.

Smith Slough is located in the lower 10 miles of the Big Hole River before its confluence with the Jefferson River. The slough originates in the Big Hole River and flows approximately 1.5 miles through an abandoned channel of the Big Hole River before discharging back to the river. An irrigation system provides year-round water to the slough system. FWP was approached by the landowners about the possibility of improving habitat in the system for fish. There are no tributaries to the lower river for more than 20 miles and the potential spawning habitat in the main river is limited due to the large substrate size.

The Smith Slough landowners were interested in enhancing habitat for adult fish and were willing to work with FWP to create spawning and rearing habitat. The compromise came naturally as the slough split into 2 channels about 1/3 the way through the system. This historically was the diversion point for the ditch and irrigation system which also flowed partially through a historic river channel. This channel, called the Smith Ditch was restored by creating meanders, riffles, glides and pools and over 1,600 ft of spawning habitat was added by over-excavating the large river cobble and replacing it with

adequately sized gravels. Rainbow trout eggs were introduced to the stream from fish collected in the Jefferson River. Additional eggs will be introduced in 2019 and 2020 and redd counts will be conducted afterword to monitor use of the slough system. We are hopeful that this project will increase trout numbers in the lower Big Hole River.



A remote stream incubator containing rainbow trout on Smith Slough post restoration.

Outside by Steve Dalby MTAFS president elect

Its field season! Many of us subsist behind a screen for the winter months, going to meetings, planning and organizing but mostly thinking about getting back into the field. For most of us, the field is a key reason we entered this vocation; for the opportunity to handle fish, work with a team that share common goals and do it in some of the most beautiful places on earth.

As a regional fish manager, I do not get out as much as I would like. That's the job I signed up for, but the flip side is that I get to be selective about what field activities I do get involved in.

This year I will spend time with some of the prairie fish in Northeastern Montana..., and one in particular.

Prairie fish are largely unknown to most people. Anglers focus largely on sportfish and their only interaction with these unique spe-

cies is putting a hook through their lips. Landowners often don't believe there are any fish in the ephemeral streams that run through their property. Many fisheries professionals (me included) grow uncomfortable at the thought of positive ID of some of the more challenging species.

Of the 87 fish species in Montana, cyprinids are Montana's largest family with 23 species (18 native). Twenty-two percent (4) of our native cyprinids are classified as species of special concern. This species assemblage gives tremendous insight into the health of prairie streams. A recent study completed by Allison Stringer found that Pearl Dace populations have declined 63.3% to 83.3% from historical sampling locations as a result of northern pike expansion following flooding that occurred in 2011. In Allison's words, "Pearl Dace are at extreme risk".

The conservation approach will sound familiar to many of you. We have identified the key drainages where pearl dace populations appear to be healthy (you can count these on one hand). We still need to fully understand northern pike distribution and potential barriers. In addition, we need to build relationships with landowners. The first stage is to secure these last remaining populations and then look at opportunities to expand back into historic range.

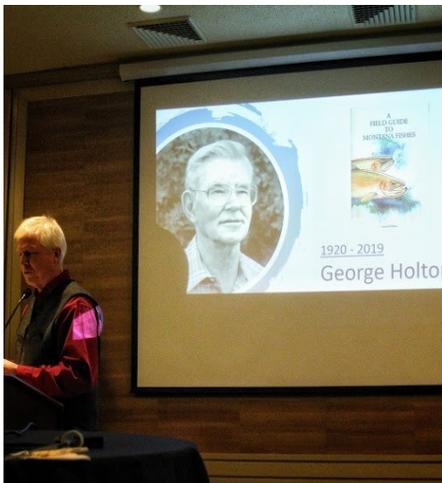
How? There are some obvious answers (pike removal and barrier construction) but the harder answer is habitat quality and quantity. These are ephemeral streams that are further impacted by water withdrawals for irrigation and grazing. To ensure long-term viability of these populations, we will need to address these issues.



Steve with a nice Smallmouth bass on Fort Peck

"PEARL DACE POPULATIONS HAVE DECLINED 63.3% TO 83.3% FROM HISTORICAL SAMPLING LOCATIONS AS A RESULT OF NORTHERN PIKE EXPANSION"

2019 MTAFS Meeting in Billings images by Amanda Bryson



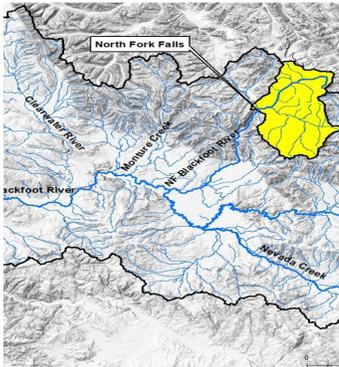
Congratulations !!

**Best Professional Presentation—
Amber Steed**

**Best Student Presentation—
Ben Triano**

Outlet

Fisheries Conservation in the Scapegoat Wilderness by Patrick Uthe



The North Fork Blackfoot River Native Fish Conservation project area

“THE PRESENCE OF THE IMPASSABLE FALLS PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A SECURE STRONGHOLD, FREE FROM THE RISK OF INVASION BY NON-NATIVES AS FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FACILITATE EXPANSION OF RAINBOW TROUT AND BROWN TROUT.”

The North Fork Blackfoot River is one of the most important spawning and rearing streams for migratory Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the Blackfoot River watershed. Private landowners, watershed groups, and government agencies have worked tirelessly for decades to address limiting factors in the lower sections of the river. This proposed native fish conservation project will complement the success of restoration work in the lower river by expanding the amount of habitat occupied by native trout in the headwaters. The portion of the basin above North Fork Falls contains 85 miles of connected streams and lakes, representing a large expanse of cold, clean, and complex habitat that is ideal for native fish species. Furthermore, stream temperature models suggest that ideal thermal regimes in the project area will likely persist, even if future warming patterns render lower sections of the North Fork unsuitable for Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout. The presence of the impassable falls provides an opportunity to establish a secure stronghold, free from the risk of invasion by non-natives as future environmental conditions facilitate expansion of Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout.

In 2006, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks initiated fisheries surveys in the

area upstream of the falls. Trout were documented in three lakes, as well as some tributaries and mainstem sections of the North Fork and East Fork of the North Fork rivers. Genetic analyses indicated these populations were comprised of hybrid individuals with mixtures of Rainbow Trout, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, and Westslope Cutthroat Trout genetics. Stocking records revealed fish plants began in 1926, with the initial stocking of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in several lakes and tributaries. Stocking by sportsmen groups, outfitters, and FWP, continued sporadically throughout the 20th century. We have no genetic or anecdotal evidence to confirm fish were present above the falls prior to stocking. A trout distribution model developed from electrofishing data, stream temperature data, and habitat metrics, estimated trout occupancy in 45 miles of mainstem river and tributary habitats above the falls. The proposed project will use rotenone to eliminate or significantly reduce the abundance of hybrid trout to facilitate the establishment of native fish populations following treatment.

We conducted a pilot-level rotenone investigation in 2018 to assess the performance of rotenone in different water chemistry profiles and evaluate fish distribution in select tributaries. The bioassay results vali-

dated the trout distribution model in some streams, but failed to accurately predict trout distribution in others. Given the discrepancy between modeled distributions and field observations, we plan to conduct one more year of pre-treatment sampling using eDNA and electrofishing to improve the model in areas of the drainage that have the highest trout densities. We are currently working with the Forest Service to refine our proposed action and determine the appropriate environmental review and public involvement process. We will use the information collected this season to address knowledge gaps and develop our project implementation plan, with hopes of conducting the rotenone treatment in 2020. Not only will this project establish a native trout stronghold, but it will also provide an enhanced backcountry fishing opportunity that anglers seeking solitude and eager Westslope Cutthroat Trout are sure to enjoy!



North Fork Falls, the barrier to nonnative fish expansion into the project area.

Genetic Conservation of Westslope Cutthroat Trout by Jimmy Dunnigan

In the summer of 2018 16,000 Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) were air dropped into Sunburst Lake in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, becoming the last lake to be sequentially stocked in a decade long conservation effort to restore WCT in 21 lakes within the South fork of the Flathead River drainage. A drainage in Northwest Montana which currently represents the largest intact, genetically unaltered metapopulation for this species in the State. The WCT fingerlings that were stocked into Sunburst Lake, and several other lakes, aren't your average hatchery reared trout. These fish, raised at FWP's Sekokini Springs Hatchery, come from stocks made up of wild, locally adapted, genetically pure parents that inhabit the headwater streams of the South Fork, above Hungry Horse Reservoir.

Sekokini Springs Hatchery and Research Facility is used to help conserve the genetic integrity of westslope cutthroat trout in the Flathead Subbasin. In Montana WCT are designated a "species of special concern"

whose range has dwindled down to less than 10% of its historical distribution in the United States. For the last several years, field crews have collected wild juvenile WCT from these headwater streams to be used as donor stocks for re-establishing pure WCT populations in lakes that have been treated to remove non-native trout, preventing the downstream expansion of hybridization in the South Fork drainage. Once collected, the juveniles are transported to Sekokini Springs where they are held in isolation until genetic and disease analyses ensures they are genetically pure and free of all reportable pathogens. At the hatchery, the fish are raised until sexually mature and viable. Each individual, identifiable by a unique PIT tag, is monitored from the time of its arrival at the hatchery and spawned only once so that the fry used for restocking the lakes are genetically representative of the donor population, and most fit for their new environment. Using this "nearest neighbor" stocking approach allows us to provide these restored mountain lakes with

genetically distinct populations, while allowing evolution to proceed with as minimal human impact as possible. In addition to our indoor raceways, the hatchery is equipped with 4 outdoor rearing ponds, allowing us to raise fish in a more natural environment, while also providing research opportunities on post-stocking fitness and survival of the different hatchery environments. Working directly with FWP's Mountain Lakes program, post-stocking monitoring is currently in progress to assess the relative performance of these unique populations over time, and the knowledge gained will be beneficial with future conservation efforts.

As we approach the 2019 field season, FWP is collaborating with the National Park Service to conserve WCT in the Camas drainage, above Arrow Lake. Using similar approaches to those used in the South Fork, Lake Evangeline, Camas Lake and Camas creek will be treated to remove non-native Yellowstone Cutthroat and restocked with local WCT donor strains to reestablish native fish assemblage. We're looking forward to this project



Packing a cooler of juvenile Westslope Cutthroat Trout onto a mule at Basin cabin in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

"USING THIS NEAREST NEIGHBOR

STOCKING APPROACH ALLOWS US TO PROVIDE THESE RESTORED MOUNTAIN LAKES WITH GENETICALLY DISTINCT POPULATIONS, WHILE ALLOWING EVOLUTION TO PROCEED WITH AS MINIMAL HUMAN IMPACT AS POSSIBLE"

MTAFS Student Subunit News and Events

Montana State University AFS events -

Summer & Fall 2019: Sponsor an undergraduate member of the Montana State University Student Subunit AFS to attend the AFS/TWS joint conference in Reno, Nevada. Graduate student officers will review applications and select successful undergraduate student. \$1500 travel award will be given to successful applicant.

Fall 2019: Tagging and marking workshop convened between the University of Missoula and Montana State University

Student Subunits. Date TBD.

Fall 2019 – Fall 2020: Monthly meetings with invited guest speakers.

Spring 2020: Sponsor the MT State Chapter raffle event.

2019-2029 Officer List

President: Andriana Puchany

Vice President: Hayley Glassic

Secretary: Levi Umland

Treasurer: Mike Siemiantkowski



University of Montana AFS subunit

We would like to **thank the local community for their generosity** once again for coming as guest speakers to our meetings this year.

Fall Speaker List: - Kellie Carim (USFS, UM), Leslie Nyce (MFWP), Michael Jakober (USFS), Anna Moeller (UM), Dan Brewer (USFWS), Zak Robinson (UM), & David Brooks (Trout Unlimited)

Spring Speaker List: Christine Brissette (Trout Unlimited). Craig Barfoot (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes), Ryan Kovach (MFWP), Adam Strainer (MFWP), Jeff Lammerding (MFWP).

We especially would like to thank Montana Trout Unlimited for hosting a panel discussion about opportunities and careers in the fisheries profession and approaches for graduate school.

In addition we held special events:

- Fall Fly Fishing Event

In the fall, UM AFS in conjunction with UM Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) used a group fishing license from FWP to take a small group of students out fly fishing on Rock Creek, the first trip for a few of the group members.

- Spring Ice Fishing Event

This past spring, UM AFS in conjunction with UM BHA and the UM Ice Holes took out a group of 30 UM students ice fishing on Georgetown Lake, again with a group fishing license from FWP. More than half of the attendees had never ice fished before this trip. Ken and James Goerz generously allowed all of the attendees to stay at their cabin the night prior to the fishing tournament. Heather Fraley wrote a wonderful article on the event in the Philipsburg Mail.

- Intro to R Workshop

On 25 October 2018, Anna Moeller, a UM PhD student with the Lukacs Lab, hosted an Intro to R workshop for the members of UM AFS and UM TWS covering the basics of setting working directories and moving up to employing useful packages, such as dplyr.

- Graduate Student/Professional Panel

Montana Trout Unlimited generously allowed us to use their office space to host a graduate student/professional panel on 28 February 2019. The panel answered questions about helpful tips for graduate school and fisheries careers. The panel consisted of Donovan Bell, Anthony Dangora, Kaeli Davenport, Andrew Lahr, Jeff Strait [graduate students], Casey Hackathorn, and Joe Naughton [professionals].

2018-19 Officer List

President: Kadie Heinle

Vice President: Adrienne Chenette

Secretary/Treasurer: Maggie Wallace

PR/Public Outreach: Carly Andlauer

2019-2020 Officer List

Co-Presidents: Maggie Wallace & Hayden Cody

Secretary/Treasurer: Atlas Mckinley



2019 MTAFS Photo Contest Reminder

The Outlet photo edition / contest is meant to engage membership with the outlet in a new and exciting way as well as highlight the fun, beautiful, and interesting jobs we have through images. We are going to have 4 categories for the contest: Field work, Fish, Outreach, and Landscape. There will be 1 winner and 1 runner up per category, judged by a panel of 4 MTAFS members. To submit a photo for the contest you have to be an MTAFS member, an amateur photographer, and each person can only submit 1 photo per category, so as a member you can submit 4 total photos. Please submit photos as JPEG, with a max size of 6MB. All winners, runner ups, and honorable mentions will be highlighted in the January 2020 edition of the Outlet, and on the website. There will be prizes for winners and runners- up.

To submit a photo email sbourret@mt.gov, and please make clear which category you are submitting to. The last day to submit a photo is December 15th 2019.

Your Chapter's ExComm and Committee Chairs

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