

2009



Big Horn Basin

Angler News

Inside this issue:

Aquatic Invasive Species	2
Fishing Regulation Changes	2
Big Horn Lake Fishing	3
Big Horn Mountain Lakes	4
Live Baitfish Regulations	4
Bighorn River Trout Fishing	5
Newton Lakes	5
Tensleep Hatchery Closed in 2009	6
Harvest Sunfish at Renner	6
Yellowstone cutthroat restoration	7
South Fork Shoshone	7
North Fork Shoshone	8
New & Improved Access	9
Summer Youth Camp	9
The Cody Fisheries Managers	10

Introduced Walleye Threaten Buffalo Bill Fishery -Jason Burckhardt

In the second week of August 2008 we began receiving reports of anglers catching walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir. Four anglers caught a total of five walleye throughout the reservoir. The walleye ranged in size from seven to 15 inches.

We conducted addition sampling, both electrofishing and gillnetting and captured a total of 24 walleye ranging in size from seven to 13.4 inches. These walleye were found to be 2 and 3 years old.

It has never been the intent of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department to stock walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir. This is an illegal introduction and whomever is responsible has committed a serious wildlife violation.

Why are we concerned about the walleye introduction in Buffalo Bill Reservoir?

Our concerns are mainly focused on the predation impacts walleye may have on the trout species within Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the North Fork Shoshone River. Walleye are voracious predators. In most cases when walleye have been introduced into Wyoming waters that contain trout, the walleye have flourished, and the trout and trout fishing have suffered.

If the walleye population expands, this illegal introduction will lead to a reduction in angler opportunities within Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the North Fork Shoshone River. A walleye fishery will not simply replace the existing trout fishery. The trout in Buffalo Bill feed primarily on zooplankton (tiny crustaceans). Walleye feed primarily on fish, and the fish they will eat in Buffalo Bill Reservoir will be mostly trout. This essentially adds another rung to the food chain ladder. This means that one walleye will not replace one trout, but 10 or even 100 trout. For this reason we are going to actively manage against walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir.

Buffalo Bill Reservoir is a wild trout fishery—it is not stocked. It is supported mainly by fish spawned, hatched, and reared in the North Fork Shoshone River and its tributaries. The effects of

walleye on the trout populations in some reservoirs in the state have been mitigated through the stocking of larger trout. This cannot be accomplished under this preferred "wild" management philosophy. Prior stocking of trout in Buffalo Bill Reservoir was discontinued after an extensive evaluation. Creel survey data indicated that the stocked fish were providing less than 5% of the total harvest.

Yellowstone cutthroat trout, a species of special concern, are present in Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the North Fork Shoshone River and could be compromised by this illegal introduction.

Currently, the top predator fish in Buffalo Bill Reservoir are lake trout and brown trout. Adding a third top-level predator into this fishery will further exacerbate the reduction in the rainbow and cutthroat trout populations.

Lake trout presently occupy mostly deeper and colder water habitats as water temperatures increase. In contrast, walleye will tend to occupy the warmer water portions of the reservoir. As a result, little habitat will be available for young trout to escape predation. The trout will have no place to hide.

What can you do to help?

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department takes this illegal introduction very seriously and is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible. If you have information, please call 1-877-WGFDTIP. You may remain anonymous. Anglers catching walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir are asked **not** to return the walleye to the water, but instead harvest these fish. By regulation, anglers can harvest an unlimited number of walleye from Buffalo Bill Reservoir. In addition, anglers catching walleye are asked to contact the Cody Game and Fish office (toll free 1-800-654-1178 or 307-527-7125) to report their catch.



Walleye introduced in Buffalo Bill have the potential to negatively impact the trout fishery.

“Anglers are encouraged to clean their equipment to ensure that they are not transporting aquatic invasive species.”



Zebra and quagga mussels can cling to boats and fishing equipment for days or weeks after leaving an infected water.

Aquatic Invasive Species

For the last few years we have included a section in this newsletter discussing the threats of Aquatic Invasive Species (formerly referred to as Aquatic Nuisance Species) or the discovery of new invaders.

What constitutes an Aquatic Invasive Species? According to National Invasive Species Council (the experts) an aquatic invasive species is “a species that is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” These organisms can have ecological, recreational, and economic impacts on water equipment and water transport systems.

Any plant or animal species can be considered an invasive species if it is moved into an ecosystem where it thrives and doesn't belong. There are two species that are posing a real threat to Wyoming: zebra and quagga mussels. These species can have widespread impacts on power plants, municipalities, irrigation systems and other water users. They impede water delivery and increase maintenance costs by clogging pipes, pumps, turbines and filtration systems. Fisheries are destroyed by the presence of these mussels. They remove plankton from the water, reducing food sources for gamefish. These mussels can clog water intakes

causing motors to overheat.

Populations of these invasive mussels are present in four of our neighboring states, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota and Utah.

Anglers, boaters and other recreationists are asked to 1) **drain** all water from engine, live wells and ballast 2) **clean** all plants animals and mud from boats and equipment including all crevices and hidden areas and 3) **dry** your boat and equipment completely before launching or recreating in other waters.

More information on AIS can be found on our web site—<http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/AIS/index.asp>

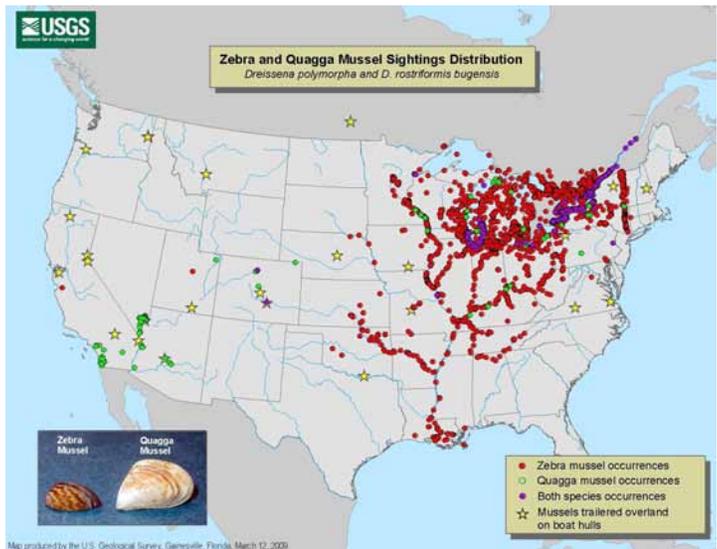
Aquatic invasive species in the Cody Region

We now have **New Zealand Mud**

Snails in the Big Horn River at Thermopolis and the Shoshone River near Cody. While we have not seen direct impacts to the sport fisheries from these introductions they do compete with aquatic invertebrates that serve as fish food.

Whirling disease has been found in the South Fork Shoshone River, Clarks Fork Yellowstone River, Bennett Creek and Tensleep Creek. We have high level infections in the Clarks Fork, which may be limiting natural recruitment of trout and mountain whitefish in that water.

Brook Sticklebacks were introduced into the Shoshone River drainage and have spread throughout the lower reaches of that drainage eliminating all other minnow species as well as elsewhere in the Big Horn River.



Fishing Regulation Changes for 2010

After extensive fishing regulation changes in 2008 and a regulation added in 2009 to allow unlimited harvest of walleye at Buffalo Bill Reservoir, we have very few proposed regulation changes for 2010-2011. We are proposing to implement the

Special Winter Ice Fishing Provision and allow the use of live baitfish at Deaver and Harrington Reservoirs.

If you are interested in discussing our present regulations or asking us to consider changes

for 2010-11, please contact us or attend our regulation meeting to be held June 9 at:

Big Horn Federal Savings Bank, 1701 Stampede Avenue, Cody, WY

Big Horn Lake Offers Fishing Diversity —Mark Smith

The quality and diversity of fishing opportunities at Big Horn Lake (Yellowtail Reservoir) continue to improve. The reason for this improvement is directly attributed to higher year round reservoir elevations.

A good water year in 2008 resulted in some of the best conditions for fish and fishing the reservoir has seen in decades.

Sauger

Our surveys of fish populations at the reservoir have found that sauger continue to do tremendously well. Sauger catches are best in late summer and through the winter months as most adult sauger are spawning in the upper Bighorn River in early summer. Good spots for catching sauger include the rocky points in and around Horseshoe Bend in late summer.

Walleye

The relatively shallow turbid water in the Wyoming portion of the reservoir is just the habitat that sauger prefer. Walleye on the other hand typically choose water with better clarity. Because of these preferences, walleye are less abundant in the Wyoming portion of the reservoir. This isn't to say that walleye are gone, but our 2008 surveys found that sauger outnumber walleye about 25:1. The good news is that the walleye we do see are growing into some real lunkers and we could see a few trophy walleyes at the boat ramp this year.

Crappie

For the first time in many years crappie numbers exploded in the reservoir in 2008. This increase is due to a bumper crop of crappie from the 2008 spawn. If these fish continue to grow and

survive, the number of crappie available to catch should increase dramatically over the next few years. A good spot for catching crappie is Crooked Creek Bay in early summer.

Channel Catfish

Channel catfish can be found throughout the reservoir, but the largest concentrations are typically in the upper basin from Jim Creek to the Bighorn and Shoshone Rivers. Our surveys show that channel catfish over five pounds are common and fish exceeding ten pounds aren't unusual. Good spots for channel catfish include the area around the Kane Boat Ramp, Jim Creek and Mormon Point in early summer.

Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth Bass like the other predators in the reservoir have benefited greatly from higher water levels and resulting increase in food supply. Like walleye they prefer slightly better water clarity than sauger or channel catfish but by mid-summer we are finding good numbers of smallmouth in Crooked Creek and Horseshoe Bend. Smallmouth bass are very structure oriented which means that they are largely found along large rock piles near the reservoir shore.

If you ignored my advice and didn't fish Big Horn Lake last year you should definitely make plans to fish the reservoir in 2009.

For more information check out these web sites.

www.bighornlake.com

www.nps.gov/bica



The largest catfish captured in the Friends of Big Horn Lake fishing derby. The 2009 Derby will be June 20.



Emerald shiners may be the most important fish in Big Horn Lake because all of the game fish eat them.



Walleye aren't abundant but there are some big fish to be caught.



Smallmouth bass can be one of the most consistent catches in the reservoir in mid-summer.

Summary of Recent Big Horn Mountain Lakes Surveys—Mark Smith

Lake Solitude- Brook trout averaged 8.5 inches and ranged 6-11 inches. Lake trout averaged 14 inches and ranged 10-16 inches.

Northeast Solitude Lakes- (Cloud Peak Lake Chain) Golden trout averaged about 9 inches in these lakes and ranged 5-17 inches.

Lower Paintrock Lake- Brook trout averaged 8 inches and ranged 7-10 inches.

Middle Paintrock Lake - Brook trout averaged 7 inches and

ranged 6-9 inches.

Meadowlark Lake- Rainbow trout averaged 10 inches and ranged 6-14 inches. Brook trout averaged 9 inches and ranged 6-11

inches. Brown trout averaged 15 inches and ranged 13-24 inches. Yellowstone cutthroat trout averaged 8 inches and ranged 7-9 inches.



Northeast Solitude lake golden trout.



Lake Solitude

“We realize live baitfish regulations are complex”

The regulations surrounding the use, possession and sale of live baitfish in Wyoming can be confusing. We realize the regulations are complex and wish they were not. However as is often the case in the biological realm, the world is far more complex than it appears at the surface.

For example, you probably didn't know that some fish species we have here in the Bighorn River drainage never existed in the Platte and Green River drainages of southern Wyoming. You also might be surprised to know that bait buckets have transported chubs and suckers into waters on the Beartooth Plateau and Big Horn Mountains thou-



Brook Stickleback are one of the undesirable invaders that have made it to the Big Horn Basin. Their transport and use is prohibited.

sand of feet higher and miles from the rivers to which they are native. We also have exotic invaders such as Silver and Big-head Carp that if introduced to local waters could produce significant damage to the fisheries we enjoy.

It is because of this use of live baitfish and the risk of illegal introduction of these fish into the waters they are used, that we have established regulations designed to eliminate the potential for undesired fish to make it into new waters.



Fathead Minnows (pictured above) and golden shiners are the only baitfish that can be sold for use in all Wyoming waters where use of live baitfish is allowed.



Flathead Chub (pictured above) are a slender, silver colored fish commonly used in the Big Horn Basin for bait.

Some have suggested we eliminate the use of live baitfish thus eliminating the threat. However, a large number of the people we serve would like to continue using live baitfish. We believe the best approach to balancing the potential introduction of undesirables with providing fishing opportunities is through careful regulation of the use, possession and sale of live baitfish.

If we as Wyoming anglers are to continue to have the opportunity to use live baitfish, it is imperative that all of us follow these regulations and report those who do not.



Use of Wyoming Baitfish in the Montana portion of Big Horn Lake requires a special permit from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

Bighorn River Trout Fishing—*Mark Smith*

The high and late run-off in 2008 resulted in an increase in angling pressure on the Bighorn River near Thermopolis. Many anglers had the good fortune of wrestling the rivers brown, rainbow and cutthroat trout.

We expend significant effort on insuring good fishing opportunities on the Bighorn and we feel good knowing anglers are reaping the rewards of these efforts. We have learned over the years that the quality of this fishery is heavily dependent upon the volume of water released from Boysen Dam during the winter. We see the best over winter survival of trout when winter flows are around 800 cubic feet per second. Unfortunately the winter of 2007-2008 saw flows around 500 cubic feet per second. Because of these relatively low flows, we were bracing for a decline in the fishery that had been building over the previous three years.

Our 2008 survey on the river did show some decline in fish

numbers, but the declines were small and trout numbers remain higher than they were in the 1990s.

In September 2008, we estimated the river had 270 brown trout per mile. Brown trout numbers don't fluctuate as much as rainbow trout between years and 270/mile is pretty close to the average count over the last 20 years.

We estimate the river also had 681 rainbow trout per mile. This is down from 1,100/mile in 2006 but still above the 20 year average.

We estimate the river had 65 Snake River cutthroat trout per mile. We often don't catch enough of these fish to generate estimates so we don't have much to compare this number to.

One of the most encouraging things we found in the 2008 survey was that small fish stocked and those naturally produced during 2008 were healthy and abundant. This finding and the much improved

winter flow from Boysen this winter (700 cfs) should result in a boost in the fishery in 2009.

We manage about 20 miles of the Bighorn as a trout fishery. This is the section of river from the mouth of Wind River Canyon downstream to the Black Mountain Road Bridge. The most fished section of the river is the stretch from the Wedding of the Waters Public Fishing Area to Thermopolis. This isn't to say this section has the most fish or the best fishing. Many local anglers prefer fishing north of Thermopolis where there is excellent access, fewer anglers and two boat ramps.

If you are looking for water to fish that isn't the color of chocolate milk this May and June you should consider trying the Bighorn. If you haven't fished the Bighorn north of Thermopolis you should check out one of the public fishing areas we have available.

The outlook for 2009 is good. All indications are that we should have good numbers of rainbows, browns and cutthroats waiting to be caught.



Rainbow trout are the most abundant fish on the Bighorn.



Brown trout numbers in the Bighorn fluctuate little between years.



One of the limitations to the Bighorn trout fishery is sedimentation from tributary streams such as Buffalo Creek shown here.

A Tale of Two Lakes—*Jason Burckhardt*

Looking to catch a trophy trout? Look no further than East Newton Lake. East Newton is well known for its ability to grow larger than average sized trout. In fact, the average size of trout in East Newton has remained near 20 inches since the late 1990s. Rainbows, browns, brookies and even a few splake (brook trout-lake trout hybrids) can be found that will double over your fishing rod. East Newton is also a back-up brood source for Eagle Lake rainbow trout and has produced millions of eggs for waters across the state of Wyoming.

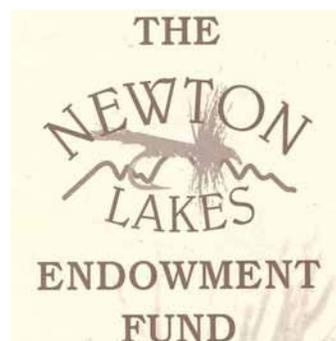
To maintain this trophy fishery

we limit the harvest to only one trout over 22 inches and artificial flies and lures are the rule. This regulation allows anglers to keep one trophy fish though most anglers practice catch and release. These trout see their fair share of flies and to call them "picky" would be an understatement.

Maintaining the East Newton Lake fishery takes more than just special regulations. We pump about 200 acre-feet of water into East Newton every year to maintain water levels. This pumping operation costs the Department thousands of dollars each year.

While East Newton has been producing trophies West Newton Lake has been on a downward slide. Drought and geologic changes threaten this lakes future. Water levels are at historic lows and the future of this fishery is in jeopardy. We are currently looking into alternatives to save West Newton.

To help defray the cost of maintaining East Newton and neighboring West Newton a permanent fund was established with the Wyoming Community Foundation. This endowment, however, is far from achieving its goal.



The Newton Lakes Endowment is a permanent fund in the Wyoming Community foundation to ensure the future of Newton lakes and other sport fisheries within Park County, Wyoming. This endowment was initially established by the members of Absaroka Flycasters and Trout Unlimited. For more information contact the Wyoming Community Foundation 307-766-2477.

Ten Sleep Hatchery to be Renovated—*Bart Burningham*



Aerial view of the Ten Sleep Hatchery.



Ten Sleep Hatchery is the home to the Department's Yellowstone cutthroat trout broodstock.

For the staff at the Ten Sleep Hatchery, 2008 will always be remembered as the year the station was diagnosed with Whirling Disease. As a result, all fish except the Yellowstone cutthroat broodstock were euthanized to prevent the potential spread of the disease.

Despite this loss, there is good news for anglers. The sixtieth session of the Wyoming State Legislature passed a supplemental budget bill signed by the governor the first week of March. In that bill was an

appropriation of \$4,517,000 to renovate the existing facilities at the Ten Sleep state fish hatchery. Construction planning is already in the works and it is our hope that this project will begin in early fall of this year, with a completion date of 2010. The hatchery will be closed to public visitation during that time.

The major emphasis for the project will be to secure all existing water/spring sources and minimize future risks of facility contamination from all disease threats, including Whirling Disease. A large portion of the construction will

address contamination issues related to the existing springs and enclosures. A water treatment facility will improve the water quality and address disease issues. New rearing units to replace the old dilapidated concrete units will be installed and covers will be built over outdoor rearing units to prevent disease introduction. Once completed, this project will change the face of the facility and improve the quality of the fish produced.

Keep a Limit of Sunfish at Renner Reservoir—*Mark Smith*



Renner Reservoir experienced a partial winter-kill in 2008 and 2009 but the number of sunfish continues to grow.



To improve the fishery we suggest releasing large bass and harvesting a limit of sunfish.

There is an ongoing debate among anglers surrounding the ethics of harvesting fish versus catch and release. I won't wade into that debate here but I will offer that Renner Reservoir is one of our regional waters where increased harvest of sunfish will not hurt the fishery.

Renner Reservoir is located on the Big Horn-Washakie County Line between Hyattville and Tensleep. The reservoir is filled by artesian well water and is ringed by reeds and cattails. The lake is a fertile oasis well suited for bass and sunfish.

In the last decade, we introduced hybrid sunfish to provide food for the largemouth bass. Prior to this introduction, few bass exceeded 12 inches. The introduction has been a success and we now see bass up to 19 inches.

Unfortunately, we haven't

been able to maintain enough pressure on sunfish to prevent them from overpopulating and stunting. Stunting is a term used to describe a population of fish that are small in size because they have to compete with so many others for food, shelter etc. This prevents them from growing at a normal rate.

The problem with the rapid increase in sunfish is that fewer of them reach a size that anglers want to catch or harvest. From our perspective, we need to decrease the number of sunfish in order to provide sunfish large enough to be desirable to anglers.

We are planning a three pronged approach to address the sunfish explosion.

First, we have reduced the harvest of large bass by creating a 1 over 12 inch regulation. This will leave more large bass in the reservoir to eat sunfish.

Second, we encourage anyone to keep a limit (50) of sunfish at the reservoir.

Third, we are considering a transplant of channel catfish from the Bighorn River to the reservoir. Channel catfish are a voracious predator of sunfish. Catfish are commonly used in farm ponds in the mid-west to control sunfish and add another dimension to the fishery. Contrary to some belief, catfish do not reduce water quality.

We would like to know what you think. Give us an email or phone call and tell us what you would like to see happen at Renner Reservoir.

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Restoration – *Mark Smith and Jason Burckhardt*



Releasing Yellowstone cutthroat trout to its native water

“We are working to restore native Yellowstone cutthroat trout to waters of the Big Horn Basin.”

We are working to restore native Yellowstone cutthroat trout to waters of the Big Horn Basin. This restoration typically requires removing the existing fish and restocking with natives. Streams identified as having restoration potential have barriers that will prevent the reinvasion of non-native trout into the restoration reach. The goal of our restoration efforts are to create populations of native trout for anglers to enjoy and ensure that these fish will remain for future generations.

Yellowstone cutthroat trout are the only trout native to our region. Prior to European settlement they were distributed throughout a large area of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho in the Snake and Yellowstone River drainages. These native cutthroat were abundant in many

waters throughout the Big Horn Basin. During European settlement many of the native populations of cutthroat were utilized as food by settlers and some of these populations were over harvested. With European settlement came habitat degradation from logging, mining, and poor agricultural practices. These habitat alterations caused declines in native cutthroat populations. To remedy the losses of our native fish. Rainbow trout from the west coast, brook trout from the east coast and brown trout from Europe were stocked. Many of these species were stocked around the turn of the century, decades before active fisheries management. Actually many waters were stocked before surveys were conducted to determine what species, if any, were present. These non-native trout

competed with our native cutthroat for resources, and rainbows, being close relatives of the cutthroat, hybridized with our natives.

Native Yellowstone cutthroat trout now occupy less than half of their historic habitats and only 17% of historic habitats have Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations that have not hybridized with rainbow trout or other cutthroat trout subspecies. Currently, the greatest threat to Yellowstone cutthroat trout persistence is the presence of non-native species.

The loss of Yellowstone cutthroat trout led to a petition to list the species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. While listing was found to be unwarranted, future listing attempts are likely.

Dead Indian Creek – *Jason Burckhardt*



Dead Indian Creek and tributaries in the South Paintrock Creek drainage were selected to conduct Yellowstone cutthroat trout restoration due to their proximity to existing conservation populations and barriers that are present to prevent the reinvasion of non-native trout.

Dead Indian Creek, tributary to the Clarks Fork Yellowstone River, was identified as having the potential to establish a conservation population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Yellowstone cutthroat trout historically occupied over 500 miles of the Clarks Fork drainage but have been eliminated from all but about 13 miles of their historic habitats, largely due to the introduction of non-native trout.

Stocking has established a few populations of genetically pure Yellowstone cutthroat. One of these populations is in Dead Indian Creek in the vicinity of Dead Indian Meadows, above a small waterfall. Below this waterfall, rainbow trout have hybridized with the Yellowstone cutthroats. We are proposing to remove these rainbow-cutthroat hybrids and restocking with Yellowstone cutthroat. This project is scheduled to begin in August of this year and continue in 2010, with restocking to occur before the 2011 fishing season.

The goal of this project is to establish a conservation population in this segment of Dead Indian Creek to ensure the persistence of this native species in the Clarks Fork River drainage.

Big Horn Mountains – *Mark Smith*

We expend considerable effort each year to make sure Yellowstone cutthroat are available for current anglers and future generations. Yellowstone cutthroat have been removed by brook trout in most of the western Big Horn Mountains and we are striving to protect and expand remaining populations.

Our current focus is in the South Paintrock Creek drainage, where we are involved in removing brook trout from Buckskin Ed and Soldier Creeks to allow the remaining cutthroat trout population to increase and expand.

When completed, this project will expand cutthroat to 20 miles of this drainage. It will also offer anglers the opportunity to catch a native fish in its native environment. An added bonus is that cutthroat in these small streams will grow larger than the brook trout did.

Like many of you, we also love brook trout. Fortunately there are hundreds of miles of brook trout streams in the Big Horn's that will remain sources to fill your camp skillet.

South Fork Shoshone River is on the Mend-Jason Burckhardt

Sampling conducted in August confirmed what we had feared, that the flash flooding and subsequent debris flow that occurred from 2007 severe thunderstorms in the upper South Fork Shoshone River basin took their toll on the fishery. Our population sampling estimated 130 brown trout per mile. This is a significant reduction from 754 brown trout per mile in 2006. Rainbow trout, rainbow-cutthroat hybrids (cuttbows) and Yellowstone cutthroat numbers were pooled for these estimates due to low numbers in both 2006 and 2008. The population of rainbows, cutthroats and hybrids

actually increased slightly from 21 per mile in 2006 to 39 per mile in 2008. This increase is likely from fish migrating upstream from Buffalo Bill Reservoir.

The good news is that the habitat in the South Fork Shoshone quickly recovered from the tons of sediment that came with the debris flow. The above average snowpack last year supplied sufficient spring flows to do a good job of sorting the substrates and depositing the fine sediments on the floodplain. Clean, loose gravel was present in the riffles which should help facilitate successful spawning

this past fall.

We sampled many young brown trout in August 2008 indicating that the browns remaining in the South Fork were able to successfully reproduce in the fall 2007 following the debris flow.

Although there are fewer fish in the South Fork the ones that remain are of a larger size. Average trout size increased to 12 inches in 2008 compared to 10 inches in 2006. The remaining trout will have less competition for resources and have a tendency to grow larger.



Fisheries technician James McLellan holds a nice brown trout sampled on the South Fork in 2008.

North Fork Shoshone River Fishing-Jason Burckhardt

If you fished the North Fork last year you were likely contacted by one of the creel clerks we had roaming the river corridor. With financial support from the East Yellowstone Chapter of Trout Unlimited, we conducted a programmed creel survey of the North Fork to quantify the number of anglers, as well as determine the angler catch rates and other angler demographics.

A total of 1,163 anglers were interviewed. Fifty-three percent of anglers were from Wyoming, with most from Park County. Anglers were also interviewed from 45 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Spain and New Zealand indicating the importance of this fishery nationally and internationally.

About half of the anglers were using flies and the rest of the anglers equally split using bait and lures. Rainbow trout were the most frequently caught species. The overall catch rate was a very respectable 0.9 fish/hour. Seventy-six percent of anglers were catch and release fishing with most of the remaining anglers keeping a fish or two for supper.

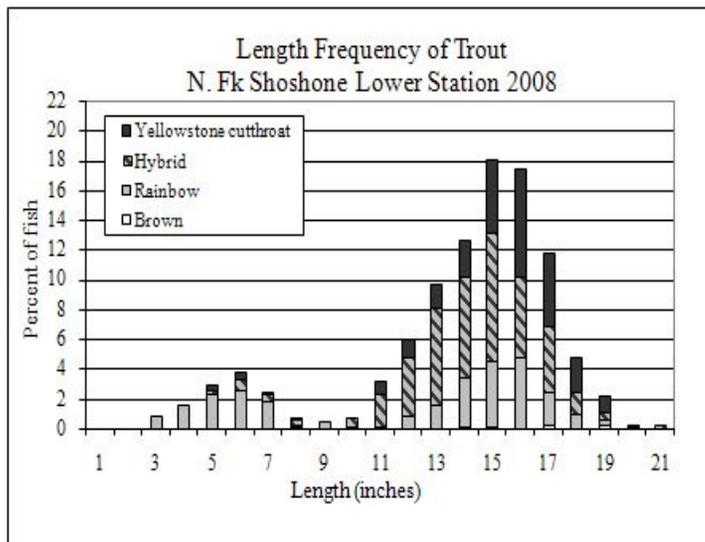
Sampling was also conducted on North Fork Shoshone at our lower river sample station from Rivers Rest to the 6FU fishing area. We estimated 608 trout/mile consisting of 3 browns, 169 rainbows, 304 rainbow-cutthroat hybrids, and 133 Yellowstone cutthroats. Average size of trout captured was 14.8 inches and 1.2 pounds. We estimated the trout biomass to be 704 pounds of trout per mile. This biomass estimate continues to exceed the 600 pounds per mile requirement to maintain blue ribbon status.

Approximately 22% of the fish captured in 2008 were Yellowstone cutthroat trout; up from 16% of the population in 2003.

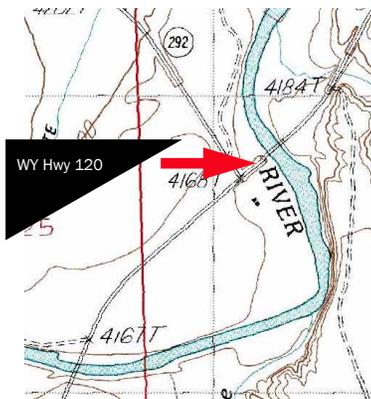
This sampling represents adult trout that remain in the North Fork Shoshone River after spawning and the few age-1 trout that have not yet migrated to Buffalo Bill Reservoir. The average spawning sized trout is about 15 inches, though those that fish the North Fork will attest that these fish fight like a 20 incher.



Anglers may find large Yellowstone cutthroat trout like the one pictured here in the North Fork Shoshone.



“Anglers from 45 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Spain and New Zealand fished the North Fork indicating the importance of this fishery nationally and internationally.”



A new ramp has been constructed on the Clarks Fork near Edelweiss.

New and Improved Access Around the Region—Steve Yekel

One of our highest priorities is to obtain and improve angler access within the Cody Region. This process can be quite slow, but we are happy to report some progress.

In spring 2009 anglers and boaters will see two new ramps in operation: one on the North Fork Shoshone River downstream of Wapiti and the other on the Clarks Fork River at Edelweiss.

The North Fork access, which we many times refer to as

“Rivers Rest”, will provide about 1/4 mile of angler pedestrian access on the north side of the river, a concrete boat ramp, comfort station and a parking lot large enough to accommodate small to medium sized boat trailers. Be watching for the announced ribbon cutting and opening of this site that was completed in cooperation with the Cody Field Office of the BLM, which are the land managers for this parcel.

Highway 120 reconstruction project. Thanks WDOT!

We are presently investigating possible egress sites downstream of the Edelweiss ramp-stay tuned.

Another area where we are actively pursuing access is on the Shoshone River below Buffalo Bill Reservoir. We are working closely with the US Bureau of Reclamation to enter into a management agreement for a parcel of land located along a roughly two mile section of the north bank of the river adjacent to City of Cody. This will provide legal access to a very important chunk of land for anglers as well as hunters. Getting GF Commission approval for this agreement will be the next step and should be completed this spring.

Don't forget to use our PLPW fishing access sites. Your access donations maintain these agreements with private landowners on parcels along the Shoshone and Bighorn River, plus other areas. Please support the “Access Yes “ program with your donations.



A new ramp has been constructed on the North Fork at Rivers Rest.

The Clarks Fork “Edelweiss” ramp is a concrete structure that will provide boater egress for other upstream sites such as the BLM access areas just downstream from the mouth of the Clarks Fork Canyon and the state lands known as the Bear-tooth Ranch. Each of these upstream sites presently has an undeveloped boat launch.

The Edelweiss ramp was completed in cooperation with WY Department of Transportation, which provided a right of way agreement and developed a parking area as part of the

Game and Fish Offers Free Summer Youth Camp—Lucy Wold



Students won't find an experience like this camp anywhere else

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is offering teens ages 14-17 a camp where they can learn about wildlife and the outdoors. The Game and Fish annual WILD About O.R.E.O. Youth Conservation Camp is scheduled for Aug. 2-7, 2009. The department's Whiskey Mountain Wildlife Conservation Camp is located near Trail Lake, ten miles southeast of Dubois, Wyo.

The camp is free. Youth enjoy a week of learning outdoor skills, and participate in hands-on activities like shooting sports, fishing skills, hiking, canoeing and campfire time. Students learn

and recreate together in some of Wyoming's most beautiful mountain country. Students won't find an experience like this camp anywhere else in Wyoming and they get it all for no charge.

If you like being active, working with other kids and want to learn more about your natural environment and the outdoors, this is the camp for you.

Students must live in Wyoming and be sponsored by a teacher or youth leader. Most equipment is provided. Each camper is required to provide personal

gear, including sleeping bag, hiking boots, rain gear and cool-weather clothing.

The camp application process is very competitive and the forty openings fill fast. The Game and Fish will accept applications through 5 p.m. on May 31. Application forms are available at any regional office of the Game and Fish, at the department Web site <http://gf.state.wy.us>, or by calling the Game and Fish education section office at (307) 777-4538.



Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.

Mark Smith

2820 HWY 120

Cody, WY 82414

Bits and Pieces

FREE fishing day is June 6, 2009. No license is needed to fish on this day (all other regulations apply).

The **Basin Kids Fishing Day** will be held on May 16th at the Basin Water Plant Pond.

Cody Youth Fishing Day is on June 6th at the Beck Lake Recreation Area.

Newsletter Contributors

Contributors to this years newsletter include the Cody Fisheries Management Crew, Bart Burningham (Tensleep Hatchery Superintendent), Dennie Hammer (Cody Region Information and Education Specialist), and Lucy Wold (Green River Information and Education Specialist). Thanks to all.

This and past newsletters for the Big Horn Basin and across the state are available at: <http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/fishing/Newsletters/>

Fisheries Management in the Cody Region

The Cody fisheries crew consists of regional fisheries supervisor Steve Yekel, fisheries biologists Jason Burckhardt and Mark Smith and aquatic habitat biologist Lew Stahl.

Since the region has so many waters, we have divided management responsibilities with Jason covering the Absaroka Front drainages, while Mark

manages the Bighorn River and Big Horn Mountain drainages.

Lew works throughout the basin and on fish passage projects throughout Wyoming.

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

steve.yekel@wgf.state.wy.us

mark.smith@wgf.state.wy.us

jason.burckhardt@wgf.state.wy.us

307-527-7125

WE'RE ON THE WEB <http://gf.state.wy.us>

SIGN UP FOR OUR FREE DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER:

<http://gf.state.wy.us/newsview/frmNewsDisplay.aspx>



Fisheries Supervisor Steve Yekel



Aquatic Habitat Biologist Lew Stahl



Fisheries Biologist Mark Smith



Fisheries Biologist Jason Burckhardt.