

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK  
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN  
LT. GOVERNOR

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**CONTACTS:**

Dave Parker, Communications Director, 444.9844

Jeff Hagener, Director, MFWP, 444.3186

John Tubbs, Director MDNRC, 444.1948

**Governor Bullock Welcomes Decision on Arctic Grayling**

Helena, MT – In a rewarding validation of years of successful collaboration between private landowners, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal agencies, today Governor Bullock welcomed the announcement by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that the Montana Arctic grayling would not be listed as a Federally Threatened or Endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

Governor Steve Bullock hailed the decision as great news. "Today's announcement reaffirms that when Montanans work together to conserve grayling, both the fish and the people of Montana are better off," said Bullock. The Arctic grayling is in good hands in Montana, under state management."

Montana is the only state in the lower 48 in which the arctic grayling are native. As the US Fish & Wildlife Service recognized in their decision, habitat quality, population trends and genetic diversity are stable and increasing for most Montana Arctic grayling populations.

One of the most successful grayling restoration efforts has been in the Big Hole Valley where private landowners have teamed with state and federal agency partners to work together to protect the fish. The decade-long program encourages non-federal landowners to voluntarily manage their land to remove threats to Arctic grayling.

In the Big Hole, Montanans have achieved the goals that were established many years ago - to conserve grayling, address private property concerns, keep Montana landowners on the land and economically viable, and enhance the overall health of the Upper Big Hole watershed.

Following the announcement, the Governor pointed to the partnerships that make this such a remarkable success story. "We're talking about 33 ranching families who live and work along the river that saw the value in restoring grayling. I especially want to acknowledge the effort of these Big Hole landowners without whom we would not be celebrating today. Great things happen when neighbors come together."

Those landowners led the way, working with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the federal Fish & Wildlife Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service to restore high quality riparian habitat along the Big Hole River and its tributaries, and to improve water flows during critical times of the year for Arctic grayling.

Jeff Hagener, Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, said: “The conservation of grayling in the Big Hole Valley is arguably one of the most significant conservation success stories in the nation. Remarkably, the over 250 conservation projects that were a part of this effort included nearly 160,000 acres. We will continue to do all we can to ensure the Arctic grayling and the diverse fish and wildlife resources in Montana remain healthy and will be sustained for generations to come.”