

**Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures**  
**Fishing Guide School**  
**870 Sleeping Child**  
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I hereby certify that this catalog is correct in content and policy

Signature

*James W. Mitchell*

Catalog Volume 1  
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### **Mission**

The purpose of Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures (MHFA) Fishing Guide School is to provide maximum instruction in the art of guided fishing to allow the student to start their own fishing guide service.

### **School**

MHFA Fishing Guide School is a nonaccredited private, for-profit school. The school curriculum was approved by the Montana Board of Outfitters on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and has been in operation since then, providing instruction for fishing guides.

### **Facilities**

We are located on 2 acres 3 miles south of Hamilton, MT. Our buildings include a 2000 square foot main office and owner's residence that houses the main classroom, as well as a 1500 square foot work area and equipment storage facility. A 1000 square foot Fly Shop (Bitterroot Fly Company) located at 808 N. Main #2 Darby, Montana 59829 that houses the base for the guiding activities. The public waters of Montana provide the on-the-water training, which includes the Bitterroot River, Blackfoot River, and Clark Fork River.

### **Governing Body**

**James Mitchell** - Owner, School President, Director, and Instructor

## **School Administrators, Faculty, and Instructors**

**James Mitchell:** Owner and lead instructor. Jim started fishing at a young age in the Bitterroot Valley. He was taught by his father who started the outfitting business in 1969. Jim began guiding anglers in 2001 and has fished and guided on the most renowned rivers in Montana. Over the years he improved and perfected his technique. Owning 2 successful fly-fishing businesses with his wife Bonnie. Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures, and the Bitterroot Fly Company an Orvis Endorsed outfitter fly shop. Both continue to grow each year. Jim was a runner up for Orvis Endorsed Guide of the year in 2018. The Bitterroot Fly Company was a runner up for Orvis Endorsed outfitter fly shop in 2024. Jim enjoys sharing what he has learned over the years with others. Jim has helped many start a fulfilling career as fly-fishing guides.

**Robert Lenfesty:** Instructor, and fly-fishing guide.

Robert was born in Seattle, Washington where he grew up fishing for salmon with his family in the Puget Sound. Robert also fished for trout on Washington's beautiful native streams. Robert Lived in Bergen, Norway as a freshman in high school returning to the states in the 10th grade where he graduated from Hargrave Military Academy in Virginia. Robert enlisted in the United States Marines in 2005 and served with second light armored reconnaissance Battalion out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina deploying to Iraq in 2006 and 2008. Robert was awarded the combat action ribbon and was honorably discharged in 2009. Robert moved to the Midwest to hunt and go to college. He attended the University of Iowa where he was also a volunteer fire fighter. Robert worked in law enforcement after graduating college, but soon found his passion was in the outdoors and in teaching. Robert Got a Job a job working in the Bitterroot Fly Company fly shop 2018, and 2019 and decided he wanted to become a fly-fishing guide. He attended the Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures Fishing Guide school in 2020 and started his rewarding career as a fly-fishing guide. He has attended 2 two other guide schools. Robert finds the water healing. He is passionate about teaching others and enjoys watching people glow as they catch trout on a fly rod for the first or the 100th time.

**Chris Grawitch:** Instructor, and fly-fishing guide.

Chris was born and raised in Freedom, Wisconsin, where he began fishing at a very young age. He grew up fishing with his dad all around Wisconsin and often in Canada. Chris knew by 8 years old that he wanted to devote his life to fishing and hunting and make it his profession by becoming a guide. They were short lived hobbies that became an obsession, where he spent every moment, he could learn from them.

His first bass tournament was in 1999 on Lake Michigan. It was the start to a 20 year long competitive world where Chris won many tournaments and won a points championship.

Looking for more opportunity, Chris researched places he thought would bring him to the next chapter of his life. In 2020, he moved to Montana, a place widely known for its hunting and fishing. He spent the first 3 years learning more about fly fishing on southwest Montana's amazing fisheries. Chris currently shares his passion through his profession as a fly-fishing guide. He loves having the ability to teach others what he has learned throughout his life and build connections by spending time on the water with other people.

**Kurt Sellerburg:** Instructor, and fly-fishing guide.

With a lifetime spent on the water and a career defined by leadership and teaching others, Kurt brings both experience and patience to every day on the river. He retired from the U.S. Navy after 24 years of service, during which he had the honor of commanding two ships—USS PREBLE and USS BUNKER HILL. That background shaped his attention to detail, commitment to safety, and calm decision-making, qualities that translate naturally to guiding on Montana's fabled trout waters.

Fishing has been part of his life since childhood and it remains his greatest passion. He has fly fished throughout the country, pursuing trout, steelhead, and striped bass, and also commercially fished for tuna in the Pacific Ocean as owner and operator of his own off-shore boat. He attended the Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures Fishing Guide school in 2024, For the past 20 years, he has been rowing drift boats and rafts, developing a deep understanding of river systems, reading water, and positioning anglers for success.

What he enjoys most about guiding is teaching—helping anglers to build confidence, refine their skills, and gain a deeper understanding of the water they're fishing. Whether working with beginners or experienced anglers, he takes pride in clear, patient instruction where needed and has even learned a thing or two from others while fishing. He also enjoys sharing the views, history, and breathtaking mountain scenery that make the Bitterroot Valley such a special place. Every trip is about more than catching fish—it's about experiencing the river and creating lasting memories.

### **Admission Requirements**

MHFA Fishing Guide School is open to everyone. You must be 18 years of age to obtain the license to become a guide in Montana. Every student must complete an enrollment application prior to attending a course. A maximum of two students are accepted for each class.

Deposit: An established fee of 50% of the course tuition fee is required to schedule the course. **(Deposit is not required of students using veteran's benefits. Instead, a certificate of current eligibility will be required)**

### **School Calendar**

The school observes all federal holidays, and also includes the day after Thanksgiving and the day after Christmas.

Reservations are accepted starting January 1 of the year the student will attend. Course terms are very stringent and are 8 days in length.

Spring course 1 - Starts the second Monday in March, runs 8 days

Spring course 2 - Starts the first Monday in May, runs 8 days

Fall course - Starts the first Monday in October, runs 8 days

### **Refund Policy**

The deposit will be refunded if canceled 30 days prior to the first day of the scheduled course. If you are unable to make the registered course and make arrangements more than 30 days prior to the first day of class, you will be allowed to attend a later course if available. Refunds will be returned within 40 days.

## Tuition and Fees

### **8 DAY FISHING GUIDE COURSE - 73 HOURS.**

This course consists of familiarization with the requirements and regulations to become a fishing guide and outfitter, fly casting instruction, streamside ecology and entomology, Knot tying (Western/Tenkara), Float/Wade fishing safety and techniques, Boat operation and safety, Meal planning and food safety, River etiquette, Fly tying basics (if requested), Self-marketing and resume building. **Not included in the course are personal items such as sunscreen, raingear, sunglasses, etc. A Montana State fishing license is required for the days on the water.**

The tuition for the 8-day course is \$4,855.00. Cost of lodging and meals, if needed, is \$2500.00. A 50% deposit is required with your completed registration to schedule your class. Deposits will not be refunded if the student cancels within 30 days of the first day of class or fails to show for the registered course. **[Deposit is not required of students using veteran's benefits, but a current Certificate of Eligibility (COE) will be required.]**

### **Refund Policy for Students Using VA Education Benefits**

In accordance with federal statute, students using VA education benefits who are withdrawn or dismissed from the school will have the applicable remainder of the program cost refunded according to the refund table below.

<b>% OF PROGRAM COMPLETED AT TIME OF WITHDRAWAL OR ENROLLMENT TERMINATION</b>	<b>REFUND</b>
10% of program completed	90% Refunded
20% of program completed	80% Refunded
30% of program completed	70% Refunded
40% of program completed	60% Refunded
50% of program completed	50% Refunded
60% of program completed	40% Refunded
70% of program completed	30% Refunded
80% of program completed	20% Refunded
90% of program completed	10% Refunded

### **Proof of Issue/Program Information Acknowledgement**

As required by 38 U.S. Code § 3676, MHFA Fishing Guide School will provide a copy of program outline, tuition/program costs, and school policies to students upon enrollment. All students are required to complete a Proof of Issue form and each form will be kept in student's file.

### **Standards of Progress and Grading**

MHFA Fishing Guide School does not use a traditional grading system, instead uses daily evaluations and progress. All work will be graded on a 0 to 4 system, meaning 0 is fail and 4 is exceptional. Each day a student receives a grade (0-4) from the instructor. At the end of the program all daily grades are added up to determine final grade. In order for a student to successfully pass the program and receive a certificate of completion, the total must be 18 or higher.

#### **Grading System**

**18 or higher = PASS**

**17 or less = FAIL**

### **Prior Credit**

MHFA Fishing Guide School will evaluate all previous postsecondary education and training, including military experience, for students using VA education benefits. Upon completion of the evaluation process, the school will determine if credit can be awarded. If credit is awarded, the school will reduce program length and cost proportionately, notify the student of the evaluation, and maintain all credit evaluation records. If credit is not awarded, documentation showing that an evaluation was conducted will be kept in student files.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend and participate in all daily classes and ensure they are on time for class each morning. Daily attendance and tardiness are tracked and monitored. If students are late due to adverse weather, arrangements will be made available for the student to make up any work.

Unexcused Absences - Due to the nature of the program and short length, no unexcused absences are allowed. If a student fails to show for one day, that student's enrollment will be terminated.

Excused Absences – One excused absence is allowed and, if taken, the student must contact the school director to arrange make-up work. If more than one excused absence is needed, the student will be required to withdraw from the program and re-enroll in a future class. In addition, the instructor must be notified and approve the excused absence before it can be taken.

Tardies – Three tardies equal one unexcused absence. Therefore, if a student is late to class more than three times and consider tardies by the instructor, the student will be dismissed from the program.

### **Leave of Absence Policy**

MHFA Fishing Guide School does not allow leaves of absence beyond the one allowed excused absence. If a student needs to miss more than 1 day of class, they will be required to withdraw from the program and enroll in a future class.

### **Student Records and Transcripts**

MHFA Fishing Guide School will maintain student records for a minimum of 3 years. Records for every student will include, but not limited to, attendance, progress reports/evaluations, grades, prior credit evaluation and supporting documents, proof of issue form, any conduct related documentation, and a copy of their certificate of completion. At any point, students may contact the school to request copies of their certificates or any documents within their folder.

## **Student Conduct Policy**

The student conduct policy outlines major categories of behavior and states disciplinary actions that may occur as a result of student misconduct.

Bad conduct will not be tolerated at MHFA Fishing Guide School. The use of foul language, and constant interruptions will not be tolerated at this school and the offending students will be dismissed from the program. The use of cell phones (if any service is available) will only be allowed during student breaks and not during classroom hours.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Drugs and alcohol are not permitted. Students are not to consume or possess any alcohol or controlled substance unless they have a prescription. Any violation may be grounds for termination from the program.

The following levels of disciplinary actions will be followed when students violate school rules:

#### **Level 1 - Verbal Warning/Reprimand**

The instructor will tell the student not to engage in inappropriate behavior and give the student a reminder of the school rules.

#### **Level 2 - Dismissal**

If a conduct-related violation occurs, the instructor has the discretion and authority to terminate a student's enrollment.

The MHFA Fishing Guide School reserves the rights to evaluate conduct related violations on a case-by-case scenario to determine what specific action is appropriate. All conduct related violations or infractions will be documented and kept in student's file.

## **Reinstatement Policy**

If a student is dismissed from a program due to standards of progress, attendance, or conduct, the student will be required to contact the owner for readmission approval. MHFA Fishing Guide has sole discretion for determining if a student who was previously terminated can be re-enrolled.

## **Graduation**

Upon successful completion of all course objectives, every student will receive a certificate of completion with the title of the course completed from Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures.

## **Program Outline**

Only 6 students are accepted for each class

8 Full days \$4855.00 Lodging and meals \$2500

### **Contact for dates and reservations**

#### **First aid CPR card required to take class**

New applicants for a guide or outfitter license must have a current first aid certification from the MT Board of Outfitters approved provider list.

March class lake day will be substituted with extra river day if lake is still frozen

### **Day One (The first full day will be spent in the classroom)**

8:00 am - 8:30 am

Meet the instructors, Introduction to Course, distribute course curriculum, discuss course expectations.

8:30 am - 12:00 pm

Requirements for guiding, Insurance, paperwork, and forms. Familiarization of Montana Board of Outfitters regulations, FWP regulations, Hook Removal techniques, and client safety.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm – Lunch

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Introduction to Rafts and Trailers, set up, cleaning, repair, and maintenance. Trailer backing practice.

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Safety speech and casting lesson preparation

5:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Meal planning for the following day. accommodating client dietary needs.

## **Day Two**

### **(Walk and Wade Bitterroot River East or West Fork)**

8:00 am - 9:00 am

Travel to include discussion with instructions on driving, passenger comfort, and safety.

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Field Study and Practical Application, Safety speech and casting lesson practice. Walk and wade stream basics, Equipment set up Western/Tenkara. client safety, knot tying, insect identification and fly selection. How to read the water and get your client into fish.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation walk & wade.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Streamside ecology and entomology.

Playing fish/netting strategies Casting instruction Western/Tenkara

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Travel with discussion on special considerations for walk and Wade clients. Meal planning for the following day

**Day Three**  
**(Lake Float Painted Rocks or Bitterroot River)**

8:00 am - 9:00 am  
Safety and pre-trip inspection

9:00 am - 10:00 am  
Travel to include discussion with instructions on trailer towing and safety.

10:00 am - 10:30 am  
Boat and angler prep, Safety speech and casting lesson practice, launch, and boat ramp etiquette.

10:30 am - 12:00 pm  
Stillwater tactics, basic boat handling, and rowing techniques, boat safety, and watercraft operation.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm  
Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation float trip lake.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm  
Lunch

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
Field Study and Practical Application

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
Western/Tenkara fishing techniques

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
Travel with discussion on how to plan and prepare for multi-day travel trips. Meal planning for the following day

**Day Four**  
**(River Float upper Bitterroot River)**

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel and field study with practical application, Safety speech and casting lesson practice, freestone river navigation, boat safety, watercraft operation, and river etiquette. How to read the water and get your client into fish.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation float trip river.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm  
Lunch

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Watercraft operation and field repair, scenic float trips, nature viewing, safety/survival, wildlife awareness, first aid/CPR review, and river etiquette

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Travel with discussion on accommodating special needs. Meal planning for the following day.

**Day Five**  
**(River Float Bitterroot River large freestone)**

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel, field study, and practical application, Safety speech and casting lesson practice, advanced field repair, advanced rowing techniques, advanced casting techniques. How to read the water and get your client into fish.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm  
Lunch on the river

12:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Field study, and practical application reading larger rivers.

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Travel with discussion on the day's achievements, Meal planning for the following day

**Day Six**  
**(River Float West Fork of the Bitterroot River)**

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel and field study with practical application, Safety speech and casting lesson practice, tailwater ecology and entomology, fish habitat identification. How to read the water and get your client into fish.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm  
Lunch on the river

12:30 pm - 5:00 pm  
Continued practical application, playing fish/netting strategies.

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Travel with discussion on the day's achievements, Meal planning for the following day.

**Day Seven**  
**(River Float Exam Blackfoot River)**

Field testing and Practical Application Exams, Final Testing and Critical Evaluation.

8:00 am - 10:00 am

Final exam of safety speech, casting lesson, boat operation and maneuvering, fly casting techniques, Reading the water to get your client into fish. Making the best out of a slow day, becoming a guide.

10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Field testing and practical application exam

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm  
Lunch on the river

12:30 pm - 5:00 pm  
Continue testing and practical application exam, mock medical emergency response drill,

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Travel discussion on what are your concerns or insecurities, and what you feel are your weak points. recap the practical application exam with instructions to remedy any weak points.

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
Graduation Dinner

## Day Eight (Classroom)

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Review of Montana Board of Outfitters license requirements and regulations, complete the paperwork, and documentation required for guiding. Prepare a professional resume,

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Recap class, discuss guide and client relations, and how to market yourself as a professional. Networking in the industry, developing and maintaining a customer base, finding jobs, and meeting employment expectations. Award diplomas to successful graduates, and departure.

\*\*Top-level graduates may be given the opportunity to continue their education and gain valuable on-the-job training guiding with Montana Hunting and Fishing Adventures. \*\*

### Additional Resource Readings

- Montana State fishing regulations
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Statutes
- Statutes and rules relating to outfitters and guides issued by the Montana Board of Outfitters
- International Federation of Fly Fishers CCI Study pack.
- Orvis Vest Pocket Guide to Leaders, Knots & Tippets
- Pocket Guide to Western Hatches by Dave Hughes
- The Orvis Streamside Guide to Trout Foods and Their Imitations by Tom Rosenbauer
- Orvis Fly-Tying Guide by Tom Rosenbauer
- Guide's Guide Augmented Book (The A to Z on Becoming and perfecting the Art of professional river running. Includes information on trip tips, company policies, first aid kits, and food planning guides.) by William McGinnis

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