



Leo Rosenthal:  
MTAFS President

# Outlet

Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

January 2024



## Presidents Hook by Leo Rosenthal

Greetings MTAFS members. I hope this winter newsletter finds you all well and rested after the holiday season. It's hard to believe that it is 2024, and that another Montana Chapter meeting is quickly approaching. These annual meetings are a great way to see the amazing work being done in our state, and a great opportunity to interact with the wide array of fisheries professionals we have in Montana. With the challenge of writing a "President's Hook" article for the newsletter, I thought I would describe my experience with AFS and what the Montana Chapter has meant to me.

I began attending these meetings in

2005 as a new graduate student at Montana State University. I had been working as a fisheries technician for several years prior to this, but this was the first time I attended the chapter meeting. I was blown away by the presentations of the graduate students who were close to finishing, and fearful of the day I would be presenting my own research. The students near completion seemed so professional, so confident, so polished. I could only hope that I would someday feel the way they did. The other thing that impressed me was the warm, inviting feeling of the meeting and the comradery among the members, both old and new.

In the years that followed, I too became confident and presented my

own findings. I became more involved with the chapter and served as Secretary/Treasurer. I stayed up way too late and drank one too many beers with legends like Brad Shepard and Robb Leary. But most importantly, I became part of a great group of scientists committed to the fisheries of Montana. Our chapter is made up of dedicated professionals ranging from biologists and researchers to fish culturists. Our meetings are interesting and exciting because of the breadth of topics presented by our members. The relationships we all make will last long after our careers have ended.

The 2024 chapter meeting will be held at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown, Montana February 20-23. Lewistown is a great location, as it is the geo-

## Important Dates

- **JANUARY 26, 2023:** WALLY McCLURE SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE
- **JANUARY 26, 2023:** AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE
- **JANUARY 30, 2023:** RAF SUBMISSION DEADLINE
- **JANUARY 31, 2023:** ANNUAL MEETING ABSTRACT DEADLINE
- **FEBRUARY 20-23, 2024:** MTAFS ANNUAL MEETING

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President’s Hook continued

graphic center of the state. I encourage all of our members to attend and bring the perspective of their part of the state to the meeting. Pete Brown has given us the meeting theme of “More of Everyone, All the Time”, and I invite anyone and everyone interested in

fisheries science to join the group that has meant so much to my career. This theme has many interpretations, and can be seen in our chapter with the diversity of the work we do. It can also be seen in the diversity of our members and the people we work to con-

serve Montana’s fisheries resources for. Our chapter is always progressing and is stronger when we have more of everyone, all the time. I look forward to seeing everyone in Lewistown.

“The other thing that impressed me was the warm, inviting feeling of the meeting and the comradery among the members, both old and new. “

Peter Brown MTAFS president elect



Montana Chapter Annual Meeting 2024 by Peter Brown

I’m really looking forward to the return of the meeting to Lewistown. According to the chapter record it’s been 34 years since the meeting was held at the Yogo Inn. If anyone who was at the last meeting, and is planning on attending this meeting, I think that the hotel’s statute of limitations has pasted and you shouldn’t run into any issues.

While going OG on the location we are leaning into the present with the theme of the meeting: “More of Everyone-All The Time.” While I can’t imagine that anyone I

know actively discourages involvement in the fisheries profession, I’m really looking forward to learning how we are influencing involvement during the continuing education session. Dr. Mariah Hill, a licensed clinical psychologist with a specialization in multicultural psychology, will be leading a 6 hour workshop that will delve into crucial topics such as the foundations of DEI, the cultural identity model, exploration of one’s cultural identity, foundations of privilege, implicit bias and microaggressions, and concluding with a fo-

cus on microaffirmations. As a special feature, several fisheries professionals will participate in a panel discussion, shedding light on the practical applications of microaffirmations and diversity within the field.

Continuing with the inclusion theme, I’m making it my mission to get fish health and fish culture personnel to the meetings. After reflecting on the importance of hatcheries in my career, my first three fisheries jobs were at hatcheries, and in my research, I killed a lot of rainbows at MSU, I’ve realized

“We are leaning into the present with the theme of the meeting  
**More of everyone all the time”**

### Annual Meeting continued

that fish culture is a huge part of our work and the Society. AFS meetings are about establishing and maintaining ties to people across the profession. I really think the work we do will be better off if we can work on those connections with the entire cross-section of fisheries professionals. Dr. Eric Featherman, the WDAFS President, will be attending our meeting this year and I've seized on this op-

portunity and put together a plenary session that highlights recent advances in hatchery management but also the ties between the fish conservation, fish management, and fish culture.

I'm also excited to revive the short format talks. We did a lighting talk session a few years back which was well received. I really hope those that have some interesting findings,

helpful techniques, or a work in progress will consider the short 10 min format. These talks will have questions optional and will be spread through the meeting according to topic.

Just a quick word on booking rooms. If you can please plan on double occupancy. The Yogo is pretty limited in space and I'd love to do my best to get everyone under the same roof.



Meeting Logo by Angela Smith

## MTAFS Approves New Committee by Amber Steed

During late November 2023, the MTAFS Executive Committee (ExCom) approved formation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, the first of its kind in our Chapter. Below is the description of this new committee:

*The MTAFS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee strives to foster a professional community where all members feel welcomed, respected, and supported. We advocate for policies and procedures that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in fisheries science and resource management. We also strive to remove systemic barriers to participation and serve as a resource to help recruit and retain individuals with underrepresented identities. It is of utmost importance to MTAFS that its members feel represented, recognized, and valued.*

The MTAFS DEI Committee was born from the interest of engaged Chapter members looking to make our

professional environment as inclusive, diverse, and equitable as possible. This began with some of our members becoming involved with the WDAFS D&I Committee during 2022, learning from and forming connections with that proactive and organized group. We knew we wanted to bring that level of energy and awareness to the Montana Chapter by growing it from within. So, a small group of Chapter members had our first meeting during spring 2023 to discuss our perceived DEI-related needs, whether a committee was the appropriate way to address them, and how to proceed. Later that year, we agreed to move forward with committee formation. As stated in our Chapter Bylaws (Section 7), "Committees and the Chairs of Committees may be appointed by the EXCOM or the President as necessary to conduct Chapter

business." With a unanimous vote, our committee became official.

### Membership Survey

It is critical to hear from all members about which DEI-related needs are most important to address or bring awareness to. You will be seeing a brief survey from us prior to the annual meeting in Lewistown on this, thank you in advance for making time for it. You can expect to see the results during the business meeting next month. Whether you value this topic or not, it's important for us to know and hear your perspective.

### Continuing Education

We recruited a professional from MSU to lead our first DEI-focused continuing education workshop in Lewistown on February 20. In addition to professional instruction, we plan to incorporate a panel of peers to share DEI-centric concepts in practice

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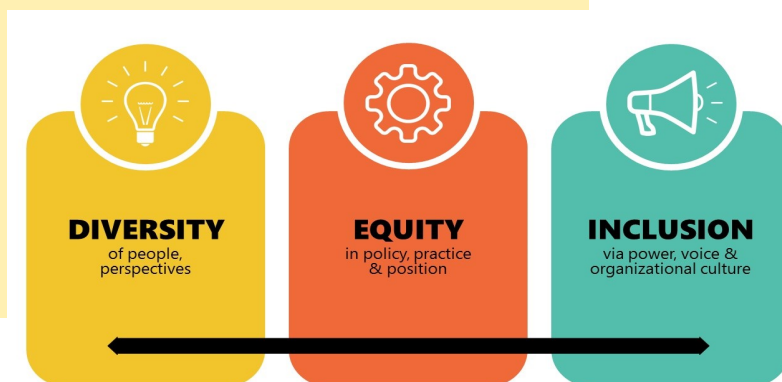


## New Committee continued

across Montana. This workshop will also count as nontechnical training credit for FWP biologists. We look forward to seeing you there!

### How to Get Involved

Reach out any time to learn more about this new committee and to get involved! And consider joining our meeting during committee breakout sessions in Lewistown.



## Continuing Education 2024 Lewistown, MT by Rob Eckelbecker

This year's continuing education workshop is centered around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) on February 20th at the Yogo Inn, Lewistown. Led by Dr. Mariah Hill, a licensed clinical psychologist with a specialization in multicultural psychology, this workshop will include 6 hours of training and delve into crucial topics such as the foundations of DEI, the cultural identity model, exploration of one's cultural identity, foundations of privilege, implicit bias and microaggressions, and concluding with a focus on microaffirmations. As a special feature, fisheries professionals will participate

in a panel discussion, shedding light on the practical applications of microaffirmations and diversity within the field.

Dr. Hill, based at MSU-Bozeman in the Counseling & Psychological Services office, boasts extensive experience in teaching, training, consulting, and providing therapeutic services related to cultural identity and DEI. Dr. Hill has developed multiple programs at MSU-Bozeman aimed at increasing inclusive practices, particularly Safe Zone and the Diversity & Inclusion Development (DID) program. She has expanded her DEI consulting services to a broader

range of Montana communities in more recent years.

Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your understanding of DEI principles. The workshop is priced at \$50 for professionals, \$25 for students and retirees, and will count for 6 hours of nontechnical training for FWP biologists. This workshop will be capped at 60 registrants.

<https://www.montana.edu/counseling/staff.html>  
[montana.edu]

Dr. Mariah Hill—  
MSU



## Fish Talk Featuring Matt Boyer by Sam Bourret

### What inspired you to work in the fisheries field? What was one of your ah ha moments?

MB: I'm grateful that my Dad shared his love for fishing with me. I smile remembering how he always left a rod and vest with tackle in the trunk of the car so we were prepared whenever there was a little spare time to wet a line after picking me up from school or sports practice (to this day, spring through fall, there's fishing gear stashed in the back of his car). Fred Ross and Clare Whitmore were important influences as well in shaping my decision to pursue a career in fisheries. The former was my high school biology and ecology teacher who was known for turning a blind eye to students taking part in a little extracurricular fishing on class field trips. The latter was a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission retiree who owned a small custom sign business. During summers in high school, he hired me to work alongside him in his shop. No doubt he could have found a more talented painter than me, but we certainly enjoyed each other's company as we talked of fish and fish-

ing. It was during that time I started to grasp the vitality of loving what you choose as a career, and I began to realize that working in the fisheries field could accomplish that for me.

### Where did you start your fisheries career?

MB: After finishing at Penn State with a degree in wildlife and fisheries science I moved between Utah and Montana for a few years working Forest Service wilderness ranger and trail crew jobs and whatever else was available to me in 'pre-discovered' Whitefish to modestly support a skiing habit. I loved my college coursework and kept sight of opportunities that would provide a career path working in the field around fish and water. In April 2002, with ski season starting to wrap up and me starting to weigh my options for summer employment, I got a call from Durae Belcer giving me a heads up that her boss, Clint Muhlfeld, was going to be hiring a short-term field worker for their upcoming fisheries field season with FWP. I didn't waste a minute before calling Clint to introduce myself as an eager young fishery professional and his ideal

choice for the job. I worked in that Hungry Horse Mitigation fish tech position for a couple of years before starting grad school at the University of Montana with Fred Allendorf and Robb Leary. That was my first real fish job and I've been incredibly blessed to have a number of important mentors who shared their valuable time and advice with me along the way.

### What was one of the most fun moments in your fisheries career?

MB: I've always gotten the most enjoyment from being pushed to find different ways of doing things in the field to create sustainable fish conservation outcomes. In the early 2000's we set out to protect westslope cutthroat trout in the South Fork Flathead and were faced with the challenge of maintaining the evolutionary legacy of a fish that's characterized by significant genetic differentiation among locally adapted populations. Much of this watershed lies within the Bob Marshall and working in wilderness requires a different mindset and approach to fisheries field work, not the least of which is

Matt Boyer



“Think about it; some of your days in the field will resemble what other people seek out in a vacation!”

a heavy reliance on pack stock to transport supplies and get from place to place. Thanks to the talent and hard work of the fisheries crew (and, no doubt, some amount of luck) we were successful in using local, wild donor stocks for westslope cutthroat trout conservation in the South Fork Flathead.

### **What are some of the largest challenges faced by the Fisheries of Montana?**

MB: Nothing's more important to the fisheries of Montana than water quality and quantity - maintaining or restoring it are enormous and growing challenges. Threats to water

quality come in the form of pollutants, rising temperature, and invasive species. Water quantity is at risk from increasing human consumption demands and shifting precipitation patterns associated with a warming planet. Tomorrow's fisheries leaders need to be equipped to communicate the science backing healthy fisheries to the public and their elected officials in a way that makes it apparent that what's good for aquatic ecosystems squares with what's good and prosperous for people.

### **MB: Do you have any advice for early career professionals in the**

### **fisheries field?**

I think it's a super exciting time to be working in the fisheries field. You've chosen a career that's not likely to lead to material wealth or fame but will undoubtedly lead to experiences and relationships that you'll look back on fondly your entire life. Think about it; some of your days in the field will resemble what other people seek out in a vacation! Use the energy those special days will provide to motivate your talents and drive to protect our incredibly valuable aquatic resources!

## Student Profile: Lukas Draugelis

I was born in Washington D.C. but spent most of my formative years overseas in Beijing, China, and Jakarta, Indonesia before returning to the United States. I received my bachelor's degree in Natural Resources from the University of Vermont (UVM) in the spring of 2023. During my time at UVM I worked as a research technician at the Rubenstein Ecosystems Science Laboratory on a suite of projects focused on population dynamics of various species in Lake Champlain including lake trout, burbot, and smelt. I conducted independent research whose findings are in a pa-

per, "*Tourists or residents? Origins of giant Rainbow Smelt morphotypes in Lake Champlain, VT*", which is under review with Transactions of the American Fisheries Society. My graduate research aims to understand mechanisms of movement and life-history adaptation of invasive rainbow trout along their invasion gradient in the Flathead River. The primary concern with further invasion of rainbow trout is their propensity to hybridize with native westslope cutthroat, increasingly threatening cutthroat persistence. By knowing what strategies

rainbow trout in the Flathead use to move between streams, a more efficient and effective management strategy can be developed to limit further upstream movement of rainbow trout. My research will also attempt to unravel the paradoxical relationship between invasive species persistence and success with the seemingly limited life-history and genetic diversity at initial introduction, which in theory, should decrease fitness. In my free time I am an avid fly-fisherman, fly tier, skier, hiker, and photographer.

Lukas Draugelis



The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society was chartered in 1967. Among its objectives are conservation, development, and wise utilization of the fisheries; promotion of the educational, scientific, and technological development and advancement of all branches of fisheries science and practice; and exchange and dissemination of knowledge about fish, fisheries, and related subjects.



<http://units.fisheries.org/montana>

[Facebook.com/MontanaChapter AFS](https://www.facebook.com/MontanaChapterAFS)

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### **Your Chapter's ExComm and Committee Chairs**

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