

Big Horn Basin

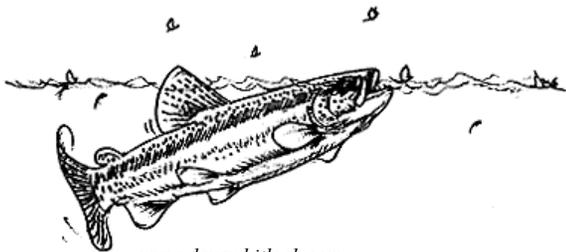
ANGLER NEWSLETTER

2004

We Need a Flush Big Horn River Trout

Warm dry winters and hot swimming pool summers. Sounds like a great climate if you are a retiree. However for fish in the Big Horn River it means tight quarters, dirty floors, and poor menu selections. As the current drought lingers, the trout fishery on the Big Horn River is starting to show the impacts.

The last four water years have been characterized by summer releases from Boysen Reservoir that are just enough to meet downstream water rights and winter flows that are well below the minimum required to sustain the fishery long-term. Among other impacts, these low flows have resulted in abundant sediment deposition on this quality trout fishery. Silt has accumulated over much of the stream bottom and is especially bad in areas where the current is slowed. While this makes wading challenging, it is even more harmful to the survival of trout. Silt fills the spaces between rocks and gravel, decreasing the available surface area for macro-invertebrates (the bugs trout eat) and leading to an overall change in bug production. Some bugs benefit and others lose but the net result is that fish have fewer quality bugs to eat.



www.davewhitlock.com

Silt is also problematic for the wild brown trout in the river. Brown trout were last stocked in the river in 1992. If provided adequate flows these fish are capable of maintaining strong numbers through natural reproduction.

When silt blankets desired spawning gravels and suffocates the eggs before they hatch, brown trout don't do well.

We manage the Big Horn River trout fishery (Wedding of the Waters to below Black Mountain Bridge) for wild brown, stocked rainbow (15,600/yr) and Snake River Cutthroat (8,000/yr) trout. Hatchery fish (about 5" in length) are scattered by boat in July following high flows.

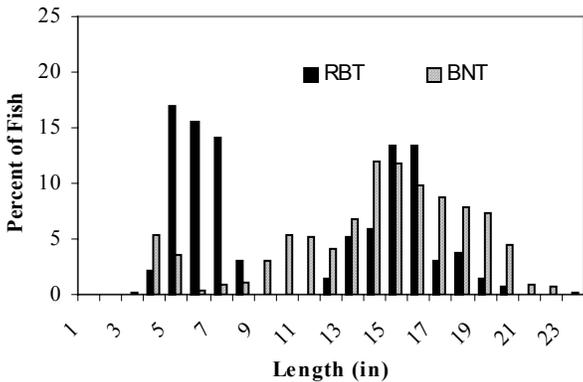
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The fish population is monitored by electrofishing in October. This allows us to determine the relative size and abundance of trout as well as the survival of our hatchery stocks. Previous studies on the Big Horn have shown that rainbow trout must be about 10-11" by October in order to survive the dynamic winter conditions on the river (this holds true for the cutthroat as well).

Surveys conducted in October give us a reasonable look at the current fishing conditions as well as information on the immediate future for the fishery.

Four consecutive days of electrofishing in October 2003 revealed good numbers of large brown trout between 14 and 21 inches in the river from Wedding of the Waters to the 8th Street Bridge. As in 2002, very few small brown trout were captured indicating that spawning in 2001 and 2002 was not very productive.



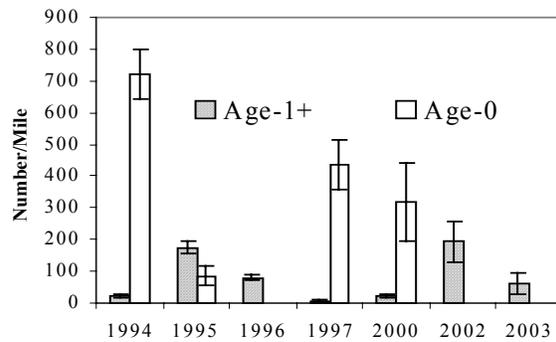
Length frequency results for brown (BNT) and rainbow trout (RBT) captured in fall 2003 surveys.

Rainbow trout have been most severely impacted by the flow conditions. The rainbow trout population is the lowest it's been since 1996 and survival of hatchery fish has been very low. In 2003 young rainbow trout (age-0) were too infrequent to generate population estimates (See figure below). What we believe has occurred is that low flows have decreased preferred juvenile habitat and preferred prey. This means that our hatchery fish are forced to occupy habitats with large trout (munch) and at the same time have a limited amount of quality food available. The net result is that these hatchery fish are eaten by

larger fish or are in good condition for winter survival.

Fewer Snake River Cutthroat trout are stocked in the surveyed reach and few were collected in 2003. These fish are stocked mostly below Thermopolis as the habitat there favors this species over rainbows. Angling surveys have found that cutthroat are doing slightly better than the upstream rainbows but the low flows don't do them much good either.

The Big Horn River desperately needs a flushing flow to prevent further downturn in the fishery. Flushing flows effective at cleaning Big Horn River substrates have not occurred since 1999. The future of this fishery is largely at the mercy of mother nature. Hope for precipitation and be prepared for a much brighter future for the Big Horn River trout fishery.



Population estimates (number/mile) for age-0 and age-1 and older RBT in the Big Horn River from Wedding of the Waters to 8th Street Bridge for years 1994 to 2003.

Make no mistake, the Big Horn is worth fishing. Throwing streamers, rapalas, panther martins and the like can turn up some memorable trout even through the winter months. And if nothing else the Big Horn in Wyoming is a treat to fish if you like relative solitude and the chance for a large trout.

Unwanted Snails Found

Stories abound of adventuresome trekkers hitchhiking across New Zealand, however adventuresome New Zealand mud snails

hitchhiking their way across Wyoming is no story—it's fact.

Several brown BB-sized snails were collected from the Bighorn River near Thermopolis in October during our routine fish survey. Experts at Montana State University confirmed that the snails were New Zealand mud snails, an aquatic nuisance species invading western waters.

New Zealand mud snails are tiny, growing to only 5mm in length. However, their size can be deceiving. The mud snail reproduces rapidly to form colonies which can sometimes cover the habitat of important trout food like may, stone and caddis flies. Although trout eat mud snails, they are a poor food source because they are nearly indigestible.

The impact mud snails will have on trout populations is not known. What is known is that mud snails are appearing in rivers that are popular with anglers.



Snails can survive for long periods of time on waders, in live-wells, and when carried on boats and trailers. Mud snails, like many aquatic nuisance animals are true hitchhikers. They cannot move great distances by themselves--they are transported. Anglers are encouraged to clean their equipment and if possible allow equipment to thoroughly dry before moving from one fishing area to another.

For more information on New Zealand Mud Snails visit: www.protectyourwaters.net

Hybrid Sunfish Available in Basin Reservoirs

The hybrid sunfish found in Wyoming are produced when a male bluegill and female green sunfish are spawned together in a Arkansas fish hatchery. Unlike some hybrids the offspring of

this cross are fertile. However, the vast majority of the young produced are male (85-95%). This is a boon to fisheries managers that often battle the incredible reproductive rates of sunfish. Because the balance of the population is male, the quantity of natural reproduction is small. This gives managers better control of the numbers of sunfish in a lake and allows for better growth rates as competition can be limited.

First stocked into Renner Reservoir in 1997 these hybrids have attained impressive size. Anglers have taken several one-pound fish at Renner and fish as large as 1.5 pounds have been reported. The state record for this hybrid in Nebraska is nearly two pounds and in warmer climates fish of three pounds have been documented. We don't really know how big these fish will get in Wyoming but any sunfish over one pound is a whopper.

Hybrid sunfish are known for their aggressive nature and preference for shallow water. These traits combined with their relatively large mouth make them a great game fish that can be readily caught throughout the year on a variety of tackle. Like other sunfish, hybrids are particularly fond of small jigs fished near structure. And because they have a larger mouth than most sunfish, you will also catch them while fishing larger hardware such as crankbaits. If you are going to use bait, night-crawlers suspended off the bottom can be deadly. Another alternative is to use small popper or rubber spider flies to attract fish to the surface. Regardless of the tackle you choose, the best time to catch these hybrids are during the lowlight hours of dawn and dusk.



The creel limit on Green Sunfish x Bluegill hybrids has been reduced at Renner Reservoir to ten (10) per day or in possession. Elsewhere in the Cody region statewide regulations apply. Because the availability of these fish varies, annual stocking might not occur, so expect some variability in these fisheries from one year to the next. Hybrid sunfish are available in Horseshoe

(pond 5), Scharen, South Worland (airport), and Renner Reservoirs. All of these waters were stocked in 2003 and should produce catches in 2004.

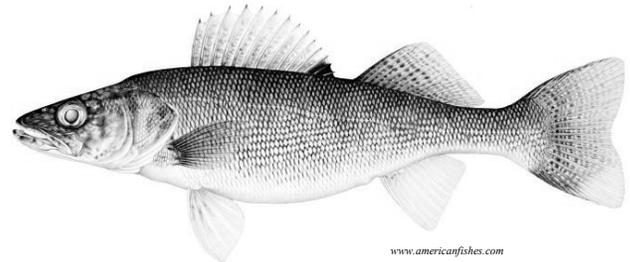
Hybrids can resemble either parent. At Renner Reservoir only hybrids have been introduced (limit 10). So although the fish you catch might resemble a bluegill you can be assured it is a hybrid.

A Marble-Eye Future for Harrington Reservoir

Harrington reservoir was filled in 1994 and by the late 1990s was well on its way to becoming the premier bass fishery in the Big Horn Basin. However, since the introduction of Yellow Perch, the story at Harrington is one that has played out numerous times in the western U.S. The story goes like this.....The initial perch find favorable conditions and grow fat and fast. Anglers respond by digging out augers, bobbers, and fried fish recipes. For a short period of time all is well. Then the perch which lack a efficient predator in the lake start to reproduce in mind boggling numbers. The average female Yellow Perch produces 23,000 eggs each year and large individuals can produce more than 50,000. Anglers can't keep up with such reproduction and soon the food utilized by perch (and many of the other fish) becomes limited and the fishery rapidly declines to one dominated by perch that are too small to attract anglers. Unfortunately small perch don't stop reproducing and without a significant change in the physical or biological structure of the lake a "stunted perch lake" remains a "stunted perch lake". So how will the story end for Harrington?

At Harrington we had two options for changing the biological structure of the lake: (1) chemically remove all fish and start over or (2) introduce an effective perch predator. Without question both of these options are risky and the outcome is far from certain. However the introduction of a predator could mean a reduction in the "down time" at Harrington, and lead to a return of quality

fishing within a couple of years as opposed to five or more years that would follow a chemical treatment. Because of this (and a host of other nasty details that come with chemical treatment) it was decided that walleye would be stocked into the reservoir.



Walleye co-evolved with yellow perch and are voracious perch eaters. However, how many walleye to stock into a "stunted perch lake" is a topic of debate. Examples from other states have shown that adding too many walleye to a stunted perch population can tip the balance towards the predator in such a way that perch are all but eliminated and the walleye don't grow large enough to provide quality angling. Further complicating the matter is that yellow perch are also predators of small walleye. Because of these problems it is difficult to determine how many stocked walleye a "stunted perch lake" such as Harrington can sustain.

The good news in the Harrington saga is that walleye have already been stocked in the reservoir (2,795 in 2003) and that once these fish reach a size that they can consume perch they will grow fat and fast leading to some plump walleye to be caught. The bad news is that for the immediate future Harrington's bass and bluegill fisheries probably won't be much better than they have been.

The number of walleye stocked will be increased to 18,400/year for the next three years as we evaluate their survival and the impacts to the perch population. Walleye fishing probably won't be worth your time at Harrington until 2005. Meanwhile, there are still some very nice bass in the lake and 25,000 bluegill were stocked in 2003.

New Waters

Sometimes fishing is more about exploration than putting fillets on ice or photos on film. In my experience, some of the most enjoyable days on the water are about exploration. Finding new waters and figuring them out is a rewarding experience.

There are more small streams that drain into the Big Horn Basin than a person could fish in a year but lakes and ponds are relatively scarce. Especially lakes that hold warm or coolwater game-fish. Because of this scarcity, we are constantly working to provide more and better “pond” fishing opportunities.

If you get the hankering to do some exploring this year a relatively new pair of ponds are being developed as fisheries just outside of Greybull. The Scharen Trout Pond and Scharen Reservoir are located a short drive east of Greybull in the Scharen subdivision.



The trout pond is only about 0.5 surface acres and will be stocked each spring with 500 rainbow trout. This probably isn't the place to catch large fish but may be a good spot to take the kids for an evening.

The spring fed reservoir created in 1999 as part of a Fish Wyoming project is about 3 surface acres and is managed for largemouth bass and hybrid sunfish. For more concise directions to the ponds give us a call at 1-800-654-1178.

Unlucky at Horseshoe Reservoir

Some call it Pond Five others Horseshoe Reservoir, for a new biologist in the region that spells confusion. But whatever you call it, this 28-acre impoundment on the Yellowtail Wildlife Habitat Management Unit offers a home to largemouth bass, rainbow trout, hybrid sunfish, and unfortunately too many carp.

Gill nets were set in the lake in June of 2003 (see results below). What we found was a small yet apparently stable population of largemouth bass. This was expected since largemouth bass were first introduced in 2001 and have not yet reached maturity. The sampling also revealed a good number of rainbow trout with some fish obviously hold-overs from the 2002 stocking. Unfortunately the nets also contained nearly as many carp as trout.

Total catch from nets set in June 2003 at Horseshoe Reservoir. Fish represented are Carp (CRP), Largemouth Bass (LMB), and Rainbow Trout (RBT).

Species	Number	#/Net Hour	Average Length (in)	Length Range (in)
CRP	49	2.97	14.7	13.0-16.5
LMB	7	0.42	11.1	10.5-12.0
RBT	53	3.21	12.7	9.0-17.7

Horseshoe was drained in 1998 to repair the dam and outlet structure. In addition, a infiltration gallery was built to prevent unwanted fish from entering the newly filled reservoir. Unfortunately a leak between the canal and reservoir occurred and carp entered the reservoir. A local flashflood over-topped the canal in 2002 introducing even more carp.

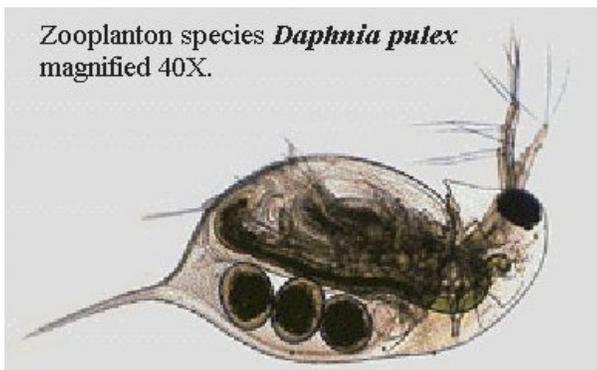
The goal for the fishery at Horseshoe following reconstruction was to establish self-sustaining large mouth bass and a stocked hybrid sunfish fishery. Rainbow trout were to be stocked to provide angling opportunities while the bass population developed.

The introduction of carp makes the future of the fishery uncertain. If carp populations continue to

build, the best alternative will be to drain the lake and start over. We will continue to monitor the situation at Horseshoe. In the mean time let us know how fishing is at the lake.

News From Buffalo Bill Reservoir

Fish sampling on Buffalo Bill Reservoir last year found a small increase in the rainbow trout population from 2002 with the population remaining near average. A trend we've noticed from past sampling is that as the trout get longer their body condition (weight to length) continues to decline. So why is this? Cutthroat, rainbow, and brown trout in Buffalo Bill Reservoir primarily eat zooplankton (lake trout are another story). Zooplankton are little animals (about the size of a grain of sand) that drift about in the water of most lakes. Although small fish can grow well on a zooplankton diet, it's hard for fish to get very big eating just zooplankton. This is why catching a trout greater than 20 inches is a rarity in Buffalo Bill. We've been collecting zooplankton samples for the last few years to see how the fluctuations in zooplankton affect trout growth in Buffalo Bill Reservoir grow.



We continue to see many lake trout in the reservoir. For that reason this year we've changed the regulation to allow anglers to keep two lake trout in addition to four other trout (which may also be lake trout) to try to reduce the number of lake trout mouths to feed. Small lake

trout eat zooplankton just like the cutthroat, rainbow, and brown trout in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, but the big lake trout eat other fish (i.e. cutthroat, rainbow, and brown trout) So keep a few lake trout your next time out. It will save a few cutthroat, rainbow, and brown trout and if there are fewer lake trout, the ones that are left will get bigger.

Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*)



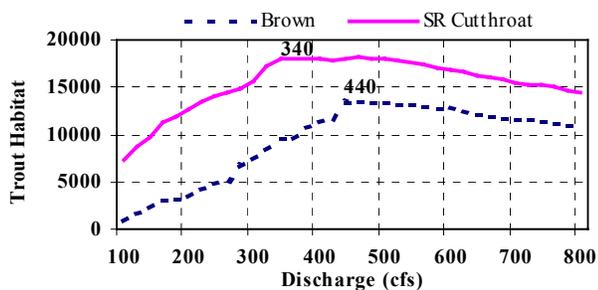
Our sampling also found that if you want to catch a lake trout in the summer time your best bet is to fish around 100 feet deep. You can catch some shallower but a large majority of those fish suspend at that depth during the dog days of summer.

Future for Shoshone Instream Flows

The Shoshone River below Buffalo Bill Reservoir is an exceptional "blue ribbon" fishery, which ranks it in the top 3% of Wyoming's trout fisheries.

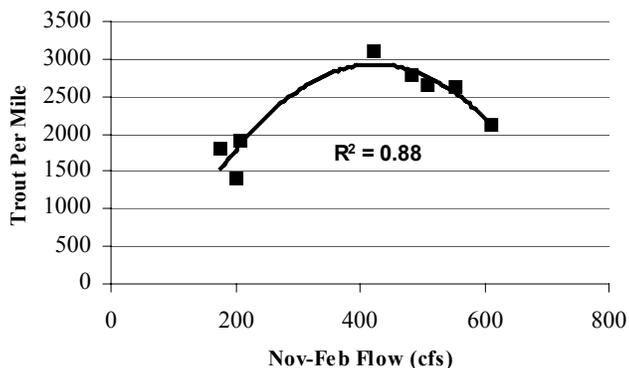
The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) has been working with the governors office, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Wyoming Water Development Commission, the State Engineers Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement winter instream flows that would benefit the fishery. Studies conducted by the WGFD and the University of Wyoming have shown that 440 cfs at the USGS Cody gage (380 cfs released from Buffalo Bill Reservoir) during the winter would optimize trout habitat.

Releases of 100 cfs from Buffalo Bill Reservoir for the last three years have reduced the amount of habitat available for trout and the amount of habitat for the critters the trout eat. On top of the loss of habitat these fish are getting a “double whammy” because of the addition of warm water from DeMaris Springs. The addition of hot water from DeMaris raises both the water temperature and the activity level (i.e. energetic demand) of the fish at a time when there is little food for the trout. It’s like making the fish run on a treadmill and go on a diet at the same time. While this might work to slim down fisheries supervisors, the fish just get skinnier and can virtually starve to death.



Relationship between trout habitat and previous years winter flows.

Sampling conducted since the completion of the Buffalo Bill enlargement have shown that trout populations are largest in years following winter flows near 440 cfs. Winter flows near 440 cfs would provide anglers with the opportunity to access the river by wading and floating and would allow for other recreational activities such as kayaking as well.

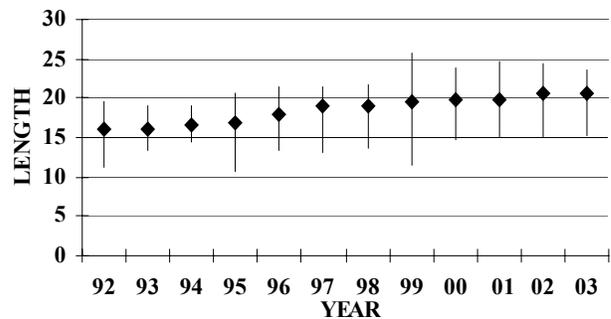


Relationship between Shoshone River trout populations and previous year’s winter flows.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will be hosting a public meeting this spring or summer regarding the Shoshone River instream flows. Stay tuned for more information!

East Newton Lake Better Than Ever!

If you haven’t been fishing at East Newton Lake, you’re missing out! The average size of the rainbows in East Newton has been greater than 20 inches for the last couple of years and the browns and splake are just as big.



Average length of rainbow trout in East Newton Lake caught during our annual egg take 1992- 2003.

East Newton Lake is managed as a “trophy” fishery with a one fish over 20-inch limit and only artificial flies and lures are allowed. Although harvest of one fish is allowed, the majority of anglers choose to fish catch-and-release.

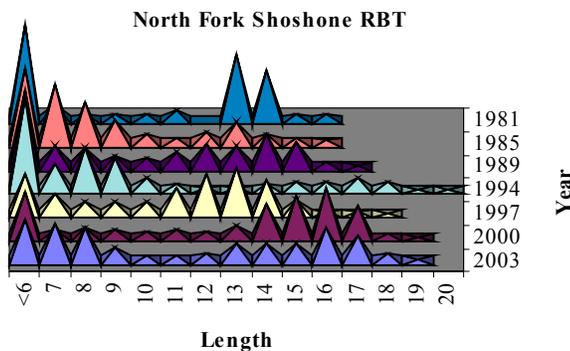
Fish population statistics from spring and fall sampling at East Newton Lake, 2003.

Species	Number Sampled	Average Length	Length Range	Average Weight	Weight Range
<u>Spring</u>					
Brown	9	18.3	11.3 – 20.2	2.18	0.6 – 2.8
Rainbow	100	20.5	15.4 – 23.6	3.43	1.7 – 4.9
Splake	23	20.2	15.7 – 22.1	2.47	1.4 – 3.4
<u>Fall</u>					
Brook	16	8.9	7.7 – 10.0	0.30	0.2 – 0.6
Brown	17	18.4	14.3 – 21.5	2.47	1.2 – 4.0
Rainbow	27	20.7	15.5 – 23.8	2.91	1.7 – 5.2
Splake	10	17.9	15.0 – 21.3	1.98	1.3 – 2.8

As many of you know, East Newton Lake is also one of the sources for rainbow trout eggs, which are used to produce fingerling trout for stocking throughout the state. The egg-take operation occurs in April and the young trout produced are then stocked in East Newton Lake, Meadowlark Lake, Clarks Fork River, Basin Waterplant Pond and many, many others. Last year we collected 353,300 eggs!

North Fork Shoshone River

We estimated the trout population on a lower stretch of the North Fork Shoshone River in September 2003. We found 558 rainbow trout per mile, 120 Yellowstone cutthroat per mile and 4 brown trout per mile. These estimates are down slightly from those of 2000. Most of the fish captured were quality size rainbow trout (13 to 17



Length Frequency of rainbow trout in the North Fork Shoshone River 1981-2003.

inches). On average the Yellowstone cutthroat tended to be larger than the rainbow with an average size of 14 inches. Not as many small fish were captured as in previous population estimates. Although those little guys are hard to catch with electricity, we may be seeing some effects of the drought reducing recruitment. The population structure of RBT in the North Fork Shoshone has changed from the 1980s thru the 1990s and continues to include more large adult fish. Good news for the angler!

Upper Yellowstone Project

In 2003 WGFDF began a collaborative project with Yellowstone National Park studying Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the upper Yellowstone River



drainage. We've surgically implanted radio transmitters in 65 fish and followed them using aircraft mounted telemetry equipment to determine their seasonal movement patterns and which tributary streams they are using for spawning. We are also conducting fish habitat and population studies in the drainage. Preliminary information suggests most cutthroat from Yellowstone Lake move into tributary streams to spawn in the spring and quickly return to the lake. We're planning on implanting another 70 transmitters this year and continuing our fish population and habitat sampling. This is the first year of a four-year study so stay tuned for results.

Clarks Fork Hatchery News

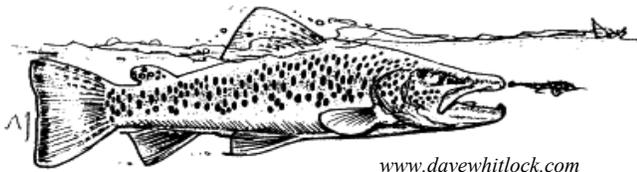
In January 2003, fish from the Clark's Fork River tested positive for Whirling Disease. Because the river is adjacent to the rearing facilities at the hatchery and public fishing access to the river is available at the hatchery there is concern about the possible transfer of Whirling Disease from the river. It is unlikely that fish being raised at the hatchery are at risk because the water supply for the hatchery is from enclosed springs and rearing facilities are concrete or fiberglass, which prevents proliferation of the disease. Routine disease testing at the hatchery has not found any infected fish. Information signs indicating the presence of Whirling Disease in the river have been placed to inform anglers and visitors of precautions they can take to help prevent the spread of the disease.

The Clark's Fork Hatchery was the initial site of the Wyoming's captive Yellowstone Cutthroat brood stock and millions of eggs have been spawned, hatched, reared and stocked from this brood stock over the years. In the fall 2003 a new

brood facility was constructed at the Ten Sleep Fish Hatchery and the brood stock was moved. There were two main reasons for the move (1) The brood facility at Clark's Fork was inadequate and susceptible to flooding and (2) We hope that the fish and eggs will perform better in the different water chemistry and temperatures at Ten Sleep.

Ten Sleep Hatchery Update

Construction of a state-of-the-art, brood facility was recently completed at the Ten Sleep Hatchery. The facility will house five different year classes of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. These fish are endemic to Northern Wyoming. Progeny from the parent fish at Ten Sleep will be used to help sustain existing wild populations and establish populations in other waters where these fish were once native. The parent fish were relocated from the Clark's Fork Hatchery to Ten Sleep in October and hatchery personnel will commence spawning operations in late January. We hope to take about 1.5 million green eggs this season. Folks are welcome to visit the station and tour the new facility any day of the year from 8:00 to 5:00. Formal tours are available by appointment by calling (307) 366-2404.



Tillett Springs Rearing Station

During 2003, personnel at the Tillett station were involved with raising fish, statewide fish stocking, spawning operations, and construction projects, just to name a few.

The Tillett station raised several species of trout in 2003 including: brown, Eagle Lake Rainbow, Firehole Rainbow, Yellowstone Cutthroat, and Snake River Cutthroat. Over 130,000 fish with a total weight of nearly 40,000 pounds were raised

and stocked into many waters throughout the state.

The annual egg take for the Firehole Rainbow broodstock began in late November of 2003 and came to an end in mid January of this year. This year's operations yielded over ¾ of a million eggs. Many brood culls, weighing from 2 to 4 pounds, from this year's egg take were stocked into Beck Lake and Deaver Reservoir.

Two new improvements were made to the station this past year, a new concrete brood recruitment pond, and a new storage building. The new brood recruitment pond was built in order to correct some gas problems that were occurring in the old dirt pond. The new pond (12 feet wide, 65 feet long with an average depth of 4.5 feet), is being used to raise replacement brood fish. After spawning has ended for the year, the 4-year-old fish are stocked out and the two-year-old replacement fish are combined with the 3-year-old brood fish in the main dirt brood pond from which they will be spawned the following year.

Construction on the new much needed storage facility should be completed in February 2004. The building will be primarily used to house larger equipment, such as stocking trucks, tractor, and various fish handling equipment, which has previously been outside, exposed to the elements.

A New Look at Wigwam Rearing Station

Over the next 5 years, the Wigwam station will be embarking on a large-scale reconstruction project. Those who are familiar with the operations at Wigwam are aware that the station spawns large numbers of rainbow trout. In the last 10 years efforts at the station have concentrated on Eagle Lake rainbow trout. The Story hatchery has also been spawning this strain, and has shown that they are capable of taking over this brood stock. After 2004, all Eagle lake rainbows raised by the department will come from the brood fish at Story Hatchery, or from eggs spawned at East Newton Lake (north of Cody).

Fish Division Gets New Mission Statement

There is a growing need in Wyoming to establish brood stocks of native cutthroat species. In place of the Eagle Lake rainbows, Wigwam will take over the responsibility of the Colorado River Cutthroat brood stock that is currently being developed at Como Bluff hatchery. In 2004, a new brood facility will be built at Wigwam with covered raceways and spawning area for the Colorado River Cutthroat brood fish.

The dirt ponds at Wigwam will be replaced with fiberglass circular raceways. Fiberglass raceways are easier to clean and harvest fish from. Unfortunately dirt ponds are easily infected by the whirling disease parasite. To minimize the risk of infection, Wigwam will cease raising fish in dirt ponds. Fish production will continue as always but things might look a little different with the fiberglass circular raceways in place.

So how will this new look affect angling in the Cody region? Not much, probably. Fish production at the Wigwam Rearing Station will be somewhat lower during the construction phase, but we will continue to produce fish in our concrete raceways for stocking. Also, other hatcheries around the state have stepped up to help fill any gaps that may occur in production during our renovation. Perhaps the most obvious change for the public will be the closure of the station to visitation during construction. There will be heavy equipment in operation, and various large excavations will exist temporarily. Public safety concerns require that we temporarily suspend public visitation until construction is complete. In the long run, production at Wigwam will return to previous levels but the species raised will shift to cutthroat with fewer rainbows.

Hatchery Footnote:

The 2003 Legislature for the first time in 60+ years agreed to fund capital improvement and facilities maintenance at several hatcheries across the state. This is a welcomed appropriation of general state funding that will make sportsman dollars stretch further!

Many of you may not know that the Game and Fish is responsible for the wildlife management of over 600 different species in the great state of Wyoming. The Fish Division is also not only responsible for sport fish (those you love to catch) but also native non-game species and amphibians. And don't forget their habitats, the most important element. In looking over our mission statement we determine that it needed a "face-lift" that better reflects what we are mandated to do by statute. So in late 2003 the final touches were placed on a new mission statement. We would like to share this with you and tell you that the new mission will be reflected in the fisheries management work schedules. For a glimpse of next years schedule - check out "Looking to the Future".

Fish Division Mission Statement

As stewards of Wyoming's aquatic resources, we are committed to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations through scientific resource management and informed public participation. We will use an integrated program of protection, regulation, propagation, restoration and control to provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities. Our efforts will balance the productive capacity of habitats with public desires.

Looking to the Future

This summer along the Absaroka front we'll be evaluating the Yellowstone cutthroat trout fishery of the upper Yellowstone River watershed, conducting our annual sampling on Buffalo Bill Reservoir, conducting trout population estimates on the North Fork Shoshone River and the Shoshone River below Mormon Dam. We will also sample Deaver Reservoir, Swamp Lake Diamond Creek Dike Pond, South Fork Dike Pond, Irma Mitigation Pond, Beck Lake,

Markham and New Cody Reservoirs, just to name a few. We're looking for volunteers so if you're interested in helping out give the Cody regional office a call.

Projects that we will be working on this year on the east side of the basin will include sport fish, native non-game species, and turtles. On Bighorn Lake, we will be cooperating with a Bureau of Reclamation study that will attempt to quantify the relationship between fish abundance and reservoir elevations. We will be sampling the lower Big Horn River and tributaries to better understand the native-fish and the upper river to monitor the trout situation. We will be doing routine sampling on several Bighorn mountain lakes and most of the low-lying basin reservoirs such as Wardell and Harrington. Additionally, to better understand native turtles on the Bighorn and Nowood rivers we would like to capture some. If you have had recent (last 2 years) turtle sightings, please give us a call or an email.

Regulation Changes for 2004

Some fishing regulations have changed in 2004. Below is a list of some of the bigger changes in the Big Horn Basin. Please pick up a copy of the new regulations for a complete list.

- **Big Horn Lake (Yellowtail)**
 - Bass limit is now five (5)
 - Walleye and sauger limit is now five (5). Possession limit is ten (10), only five (5) of which may be sauger. All walleye and sauger must be kept whole (gills and entrails can be removed) until you are off the water and done fishing.
 - Ling (burbot) limit is now five(5)
 - Shovelnose sturgeon limit is two (2)
- **Buffalo Bill Reservoir**
 - Creel limit for trout is now six (6) per day or in possession. Only four (4) of which may be cutthroat, rainbow, brown, or cutthroat x rainbow hybrid.
 - Only one (1) trout may exceed 24 inches.
- **Renner Reservoir**
 - The creel limit for green sunfish x bluegill hybrids is now ten (10) per day or in possession.

Bits and Pieces

- Wyoming free fishing day is June 5, 2004
- Basin kids fishing day in 2003 was as always a huge success. The event will be held again on May 8, 2004. Contact the Basin Eagles Lodge for additional information.
- Kids fishing days will be held in Cody (Beck lake) and Powell (Homesteader Pond) in June. Contact the city recreation districts for more information.
- Lakes in the Big Horn Mountains will be stocked by helicopter in August, 2004.
- Users of the lower Clark's Fork River should be aware of possible grizzly bear presence along the river. In the spring of 2003 the Game & Fish Department trapped a grizzly after it turned over some trash barrels at the fish hatchery and caused some damage to farm buildings across the river from the hatchery.
- You may notice a new addition to the facilities at East Newton Lake. Thanks to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation a new comfort station is now on site.

The Future of the Newsletter

We feel this newsletter is a great way to communicate. We appreciate any comments you might have regarding the newsletter and fisheries in the Cody region. Please use the phone numbers or email address below to give us feedback. In order to reach more anglers and save some money we would like to offer next years newsletter in an electronic version to those who are online. Please email me at the below address and I will put you on the list for an electronic copy of next years newsletter. For those who would like to continue receiving a paper version just disregard this offer and go fishing.

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