



“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People”

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Fish Division
What do we do?

The Fish Division is responsible for the management of all Wyoming’s aquatic wildlife including fish, mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians, and reptiles. The Division continues to strive to meet the dual purpose of conserving native species and maintaining high quality sport fishing opportunities. Our mission is to be stewards of Wyoming’s aquatic resources, committed to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations through scientific resource management and informed public participation. We use an integrated program of protection, regulation, propagation, restoration, and control to provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities. Our efforts balance the productive capacity of habitats with public desires.

In 2012, anglers spent an estimated 2.2 million days fishing in Wyoming. The Fish Division strived to meet the needs of anglers, fish, and fish habitat in 2012. The Aquatic Habitat Section completed 123 habitat projects, such as streambank protection, providing fish passage, and creating essential fish habitat. The Fish Management Section completed 649 surveys evaluating species conservation and sport fisheries quality. The Water Management Section filed 14 in-stream flow filings. The Fish Culture Section stocked 220 tons of trout, kokanee, grayling and over 2.1 million warmwater fish such as walleye, channel catfish, and tiger muskie.

The Fish Division will continue to meet the needs of anglers fishing in Wyoming to the best of our ability through our commitment to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations.

2014-2015

Fish Regulations Timeline

If you are looking to participate in the formulation of the 2014-2015 fishing regulations, please note the timeline below and specific dates to participate.

April 23, 2013 - Public Comment Period opens. Public comments can be submitted in-person, by phone, online (wgfd.wyo.gov), or by attending one of the public meetings.

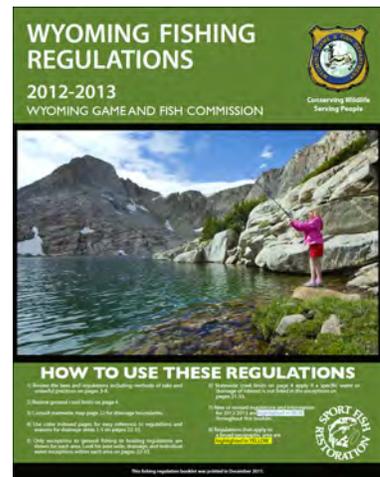
May 1 to June 6, 2013 - Public Meetings will be held throughout Wyoming. Check with you local Game and Fish office or online (wgfd.wyo.gov) for dates, times, and locations. Laramie meeting, May 22, 2013 at the West Laramie Fire Station #3, 7-9 p.m.

June 7, 2013 - Deadline for Public Comments

July 2013—Proposed Fish Regulations for 2014-2015 will be presented to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission for their approval. Commission meeting will be in Saratoga, check with your local Game and Fish office or online (wgfd.wyo.gov) for

Special points of interest:

- Wyoming’s Free Fishing day is Saturday June 1, 2013!
- Summary of last year’s activities.
- Aquatic Invasive Species News
- Unique fishing opportunities
- Look for the WGFD on Facebook and YouTube!



Watercraft Inspections at Borders



By now you've heard of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and are well aware of the damaging effects invasive species such as zebra and quagga mussels could have on Wyoming's water resources. Just a few of the negative impacts invasive species can have include impeding water delivery, clogging pipes and pumps used to supply your drinking water, clogging water intakes on your boat which can destroy the motor, and removing the food source for many of the fish you enjoy catching.

Now for the part you may not have heard yet. The 2012 Wyoming State legislature passed a new statute. The statute requires a boat transported into Wyoming from March 1 through November 30, to be inspected for AIS before being launched in Wyoming. Additionally, any watercraft that has been in a water infested with zebra or quagga mussels within the last 30 days, is required to undergo a **mandatory inspection** before launching in Wyoming *during ALL months of the year*. While we realize that this may take some adjustment for boaters and is an added requirement when bringing your boat into Wyoming, it is a necessary step to keep our waters free of harmful invasive species.

The goal is to make it as easy as possible for nonresident boaters and resident boaters transporting their boat back into the state to get this mandatory inspection. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) will staff check stations at key entrances into the state as frequently as possible during the boating season (April 15 through September) and we encourage all boaters to plan ahead to have their watercraft inspected at one of these locations.

In the Laramie Region, watercraft check stations will be operated at the **Torrington US Hwy 26 Port of Entry (POE)**, the **Cheyenne Interstate 25 POE**, the **Cheyenne Interstate 80 POE**, the **Laramie US Hwy 287 POE**, and at regional waters on a rotating basis. Hours and location information for each of these stations can be found on the WGFD webpage at wgfd.wyo.gov/AIS. If you require an inspection during other times, please contact your regional WGFD office or 1-877-WGFD-AIS (943-3247) to schedule an inspection.

If you never boat outside of Wyoming this season or are not a boater at all, we encourage you to keep doing your part in preventing the spread of AIS in Wyoming by always remembering to Drain, Clean and Dry. **DRAIN** all water from your fishing gear and equipment including waders and boots. **CLEAN** all plants, mud, and debris from gear and equipment. Never move a plant or animal from one location to another. **DRY** your gear thoroughly. By doing this each and every time you fish or boat, you won't be the one that moves an invasive species to your favorite water.

There are no known populations of zebra or quagga mussels in Wyoming to date, but they have rapidly invaded waters across the country and are present in over 34 states including Colorado, Nebraska and Utah. They could be present in Wyoming waters before our monitoring can detect them, so even if you only boat or fish in Wyoming, it is important that you always Drain, Clean, and Dry. There are currently populations of other invasive species in Wyoming (Asian clam, New Zealand mudsnail, and curly pondweed) and we do not want these species moved to another water. You can report an aquatic invasive species sighting by emailing ReportAIS@wyo.gov.

More information can be found at: wgfd.wyo.gov



Adopt-A-Trout Program arrives in Laramie

by Scott Christy (Wyoming Trout Unlimited)

Imagine this. Take a bunch of Wyoming 4th to 8th graders and involve them in an ongoing science study following fish movement on a local stream over the course of their entire school year. To start the whole thing off, get the kids out on the stream at the start to see telemetry tracking tags inserted in fish. Over the school year, have them 'adopt' the fish and follow along with the movement of their fish from the classroom. Finish the school year with a day of conservation work on the study stream with Trout Unlimited, agency partners, fisheries managers, teachers, and the kids themselves. That is exactly what Wyoming Trout Unlimited (WYTU) is doing to create the next generation of conservationists and fisheries stewards with their Adopt-A-Trout program.



Adopt-A-Trout has been well-received by Wyoming's educators as a great opportunity to get their students involved in actual ongoing science with a connection to local places. Starting in 2007 with a single program on the Gros Ventre river, Adopt-A-Trout has grown quickly to six programs across Wyoming in the 2012/2013 school year including Lander, Meeteetse, Laramie, Jackson, Big Piney, and Evanston. At the heart of each Adopt-A-Trout program lies a fisheries movement study. To maximize the science value of each program, WYTU works directly with fisheries biologists from agency partners such as the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the United States Forest Service, and the United States Geological Survey to design studies. Information on barriers to fish movement, species distribution, habitat utilization, and critical spawning areas is often sought. These studies are typically accomplished with telemetry tracking equipment very similar to the technology used to track other wildlife such as bears or wolves. After deciding on a rough study design, WYTU seeks a local school district classroom to partner with for the study duration. Throughout the school year TU staff, TU volunteers, and fisheries management professionals visit the classroom monthly to present new data from the studies and follow up with additional fish related curriculum.



*Laramie Adopt-A-Trout Program
October 2012 Field Day*

In Laramie, two 5th grade classes from Indian Paintbrush Elementary are participating in the program. Kicking the program off was a field day on the water last October. Laramie Adopt-A-Trout students learned about telemetry equipment use, macro invertebrates, fly casting, and electro-fishing while having the opportunity to witness the surgeries that implanted the telemetry tags in the fish. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Trout Unlimited are using the Adopt-A-Trout study in Laramie to look at the migratory movements of twenty radio-tagged wild brown trout from the Laramie River that used Spring Creek, an urban stream in Laramie, as a spawning tributary in 2012. As the spring thaw comes to the Laramie Valley and the school year heads toward summer, WYTU will organize a second streamside field day with the kids to complete a conservation project related to the wild brown trout in the Laramie River drainage.



Wild brown trout in Spring Creek

Splake in the Snowy Range

Splake are a hybrid fish produced by crossing a brook trout male with a lake trout female. Splake have several characteristics that make them useful in fishery management. Splake are predators that primarily feed on other fish. Because they don't readily reproduce the number of fish in a lake is controlled by the number of fish stocked. In Wyoming, splake are used as a control for species less desirable to anglers and to increase the average size of brook trout by preying upon abundant smaller brook trout. Splake also provide an additional species for anglers, as well as the opportunity to catch a large fish. In 2012, the lakes in the Snowy Range stocked with splake were evaluated to determine the status of their management.

Turpin Creek Reservoir is an example where stocking of splake is successful. This lake has a wild brook trout population that would normally include numerous small brook trout. With splake present the average size of brook trout is over nine inches and many individuals are 12 inches in length. In addition, the average size of splake is 12 inches and one fish caught during sampling was over 22 inches. These are very good fish sizes for a high elevation, alpine reservoir.



Big Brooklyn Lake splake captured in 2012

Big Brooklyn Lake, Libby Lake and Lewis Lake had sampling results similar to Turpin Creek Reservoir. For all of these lakes, the average brook trout were over nine inches and the average splake was over 14 inches. Large splake up to 22 inches were caught in Big Brooklyn Lake and 17 inch splake were captured in Lewis and Libby lakes. The longnose sucker population in Big Brooklyn Lake is successfully being controlled by splake. Libby Lake is not stocked with splake, but they drift downstream from Lewis Lake. The previous state record splake was from Libby Lake.



Nice brook trout, the result of splake stocking

Two lakes where splake stocking is not proving successful are South Twin Lake in Carbon County and Little Brooklyn Lake. In South Twin Lake the splake are not providing effective control of the sucker population and are not growing large enough to interest anglers. In Little Brooklyn Lake the average size of brook trout remains smaller than desirable in spite of splake stocking. Catchable size (8-10 inches) rainbow or cutthroat stocking will replace splake stocking in these lakes.

Another location other than the Snowy Range where anglers can fish for splake is North Crow Reservoir in Curt Gowdy State Park. The current state record was caught out of North Crow Reservoir in 2011.



8-pound splake captured during sampling in 2010 at North Crow Reservoir

Wheatland Reservoir #1 study on gizzard shad stocking

Management of game fish species and their prey items can be challenging due to extreme water fluctuations of irrigation storage reservoirs. In most irrigation storage reservoirs with public access in Wyoming, principle management objectives have been to maximize or optimize production of naturally reproducing or stocked sport fishes, particularly predators, such as walleye. Walleye generally rely on near shore prey fish assemblages for food and their population, growth, and body condition) are intimately tied to prey availability. Consequently, forage fish management is an integral part of sport fisheries management. The occasional or annual stocking of adult gizzard shad into Wyoming waters is a fisheries management tool used by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for large reservoirs with reproducing or stocked populations of warm and coolwater game fish. Stocked adult gizzard shad reproduce creating abundant forage for game fish species. Wheatland Reservoir #1, located near Wheatland, in Platte County, is one Wyoming water that has a history of adult gizzard shad stocking. Wheatland Reservoir #1 is a 424 surface acre irrigation and is operated by the Wheatland Irrigation District. Public access was allowed in 1991 after a lease agreement was signed between the Wheatland Irrigation District and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). The original lease from 1991 through 2011 allowed recreational activities. This 20-year lease between the Wheatland Irrigation District and the WGFD was renewed in 2011 and will last until 2031. Gizzard shad stocking into Wheatland Reservoir #1 ceased for several years and in 2004 reduced growth and body condition were noted for walleye and channel catfish. Based on this data it was determined to once again stock adult gizzard shad in the spring into Wheatland Reservoir #1. Adult gizzard shad were stocked



from 2005 through 2008. The objective of this study was to document the long-term trends in walleye and channel catfish growth and body condition following spring adult gizzard shad stocking. One hundred sixteen walleye were captured during annual fall gill netting from 2006 through 2009, of which 102 were aged. The annual spring stocking of adult gizzard shad significantly increased body condition for most sizes of walleye when compared to years when gizzard shad were not stocked. Eighty one channel catfish were captured during fall gill netting from 2006 through 2009, of which 65 were aged. Channel catfish body condition and growth were not significantly affected by gizzard shad stocking. However, given the high body condition values for walleye, adult gizzard shad stocking into Wheatland Reservoir #1 will continue. Another potential benefit to annual adult gizzard shad stocking is reduced predation on other prey items in Wheatland Reservoir #1 such as spottail shiner and yellow perch, due to the abundance of young gizzard shad.



Orangethroat darter

Meet your native fish

The orangethroat darter 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 2.5 inches. Its color is brown or olive with dark dorsal saddles and vertical bars. Breeding males are more brightly colored than females with vertical blue bars, orange spots, and a bright orange and blue dorsal fin. Orangethroat darter prefer sand or gravel substrates, and can be found in lowland streams in Laramie and Platte Counties, such as Lodgepole Creek and the Laramie River, below Grayrocks Reservoir. Conservation of this species within its native range in Wyoming is important to help maintain the diversity of native fishes in the state.

Creel Surveys in the Laramie Region

Reservoirs, lakes, rivers, and streams in Wyoming all have management objectives that fisheries biologist use to evaluate the status of a fishery. Fishery biologists collect data to determine if various waters are meeting their management objectives and make necessary changes based on analysis of the data. Two types of data can be collected; one type reflects the status of the fish themselves and includes population data, size of fish, growth rates and fish survival. Creel survey data is the other type. Creel data can provide estimates of the utilization of a fishery by anglers. From a creel survey, biologists obtain data on the number of anglers fishing a water; the total hours they fished; catch rate (the average number of fish caught per hour); the number, size and species caught; utilization of stocked fish; residency of anglers and what kind of tackle they used. Based on the analysis of the data adjustments to the number, size, timing or species of fish stocked can be made. In addition, biologists can determine if fishing regulations like creel limits or size restrictions are appropriate. The information on angler use is also of interest to anglers as it relates to their favorite fishing spot.

Creel survey information from **Lake Owen** (summer 2009), **Rob Roy Reservoir** (summer 2011), and **Saratoga Lake** (summer 2010):

| Creel survey estimates | Lake Owen | Rob Roy Reservoir | Saratoga Lake |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|
| Total number of anglers | 6,148 | 3,529 | 2,990 |
| Total hours fished | 19,073 | 13,586 | 9,006 |
| Catch rate (fish per hour) | 0.97 | 0.46 | 0.28 |
| Fish caught and released | 9,017 | 3,192 | 507 |
| Fish caught and kept | 12,742 | 3,099 | 616 |

This information confirms that Lake Owen exceeded the management objective that anglers should average a catch rate of 0.5 fish per hour. We also determined that nearly all of the fish stocked each year are caught (some kept-some released), most anglers are from Albany and Laramie counties, anglers fish with bait (60%) or flies (17%) and many more anglers fish from the bank than from boats.

At Rob Roy Reservoir the number of fish caught corresponds well with the number stocked and the catch rate meets the management objective. Boat anglers are much more successful at Rob Roy Reservoir than bank anglers.

Data collected in 2010 indicates improvement since the last creel survey in 2004. A management change implemented due to data collected during the creel survey is that Bear River cutthroat will no longer be stocked and will be replaced by increasing the number of rainbow trout stocked annually. Despite being stocked for 5 years, Bear River cutthroat were not being caught by anglers as frequently as rainbow trout.

Nearly 3,000 anglers fished at Saratoga Lake during the summer of 2010. While the rainbow trout catch rate is below our management objective, the 2010 rainbow trout catch rate has improved over the previous survey in 2004 and the size of rainbow trout caught was larger.



Counting boat anglers at Grayrocks Reservoir

A creel survey conducted at Grayrocks Reservoir during June 2012 collected interesting information on the current state of this fishery. Several species made up the total estimated catch of 38,374 fish in the month of June; 15,400 smallmouth bass, 12,704 walleye, 6,684 black crappie, 1,669 yellow perch, 1,276 freshwater drum, 465 carp, and 176 channel catfish.

Creel survey information from Grayrocks Reservoir, June 2012:

| | Creel survey estimates |
|--|------------------------|
| Total number of anglers | 3,434 |
| Total hours fished | 18,098 |
| Catch rate all species (fish per hour) | 2.12 |
| Catch rate walleyes | 0.70 |
| Total fish caught (all species) | 38,374 |

Funding aquatic habitat projects by *Christina Barrineau*

Since 2004, I have worked as the Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). I feel privileged to work in Wyoming and love its diversity and abundance of habitats and wildlife. My region covers over 13,000 square miles, and has thousands of miles of streams and numerous lakes and reservoirs. Needless to say, I haven't even come close to visiting all these waters. Each year I focus my work on particular areas, such as the Laramie River or Douglas Creek Watershed. Over the past few years, I've been able to work with many different organizations such as Trout Unlimited, Laramie Rivers Conservation District, Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District, US Forest Service, City of Laramie, and many, many others to put habitat projects on-the-ground for the wildlife and people of Wyoming. One of the more important tools WGFD has for getting habitat projects up and running is the WGFD Habitat Trust Fund. So far, I've yet to meet a contractor who will work for free, so having the ability to match funds from others helps get projects on-the-ground.



Planting willow stakes along newly restored meander bend of the Encampment River

In 1986, when the WGFD Habitat Trust Fund was created, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission stated habitat is the single most important factor contributing to the abundance and diversity of wildlife in Wyoming. The WGFD Trust Fund was created by transferring \$2.2 million from the general fund of WGFD, which is generated from license sales. Additional monies from conservation stamps, publication sales, donations, and interest accrued on license applications are the only sources used to further build the Trust

Fund corpus. Today the Trust Fund corpus is roughly \$25 million and continues to accrue money from conservation stamps and monetary donations. Each year the interest from the corpus has been used to fund habitat projects around the state such as prescribed burns, noxious weed treatments, wetland developments, education materials, river restorations, and fish passage projects - just to name a few. The corpus remains untouched to make sure money is available to fund future habitat projects. This fund drives many of the duties I and other habitat biologists perform for residents of Wyoming.

Over the past five years the WGFD Trust Fund has awarded on average \$1 million per year for many wildlife and fisheries habitat projects. Every dollar from the WGFD Trust Fund has been matched with a minimum of \$2.80 to as high as \$16.50 from other sources of funding, such as Federal and State agencies, private landowners, and nonprofit organizations such as Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited. These funding sources have contributed almost \$4 million to over \$18 million towards habitat conservation each of the past five years. A majority of that money comes directly back to local economies of WY when we use local contractors to complete many of these projects. For example, several of the projects I've worked on have used local SE Wyoming contractors, including work on the Laramie River and East Fork Encampment River.

Over the past year you may have heard about the current and future financial situation of the WGFD. As many of you know, our Department sought additional funding through a license fee increase during the 2013 legislative session, but the legislation did not pass. As a result, several cuts were made to our Fiscal Year 14 budget. One of the significant cuts was a 50% reduction, or approximately \$500,000, in Habitat Trust Fund dollars for habitat projects. If we account for the matching money from our various partners we have secured for every Trust Fund dollar the past 5 years, this cut represents nearly \$2 million and potentially much more. So, the next time you buy a conservation stamp at \$12.50, we at WGFD will work hard to turn that into at least \$47 dollars of on-the-ground habitat work to benefit the fish and wildlife you enjoy. Who knows we may even be providing work for your friend who joins you on your next fishing trip. We thank you for your support and hopefully, I'll see you on the river!

Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
[HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov)

"Conserving Wildlife — Serving People"



Look for us on



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, Beth Bear, and Scott Christy. Photo credits: Steve Gale, Lee McDonald, and Christina Barrineau. Color illustrations of game fish used in this newsletter provided by artist Michelle LaGory.

Laramie Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Management Crew manage and conserve your aquatic wildlife and habitat in over 5,500 miles of streams and rivers, and in almost 300 lakes and reservoirs in an area that is over 13,000 square miles.

Mike Snigg has been on the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew since 1985 and has been the Regional Fisheries Supervisor since 2003. Mike has over 30 years with the Department. After obtaining his Bachelor's from Simpson College in Iowa, he received his Master's from UW.

Lee McDonald transferred to the Regional Fisheries Biologist position from the Fish Culture Section in 2006. Prior to this assignment he was Superintendent of the Como Bluff Fish Hatchery in Rock River. Lee has over 30 years with the Department. He received his BS in Fishery Science from Colorado State University.

Steve Gale was hired as a Regional Fisheries Biologist in 2005. Steve received his Bachelor's in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the University of Nebraska and his Master's in Fisheries Management from Montana State University.

Christina Barrineau was hired as the Regional Aquatic Habitat Biologist in 2004. Christina received her Bachelor of Science degree from Warren Wilson College in North Carolina and her Master's in Zoology from the University of Wyoming.



Mike Snigg



Lee McDonald



Christina Barrineau



Steve Gale