

2011 Edition



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

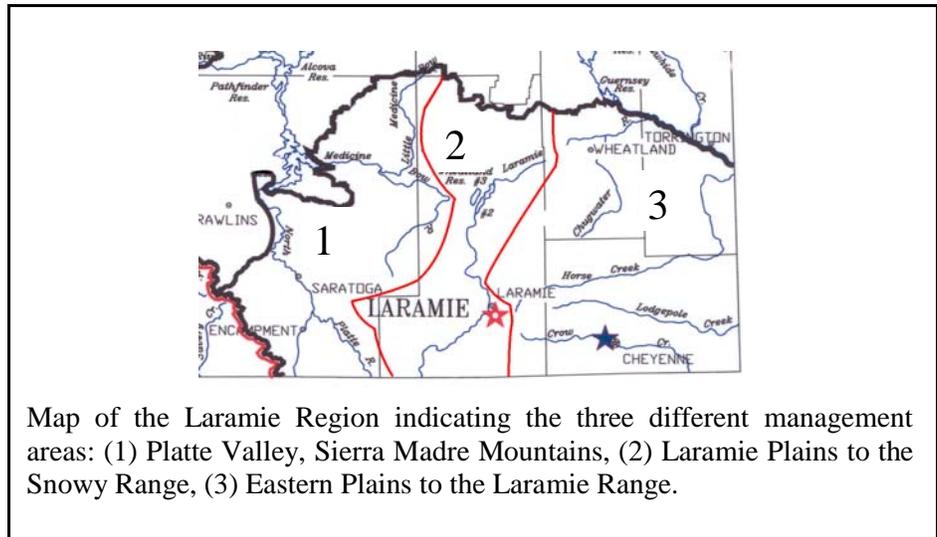


"Conserving Wildlife—Serving People"

The Laramie Region

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2012-2013 Fish Regulation Process

Special points of interest:

- Wyoming's Free Fishing day is Saturday June 4, 2011!
- Summary of last year's activities.
- Aquatic Invasive Species News.
- Water Outlook for 2011.
- Creel Surveys in Wyoming.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is considering changes to Fishing Regulations for 2012-2013. Our Fish Division mission states that we will provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities in balance with the productive capacity of habitats and public desires. Our current regulations and new proposed regulations for 2012-2013 were developed with that mission in mind. The rulemaking process will begin with an open public comment period starting on April 22, 2011 and ending June 6, 2011. Public meetings will be held throughout the State May 5 through May 12. The Laramie Region meeting will be held May 5th at

the West Laramie Fire Station #3 at 7 pm. After the comment period closes we will prepare our final recommendations and present them to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. 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 will be provided to the Commission.



Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species in Wyoming

Aquatic invasive species are organisms that are introduced into new ecosystems where they cause harm and threaten human uses of water resources. Often called "nuisance" species, they can attach to equipment, boats, and clothing used in the water and can then be transferred from one body of water to another. Once established, these species cause significant problems for aquatic ecosystems and the people who use them. Of particular concern are two species posing a significant and immediate threat to Wyoming – zebra and quagga mussels.



What are they?

Zebra and quagga mussels are freshwater, bivalve mollusks, typically with a dark and white pattern on their shells. They are native to Eurasia and were first discovered in the Great Lakes in 1988, most likely transported in the ballast water of ocean-going ships. They are up to an inch long and are often found in clusters attached to hard surfaces such as boats, piers, pipes, and other equipment. Invasive mussels reproduce rapidly. There are no known populations of these mussels in Wyoming to date, but they have rapidly invaded waters across the country and are now present in Colorado, Nebraska and Utah

Impacts to You

The negative impacts of invasive zebra and quagga mussels cannot be overstated. They impede water delivery and increase maintenance costs by clogging pipes, pumps, turbines and filtration systems. Invasive mussels can clog water intakes on motors, overheating and ruining boat engines. Invasive mussels remove plankton from the water. Plankton is the primary food source for forage fish, which in turn are the food of sport fish. The result is often a catastrophic decline in sport fisheries.

How You Can Help

Overland transport on trailered watercraft poses the greatest risk for spreading aquatic invasive species. To prevent the spread of these mussels to Wyoming and protect our resources, we're asking all boaters and anglers to **Drain**, **Clean**, and **Dry**. Drain all water from your equipment and

boat, including the livewell, bilge, and ballast. Clean all mud, plants, and debris from your equipment and boat. Dry your equipment and boat thoroughly before launching in another body of water for at least 5 days in summer, 18 days in spring and fall, and 3 days in winter.

The 2010 Wyoming Legislature passed a new aquatic invasive species bill that allows the establishment of check stations to inspect watercraft for aquatic invasive species, and if necessary, decontaminate the watercraft. In addition to encountering check stations at boat ramps throughout Wyoming, boaters will need to purchase a Wyoming Aquatic Invasive Species Decal before launching in any waters in Wyoming in 2011.

For more information, call 307-777-4600 or visit <http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/AIS/index.asp>.

To report an aquatic invasive species sighting, or to request assistance with watercraft decontamination call 1-877-WGFD-AIS (1-800-943-3247).

Don't Move a Mussel

BEFORE YOU LAUNCH IN ANY WATER,

*protect your water resource and
boat motor from invasive zebra and
quagga mussels by doing a*

SELF-CHECK

Follow these simple steps to protect your waters:

- ✓ **DRAIN** All water must be drained from your boat. This includes the ballast, bilge, livewell and motor. Leave wet compartments open.
- ✓ **CLEAN** Remove all plants, mud and debris from equipment and boat.
- ✓ **DRY** Dry your boat or equipment 5 days in the summer, 18 days spring/fall or 3 days of freezing.

Help protect Wyoming's
waters by making sure you
Don't Move a Mussel!

Please contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department if you see attached mussels on your equipment or in Wyoming waters. We can provide more information and assistance in removal. Call 1-877-WGFD-AIS - (877-943-3247)

**WYOMING GAME & FISH
DEPARTMENT**
"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"

**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!**
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

Updates on selected waters in Laramie Region

Hawk Springs Reservoir

Hawk Springs Reservoir, located approximately 70 miles northeast of Cheyenne, is one of the largest bodies of water (1,280 surface acres at full capacity) available for recreational use in Goshen County. It was constructed in the early 1930s for irrigation purposes and is operated by the Horse Creek Conservation District. In 1983 the Wyoming Legislature approved funds to rehabilitate the dam and water delivery system in return for guaranteed public access and a conservation pool for fisheries purposes. The original dam and outlet works were replaced in 1984. After reconstruction the reservoir has a maximum depth of 34 feet and may fluctuate about 19 vertical feet to the conservation pool. The reservoir is located within Hawk Springs State Park and allowable activities include fishing, boating, and camping. Public facilities include parking areas, vault toilets, and boat ramp. Hawk Springs Reservoir is sampled annually and in 2010 walleye captured in sampling gear ranged from 6 to 22 inches and weights ranged from 0.1 to 4.0 pounds. The other primary game fish besides walleye in the reservoir is channel catfish. Channel catfish captured in sampling gear in 2010 ranged in length from 12 to 23 inches and weights ranged from 0.5 to 4.5 pounds. Crappie (black and white) in 2010 ranged in length from 5 to 13 inches (picture below). Other game fish available to anglers are largemouth bass and yellow perch. About 10,000 largemouth bass fingerlings were stocked in 2008. Walleye stocking was discontinued from 2006 through 2008, based on natural reproduction success, but recent evaluations prompted that annual stocking be reinitiated. Therefore in 2009 and 2010, around 80,000 walleye fingerling were stocked and 80,000 will continue to be stocked annually, along with 2,500 channel catfish.



Snowy Range Lakes



Sucker Lake brook trout

The Snowy Range Lakes lie within the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest. A number of lakes are within the Scenic Roadless Area established in 1970. Lakes in the Snowy Range are classified as alpine lakes and all are above 8,000 feet in elevation. The Snowy Range Lakes are an important recreation area for residents and non-residents. Contact the Forest Service for maps and information on allowable activities. Given that there are over a hundred alpine lakes within the Snowy Range, the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew samples a handful every year. In 2010 Arrastre Lake, Campbell Lake, East Glacier Lake, Golden Lake, and Sucker Lake were sampled. Arrastre Lake has a naturally reproducing population of brook trout that average 8 inches in length. Campbell Lake also has a naturally reproducing population of brook trout that average 11 inches. East Glacier Lake is stocked annually with Bear River cutthroat, but also has a naturally reproducing population of brook trout. Bear River cutthroat in East Glacier Lake average about 9 inches. Golden Lake is also stocked with Bear River cutthroat and has a naturally reproducing population of brook trout. Golden Lake is fairly productive for an alpine lake, but it also winterkills periodically. Bear River cutthroat trout in Golden Lake average 14 inches and brook trout average 12 inches in length. Sucker Lake has a naturally reproducing population of brook trout that average 9 inches.

Summary of 2010 AIS Boat Inspections in Laramie Region

Watercraft inspections were conducted on 36 waters throughout Wyoming from May 22 through September 27, 2010. During that period, about 41,429 watercraft inspections were conducted. In the Laramie Region watercraft inspections were conducted from May 22 through September 18, 2010. During that period, about 2,254 watercraft inspections were conducted over 66 days.



Total hours spent conducting watercraft inspections in the Laramie Region was 2,361 hours. Inspections rose steadily through July and tapered off into August with the highest inspection activity occurring over the Labor Day holiday weekend.

The vast majority of watercraft inspected in the region were motorized. Based on registration state of inspected watercraft or trailer, use by resident boaters was much greater (79.2%) than by nonresident boaters (20.8%). The majority of nonresident use came from watercraft registered in Colorado, Nebraska, and Montana.

Of all watercraft inspected in the region, 74% were inspected one-time, while 26% were repeat boaters who had been through an inspection station in the Laramie Region more than one time during the season. Of those repeat boaters, the majority were inspected two times; the most was one Wyoming registered watercraft that was inspected in the region seven different times during the season. When asked what the last water the boater had been at within the last 30 days, most had been at Granite Reservoir, followed by Grayrocks Reservoir, WY, Hawk Springs Reservoir, WY, and Glendo Reservoir, WY. Within that 30 day time period, boaters indicated they had been to over 90 different waters in seven states (Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming).

Boaters were also asked what water they would be boating at next. Although 56% of boaters interviewed said it was unknown what water they would visit next, some useful information on boater movement was still gathered from this questioning. Of boaters that responded, the majority said they would next visit Grayrocks Reservoir, WY (30.5%). Other responses included Granite Reservoir, WY (20.6%), Hawk Springs Reservoir, WY (13.8%), and Glendo Reservoir, WY (12.0%). In total, boaters indicated they would travel to over 50 different waters in seven states (Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) after boating in the region.

Monitoring for AIS was also conducted at numerous waters throughout Wyoming. Plankton tow sampling for larval mussels (veligers) was conducted at 44 waters throughout Wyoming from May through October 2010. To date, all samples received are negative. Plankton tow sampling for larval mussels was conducted at these Laramie Region waters Crystal Reservoir, Granite Reservoir, Grayrocks Reservoir, Hawk Springs Reservoir, Lake Owen, Rob Roy Reservoir, Saratoga Lake, Wheatland Reservoir #1, and North Crow Reservoir.



AIS boat inspection at Granite Reservoir

Laramie Region Reservoir Levels (finally some water)

Wyoming is the 5th driest state, so even during years with normal precipitation water availability for recreation is at a premium. The drought which started in 1999 impacted water levels in southeast Wyoming. Boating was difficult or impossible and many fisheries suffered. The drought eased somewhat in 2008. In 2009 water conditions improved in many locations and 2010 brought an above average snowpack to southeast Wyoming. Here's an update on several specific reservoirs. For information on Springer and Bump Sullivan Reservoirs see the separate article on page 6.

Lake Hattie: Lake Hattie did not receive water from 2002 through 2008. Water levels receded to the point where the reservoir had three distinct parts. At the lowest level in 2008 the reservoir was 1,300 surface acres of a possible 3,000. In 2009 Lake Hattie raised 10 vertical feet. In 2010 good snow pack and a very wet spring resulted in the reservoir filling. The main boat ramp is now available. Leaking control valves in the outlet structure to the North Canal forced the partial lowering to evaluate needed repairs. Good snowpack during the 2011 winter indicates the reservoir will fill again, depending on the schedule for repairs to the outlet. Fish stocking continued through the drought and the number of fish stocked is increasing proportionately to the water level. Lake Hattie supports a diverse fishery including yellow perch, rainbow trout, Bear River cutthroat, brown trout and kokanee salmon.

Twin Buttes Reservoir: Water for the reservoir comes from Lake Hattie by canal. With reduced water levels in Lake Hattie no water was available. Water became very salty with evaporation, which limited survival of stocked fish. Fish stocking stopped after 2008. The few fish, mainly brown trout, still present in the reservoir

were able to survive because they had slowly acclimated to the salty conditions. In 2010 Twin Buttes water was again available and the lake filled. The salinity was diluted and fish could once again be stocked. During the winter of 2011 2,000 rainbow trout brood fish (average size 12 inches) were stocked through the ice. Normal stocking of 10,000 rainbow trout will resume in 2011.

Wheatland Reservoir #3: This reservoir has very junior water rights and is one of the last to receive water. As a result fish stocking ceased in 2003 as water receded. During the spring of 2009 the reservoir was filled and water reached the base of the boat ramp. This was adequate water to allow fish stocking to resume. A total of 265,397 fish were stocked through the summer and fall thanks to the efforts of the Fish Culture Section. Stocked species included nearly all trout species. Most of the fish were less than 3 inches. In 2010 the reservoir received even more water. An additional 176,412 fish of various sizes and species were stocked in 2010. The growth of fish stocked in 2009 has been amazing with some Snake River cutthroat approaching 20 inches in only two years. Walleye have made their way into Wheatland Res #3 from Wheatland Res #2 and have re-established a population.

Grayrocks Reservoir: Grayrocks Reservoir filled in 2010 for the first time in several years. All boat ramps are now accessible to boaters and angler use is increasing. Water use plans by the reservoir operator and improved snowpack in the drainage indicate that the reservoir will likely maintain good levels for the next several years. When water levels started to improve in 2009 walleye stocking was increased proportionately to the new levels. Several strong year classes of fish are utilizing the abundant forage found in newly flooded areas of the lake.



Plains killifish

Meet your native fish

The northern plains killifish is native to the North Platte and South Platte River drainages in Wyoming. It is a small fish that can reach a length of up to 4 inches. Its color is light brown to white with 12 or more dark vertical bars along the sides. Breeding males are more brightly colored than females with bright orange fins. Northern plains killifish prefer shallow streams with sand or gravel substrates, and can be found in lowland streams in Laramie and Goshen Counties, such as Horse Creek and Crow Creek. Conservation of this species within its native range in Wyoming is important to help maintain the diversity of native fishes in the state.

Springer and Bump Sullivan Reservoirs



Mention the Springer Wildlife Habitat Management Area and memories of cool mornings, pheasants, geese and your favorite old dog come to mind. With the recent abundant water available in the Horse Creek Drainage fishing trips may soon be added to those memories. Springer is located 15 miles south of Torrington, just off Highway 85. There's exciting news for anglers related to the two reservoirs.

Bump Sullivan Reservoir has been completely dry for several years. Abundant water in the drainage, the cleaning of 12 miles of ditch by the WGFH Habitat and Access Branch and cooperation with landowners has resulted in the reservoir being filled. The full reservoir enabled stocking of 5,400 largemouth bass, 15,000 bluegill and 19,000 black crappie. These were all small fish so it will take a little while for them to grow. All the fish species present in Horse Creek can also find their way into Bump Sullivan Reservoir.

Springer Reservoir (also called Goshen Hole Reservoir) was severely drawn down during the drought. Like many of the other reservoirs in Southeast Wyoming, Springer Reservoir filled in 2010. Springer Reservoir has been a popular fishing and recreation area and fishing will improve following the stocking of 60,000 walleye and 3,600 largemouth bass in 2010.

The good water conditions in newly filled or refilled reservoirs create an environment for fast growth of fish. Look for great fishing starting during the summer of 2011. These two reservoirs will provide great angling as long as adequate water supplies continue.

Creel Surveys: Why, How, Where

The ultimate goal of nearly all fisheries management and research on standing waters in Wyoming is to provide recreational opportunities for anglers. Therefore, any assessment of fisheries management programs should incorporate some measure of angler success or satisfaction. The science of surveying anglers and their catch is one of the major tools utilized by fisheries managers throughout North America. The type, complexity, and extent of surveys vary widely and only by developing management goals or criteria beforehand can fisheries managers develop the most appropriate type of angler survey. Intensive creel surveys can provide estimates of total harvest and total pressure. We call these "programmed creel surveys" and they follow accepted statistical sampling theory in an attempt to achieve estimators of interest that are unbiased and precise.

Programmed creel surveys are periodically conducted on many of the standing waters within Wyoming. These surveys attempt to gather data to allow for calculation of as many aspects of fishing use and success as possible and yield monthly estimates of pressure, a multitude of catch statistics, angler residency information, etc. A programmed creel survey is typically conducted for a 3 to 6 month period during the peak fishing season, but may last up to a year. In an attempt to approximate a true instantaneous count of anglers, aircraft are sometimes utilized when making angler counts for large lakes and reservoirs.



The Laramie Fisheries Management Crew has most recently conducted programmed creel surveys at Lake Owen (2009) and Saratoga Lake (2010). Future programmed creel surveys planned are for Rob Roy Reservoir (2011), Grayrocks Reservoir (2012), Laramie Plains Lakes (2013), North Platte River (2014), and Wheatland Reservoir #3 (2015).

Encampment River Watershed Projects

As part of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Strategic Habitat Plan, the Encampment River watershed has been identified as an Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Priority Watershed. The Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist and Fisheries Management Crew are actively working on several habitat projects in the watershed. These projects will benefit all fish species throughout the watershed, but in particular trout species.

In the upper portion of the watershed, WGFD is working on a fish passage project with Trout Unlimited and the United States Forest Service. The project entails the removal of a large concrete weir that spans the river channel on the East Fork Encampment River near the confluence with the Encampment River. The structure was installed in the 1970s to gage streamflow for a timber harvest study and is no longer in use. During summer low flows, the structure is a barrier to upstream fish movements. The removal is slated for late summer 2011 and will reconnect the East Fork Encampment River to the Encampment River. Removing the weir and restoring the stream channel will provide access to wild trout for spawning habitat in the East Fork Encampment River. Funding for the project will also be provided by the Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust Fund.



East Fork Encampment weir

Below the Town of Riverside, the Encampment River is highly unstable with areas of bank erosion, extensive mid-channel bar and transverse bar development, channel degradation and aggradation. Causes of the instability include: historic tie drives, mining, channel dredging, and

water diversions. A stream assessment and river restoration design plan was initiated in 2010 on 3.5 miles of the Encampment River below Riverside with funding provided by the WGFD and Trout Unlimited.

The first on-the-ground project from this large planning



Encampment River below Town of Riverside

effort is slated to start in late summer 2011. About 2,000 feet of stream channel will be reconfigured. The restoration design plan calls for excavating pools, narrowing riffles, installing grade-control structures (cross-vanes), changing the radius at meanders, and planting riparian vegetation. Additionally, floodplain benches will be built to help the river access its floodplain during high flows. The decrease in sediment deposition along a narrower, deeper stream channel will create improved trout habitat and fish passage, especially during periods of low flow. Erosion of private adjacent pastures will be greatly reduced. Project partners include the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund, Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the landowner. Additional project partners are being sought to continue the project downstream.

As these fish passage and stream restoration projects are initiated in the Encampment River Watershed, the Laramie Region anticipates working with project partners to develop more habitat projects to benefit aquatic wildlife.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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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."

Many Thanks to Newsletter Contributors: Steve Gale, Lee McDonald, Christina Barrineau, Mike Snigg, and Beth Bear. Color illustrations of game fish used in this newsletter provided by artist Michelle LaGory.

Mike Snigg 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.



Mike Snigg

Steve Gale 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 completed his Master's in Fisheries Management from Montana State University in 2005.



Lee McDonald

Lee McDonald 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 30 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 Barrineau

Christina Barrineau was hired as the regional aquatic habitat biologist in August of 2004. She is originally from South Carolina and moved to Wyoming in 2000. 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.



Steve Gale