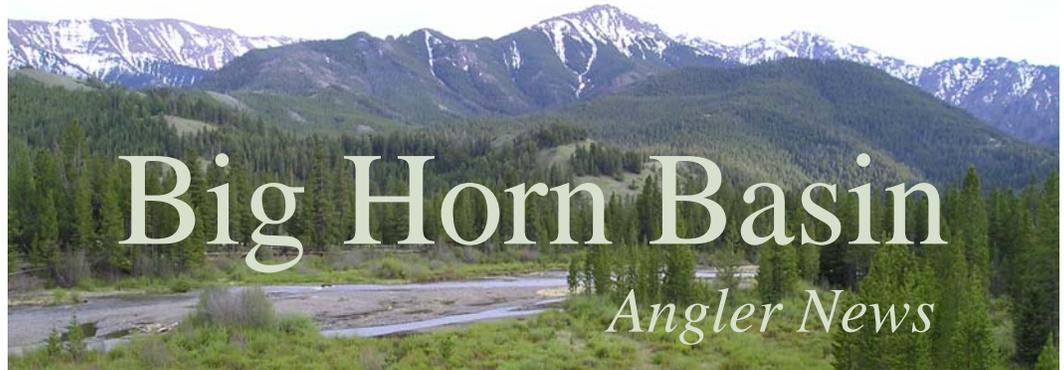


# 2005

Volume 8



Wyoming Game and Fish Department—Cody Region



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### New Year New Look

In 1997, Cody regional fisheries manger Mike Welker came up with the idea to produce a cool and warmwater angler newsletter. The idea was to produce a newsletter that would provide anglers with information on the status of fisheries in local waters. The first issue came out in the 1997 and the fact that you are reading the 2005 edition indicates its success.

The Casper region picked up the idea for a newsletter in 1999 and beginning in 2004 all of the fisheries management regions are creating such newsletters. The news regarding fisheries across Wyoming can now be found by logging on to the game and fish website <http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/fishing/Newsletters/>. You can use this link to share the newsletter with other anglers and to review past issues.

This year the newsletter makes another evolution into a format that will make it better suited for electronic viewing. We will continue to mail out



Big Horn Basin waters offer many fishing opportunities

the newsletter to those that don't have the internet but we would encourage those that can get a copy electronically to do so (the electronic version is in color).

New to this issue is a feature we are calling "Nibbles", be sure to check out these important topics on Page 2.

### Fisheries Management in the Cody Region

The state of Wyoming is divided into eight fisheries management regions. Each region has two fisheries biologists and one fisheries supervisor, assigned to manage the aquatic resources. The Cody Region covers the upper Yellowstone River drainage (upstream of Yellowstone National Park) and the Big-Horn River and its tributaries downstream from the Wind River Reservation.

Steve Yekel is the Cody Region Fisheries Management Supervisor and the biologists are Jason Burckhardt and Mark Smith.

We manage these resources for you and we encourage you to call or stop by if you have questions or concerns.

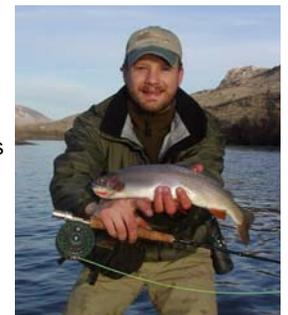
Our contact information is on the back page of this newsletter.



Fisheries Supervisor Steve Yekel



Fisheries Biologist Mark Smith



Fisheries Biologist Jason Burckhardt.

## Nibbles

*"We would like your comments and suggestions to improve our fisheries and help make sound fisheries management decisions"*

As anglers we have all gotten those nibbles that are sometimes a warning of a big bite or a nagging frustration that you try to address by changing tackle, adding new bait or the like. Well, the "Nibbles" segment will be just that. We will mention issues that may be on the horizon and may or may not affect your future fishing. We hope the issues mentioned will spawn comments and suggestions to conserve or improve our fisheries and help us make sound fisheries management decisions.

So here goes...

Sauger are declining in numbers across their native range including the Big Horn River drainage. Would you support a reduced limit to conserve this important native species?

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) such as Silver and Asian carp, Ruffe and many other non-native fish as well as Zebra Mussels, Asian clams (found below Boysen Reservoir in 2004), New Zealand Mud Snails (found in the Big Horn River in 2003), and numerous non-native plants, are becoming a major concern for fishery scientists across the country. Many of these have been moved from state to state unintentionally by anglers, boaters, and commercial bait dealers. This could be considered very close to a "big bite" issue. Reports of illegal fish introductions across Wyoming are increasing at an alarming rate. The use, collection, and distribution of bait fish that are not closely checked can be an avenue for illegal fish introductions and worse—ANS introductions. Would you support more restric-

tive regulations on bait fish use?

We are considering the simplification of fishing regulations. This could include some reductions in fish limits to 2 or 3 fish. Would you support the concept of simplification if it meant reductions in some limits?



## Tensleep Fish Hatchery Update— *Bart Burningham*

Yellowstone Cutthroat spawning began at the station in January 2005. Hatchery personnel plan to take approximately 1.5 million eggs from these fish this year. The fish were moved from the Clark's Fork Hatchery in October 2003 and are beginning to adapt to their new environment at Ten Sleep. However, egg quality was poor in 2004. We hope to see considerable improvement in the coming years. Progeny from these fish are stocked in native drainages throughout northwest Wyoming.

Those who have visited the station in the past year may remember new circular tanks at the hatchery. Installation of those units was completed in March 2004. This spring they

will be covered to protect fish from predation and to improve fish health.

In addition to fish the hatchery normally raises, the hatchery will be producing fish for Boysen Reservoir and the Big Horn River this year. In past years, the department has had a hard time meeting the size of fish requested by fisheries biologists for the Big Horn River. Due to Ten Sleep's warm water and proximity to the Big Horn, the hatchery has agreed to raise these fish. If successful, survival of the fish should be better and improve future angling opportunity on the river.

Those who visit the station this summer will have the opportunity to utilize a new self-guided

tour system at the hatchery. The old "show" ponds have been filled in and are no longer in use due to disease concerns. An informational kiosk has been built where the old ponds were located. The kiosk consists of informational panels on hatchery operations, and a flyer with a map of the station which will guide and inform visitors at the hatchery and ultimately improve your visit to the Ten Sleep Hatchery. Visitors are welcome to tour the station and take advantage of the new system, which will be in place by June. Self-guided tours can be done from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm daily.



The new broodstock facility at Tensleep Hatchery

## Harrington Reservoir

Harrington reservoir is a irrigation impoundment on BLM lands in Big Horn County. The reservoir has good populations of bluegill, largemouth bass, and yellow perch. There are growing populations of walleye and the possibility of a record sauger. Harrington hasn't been a hot-spot for fishing for several years due to an illegal introduction of yellow perch. The numbers of perch provide fast action but they have averaged less than 5-inches in length since 2000. Walleye have been stocked for the last two years

and should start showing up in catches this year.

The good news at Harrington is that conditions appear to be improving. Our surveys in 2004 found good numbers of large-mouth bass greater than 10-inches and abundant bluegill in the 6-7 inch range. Yellow perch remain the most abundant game-fish in the reservoir, but unlike previous years there are enough 7-8 inch fish to attract some fisherman. In 2001 the Game and Fish Department moved 90 sauger from the Big

Horn River to Harrington. We sampled five of these sauger in 2004 which averaged 20-inches and 3-pounds. Walleye are still scarce although a 5- pound fish was sampled and released in 2004.

Harrington reservoir is located between Cody and Basin. You can find the reservoir by following the highway signs from the east end of the town of Otto. There is a 15-horse power boat motor limit on the reservoir.



Jon Crooks shows off his Harrington Reservoir Bass

## Shovelnose Sturgeon in the Big Horn River

Shovelnose sturgeon are one of the smallest member of the sturgeon family (reaching 5-10 pounds). They are also known as sand sturgeon, hackleback, switchtail, and flathead sturgeon. The fish are found throughout the Mississippi and Missouri River systems and are the only sturgeon native to Wyoming.

The migration of Shovelnose sturgeon from the Yellowstone River to the Big Horn River to reproduce was blocked when Yellowtail Dam was built. In order to return these fish to their native waters and provide another fish for people to catch, shovelnose were re-introduced

to the Big Horn River above Yellowtail beginning in 1996. Between 1996 and 1999 the Game and Fish Department stocked nearly 375,000 shovelnose sturgeon in the River from Worland to Big Horn Lake.

The fish are just now reaching reproductive maturity and whether they will be able to reproduce hasn't been determined. Catching these fish in the river was a relatively rare event up to 2003, when anglers began to report catching the fish during late spring and early summer. The fish appear to be surviving well and most of those caught are about 2-feet long.

The fisheries management crew will be running traps this summer to capture and tag sturgeon. If you capture a sturgeon this year (tag or no tag) we would like to hear from you.

To catch sturgeon in the Big Horn you simply use the same gear and bait that works for catfish. Most reports indicate that a simple night-crawler fished on the bottom is "the ticket".

*"Most reports indicate that a night-crawler fished on the bottom is the ticket"*



A Nice Shovelnose Sturgeon

## Summaries of Recent Sampling

**Wardell Reservoir**—Walleye numbers are low due to the drought, but 14-18 inch fish are being caught regularly. Crappie fishing should be improving as the lake was stocked twice in 2004.

**Horseshoe Reservoir (Pond 5)**—Some nice rainbows in the 16" range were sampled. A good number of thick largemouth bass in the 12-14" range were

also found.

**Deaver Reservoir** — Walleye catch was the highest recorded since the annual sampling began in 1999. More good news was that fish greater than 21" were also caught for the first time since 1999.

**Maybelle Lake**— This Big Horn mountain lake offers fast action for Yellowstone cutthroats in

the 10-14" range.

**Shell Creek**— Sampling at Shell Creek Campground found abundant rainbow trout and a few brook trout, both averaging 6" in length.

**South Worland Pond (Airport Pond)**— Sampling found abundant largemouth bass (average length 7") and hybrid sunfish (average length 6"). Trout are stocked annually.

## Tillett Springs Rearing Station– Ben Milner



Tillett Springs Rearing Station.

During 2004, personnel at the Tillett Springs Rearing Station were involved with raising fish, stocking fish in various waters throughout the state, and spawning of the Firehole rainbow broodstock. Many species of trout were raised at the station including: brown, Eagle Lake rainbow, Firehole rainbow, Yellowstone cutthroat, and Snake River cutthroat. Approximately 186,000 fish with a total weight of over 41,000 pounds were raised and stocked into waters throughout the state.

The annual spawning of Firehole rainbow broodstock began in late November 2004. This year's operation yielded nearly 1¼ million eggs. Surplus brood fish, weighing from 2 to 4 pounds, from this year's spawn were stocked into Beck Lake and Deaver Reservoir. In addition to the Firehole rainbow spawning, we also received and hatched over 4,000 Yellowstone cutthroat eggs from LeHardy Rapids in Yellowstone National Park. These fish are the future broodstock for the

Tensleep Fish Hatchery.

Construction of a new storage building was completed in February 2004. The building is primarily used to house large equipment, such as stocking trucks, tractor, and various fish handling equipment, which was previously outside and exposed to the elements.

## Game and Fish Hosts Fish Passage Workshop– Lew Stahl

*"Fish Passage means more fish in the stream"*

Fish Passage – did you ever wonder what this meant? In February 2005, the Game and Fish sponsored a Fish Passage Workshop in Casper. Experts from Colorado and Washington discussed the need for upstream and downstream fish passage, and how to design passage solutions for various Wyoming situations. This included passage over or around dams and diversions, passage through culverts, and screening of various water outtakes for irrigation, power generation, or other purposes. One hundred and fifteen people

from nine state and federal agencies and seven consultant firms attended the workshop. Participants included habitat biologists, fisheries biologists, fish culturists, and various environmental, hydraulic, and civil engineers who will be using the information during development of future fish passage projects in Wyoming. This was a major step toward addressing fish passage issues in Wyoming. Each year thousands of fish are prevented from spawning or lost entirely when they are diverted from the stream system. Armed with these new techniques, we hope

to provide fish better access to their spawning sites and get both the adult and young fish safely downstream to grow and complete their life cycle. Considering the tasks ahead, this will be a long process but one that will definitely benefit the fisheries and the anglers of Wyoming.

We are currently planning a one-day workshop on improving water quality and fish passage issues in the Big Horn Basin. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for February or March 2006 and will be open to all.

## One Big Catfish



Dick Stearns and Jim Kolesien with Dicks 23 pound Shoshone River cat

Its funny how stories of big fish being caught spread like wild-fire. A record sized fish generates multiple stories about where it was caught, how it was caught, and of course just how big it was.

The stories of a spectacular catfish being caught in the Shoshone River started circulating last summer. A good catfish in the Big Horn will often exceed 10 pounds, but the rumor was that the captured fish was

greater than 20 pounds.

As it turned out, the rumor was true. Dick Stearns of Powell was fishing on the Lower Shoshone River on June 18, 2004 when he caught and released the 23.2 pound channel catfish. The fish measured 35.5 inches long and had a girth of 21.5 inches.

Congratulations Dick, that is one huge cat.

## 20 Miles of Great Trout Fishing—Big Horn River

The Big Horn River begins at the Wedding of the Water, where the river changes (in name only) from the Wind River to the Big Horn. From the Wedding of the Waters (just above Thermopolis) to the Sorenson Public Fishing Area, there are approximately 20 miles of water that offer very good fishing for brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout.

The game and fish department stocks approximately 13,000 rainbow and 8,000 cutthroat in this stretch of river each year. The fish are stocked at 6-7 inches in early summer and grow to nearly 12 inches by fall.

To evaluate how well these stocked fish are doing in the river, the fisheries management crew has been electro-fishing the river from Wedding of the Waters to 8th street in Thermopolis each October.

As those who live in the region know, water has been scarce for some time now and the flows have been very low on the Big Horn for five consecutive years.

These low flow conditions have resulted in low overall trout production on the river. However, the trout that are in the river are in exceptionally good condition.

In our October 2004 electrofishing survey we found that brown trout ranged from 7-20 inches and numbers were about the same as in 2002 and 2003 about 300 fish/mile. We were encouraged to see an abundant number of small brown trout from the 2003 spawn.

Rainbow trout sampled in 2004 ranged from 4-20 inches with only fair survival of fish from the 2004 stocking. Unfortunately we were not able to capture enough fish to make an esti-

mate of the number of rainbows/mile, but its safe to say that rainbow trout are less abundant than they have been during better water years.

Snake River Cutthroat ranged from 7-20 inches and were estimated at 201 fish/mile in our 2004 electrofishing survey. Better fishing for cutthroat is generally found downstream of our sampling reach below Thermopolis.

While numbers are a little low, fishing is still great on the Big Horn. The best advice is to hit the river early in the summer and late in the fall and to focus your efforts on early morning and evening outings when the sun is low in the sky.



A healthy Big Horn River Brown

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*"While numbers are a little low, fishing is still great on the Big Horn"*

## The Up and Downside of Drought at Clarks Fork Hatchery— Dave Miller

The Clark's Fork Fish Hatchery has been affected by Wyoming's drought as has other hatcheries in the state. Low water conditions have changed stocking schedules, resulting in changes in the number of trout being raised, and the locations stocked. The reduction in the number and size of Yellowstone cutthroat stocked in the Sunshine Reservoirs near Meeteetse and the deletion of rainbow trout for Wheatland Reservoir #3 near Laramie reduced the scheduled production at Clark's Fork in 2005 by several thousand pounds. The bright side of this reduction has been that the rearing facilities at Clark's Fork are being used

to raise fish originally scheduled to be stocked from department hatcheries now undergoing major renovations. The drought also made Yellowstone cutthroat from Clark's Fork available to help Montana. In the fall of 2004, in a cooperative effort between Wyoming Game and Fish and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Clark's Fork supplied Yellowstone cutthroat to Montana for a reintroduction project in a stream in southern Montana.

While Whirling Disease has affected operations at some of Wyoming's hatcheries, Clark's Fork has remained disease

free. The Clark's Fork River was found to be positive for Whirling Disease in 2003, however biannual testing of hatchery fish has not found the pathogen. The hatchery's totally enclosed water source, as well as the concrete and fiberglass rearing facilities, make it unlikely that the disease will infect fish at the hatchery.



Clark's Fork Hatchery stocks Upper Medicine Lodge Lake

## Renner Reservoir—Proposed Regulation Change



A few large bass can be found at Renner

*"we are proposing changing the regulation to allow only two bass between 12-15 inches"*

Its no secret that Renner Reservoir located between Hyattville and Tensleep is a very good largemouth bass fishery. Those who have experience at the reservoir can also attest that catching small bass is relatively easy. The current regulation allows the harvest of six largemouth bass only two (2) of which may be between ten (10) and fifteen (15) inches, and only one (1) fish may exceed fifteen (15) inches.

Sampling indicates that the intent of the regulation, which was to produce more large bass in the reservoir is not meeting expectations. Of the 443 bass sampled by the Game and Fish in the past four years, only one exceeded 15 inches (see figure below for break down).

While there are many fish less than 10 inches that anglers could harvest, very few do. Eighty-three (83) anglers were interviewed at Renner Reservoir in 2002. These 83 anglers harvested 99 bass. Eighty-six-percent (86%) of the harvested fish were within the slot limit (10-15 inches) and 76% were between 12 and 15 inches. It appears that the majority of anglers do not harvest bass that are less than 10 inches, and select for bass that are greater than 12 inches.

Given the limited forage at Renner it is unlikely that Renner will ever produce an abundance of large bass. Renner is very reliable at producing good numbers of small bass. In fact the fishery would benefit from increased harvest of smaller fish, by providing more food and space for the remaining fish.

In order to increase harvest of smaller fish we are proposing a regulation to allow keeping only two bass between 12-15 inches as opposed to the current 10-15 inch slot limit. This will allow those that are willing to keep six bass in the 10-12 inch range to do so.

If you have comments and/or questions on the new regulation we want to hear from you. We will be holding a public meeting on the changes to the **Cody region fish regulations on May 10<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 pm in the basement of the Park county courthouse.**

Written comments can be sent by May 31 to:

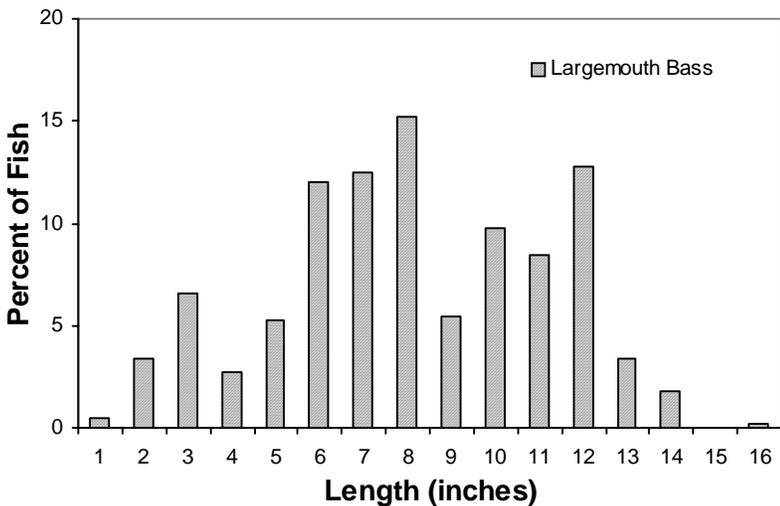
WYGF  
Attn: Mark Smith  
2820 Hwy 120  
Cody WY 82414

A public meeting on fishing regulations will be held on **May 10 from 7-9 pm** in the basement of the Park County Courthouse.



Hybrid-Sunfish from Renner Reservoir

443 Bass sampled at Renner Reservoir 2000-2004



## Reconstruction at Wigwam Rearing Station– *John Murphy*

Construction of new fish rearing units is well under way at the Wigwam Rearing Station east of Tensleep. As mentioned in last year's newsletter, exposure to whirling disease has required the removal of dirt ponds. The new concrete raceways and fiberglass circular tanks being installed can be kept parasite-free and will enable the raising of fish in a disease-free environment.

A new concrete brood facility was completed in January, and the Colorado River Cutthroat (CRC) brood fish were transferred from the Como Bluff

Hatchery. These fish are doing well in this new environment, and will be spawning by the time this newsletter goes to print. The CRC are native to the Little Snake River drainage near Baggs, and the fish raised at Wigwam will return to this drainage later this summer.

Along with the new raceways and circular tanks, a modern water treatment complex has also been installed. The water supply at Wigwam is clean, cool spring water, but it is slightly high in nitrogen, and low in oxygen. To counter this problem, a tower to strip nitrogen and in-

ject oxygen was installed.

Work continues on the installation of the remaining circular tanks and filtration system. This project is slated for completion by early summer, and we hope to have the grounds cleaned up and be open for visitation later this summer. By mid-summer we will be back into regular production mode, and will have both CRC and rainbow trout in at least some of the new tanks. Please feel free to stop by and visit this summer. We think you will like what you see!



Colorado River Cutthroat have found a new home at Wigwam

## Luce Reservoir Phase II Habitat Improvement– *Lew Stahl*

Luce Reservoir is a trophy rainbow trout fishery and irrigation reservoir for local ranches located about 25 miles northwest of Cody. In 2001 the outlet failed. In 2002, funding was secured and a new water level control structure and fish screen were installed. Second phase plans included ensuring dam life by riprapping the dike to protect it from wave action, and to improve fish habitat by increasing the depth four to five feet. In 2003, Game and Fish

Trust Fund dollars were used to obtain and place rock riprapping on the dam face. Prior to funding availability, unusual spring moisture filled the reservoir higher than expected and wave action, resulting from the site's strong winds, had begun to erode the dam. The Two Dot and Paint Creek Ranches completed the earthwork necessary to repair and reshape the dam prior to rock placement, and Game and Fish contractors completed the project in November.

To get to Luce Reservoir take highway 120 north of Cody for about 21 miles to country road 7RP. Follow this road for approximately 4 miles to the Luce and Hogan Reservoir Public Access Area.

*"Luce Reservoir is a trophy rainbow trout fishery and irrigation reservoir"*



Luce Reservoir Wave Erosion



Luce Reservoir Dam Repaired and Reshaped



Luce Reservoir Dam With Riprap Protection

## Lurking in the Depths of Buffalo Bill Reservoir



Three lake trout from 32.5 to 36.5 inches caught in one 2004 gill net

Buffalo Bill Reservoir is known for its excellent rainbow and cutthroat trout fishing, but even larger fish are out there. A growing number of people are targeting the monsters of the depths, the lake trout. According to our surveys there are a growing number of lake trout in the reservoir. It's difficult for us to tell exactly how many lake trout are in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, because our sampling techniques have focused primarily on the rainbow and cutthroat fishery. Our new hy-

droacoustic (sonar) techniques are not very effective at identifying fish close to the bottom. Lake trout from 17 to 21 inches show up frequently in angler creels. The larger fish, over 30 inches, are less frequently caught. Large lake trout are both a blessing and a curse. The large lake trout represent a trophy component to the Buffalo Bill fishery, but a trophy lake trout will consume many times its own body weight in other fish, including cutthroat and rainbow trout,

which are by far the most popular sport fish in Buffalo Bill Reservoir. In order to address the growing lake trout population, we liberalized the regulation in 2004, allowing for two lake trout to be harvested in addition to the four trout limit.

Anglers targeting lake trout are fishing in depths greater than 30 feet, with those catching the big fish typically jigging just off of the bottom in 50 to 100 feet of water. A few are caught while trolling .

## Hogan Reservoir Improvements

*"Hogan Reservoir was chemically treated to remove a large sucker and chub population "*

Hogan Reservoir is a small reservoir, located about 25 miles northwest of Cody . The reservoir is managed as a family fishery with a six trout limit. In contrast, Luce Reservoir, its close neighbor is managed as a trophy water and is strictly catch and release. This provides for a diversity of angling opportunities. The fishery at Hogan Reservoir has been mediocre for several years due to extensive sucker and chub populations competing with the stocked trout. Last winter the reservoir was drawn down to a small pool to repair the outlet structure,

riprap the dam, and remove accumulated silt.

We used this draw down as an opportunity to reclaim the fishery. Net samples in February 2005 indicated there were few trout present. In March the reservoir was chemically treated to remove all fish, with plans to start the fishery anew after it is filled this spring. We will restock with 4 inch and 9 inch Snake River Cutthroat. Rock placement on the dam will allow for higher winter water levels, which will improve over-winter survival of the stocked

trout. The reduction of silt will allow for more water to be stored in the reservoir for irrigation as well as provide more over winter habitat. The new outlet was screened to prevent fish loss into the irrigation canal. All these activities were coordinated with local water users and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Boat ramp development options were explored but dropped due to concerns raised in a 1996 BLM environmental assessment. If you are interested in a boat ramp at Hogan, contact the BLM at 307-578-5900.



Chemical rehabilitation of Hogan Reservoir.



Riprapping of the dam on Hogan Reservoir.



New outlet structure and removal of accumulated silt in Hogan Reservoir.

## Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Considered for ESA Listing

Historically, Yellowstone cutthroat trout occupied much of the Yellowstone River basin, including the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River, Wind-Bighorn River, and Tongue River basins in Montana and Wyoming, along with the Snake River basin in Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada. Yellowstone cutthroat trout are the only trout native to the Bighorn River Basin. The lower portions of some mainstem rivers, such as the Lower Big Horn River, were probably too warm to support populations.

Since European settlement Yellowstone Cutthroat trout numbers and distribution have been greatly reduced. Reasons for the reduction in number and range of Yellowstone cutthroat trout are primarily the introduc-

tion of other trout species and habitat degradation. Because of these threats, Yellowstone cutthroat trout were petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1998. In February 2001 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that listing was not warranted. Last year four environmental groups sued the FWS over failing to list this cutthroat. In December, 2004 U.S. District Judge Philip Figa ruled the earlier petition to list the trout was illegally rejected by the FWS; forcing the FWS to conduct a 12-month status review. A decision to appeal this latest court action is still being considered by the FWS. This status review will determine if listing has merit. Listing could result in restrictions on activity,

including fishing, where the species is found.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department does not feel that listing is warranted. However, to improve the status of the species and provide for its long-term persistence, we are looking at areas for restoration. Areas that are currently being considered are tributaries in the Greybull River drainage, tributaries in the South Fork Shoshone River drainage, Sunlight Creek, Dead Indian Creek, Porcupine Creek, and a few other smaller tributaries. Restoration activities may include the introduction of Yellowstone cutthroat into fishless areas and/or the removal of competing or hybridizing species.



Yellowstone cutthroat trout (image by Joseph Tomelleri)

## The Cutthroat of the Yellowstone

One of the last remaining strongholds for Yellowstone cutthroat trout is Yellowstone Lake and its tributaries.

In 2003 we initiated a project with Yellowstone National Park to assess the dynamics of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the upper Yellowstone River (the largest tributary of Yellowstone Lake). Undocumented evidence indicated that most cutthroat use the tributaries of Yellowstone Lake for spawning and return to the lake shortly afterward. To determine the movement patterns of these fish we surgically implanted radio transmitters in 136 cutthroat in 2003 and 2004. We flew over the upper Yellowstone River weekly from May through October, receiving radio signals from the fish to determine their locations. We found that most

radio tagged fish do indeed come up and spawn from May through mid-July and return to Yellowstone Lake shortly after spawning. All of the tagged cut-



A Yellowstone cutthroat on the operating table, receiving its radio transmitter

throat moved some distance from the original tag site with a few traveling as far as 48.5 miles between Yellowstone

Lake and the spawning site. Most of the spawning fish captured were between 18 and 20 inches.

We followed-up on our radio telemetry with some ground surveys, looking for populations of cutthroat trout that remained in the river system year round and evaluating habitat conditions within the watershed. Very few adult cutthroat trout were found in the Yellowstone River or tributaries after mid-July. Hundreds of young Yellowstone cutthroat from the spring spawn were found in the tributaries in late July and August. There were also a few yearling cutthroat. These yearlings will eventually migrate to Yellowstone Lake and return in a few years to spawn in the tributaries in which they hatched.

*"All of the tagged cutthroat moved from the original tag site with a few traveling as far as 48.5 miles to spawn."*



A typical Yellowstone cutthroat trout from the upper Yellowstone River

## Newton Lake Recreation Area Upgrades

The Newton Lake Recreation area lies approximately 5 miles north of Cody off highway 120. It consists of two lakes East Newton Lake, managed as a “trophy” fishery, and West Newton Lake, managed as a family fishery with a six fish limit for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout.

An agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation was signed in 2004 giving the Game and Fish Department management authority over the area.

West Newton Lake recently received a much-needed facelift. A grant for \$9,000 from Park County Parks and Recreation Board, administered by Trout Unlimited, was used to limit vehicle travel to designated parking areas, enhance the designated parking areas and upgrade the boat launch site. The vehicle restrictions were done primarily to protect the fragile riparian (shoreline) vegetation and mirrors action take on East Newton Lake in 1987

which greatly improved shoreline vegetation.

The East Yellowstone Chapter of Trout Unlimited has also allocated \$2,000 to upgrade the present picnic area and install two new picnic tables and parking sites. The picnic tables are slated to be purchased and installed later this spring.

*“Thanks to the Park County Parks and Recreation Board and the East Yellowstone Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Newton Lake Recreation Area received a facelift.”*



The parking area of West Newton Lake before and after the placement of large boulders to restrict travel to the parking area and off the shoreline

## East Newton Lake– Producing Eggs and Trophy Trout

East Newton Lake is managed as a “trophy” fishery with a limit of one fish greater than 20-inches and only artificial flies and lures allowed. Even though a harvest of one fish is allowed, the majority of anglers choose to catch-and-release fish.

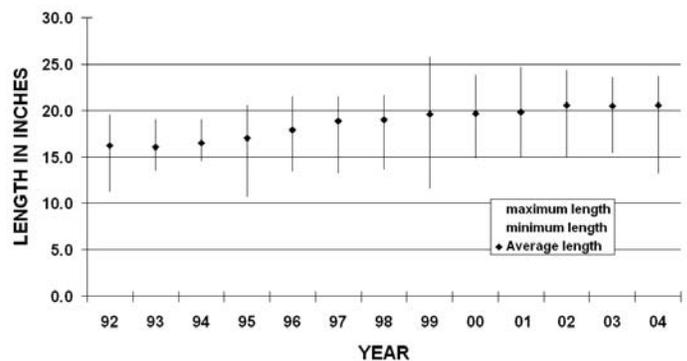
East Newton Lake is also one of the sources for rainbow trout eggs used to produce trout for stocking throughout the state. The spawning operation occurs in April. The young trout

produced are then stocked in East Newton Lake, Meadowlark Lake, Clarks Fork River, Basin Water Plant Pond and many oth-

ers throughout Wyoming. Last year our spawning crew collected 353,300 eggs!



A 20 inch rainbow trout near the shore of East Newton Lake.



The minimum, maximum, and average size of rainbow trout caught during the spring spawning operation at East Newton Lake

## Shoshone River Winter Flows

The Shoshone River is a “blue ribbon” fishery ranking in the top 3% of streams in Wyoming. Those of you that have fished the Shoshone River this winter may have noticed that there is a little more water than in recent years. An agreement signed in 2004 between the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Wyoming Water Development Commission, the State Engineers Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, allows for more flexibility in the winter flow releases.

The new agreement allows for releases of 100, 150, 200, or 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) and is based not only on reser-

voir inflows, but also the storage content of Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the amount of water present in the “State Account” that was created from the enlargement.

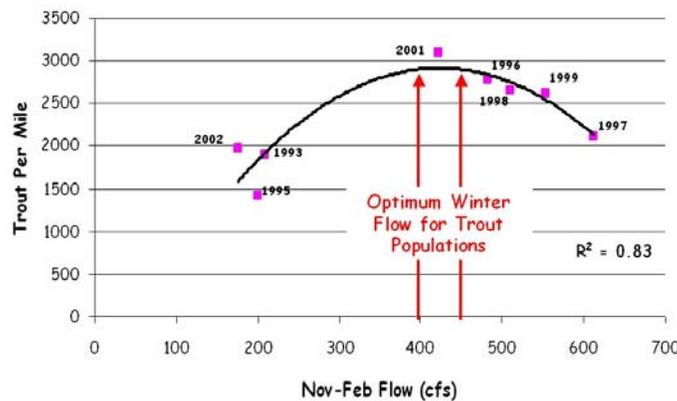
Shoshone River tailwater studies found optimal trout habitat was maintained when Buffalo Bill releases were near 350 cfs.

Trout populations were also largest following winter releases of around 350 cfs, and were lowest following winter releases of around 100 cfs.

This new agreement minimizes the number of years with releases of 100 cfs, which is good news for the trout, and trout anglers!



The Shoshone River flowing through Cody.



\*Flows include 60-80 cfs from Demaris Springs

The relationship between trout population and the previous years winter flow

## New Float Access on the North Fork Shoshone?

The Rivers Rest Public Access Area, just downstream from the town of Wapiti, is accessible to the wading angler, however vehicle and boat access has not been developed. The addition of a boat ramp at this access area will allow anglers the flexibility to float only a portion of

the 12 river miles between the Forest Access and the Gibbs Bridge Access, dividing the float distance nearly in half.

Preliminary plans have been drafted for the construction of a ramp, parking area, and comfort station. The BLM is pres-

ently preparing an Environmental Assessment and gauges the need for such facilities through public input. If you are interested in boating access at the Rivers Rest Public Access Area, please contact the BLM, Cody Field Office at 307-578-5900.

*"The addition of this boat ramp would divide the float distance between the forest boundary and Gibbs Bridge in half"*



Existing (blue) and proposed (red) float access sites on the lower North Fork Shoshone River



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*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."*

**Newsletter Contributors**

Contributors to this years newsletter include the Cody Fisheries Management Crew, Lew Stahl (Cody Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist), Ben Millner (Fish Culturist at Tillet Rearing Station), John Murphy ( Assistant Superintendent at Wigwam Rearing Station), Bart Burningham (Tensleep Hatchery Superintendent), Dave Miller (Clarks Fork Hatchery Superintendent) and Dennie Hammer (Cody Region Information and Education Specialist). Thanks to all.

**Bits and Pieces**

FREE fishing day is June, 4 2005. No license is needed to fish on this day (all other regulations apply).

The Basin kids fishing day will be held on May 14th at the Basin Water Plant Pond.

Cody Youth Fishing Day is on June 4th at the Beck Lake Recreation Area.

Renner Reservoir was stocked with 500 Grass Carp in 2004. These eating machines, reduce vegetation that would otherwise frustrate summer fishing.

Sand Coulee Reservoir (FUBAR), a BLM Reservoir west of Powell, continues to be plagued by low water levels due to a failed outlet pipe. The BLM has been trying to secure funding for repairs since 2003.

**Big Fish Board**

Steve Knopp (top-right) displays this 32 inch, 20.5 pound lake trout from Buffalo Bill Reservoir caught in April 2004.

Edwin Bauer (bottom-right) shows off his pet lake trout on a leash caught from Buffalo Bill Reservoir fall 2004. Don't you wish you caught that "Big Dog". Fish measured in at 38 inches long.

**Please send us your big or unusual fish pictures for our "big fish board". We will post them in the Cody office and may use them for next years newsletter.**

