

Conserving, protecting, and restoring coldwater fisheries in Montana's Missouri, Little Blackfoot, and Smith River watersheds.

PBMIR NEWS

PAT BARNES MISSOURI RIVER TU • www.patbarnestu.org • FALL 2010

Action Alert:
Submit comments
by November 30th!
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PAT BARNES MISSOURI RIVER CHAPTER
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– Thank you for your continued support of the Pat Barnes Missouri River Chapter of Trout Unlimited. –

Board announces new slate of officers

At its first meeting of the 2010/2011 year, the PBMRTU board unanimously approved the following nominees as the next board of officers:



Garrett Fawaz
President



Brian Lehl
Vice President



Lee Ricks
Treasurer



Todd Damrow
Secretary

The new officers are very honored to accept these nominations and look forward to continuing the outstanding conservation, restoration and protection efforts accomplished by the leadership of the chapter's outgoing officers. During their tenure, Tony Herbert (President), Nola Freestone (Treasurer), and Lisa Verzani (Secretary) demonstrated exceptional dedication, professionalism, and selfless service to the chapter with the goal of improving of our cold-water ecosystems and trout populations throughout the Missouri Smith and Little Blackfoot Rivers. Additionally, their efforts to enhance net revenue enabled the chapter to increase its Trout-in-the-Classroom program and establish the new Project Healing Waters program for disabled Montana Veterans.

On behalf of the new officers and all of our chapter members, I extend our sincere "Thank You" to Tony, Nola and Lisa for their leadership, contributions and service to the chapter.

- Garrett Fawaz, President

Board of Director Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month from September through April. Non-board members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Past, but not gone

It has been my pleasure to serve as Chapter President for the past 3 years. 5 ½ years ago, in between ski weekends, I joined the board to help with the upcoming banquet. As it turned out, I'm still involved because I became connected to the issues of the Chapter, and to the members of the board. They are a caring group of individuals working on the right issues, fighting The Good Fight. The membership of the Chapter continues to grow, and my advice to all members is to become active in our local TU issues and consider how you can help the Chapter and the Board.

I offer my sincere thanks to all the board members during this time. I extend a particular thanks to Nola Freestone for her devotion of time and energy to take our banquet to new levels, to John Wilson for his leadership on conservation issues, and to Jay Erickson for his consistent support. Now, having said that, I warn you I may be the Past 'El Presidente', but I'm not gone. I'm going to stick around and help Garrett and the new officers as needed. I hope to see you soon, preferably out on a river with a fat, healthy trout on the end of your line.

- Tony Herbert, Past President



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PBMR News is a quarterly publication of the Pat Barnes Missouri River Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Chapter 055. It is published by and for the members of the Chapter. © 1980-2010.

Articles, letters, and artwork related to conservation, restoration, and preservation of Montana's coldwater fisheries are welcome. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit any material submitted. Guidelines for submission format, methods, and deadlines are available upon request by emailing patbarnestu@gmail.com.

BOARD OFFICERS

President, Garrett Fawaz
Vice President, Brian Lehl
Treasurer, Lee Ricks
Secretary, Todd Damrow
Past President, Tony Herbert

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation, John Wilson
Membership, Vacant
Trout-In-The-Classroom, Chris Hunter
Banquet, Nola Freestone
Casting Clinic, Lisa Verzani
Programs, Jay Erickson

OTHER DIRECTORS

Mark Aagenes
Dennis Cates
Frank Cooper
Todd Damrow
Earl Dorsey
Dan Ellison
Geof Ferguson
Art Keeler
Brian Lehl
Jim Stevens
Chris Strainer
Ed Tinsley

To reach board members by email, send messages with the board member's name in the subject line to patbarnestu@gmail.com.

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Outreach

Disabled veterans find therapy in Montana trout fishing

by Garrett Fawaz

Thanks to the exceptional support from volunteers, community members and businesses throughout the state, the Project Healing Waters (PHW) program had a very successful second year of fly-fishing activities for Montana's disabled veterans. The program coordinated two trips this summer: one overnight trip on the Missouri River and one-day trip to the K Bar L Ranch on the Sun River, courtesy of the Klick family.

Eight veterans from Task Force Raven (recent deployment to Afghanistan) and one paraplegic veteran from South Carolina spent an evening on the Missouri river at Mr. Jim Hunt's cabin adjacent to Pelican Point FAS. Volunteers provided veterans with fly-casting and fly-tying instruction, and a full-day, professional guided float trip between Holter Dam and Cascade. This trip received substantial press coverage from television, newspaper, and several Montana magazines. The veterans each expressed their sincere "Thank You" to TU, program volunteers, and our communities for providing a truly enjoyable and relaxing two days. Recognizing their efforts and support for Montana veterans, Brigadier General Walsh, State Adjutant General, presented certificates of appreciation to each volunteer at a small ceremony held in Craig, Montana September 16, 2010.

Back at the K Bar L Ranch, veterans from the Willis Cruse House in Helena enjoyed a full day of fishing at several ponds on the property, catching numerous brook and cutthroat trout. The veterans were served a nice lunch at the Sun Lodge. A sincere "Thank You" is extended



Captain John W. Gehring prepares to release a plump rainbow trout caught on the Missouri River.

to the Klick family for providing this opportunity for our veterans.

The PHW program successfully raised over \$4,200 this past year, recruited several new volunteers, and established a Facebook site. In 2011, the PHW team will focus on developing a strategic marketing and fundraising process and continuing to improve business processes.

Again, PHW program members sincerely thank our community, local businesses, and non-profit organizations across the state for the support they've given the program over the past year. Without continued support, we would be unable to provide these types of opportunities to our most deserving Montana veterans.

To learn more about Project Healing Waters, visit their website:

www.projecthealingwaters.org



Conservation

Little Blackfoot fishery tops list for protection and enhancement funding

by John Wilson

A two-year effort to evaluate and prioritize Upper Clark Fork River Basin fisheries resources for protection and enhancement funding has resulted in a top tier priority ranking of the Little Blackfoot River and some of its tributaries. If the Governor approves the prioritization plan, an estimated \$50 million will be dedicated to fishery protection and enhancement work in the basin. Fish, Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologists (Jason Lindstrom and Dennis Workman) completed the prioritization work in conjunction with the State of Montana Natural Resource Damage Program after assessing 137 river/stream/tributary reaches in the basin.

“This is an amazing and unparalleled protection and enhancement opportunity for the Little Blackfoot trout fishery and for PBMRTU,” said Garret Fawaz, incoming PBMRTU President. “The governor needs to hear from our members that fisheries enhancement is exactly how these natural resource mitigation dollars need to be spent.” You can read



the full “Draft Final Prioritization of Tributaries in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin” and submit comments by November 30 at <http://doj.mt.gov/lands/naturalresource/noticespubliccomment.asp>.

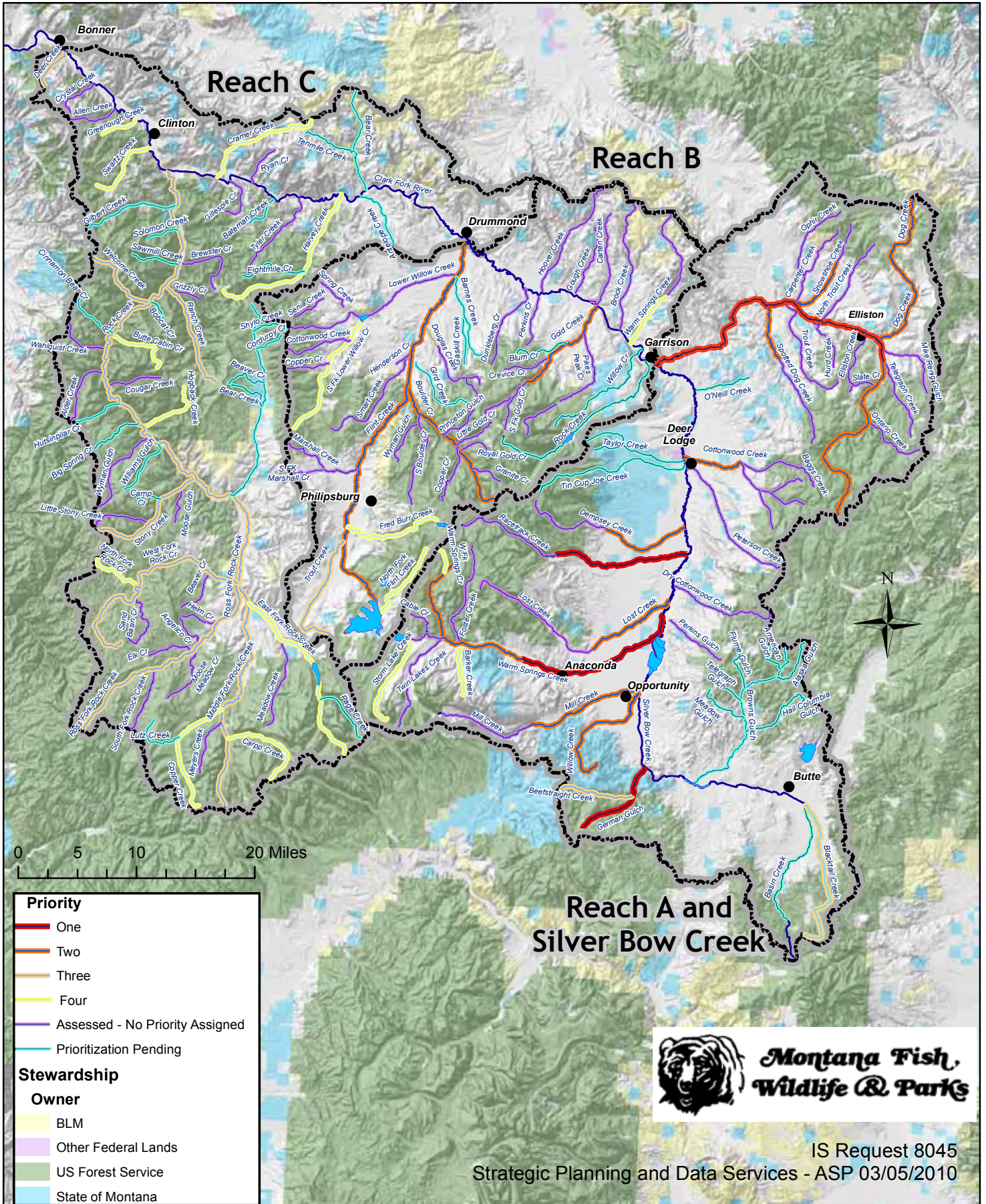
Of the 137 areas assessed, 46 river/stream/tributary reaches were identified as priority areas. The 46 areas were then ranked from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest priority and 4 the lowest (see map on page 7). The lower Little Blackfoot River was one of only four areas to receive a priority

ranking of 1. Fourteen river/stream/tributary reaches received a priority ranking of 2, including the upper Little Blackfoot and Little Blackfoot tributaries Spotted Dog Creek, Dog Creek and Snowshoe Creek.

The funding comes from the landmark 2008 settlement of natural resources damage litigation brought by the State of Montana against ARCO for injuries to the Upper Clark Fork Basin from past mining and smelting activities.

Action Alert: Submit your comments by November 30th!
<http://doj.mt.gov/lands/naturalresource/noticespubliccomment.asp>

Priority areas for projects in tributaries to the Upper Clark Fork River drainage



Older Missouri brown trout struck by infections

by John Wilson

In late October and early November PBMRTU and Missouri River Flyfishers members reported seeing fairly substantial numbers of dead or dying brown trout in the Missouri River below Holter Dam all the way to Cascade. The trout invariably had white fungus patches on their bodies and were almost exclusively larger brown trout. PBMRTU Conservation Committee members informed Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Regional Fisheries Manager, George Liknes and Fish Health Coordinator, Ken Staigmiller of the reports.

Liknes and Staigmiller took immediate action collecting live infected trout and clinically examining/analyzing the problem. The following is a report to concerned anglers from Fisheries Manager George Liknes explaining the likely causes and outcomes. Importantly, internal clinical signs of infection were not present, which indicates a normal condition and no additional disease present. Temperature correlations have yet to be completed, but the Missouri was still above 50 degrees November 7. Perhaps the infected trout are another insidious victim of climate change?

Email from George Liknes (11/09/2010)

Please let me try to explain in some detail what we think is happening to the fish that you are observing that are in bad shape or dead, which should be primarily brown trout. The fungi that you are seeing on the brown trout is likely *Saprolegnia* spp., or a closely related genera. *Saprolegnia parasitica* and *S. diclina* are the principal species which cause the disease in salmonids. These species occur worldwide and appear as whitish cottony-like growths on eggs or fish. They are most commonly a secondary infection or invader to bacterial or viral infections, malnutrition, physical injury and/or physical stress and are opportunistic in nature.

As John Wilson's email suggested, our fish health biologist went out and collected some live fish with *Saprolegnia* fungus present in conjunction with scheduled redd counts after speaking with Hal Harper. He examined the live fish; most all had

fungus on and near the ventral (bottom) portion of the body on and near the tail. Internal clinical signs of infection were not present, which indicates a normal condition and no additional disease present. As you would expect from spawning fish that were focused on spawning and not feeding, internal fat was absent and all except one had their gall bladders swollen and dark, which indicates they had not been feeding. If the fish is not feeding, that is an additional stressor on the fish. One female's gall bladder was not completely

full and had eggs in her stomach; she would have likely survived the infection.

We are aware of the substantial numbers of dead browns that can be observed in pools of tributaries or at the mouth. For example, 15 could be observed in a single pool in Sheep Creek today.

When infected individuals within a spawning stream are present, you can assume all individuals are exposed to fungal spores; since other fish are not infected, the *Saprolegnia* are opportunistic parasites. The infection

is promoted by primary traumatic damage inflicted on females during redd construction and on males from abrasion and wounds during redd defense. The occurrence is also favored by sexual maturity and mature males are more susceptible than mature females. Mature males that spawn possess fewer mucous secreting cells in their epidermis, which results in a reduced mucous slime coating; the mucous is thought to inhibit colonization of fungus.



Patches of cottony white fungus on a Missouri river brown trout. Clinical tests revealed no internal signs of infection, which indicates a normal condition and no additional disease present.

The mucus inhibits fungus by physically removing attached spores, it includes a morphogen that inhibits mycelium growth, and it contains lymphocytes and neutrophils that attack the mycelium. The concentration of the mucus producing cells decrease posteriorly along the fish, which is also the areas more prone to mechanical damage during spawning. Males produce higher levels of androgenic steroids during spawning and as a result, have lower concentrations of mucous secreting cells, and are more susceptible. Larger males are thought to produce higher peak levels of androgens or for a longer period of time. This along with larger fishes tend to be older and occupy higher positions within the dominance hierarchy in spawning areas, they would then be challenged frequently by younger, sub-dominant males, use up their energy reserves, have a great chance for mechanical injury, as well as having less resistance to a secondary

infection. So, older larger fish will tend to be at much greater risk, especially if they are males. However, any fish could be at some risk, especially if they are exposed to a primary infection or injury.

One thing that is quite important that we have not yet analyzed is water temperature. We will compare water temperature data this fall and to other years to determine if the Indian summer and potential warmer water temperatures could have helped to accentuate the more widespread incidence. However, it could be a result of a brown trout population with a higher proportion of larger, older fish.

Back in late September we did a health inspection of wild brown trout on the Missouri in the Craig area. We have received the majority of the results back from that and to date, no major pathogens have been identified. We did observe some clinical signs of Mycobacteria, which is a form of

tuberculosis that we have found in mountain whitefish and rainbow trout in the Mo below Holter in the past, but those test results have not been received. Those clinical signs would not be consistent or be related with what is being observed on the dead or dying brown trout. We are not aware of any threat to human health by this species of Mycobacteria. The health inspection provides us confidence that we do not have a major disease problem developing on the Missouri at this time. We expect to see the Saprolegnia infections fade as brown trout spawning decreases in early December. About 25 years ago we saw a similar outbreak in the Missouri River near Beaver Creek below Hauser Dam. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Cheers,
George

Missouri River trout afforded new protections: Walleye limits revised

by John Wilson

At their October meeting the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Commission set new, more liberal angler harvest limits on walleye in the world-class trout stretch of the Missouri River, from Holter Dam to Black Eagle Dam in Great Falls. The new regulations, designed to reduce present and future walleye predation on wild trout, sets "no limit" on walleyes from Holter Dam to Cascade bridge and 20 daily; 40 in possession from Cascade bridge to Black Eagle Dam. Previously the limit between the dams was five walleye daily and 10 in possession.

The regulation change garnered strong support from PBMRTU. Electrofishing data revealed a rise in walleye numbers in this popular section of the river, attributed to increased numbers of walleye flushing over Holter Dam in high water years. Walleye are a top-level predator that regularly feed on juvenile trout when they are available. Suppression of walleye populations

through more liberal angler harvest limits is a cost-effective way to protect the self-propagating wild trout populations. Approximately ten years ago illegally introduced walleye were legitimized in the reservoir system above Canyon Ferry, Hauser, and Holter dams. Escalation of walleye numbers there is now a given. Expanded numbers of walleye in the reservoirs has and will lead to increased flushing of walleye over the dams into the world class trout stretch below Holter.

PBMRTU Conservation Committee provided leadership in tackling the issue of liberalizing walleye limits by working cooperatively with FWP Commission members and department biologists. The committee initiated a public education campaign that included guest editorials in Helena and Great Falls newspapers, produced fact sheets for distribution, and--with the support of local flyshops--spearheaded a petition signature drive

that netted 320 signatures in support of "no limit" on walleye. The signatures were delivered to the Commission at their October meeting. A dozen PBMRTU members testified in favor of the new regulation change at the Commission meeting.

"This successful effort to increase walleye harvest levels to protect the Missouri River wild trout fishery below Holter Dam from the predation risks posed by an unauthorized escalation of the walleye population is a clear step in the right direction," said Tony Herbert, outgoing PBMRTU President, adding, "it was a concerted team effort." Though the new regulations are expected to be successful in suppressing walleye numbers, PBMRTU will continue to monitor walleye population levels below Holter and seek further suppression remedies if liberalizing walleye harvest limits doesn't sufficiently protect the trout resource.

A driftboat and trailer for \$100: What are the odds? About one in 100!

You could be the winner of a new ClackaCraft drift boat. Yes, you read it right. PBMRTU has purchased a brand new ClackaCraft drift boat and trailer to raffle as part of our annual fundraising event. It's a beauty and you won't want to miss this opportunity. We are selling only 100 tickets at just \$100 each. They are already going fast so be sure to get your tickets now.

So what happens if you don't need a drift boat? You should still buy a ticket (or two or three) and if you are drawn

as the winner, we will give you \$5,000 that night! This is a great deal all around. You might even think about giving one of these raffle tickets as a Christmas present this year!

2011 will be the chapter's 30th anniversary so help us celebrate by attending the upcoming banquet. Your generous support is the reason we are able to coordinate the efforts needed to protect, reconnect, restore and sustain our local waterways for you and generations to come.

This year, the annual PBMRTU banquet is going to be bigger and better than ever. We are shaking things up once again and have scheduled this well-attended event at the new Gateway Center on National Avenue; you know, that new building down by Pacific Recycling - lots of parking, lots of room, terrific food and great stuff to win.

Join us on February 26, 2011 - you never know what kind of surprises we have up our sleeves to celebrate 30 years!



For more information about the banquet, to join the banquet committee, or to purchase raffle tickets, call Nola Freestone at 495-2675 or email nolafreestone@yahoo.com (put **BANQUET** in the reference line, please).

Purchase 1 or more of the 100 available raffle tickets for \$100 each and there's a pretty good chance one of these beauties WITH TRAILER could be yours.

The namesake: Why "Pat Barnes"?



PBMRTU's namesake, Pat Barnes.

Outgoing PBMRTU president, Tony Herbert, requested from me a short history of why "Pat Barnes" is part of the chapter's name. The following is how I recall what happened.

In about 1990, then-President Frank Cooper led a discussion about trout anglers being a little confused about two groups, the Missouri River Chapter of TU and the Missouri River Fly Fishers, a fishing club in Great Falls. A motion was put before the

Board to rename the chapter "Pat Barnes Chapter of TU."

Why Pat Barnes? Pat was a teacher in the Helena school system and also owned a "tackle shop" in West Yellowstone. He was a charter member of the Missouri River Chapter of TU, and very helpful with donations to the banquet. Most notably, where conservation was concerned, Pat was a pioneer.

The Board had some discussion about the name

change. When Frank Cooper suggested that we keep "Missouri River" and just add "Pat Barnes," the Board passed the motion.

If you want to learn more about Pat Barnes, Dave Shors helped Pat write a book on his fishing life. You can buy "Ribbons of blue: the life and lore of the 'old pro' Pat Barnes." The Independent Record has paperback copies for \$2.00.

- Earl Dorsey, PBMRTU Board