Wyoming Game and Fish Department

2007 Edition

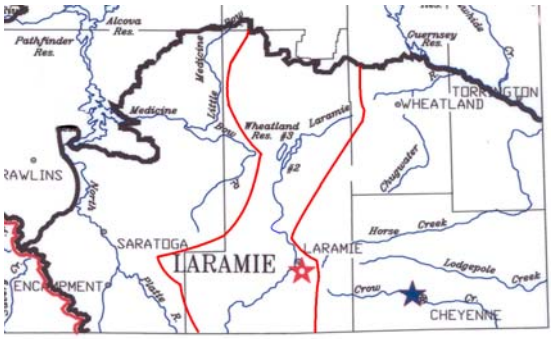
"Conserving Wildlife—Serving People"

Inside this issue:

Special points of interest:

- Wyoming's Free Fishing day is Saturday June 2, 2007!
- Proposed changes to the 2008-2009 Fishing Regulations.
- Summary of last year's activities
- Interested in volunteering to help our fisheries management crew?
- Don't forget to pick up the 2007 fishing regulations!

The Laramie Region



Map of the Laramie Region indicating the three different management areas: Eastern Plains to the Laramie Range, Laramie Plains to the Snowy Range; Platte Valley to the Sierra Madre Mountains

ANGLERS ASKED TO ADJUST HABITS DURING PERIODS OF HIGH WATER TEMPERATURES

As the water levels drop, the temperature rises, and is a real threat to trout and other coldwater species. Trout experience significant mortality at prolonged exposure to water temperatures greater that 75 degrees Fahrenheit and brief exposure to temperatures over 80 degrees are lethal. Fish stress more quickly in warmer water because the water holds less oxygen which greatly hampers a fish's ability to recover from the rigors of being caught. Catching and releasing a trout in 40-degree water is not a problem if done correctly. However, as water temperature approaches 70 degrees the chance for any trout species to survive being caught and released is greatly reduced. We are not suggesting that anglers quit fishing the during the summer altogether, but we urge anglers to be aware of the water temperature and change fishing techniques with changing conditions. Water temperature is particularly important for anglers practicing catch and release or where our regulations require fish be released. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department asks catch-and-release anglers to consider the following during the dog days of summer. Fish early in the morning while water temperature is cooler. Carry a pocket thermometer and monitor the water temperature. If the water temperature is at or above 65 degrees, consider keeping what you catch within the regulations; if 70 degrees or higher, do not attempt to catch and release trout. As water temperature increases, using the proper techniques to catch and release a trout become increasingly more important to help insure the trout has a chance to survive. If water temperatures are high perhaps try fishing for a different warm water species or escape the heat with a trip to the high country.

Eastern Plains and Laramie Range

EASTERN PLAINS

Grayrocks Reservoir

The water level at Grayrocks Reservoir continued to decline in 2006 and the forecast for water to fill the reservoir in 2007 is not good. Currently no boat ramps can be used, therefore boaters have been launching at a primitive gravel ramp near the dam. However, shallow water levels make boating hazardous. Walleye and channel catfish populations are hanging on. During 2006 annual trend sampling the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew found walleye averaging 14.1 inches and 1.2 pounds. Walleye length ranged from 7 to 20 inches. The age of walleye captured in nets spanned from 0 to 11 years. Channel catfish averaged 18.8 inches, weighing an average of 1.7 pounds. Grayrocks Reservoir is stocked with 200,000 walleye fingerlings annually and 6,500 catfish every other year. Studies are under way to determine contribution from naturally reproducing fish in the reservoir.

Grayrocks Reservoir walleye

Hawk Springs Reservoir

Access to Hawk Springs Reservoir was blocked for a short period of time in the fall of 2006, however public access was restored. Low water conditions are a serious concern at Hawk Springs. In late August 2006, the average depth of the reservoir was only 3.2 feet. The maximum depth was 8 feet. Game fish netted in August included black crappie, white crappie, channel catfish and walleye. Black crappie and walleye fishing is fast in February and continues into the early spring. Both walleye and catfish reach a nice size in Hawk Springs Reservoir. Catfish up to 2 pounds and walleye up to 4 pounds were captured during 2006 sampling.

Packers Lake

Packers Lake is located just inside the Wyoming/ Nebraska border southeast of Torrington. Packers Lake is managed by stocking walleye, black crappie, channel catfish and rainbow trout. It provides a unique and diverse warm water fishery. The rainbow trout are stocked in the fall to provide a fall, winter, and early spring fishery. Our sampling in 2006 included gill netting and night electrofishing. The electrofishing was attempted to gather information on largemouth bass. Forty-five largemouth bass were captured ranging in size from 2 to 14 inches. Walleye averaged 14.2 inches and about 1 pound.

Wheatland Reservoir #1

When Wheatland Reservoir #1 was sampled in 2004 the walleye and channel catfish exhibited poor body condition. Adult gizzard shad were stocked in the spring of 2005 and 2006 and spawned successfully. The forage produced by the young shad has improved the condition of both the walleye and catfish. The catfish averaged 16.8 inches and weighed 1.4 pounds. Walleye average length and weight was 12.9 inches and about 1 pound. The length of walleye ranged from 10 to 21 inches. A detailed study of walleye and catfish age, growth and condition will continue in 2007. We will continue to stock 100 adult gizzard shad yearly so young fish from their spawning activities can provide forage for catfish and walleye.

Channel catfish

LARAMIE RANGE

North Crow Reservoir

Longnose suckers have been the most abundant fish in this reservoir for over a decade. In 1999 suckers dominated our annual sampling and the non-game to game fish ratio was about 7:1. Splake were first stocked in 2002 in order to help control the sucker population. The non-game to game fish ratio was down to 4:1 in 2004. Rainbow trout and grayling (first stocked in 2002) have shown slow growth, possibly due to direct competition for resources with the large sucker population. Splake appear to be taking advantage of the large sucker population, however it was determined that more needed to be done. A sucker removal program was initiated in 2005 and 428 suckers were removed via trap and gill nets. It was determined suckers in North Crow Reservoir spawn sometime from late May into June. A total of 1,505 suckers were removed in 2006. The reservoir was also netted and rainbow trout averaged 9.8 inches in length and weighed on average almost 0.5 pounds. Grayling average just over 11 inches in length and almost 0.5 pounds. The largest fish captured was a 25 inch splake that weighed 5.2 pounds. We will be continuing the intensive sucker removal project until 2010 and will monitor the response of game fish through sampling in the fall. If you fished at North Crow Reservoir in 2006, you may have participated in what we call a remote creel. One hundred forty three legible cards were returned and anglers reported a catch rate of 1.4 fish per hour. Anglers reported a rainbow trout catch rate of 1.2 rainbow trout per hour and released 66% of rainbow trout caught. Overall, anglers were generally satisfied with both the number of fish caught and with size of fish caught.

Setting trap net to catch suckers

Personnel from Curt Gowdy State Park help the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew count and remove unwanted suckers from North Crow Reservoir

Creel box

Red shiner

Meet your native fish

The red shiner is native to the North Platte drainage in Wyoming. It is a small minnow that can reach a maximum length of 3.5 inches. Its color is olive on top with silver on its side. Breeding males become brightly colored and develop small bumps called tubercles on their head. Red shiner is common in lowland streams in Platte and Goshen Counties, such as Horse Creek and the Laramie River. Red shiner is an important prey species for a variety of birds, mammals, and fish. Conservation of this species within its native range in Wyoming is important to help maintain the diversity of native fishes in the state.

Laramie Plains and Snowy Range

Something Different To Fish For…

In Wyoming grayling are native only to the headwaters of the Madison and Gibbon Rivers. These salmonid or salmon like fish can be distinguished from trout and char by the distinctive sail-like dorsal fin. Grayling seldom grow larger than 12 inches in length. The state record was caught in Meadow Lake, Sublette County. It was 19 5/8 inches long and weighed 2.31 pounds.

Grayling prefer water that is clean, clear and cold. They are found in larger rivers, streams and lakes. Spawning takes place in the spring when they spawn in flowing water over gravel beds. Grayling eggs are very small compared to trout. They feed primarily on insects and tend to feed in small schools. In the Laramie Region you can fish for grayling at North Crow Reservoir. In 2009 grayling are scheduled for stocking in Bear Lake in the Snowy Range.

LARAMIE PLAINS

Lake Hattie

Lake Hattie was sampled on May 10, 2006. The maximum capacity of Lake Hattie is about 3,000 surface acres, in the spring of 2006 it was at 1,655 surface acres. Kokanee in all length categories were in excellent condition in 2006 and 25% were greater than 16 inches in length. The largest kokanee captured was 18 inches and almost 2 pounds. Yellow perch continue to do very well and are a favorite target of ice anglers. Over 65% of yellow perch caught during our sampling in 2006 were greater than 8 inches. Lake trout are still in Lake Hattie and are a favorite of ice anglers. They average over 26 inches and 5 pounds. Very few rainbow trout were caught during our sampling, however one rainbow was almost 20 inches and 3 pounds.

A good day perch fishing at Lake Hattie

Twin Buttes Reservoir

Twin Buttes Reservoir continues to produce quality sized fish despite decreasing water levels over the past five years. Water can enter Twin Buttes Reservoir via a canal originating from Lake Hattie, but this has not occurred since 1999. Yellow perch and suckers used to enter Twin Buttes Reservoir via the canal and compete with brown and rainbow trout for resources. However, yellow perch and suckers have not been captured during annual sampling since 2004 and 2003 respectively. Rainbow trout, the most abundant game fish, are in excellent condition and averaged 17.2 inches and 2.4 pounds. Over half of the rainbow trout caught during our sampling were just under 16 inches, so we expect to see more rainbow trout over 16 inches in 2007. Brown trout continue to persist despite last being stocked in 1999. They averaged 21.3 inches in length and weighed on average 3.8 pounds. A limited number of brown trout will once again be stocked in 2007 to provide diversity to the fishery.

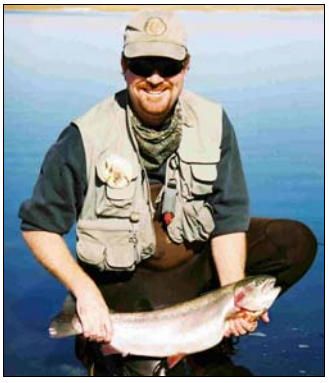
Twin Buttes rainbow

Effects of drought on Laramie Region lake elevations

	2006 Water elevations	Increase or Decrease from 2005
Hattie	7,240	Decreased 4 feet
Twin Buttes	7,242	Decreased 1 foot
Meeboer	7,232	Decreased 1 foot
Gelatt	7,243	Unchanged
Wheatland #3	6,924	Decreased 4 feet (lowest in 21 years)
East Allen	6,535	Unchanged

Meeboer Lake

Winterkills have been a part of Meeboer Lake's history, however mild winter conditions over the last six years have prevented winterkills from occurring and the results have been impressive. Rainbow trout collected during spring sampling in 2006 averaged 20.3 inches and 4.4 pounds. Over 65% of rainbow trout caught were over 20 inches and all were in excellent condition. The largest rainbow trout caught was 23.5 inches and weighed 7.3 pounds. During January 2007, winterkill conditions (thick ice, no open water, snow cover on the lake, and cloudy days) existed for several weeks at Meeboer Lake. Our aeration systems could not break through the thick ice cover to create open water. Sampling in March 2007 confirmed that a complete winterkill had occurred. However, the bright side is that the lake is stocked annually with 30,000 sub-catchable rainbow trout (5-7 inches), which will grow very fast in this highly productive lake.



Meeboer Lake rainbow

Gelatt Lake

Just like Meeboer Lake, winterkills have been a part of Gelatt Lake's history, however mild winter conditions over the last six years have prevented winterkills from occurring. Rainbow trout collected in 2006 averaged 17.3 inches and 2.8 pounds. The largest rainbow trout caught was 22 inches and 6 pounds. Snake River cutthroat stocked at 8 inches in the spring of 2005 averaged almost 17 inches in length by spring of 2006! During January 2007, winterkill conditions (thick ice, no open water, snow cover on the lake, and cloudy days) existed for several weeks at Gelatt Lake. Our aeration systems could not break through the thick ice cover to create open water. Sampling in March 2007 confirmed that a complete winterkill had occurred. However, the bright side is that the lake is stocked annually with 7,500 catchable rainbow trout (8 inches), which will grow very fast in this highly productive lake. One thousand five hundred 3-inch brook trout will also be stocked in the spring of 2007.

Laramie River

A population estimate was conducted at the Monolith Access Area on April 28, 2006. A total of 85 trout (brown and rainbows) were collected and 76 were brown trout. The largest trout captured was a brown trout 22.1 inches long, weighing 3.8 pounds. The largest rainbow trout captured was 18.1 inches and 1.9 pounds. It is estimated that there are about 150 trout/per mile ≥ 1.0 inch. Considering the probable high summer temperatures and fluctuating water levels the wild brown trout population at the Monolith Access Area is doing well. A strong brown trout year class was present with 58% of browns captured ranging in length from 3 inches to < 6 inches. The current population estimate for brown trout did not differ from the previous brown trout population estimate conducted in 2001 indicating a rather stable population has persisted over the last five years. The Monolith Access Area offers anglers an opportunity to catch trophy size brown trout near Laramie.

Laramie River brown trout

Alsop Lake

There is good news to report at Alsop Lake. The long drought had meant no water was available to Alsop Lake for over 5 years. As a result fish stocking had been discontinued and the situation was bleak. In 2005 water was added to the reservoir and fish stocking resumed. Snake River cutthroat that were stocked in 2005 and Eagle Lake rainbow in 2006 are entering the creel in good numbers.

Spring Creek

Spring Creek is the small spring fed stream that flows through the City of Laramie and into the Laramie River. In addition to the normal flow, Spring Creek also acts as a conduit for storm runoff from residential areas of Laramie and is subject to frequent high flows. One thousand fingerling brook trout were stocked annually from 2002 through 2006 to try to establish a brook trout fishery. Fish were stocked at several locations in LaPrele Park. However, sampling indicates the brook trout introductions have failed, but a wild population of brown trout has established itself in spite of severe habitat challenges. The

Prairie rattlesnake

Rattlesnakes get their name from the noise they make when they shake their tails. Snakes shed their skin as they grow, and rattlesnakes leave some of that skin behind on their tails. They shake their tails when they get excited, which can excite us. We get excited for good reason; these snakes are venomous. Rattlesnakes are pit vipers, meaning they have a heat sensing organ (pit) and hollow fangs to inject venom. There are two types of rattlesnakes in Wyoming, midget-faded rattlesnakes and prairie rattlesnakes. While midget-faded rattlesnakes are only found in the western part of Sweetwater County, prairie rattlesnakes are found throughout the state. Their primary habitats are prairies and hills. These animals survive winter by gathering together in dens. In the spring they emerge to forage and mate. They generally return to their dens by September. During the summer months, be on the lookout for snakes and avoid them. If you don't bother them, they will probably avoid you.

Laramie Plains continued

browns were mostly small but one individual was 16 inches long. Brown trout from the Laramie River most likely use Spring Creek to complete different stages of their life cycle. We plan to discontinue brook trout stocking and manage the wild brown trout population. We will look for opportunities to improve habitat in Spring Creek where possible.

Nice brown trout captured in Spring Creek, which flows through the town of Laramie

Sodergreen Lake

Fishing has been allowed at Sodergreen for over 30 years and it was recently enrolled in the Department's Walk-In Access Program. The lake is managed as a catchable trout fishery. Ten thousand catchable sized trout are stocked each year for fisherman. Rainbow and cutthroat trout from 9 to 13 inches are common in the lake.

East Allen Reservoir

East Allen Lake is a 284-acre reservoir near Medicine Bow. The maximum depth is 15.5 feet with an average depth of 7.8 feet. Most of the shoreline is fairly shallow. Water levels have remained stable for the last several years. Annually, 10,000 Bear River cutthroat and 50,000 rainbow trout are stocked in early spring. Fish are stocked at 3 to 4 inches long. Our 2006 sampling indicated good populations of Bear River cutthroat averaging 13.3 inches and 0.91 pounds. The Bear River cutthroat ranged in size from 11 to 17 inches. Rainbow trout mostly avoided our sampling gear but they made up the majority of the catch from fishermen. During the Lions Club Fishing Derby rainbow trout from 12 to 16 inches were measured.

Snowy Range

Albany South Twin Lake

The primary purpose of sampling Albany South Twin Lake was to evaluate the contribution of stocked fish vs. wild fish. Bear River cutthroat stocked into Albany South Twin have been marked since 2000, so we can distinguish stocked fish vs. wild fish. Of the 55 Bear River cutthroat collected from sampling in 2004 and 2006, 60% were wild fish. Bear River cutthroat trout captured during sampling in 2006 averaged 10.6 inches and 0.4 pounds, the largest cutthroat captured was 13.5 inches long. The secondary purpose was to evaluate the spawning gravel placed into the outlet and inlet streams in 1997 and 1999. Adequate spawning gravel still exists in both the inlet and outlet streams and adult fish were observed spawning in both. With over half of the population consisting of wild fish, future stocking will be deleted starting in 2007.

Albany South Twin Lake Bear River cutthroat

Snowy Range continued

South and North Gap lakes

South Gap and North Gap lakes were sampled in the summer of 2006. Bear River cutthroat and rainbow trout have been stocked into South Gap Lake since 1990. The average length of rainbow trout was 10.9 inches and the average length of Bear River cutthroat was 10.7 inches. North Gap Lake is not stocked because it has a wild, reproducing population of brook trout. The average length of brook trout was 10.4 inches and averaged 0.4 pounds.

Shelf Lake #2

Shelf Lake #1 and #2 were sampled in 2006. Only a handful of fish were caught during the short sampling period. The Bear River cutthroat trout caught during our sampling averaged 13.9 inches and 0.8 pounds. Golden trout were once again stocked into Shelf Lake #1 and #2 in 2006. The stocked golden trout should reach catchable size in 2-4 years and anglers should be excited about the opportunity to catch this unique species in the Snowy Range.

Shelf Lake #2

Cascade Lake

A short hike or ATV ride up Forest Road 103 will take you to Cascade Lake. Cascade is a small (8 acre) alpine lake about 14 feet deep. The lake is located on Turpin Creek. It is managed by stocking 1,500 fingerling brook trout by ATV every other year. A netting evaluation on July 25, 2006, was conducted to determine the status of the brook trout population. Brook trout averaged 10 inches and ranged from 9 to 11.5 inches.

Headed toward Cascade Lake with sampling gear

Sand Lake

The Sand Lake Dam has been repaired but the reservoir has not yet been filled. The catch from one gillnet set overnight in July indicated that longnose suckers dominate the fishery. The rainbow trout present do not seem to be competing well against the suckers. To correct this situation we plan to resume stocking splake in addition to rainbow trout. Hopefully the predacious splake will help control the sucker population. Currently, Sand Lake is difficult for boat fishermen to access, due to the low water level.

Wagonhound Creek

Wagonhound Creek both upstream and downstream of Interstate 80 was sampled by electrofishing in early August 2006. Both sections were on the Wick Wildlife Management Habitat Unit. Brown trout are the dominant game fish in Wagonhound Creek. Seventy-seven fish per mile were estimated below I-80 and 138 fish per mile upstream of I-80. These are fairly low population numbers. Wagonhound Creek has numerous habitat challenges including eroding banks, siltation and drought. Improved grazing and irrigation management practices on the Wick WHMA have started to improve the habitat problems and other aquatic habitat improvement projects will be investigated this year. While we work to improve the aquatic habitat we will stock brown trout to bolster the current populations. The stocking will continue every other year for 6 years and then be evaluated.

Platte Valley and Sierra Madres

North Platte River

Each summer a population estimate is obtained on a specific section of the North Platte River. There are a total of five sections where we conduct population estimates, so each section is sampled once every few years. This year a population estimate was conducted on the river section from the Pass Creek confluence to the Interstate 80 Bridge. In three days of electrofishing 254 trout (≥ 6.0 inches) were captured, of which 174 (69%) were brown trout and 80 (31%) were rainbows. Brown trout averaged 10.7 inches and ranged from 4 to 21 inches. Rainbow trout averaged 12.4 inches and ranged from 5 to 18 inches. The population estimate was 405 trout per mile. Only 4 walleye were captured and very few walleye have been captured in this river section since the early 1990s. The trout population has remained stable since the 1990s. However, the population is relatively low in this section due to poor habitat and low water conditions. If fishermen target the areas where good habitat is available fishing can be successful.

Encampment River

A population estimate was conducted on the Encampment River near Baggot Rocks in July 2006. In three days of electrofishing, 722 trout (≥ 6.0 inches) were captured, of which 443 (61%) were brown trout, 276 (38%) were rainbow trout, and 3 (<1%) brook trout. The largest brown trout captured was 24.5 inches and weighed 5.34 pounds and the largest rainbow trout captured was 20.4 inches and weighed 3.36 pounds. Currently, the fishery and the habitat in this section of the Encampment River are in excellent shape. Over 40% of the brown trout collected were ≥ 15 inches in length. The population estimate for this section of the Encampment River for all trout ≥ 6.0 inches is 1,857 trout/per mile and the estimate for all trout ≥ 16.1 inches is 382 trout/per mile.

Netting fish on the Encampment River near Baggot Rocks

Teton Reservoir

Teton Reservoir has been managed by stocking 15,000 rainbow trout and 5,000 brown trout every year. Periodic winterkill is a problem and the last known winterkill occurred in 2001. Even with an occasional winterkill, annual stocking had provided a good fishery with rainbow trout exceeding 17 inches and brown trout exceeding 22 inches. The only non-game species present prior to 2001 were creek chubs. Our netting in 2006 indicated a couple of new developments. A large population of white suckers exists and the average size of rainbow and brown trout has decreased. In 2006 the largest rainbow trout captured was 13.2 inches and the largest brown trout 11.7 inches. There are a couple of possibilities to explain why larger fish were not captured in 2006. There may have been a partial winterkill that went unnoticed and trout are just now growing into the traditional size ranges. Also, white suckers may be competing with trout resulting in decreased growth rates, however fishing remains good with fast catch rates.

Hog Park Reservoir

Splake were inadvertently planted in the late 1980s and are still present despite the lack of evidence that splake reproduce in the wild. Splake growth may be limited due to the high elevation and low water temperatures, however the previous splake state record was caught from Hog Park Reservoir in 1999 (30", 11.5 lbs.). Some of the oldest splake recorded (16-20 years) have come from lakes in Canada. Therefore, it is not unrealistic to expect that some of the splake stocked in the late 1980s may still be alive. A total of 11 splake were captured of various sizes, and their ages have yet to be determined. Two splake over 22 inches were caught in 2006 and may be part of the original stocked fish. However splake as small as 9.6 inches were also captured. Without genetic testing it would be difficult to determine if these small splake were a cross between splake and brook trout, because there is a potential for hybridization between splake and either parent species (brook trout and lake trout).

Hog Park splake

Encampment River study

!Attention Anglers!

Please help us in determining Fish Passage benefits. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is conducting a tagging study to learn more about potential benefits to providing fish passage for spawning trout to the Encampment River.

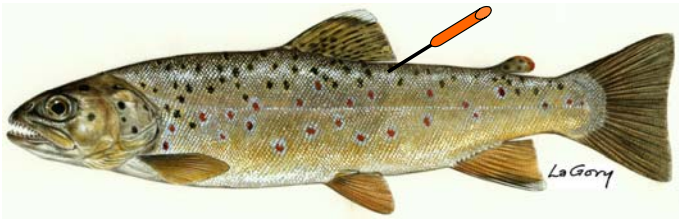
Your help is essential to the success of this study. Please inspect all brown trout for a tag. Tags are blaze orange in color with a unique ID number and phone number located on them. Tags are located directly behind the dorsal fin on the trout's back.

Please do the following if you catch a tagged brown trout:

1) Clip the tag from the fish

2) Call the phone number on the tag and report the unique ID#, location and date you caught the tagged fish

You can also mail the tag(s) to the Laramie Regional Office of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department - 528 South Adams, Laramie, WY 82070. If you do mail the tag(s) don't forget to include the location and date you caught the tagged fish.



Anglers who report catching a tagged brown trout will be given the distance the fish migrated since being tagged. Anglers participating in this study are directly contributing to improving fish passage in the Encampment River and future angling success.

Instream Flow update for the Laramie Region

Instream flow water rights were approved by the Wyoming State Engineer for sections of seven creeks and rivers in the region in March. Protection of water in these streams with formal water rights will help maintain fishing opportunities for anglers today as well as future anglers. The seven water rights provide protection on 47.4 miles of creeks and river on the west side of the Snowy Range. The specific streams/river include the North Platte River (16 miles from the Colorado state line downstream to just below Douglas Creek); Douglas Creek (23.3 miles upstream from its confluence with the North Platte); and a total of 9.1 miles on five small tributaries of Douglas Creek (Nugget, Camp, Horse, Beaver and Lake creeks). The North Platte and Douglas Creek are extremely popular destinations for anglers and the headwater streams provide important habitat for spawning and rearing small rainbow and brown trout. Each of these stream segments is located primarily on public land with good public access. Wyoming's instream flow law was passed by the 1986 legislature. The law enables the state to obtain a water right according to the same process and regulations as any other water right. The main difference between an instream flow right and other kinds of water rights is that an instream flow right can be left in the stream channel. According to Wyoming water law, instream flow rights cannot and will not affect any other existing water right. The process of getting an instream flow water right involves several state agencies and public involvement. After the Game and Fish identifies stream segments where instream flow protection is needed, the Wyoming Water Development Office assesses the feasibility of the permit. The state engineer's office then holds a public hearing on the permit application in a town near the proposed stream. Based on this information and public input the state engineer then issues a decision on the permit. Typically, the process takes many years to complete. The applications for the recently granted permits were submitted in 1991. Since the Clark's Fork River was approved for the first instream flow water right in November 1987, 64 other stream sections – almost entirely on public land – have been approved protecting flows on 447.4 miles of streams.

For more information about the department's instream flow program visit our web site at: **http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/instreamflow/index.asp**

2008-2009 Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is considering changes to Fishing Regulations for 2008-2009. We attempted to simplify and clarify the existing regulations and address issues with Winter Ice Fishing and Spear Gun Fishing regulations. New statewide and area wide provisions were formulated, and we looked at the individual water exceptions within the 2006-07 regulations to determine which should be changed as a result of the newly formulated area specific creel and possession limits. We also looked at standardizing area specific special regulations (exceptions) such as slot limits and trophy regulations. Another goal was to reduce the number of exceptions on individual waters. Baitfish recommendations are proposed to address the supply of baitfish for statewide use, transfers of live baitfish from seining license holders to others, remove the number of traps that can be used by those who hold both a seining and live bait dealers license, expand the method of baitfish capture, extend the length a baitfish receipt is valid. Our Fish Division mission states that we will provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities on balance with the productive capacity of habitats and public desires. These proposals were developed with that mission and the following goals in mind: 1) protect the aquatic resource, 2) simplify and clarify the regulations where possible, and 3) continue to provide baitfish for anglers. Because the proposed changes are so numerous the Department felt it was necessary to have a more prolonged public involvement process. In February and March we held preliminary scoping meetings. The goal of the scoping process was to get the ideas out to anglers and listen to their concerns and suggestions regarding the proposals. We held several meetings around the state and attended other meetings to explain our proposals and got feedback on the proposed changes. The scoping process ended on March 14, 2007. We evaluated comments received during our scoping process and made revisions to the proposed changes. We will start the normal rulemaking process beginning with an open public comment period starting on April 30 and ending June 13. Public meetings will be held the weeks of May 7 and May 14. Our meeting will be held May 17th for the Laramie Region at the Albany County Library 7 pm. After the comment period closes we will prepare our final recommendations and present them to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission at their July 19-20 meeting.

We are very interested in public feedback on these proposals and encourage comment by whatever means is most convenient. All comments made during the public comment period (April 30 through June 13) will be provided to the Commission.

All information pertaining to these proposed changes can be found on our web site.

http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/regulations/index.asp

You can also submit written comments to the address below:

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Attn: Fishing Regulations
5400 Bishop Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82006

Pole Mountain beaver pond surveys

Over the past few years, Wyoming Game and Fish biologists and volunteers from the Travelle Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America have been surveying beaver ponds in the Pole Mountain Area. The beaver ponds in streams such as Middle Crow Creek and Horse Creek provide important habitat for brook trout and amphibians. Without the beaver ponds it is unlikely that these streams would have much water to support brook trout, especially in drought years. Since beaver primarily use woody vegetation (especially aspen and willows) for food and construction of dams and lodges, they influence vegetation dynamics and are in turn impacted by land/vegetation management activities, such as fire suppression, off-road travel, and grazing. Lack of aspen and willow regeneration in the watershed may be impacting beaver. The encroachment of conifers on aspen stands is a major concern throughout the west. Also, in some areas trapping beaver may be limiting their ability to build and maintain dams. While in other areas beaver numbers may be high enough to significantly impact aspen stands. While walking miles of streams, observers have noticed some streams with lots of beaver activity and others where the beaver seem to have disappeared. The overall goal of the survey project is to get a better understanding of the dynamics in the beaver population for better habitat management. The data collected will be compared with several historical beaver pond surveys in the Pole Mountain Area. It is important to recognize that beaver populations fluctuate and not all streams in the Pole Mountain Area should maintain active beaver colonies at all times. Dynamic beaver populations allow for vegetation communities (aspen, willows, and grassy meadows) to grow, while new dams flood out other areas. Humans also play a role with our management and uses of the watershed. We need to develop a balance that creates a healthy watershed that meets the needs of fish and wildlife species, vegetation communities, and all users of Wyoming's natural resources in the Pole Mountain Area.

The ins and outs of Fish Stocking

If your favorite fishing spot is a lake or reservoir it is likely supported at least in part by fish provided by the Game and Fish Department's Fish Culture Section. Hatchery reared fish are a very valuable resource. Currently, ten hatcheries or rearing stations produce fish or hold brood stocks in Wyoming and most of them stock fish in the Laramie Region each year. The species produced are; rainbow trout (3 varieties), brown trout, brook trout, lake trout, splake, cutthroat trout (4 sub-species), and kokanee salmon. Warm and coolwater species like walleye and catfish are obtained by trading trout eggs from Wyoming's disease free brood stocks for the warm and cool-water fish. A complex decision making process is used by fisheries managers to determine the number, species, size and stocking date of hatchery reared fish. The goal is to make the best use of our valuable hatchery product. Hatchery fish are stocked only if needed to maintain fish populations. Lack of spawning habitat, heavy fishing pressure or repopulation of a fishery after a disaster are factors that would influence the decision to use hatchery fish. The number of fish stocked varies with the size and productivity of the receiving water. Rainbow trout are the most common species used by fishery managers. They are well adapted to hatchery production and perform well after stocking. Other species are used for special situations. For example, brown trout do well in warmer waters and splake and brown trout can act as a predator to control other species. Managers try to match the characteristics of the species with the biological parameters of the lake. The size of fish stocked depends on factors like the presence of predators, water productivity, and fishing pressure. Fish are stocked at the smallest size that we feel will be successful. The common range of sizes considered is 3 inches to 8.5 inches in length. The stocking date is based on when fish of a correct size are available from the hatchery system, when the receiving water is the correct temperature, and when food is most available. Fish stocking recommendations are made two years in advance to allow fish culturists the lead-time to produce the fish in the hatcheries.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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The Wyoming Game and Fish E-newsletter is now available for those who want to keep up with developments on line. If you are interested in signing up, go to: http://gf.s t a t e .wy. u s / newsview/frmSubscribe. aspx.

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."

Many Thanks to Newsletter Contributors: Steve Gale, Lee McDonald, Christina Barrineau, Bill Tuner, Mike Snigg, Jeff Obrecht, Tom Annear. Color illustrations of game fish used in this newsletter provided by artist Michelle LaGory.

Pole Mountain Stocking

The Pole Mountain area, located between Cheyenne and Laramie, is dotted with hundreds of beaver ponds that are teeming with brook trout. These ponds offer fast action for novices and skilled anglers alike. Unlike similar areas in the Snowy or Sierra Madre ranges, the stream habitat in the Pole Mountain area is not conducive to brook trout spawning in areas where most ponds occur. In order for these ponds to support the high fishing pressure they receive, we stock these ponds annually with 20,000 fingerling brook trout on the first Saturday in June. Stocking hundreds of ponds scattered over thousands of acres is a labor intensive job, requiring a lot of people to do effectively. To accomplish this, we solicit the help of dozens of volunteers. Volunteering for this project is a good way to find some new fishing holes and makes for a great family outing. If you are interested in volunteering on this project, Saturday, June 2, 2007, contact us at the Laramie Regional Office, (307) 745-4046.

The Laramie Region Fisheries Management Crew is composed of four full-time biologists: Mike Snigg, regional fisheries supervisor; Steve Gale and Lee McDonald, regional fisheries biologists, and Christina Barrineau, aquatic habitat biologist.

Mike has been on the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew since 1985. He was promoted in August of 2003 from regional fisheries biologist to regional fisheries supervisor. Mike has over 30 years with the Department. After obtaining his Bachelor's from Simpson College in Iowa, he worked for the Department for several years , and received his Master's from UW.

Steve was hired as a regional fisheries biologist in June of 2005. He was raised in North Platte, Nebraska. Steve received his Bachelor's in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the University of Nebraska in 2000. He recently completed his Master's in Fisheries Management from Montana State University in 2005.

Lee transferred to the regional fisheries biologist position from the Fish Culture Section in June 2006. Prior to this assignment he was Superintendent of the Como Bluff Fish Hatchery in Rock River, Wyoming. Lee has over 20 years with the Department. Lee came to Wyoming from Pueblo, Colorado in 1975. He received his BS in Fishery Science from Colorado State University in 1978.

Christina was hired as the regional aquatic habitat biologist in August of 2004. She is originally from South Carolina and moved to Wyoming in 2000 for a summer fisheries technician position with the Game and Fish. Christina received her Bachelor of Science degree from Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina in 2000. She received a Master's in Zoology from the University of Wyoming in 2003.