

1 \_\_\_\_\_ BILL NO. \_\_\_\_\_

2 INTRODUCED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
3 (Primary Sponsor)

4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO COMMERCIAL FISHING,  
5 GUIDING, AND OUTFITTING; ESTABLISHING COMMERCIAL FISHING, GUIDING, AND OUTFITTING-FREE  
6 DAYS ON STRETCHES OF RIVERS; AND PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY."

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8 WHEREAS, many Montanans highly value floating and fishing on Montana's rivers and regularly  
9 pursue river-based recreation opportunities through the summer months; and

10 WHEREAS, fishing outfitters and guides are an important part of Montana's recreation economy and  
11 provide fishing opportunities to thousands of clients floating Montana's rivers in the summer months; and

12 WHEREAS, the growth in the number of boats, both recreational and commercial, have diminished the  
13 fishing and floating experience on Montana rivers on many days during the summer months; and

14 WHEREAS, fishing guides, outfitters, and noncommercial floaters and anglers have come together to  
15 craft solutions to overcrowding on the Beaverhead, Big Hole, and the West Fork of the Bitterroot Rivers, and  
16 these solutions have enhanced and improved the recreational experience for all users; and

17 WHEREAS, these solutions, which set aside certain stretches of river where commercial floating is not  
18 allowed on certain days of the week, provide a model that should be adopted on other heavily used Montana  
19 rivers, and the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks should move forward with rulemaking.

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21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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23 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Establishing commercial fishing, guiding, and outfitting-free days**  
24 **on stretches of river.** (1) For 2 days of each week between the third Saturday of May and Labor Day of each  
25 calendar year, the department shall designate river stretches where commercial fishing, guiding, or outfitting is  
26 prohibited. Commercial fishing, guiding, and outfitting-free river stretches must be designated for the following  
27 rivers:

28 (a) the Bitterroot River, from the Wally Crawford fishing access site to its confluence with the Clark

- 1 Fork of the Columbia River;
- 2 (b) the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, west of the Reserve street bridge in Missoula;
- 3 (c) the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, east of the Reserve street bridge in Missoula;
- 4 (d) the Big Blackfoot River;
- 5 (e) the Madison River, above Ennis Lake;
- 6 (f) the upper Yellowstone River, downstream of the Gardiner bridge to the Sheep Mountain fishing
- 7 access site;
- 8 (g) the North Fork of the Flathead River; and
- 9 (h) the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.
- 10 (2) The department shall set which days of the week the designated stretches of river will be
- 11 commercial fishing, guiding, and outfitting-free, except that one day must be Saturday.
- 12 (3) The designated stretches of rivers must be of a length or float time to provide for an average
- 13 day of recreational use.
- 14 (4) The department shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section by May 15, 2026.
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- 16 NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
- 17 integral part of Title 87, chapter 3, part 1, and the provisions of Title 87, chapter 3, part 1, apply to [section 1].
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