



FWP NEWS

Good News For Campers This Summer

Summer vacations and camping trips in 'grizzly country' will be simpler and more convenient this summer.

"The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has identified a couple of bear resistant coolers that will eliminate the need to suspend food out of bears' reach," said Chris Smith, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks deputy director.

Smith said the newly approved products make it much easier for recreationists to comply with food storage orders in grizzly country.

"Outfitters and campers are really going to appreciate these new cooler designs," Smith said. "The coolers will also work on the Smith River where the adoption of food storage orders was hampered by the impracticality of hanging coolers."

These rugged ice-boxes have airtight seals, special fittings, and stainless steel latches or padlocks. The IGBC publishes an online list of products approved for use where food storage orders are in effect and other approved products such as electric fencing at: <http://www.igbconline.org/>

Prior to the certification of these new coolers, food had to be hung at least 10 feet in the air and four feet from the pole or tree.

Smith said USFS food storage restrictions are for the public's safety and to foster grizzly bear recovery by preventing bears from becoming food-conditioned—that is conditioned to find an easy meal from garbage cans, coolers and the like.

Food storage orders in effect on U.S. Forest Service lands include the Flathead, Lolo, Lewis and Clark, and Helena National Forests. Signs explain the orders and offer tips on how to behave in bear country.

For details on USFS food storage orders, contact your local Ranger District Office, or check the Website for the forest you plan to visit. For example, the Flathead National Forest has its food order posted online at www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/wildlife/grizzly_bears_index.shtml.

For a complete guide to living in bear country, go to the FWP Web site at fwp.mt.gov and click on Wild Things and Living With Wildlife to find the FWP Be Bear Aware page.

Clark Fork Trout Study Kicks Off

A four-year comprehensive study to explore trout numbers, species composition and important habitat in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin kicks off this month.

FWP and graduate students from Montana State University are placing radio tags in 200 trout over three years to monitor their movement. The first of these tags are scheduled to go out this spring, beginning the week of April 20.

Researchers will capture and tag fish along the Clark Fork from Warm Springs Ponds near Anaconda to below Rock Creek near Clinton. Tracking the journeys of these fish on the river and its tributaries will help FWP understand seasonal movements, spawning and rearing habitats, impediments to migration, and other challenges to survival.

Researchers hope to use the information collected to identify crucial fish habitat where they can focus protection and enhancement projects.

"This is the first time that we've ever done this type of fish movement research on this stretch of the Clark Fork, and it has been years since we have been able to study population numbers and distribution," said Pat Saffel, FWP Region 2 Fisheries Manager. "This project is like a rediscovery of one of our region's very visible and highly accessible fisheries."

For years, research was halted on this 100-mile stretch of river as the State and the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) were in litigation over damage caused to the watershed from mining activities.

A February 2008 settlement between the two parties provided money for restoration and research projects in the Upper Clark Fork watershed. Some of these settlement funds, combined with FWP effort and dollars, are funding the trout research project.

"The fisheries research will help monitor how well current cleanup and restoration activities are addressing habitats that are important to trout," Saffel said.

For the first time since the 1980s, biologists are also electrofishing this stretch of the Clark Fork to estimate fish abundance, distribution, and species composition.

Biologists began "shocking" the waters just downstream from Warm Springs with an electrical current at the first of April. The

current makes the fish easier to catch so researchers can mark fish, tally numbers and assess fish condition. FWP will shock and sample the entire stretch of river between Warm Springs and Clinton over the next six weeks.

FWP reminds nearby landowners, fisherman, boaters and other recreationists that they might see researchers in boats electrofishing the river throughout the spring. Researchers will also be in boats and on the ground following tagged fish movements with radio-tracking devices.

For additional questions on the study, contact FWP at (406) 542-5500.