



# Lander Region Angler News

## Boysen Reservoir

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Think BIG, fish production should be very good at Boysen Reservoir this year!

Drought had its affect on Boysen Reservoir. During the time of receding shorelines, forage and juvenile fish were pulled into open water where they became easy targets to predators. Adult walleye dominated the Boysen fishery.

Two strong walleye year classes, age 7 and 8, carried the walleye fishery the past few years. So far these two cohorts have only suffered an estimated 14% mortality.

With the increasing water level last year, walleye recruitment has improved. Twenty five percent of the walleye sampled in 2004 were

age 1. By age 4 this year class of walleye will be around 15 inches. Walleye recruitment should continue to be good if the flooded terrestrial vegetation remains available for nursery habitat for juvenile fish.

Thousands of acres of flooded terrestrial vegetation now serve as nursery habitat for most fish species and spawning habitat for yellow perch. Our sampling in 2004 confirmed that juvenile fish have benefited. Two strong year classes of yellow perch reflect the gradual filling and inundating of terrestrial vegetation.

We are working to improve crappie fishing at Boysen. In June 2005, we placed large tree structures North of Tough

Creek. Rocky Mountain Discount Sports purchased concrete for the project. We would like to thank them for their support for improving fishing opportunities, especially for kids. It may take a few years of habitat work to make a difference. We'll keep you posted through our newsletters.



**Tree Structures in Boysen**

**Department Personnel**

• **Lander Fisheries Managers**

**Dave Dufek**

**Kevin Johnson**

**Joe Deromedi**

• **Lander Aquatic Habitat**

**Dennis Oberlie**

• **Dubois Hatchery**

**Al Gettings**

**Kelly Todd**

**Travis Trimble**

## A & M Reservoir

This once popular fishery south of Green Mountain had been dry for several years. In 2004 the Bureau of Land Management installed a new well and pump a short distance above the reservoir. With the help of additional pumping from existing wells

by Merit Energy Company, the reservoir was filled in early 2005. Fish were stocked soon afterwards and should reach a catchable size by late summer.

We are looking forward to having this very productive

fishery back in action. We are grateful for the work of the BLM and the generous cooperation and assistance by the people of Merit Energy Company in Bairoil.



## Native Fishes of the Wind/Bighorn River



**Sauger from the Little Wind River.**

**Sauger Study-** Kris Kuhn, a graduate student from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research unit, began fieldwork for Phase II of the native sauger study in the Wind River Drainage during May 2004. This study is a cooperative effort involving the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lander regional offices, Shoshone and Arapahoe tribes, the University of Wyoming, and approximately 75 private landowners. Kris inventoried and mapped approximately 59 miles of riverine habitat in the Little Wind and Popo Agie rivers. Emphasis was placed on identifying and describing habitat potentially used by adult sauger during the winter and for spawning in the spring. During early September, Kris captured and surgically implanted 50 adult sauger with radio transmitters. He tracked the fish throughout the winter and will continue to track them through spawning time in late spring to gather information on

spawning habitat, timing, and location.

Patrick Lionberger is the graduate student who will be conducting Phase III of the sauger study. He conducted preliminary investigations during May through August 2004 to determine methodologies for capturing immature sauger within the drainage. The majority of his effort involved seining, trapping, and electrofishing of river habitat within the drainage. Though he captured approximately 39,500 fish, including 27 different species, no young sauger were found. During 2005, Patrick will concentrate most of his efforts on attempting to locate sub-adult sauger within Boysen Reservoir. Different sampling gears and techniques have been discussed and will be used with the hope of capturing enough young sauger to be able to describe habitat needs. Future monitoring schemes would also be developed from this effort.

**Burbot Study**—Ling, common name for burbot, is a native fish species to the Wind/Bighorn River that has decreased in abundance across its native range. Anecdotal information from anglers suggests that large ling have decreased in abundance. Sampling that targeted ling during the past few years has only produced medium to small sized ling.

Ling are relatively inactive during times when fisheries biologists have typically sampled other game fish. Therefore some state wildlife agencies don't have good trend information for ling. Fisheries biologists are working to improve their sampling knowledge for ling in an effort to better monitor size structure, population statistics, movement, spawning habitat, etc.



**"The Department will be working with the University of Wyoming over the next couple of years to increase our knowledge of the biology and population status of ling in the Wind River Drainage"**

## Fisheries in the Absaroka Range North of Dubois



**Deacon Lake** - Need exercise with reward. Hike into Deacon Lake on the upper Horse Creek watershed north of Dubois. A little over a mile hike uphill may reward you with some good action. Our sampling in 2004 revealed a high abundance of Yellowstone cutthroat trout averaging 15.6

inches in length. The fishery is provided through our helicopter stocking program.

**Brooks Lake**—Brooks Lake is a popular location during summer. But don't let traffic discourage you from fishing. We stock Brooks Lake annually and our sampling indicates that plenty of fish sur-

vive to the following year. If you want a more remote location hike to the Jade lakes or Upper Brooks Lake. These lakes are accessible by good trails and can be fished within a day trip.

## Fisheries in the Wind River Mountains West of Dubois

**Pelham Lake**—Located near the upper watershed in the Wind River Drainage, Pelham supports an ample population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Mean length has remained near 15 inches during the past few years. Please respect the remote feeling Pelham provides and pack out what you pack in. The hike is at most a short mile.

**Fish Lake**—You can drive to the shoreline of Fish Lake

which is located in the Wind River Mountains just off the continental divide. Access allows for the use of a small boat or canoe. Remember to hold your horses, use of internal combustion motors are prohibited on the lake. Fishing is good. Fish Lake is stocked annually with Snake River cutthroat trout. Mean length was 14.2 inches from our sampling in June.

**Torrey Drainage**—Torrey, Ring and Trail lakes are located a short distance east of Dubois. Fishing can be good but during the past year fishing has been below average. The lakes will be stocked with rainbow trout in May. We will be evaluating the survival of stocked fish over the next couple years to hopefully improve fishing. We will keep you informed with our findings.



**Torrey Lake occasionally yields some trophy sized lake trout.**

## Dubois Fish Hatchery Renovations

The Dubois Fish Hatchery is going through an extensive transformation in 2005. Because of this, the hatchery is closed to visitation and is not rearing any fish in 2005. Production should begin again in November, 2005 and the station should be in full production by March, 2006. The renovation involves replacing the troughs and plumbing in the hatchery building, removing all of the outside concrete raceways, and installing a new rearing system outside.

In the hatchery building, all of the old cement troughs were removed and replaced with new fiberglass units. Also, all pipework was replaced to allow for more efficient operations with small fish in the hatchery. The Dubois Hatchery will remain an important egg incubating station for our

other hatcheries in Wyoming and to other states.



On the outside, the station will look radically different. All of the concrete raceways were removed in April, 2005 and will be replaced with fiberglass circular units. The station will also utilize pumped water to increase the capacity of the station, and utilize several filter systems to improve the water quality. With this new technology, the quality of the fish should improve, the capacity of the

hatchery should increase, and the water quality of the discharged station water should improve as well.

This project was made possible through Game and Fish funding and through special funding appropriated by the Wyoming State Legislature in 2004. Our legislators recognize the importance of the hatcheries in Wyoming to both the residents and non-residents visiting the state. We hope to have the hatchery up and running by the end of 2005 and to have the station open to visitation in 2006. We also want to emphasize that all waters that have been traditionally stocked by the Dubois Hatchery in the past, will be stocked by other hatcheries in Wyoming in 2005.





## Shoshone Lake

Shoshone Lake is managed as a wild brook trout fishery and has had a restrictive regulation in effect since 1996. The limit was originally set at two fish, but due to concerns with increasing numbers and diminishing size and condition, the regulation was changed to allow the harvest of four brook trout beginning in 2002.



We monitor this important fishery in several ways. Gill netting is conducted every year to track the size structure of the brook trout population and give a general idea on number of fish. We interview anglers throughout the summer to gather information on catch rates and average size of fish in the catch. And lastly, we count the number of

spawning fish in the inlet stream every September and compare it to previous years.

Gill net yield showed a slight decline in average size, but a slight increase in numbers. As you may recall from last years newsletter, we predicted that average size would go down because of a large year class of older fish which are beginning to be lost to the population because of old age. However, two other strong year classes within the population should insure that fishing remains acceptable.

Angler interviews resulted in a calculated catch rate of 0.58 fish/hour. This is considerably lower than the average for other years from Shoshone Lake. However, the average

length of the fish was 15.6 inches, which is the highest it has been for over ten years.

Somewhat higher flows in Shoshone Creek resulted in spawning counts being the highest recorded since 2000, and over four times that counted last year.

We expect Shoshone Lake to provide some good fishing in 2005, though average size of the catch may be down slightly.

## Christina Lake

Christina Lake is a wild lake trout and brook trout fishery at the headwaters of the Little Popo Agie River. It is 340-acres in size and located at an elevation of 9,942 feet. In 1992, a fishing regulation limiting the take of lake trout to two fish per day was approved. Sampling with gill nets was performed in 2004 to help evaluate the success of the regulation and to determine any trends or changes in the fish populations of the lake. The catch was the highest since the somewhat standardized monitoring began in

1991. Comparison with 2002 netting results show an increase in both average length (17.1 inches) and relative weight (93). Relative weight is measure of how fat the fish are for a given length, and 93 is considered about average.

There have been limited comments received from anglers who would like to see the special regulation eliminated. They feel that high lake trout numbers are resulting in a stunted population with poorly conditioned fish. The available data do not confirm

this. If anything, the data show that the regulation has achieved its desired affect of increasing lake trout numbers and size. Furthermore, relative weights have actually increased, indicating that sufficient forage exists to support the present population levels.

Therefore, we are not proposing any changes in regulations for Christina Lake at this time. We plan to continue to monitor the lake trout population with gill netting every two years.



“Therefore, we are not proposing any changes in regulations for Christina Lake at this time.”



## Stough Creek Drainage

A survey of the Stough Creek Drainage within the Popo Agie Wilderness was completed during 2004. Footprint, Upper and Lower Toadstool, Cutthroat, and Big Stough lakes all offer good opportunities for some fast brook trout fishing. Fish sizes

are not large, but all of these lakes contain brook trout up to about 13 inches.

Blackrock Lake and the stream below it contain good numbers of Snake River cutthroat trout up to 17 inches in length.

If you want something a little different, give Palette and Dipper lakes a try. These lakes have some nice sized splake. The fish averaged about 16 inches, with the largest in the sample being 22.3 inches and 3.5 pounds.



**Splake from Dipper Lake**

## Ocean Lake

Beginning in 2004, our requests for walleye fingerling to be stocked into Ocean Lake increased from 160,000/year to 320,000/year. On July 1, 2004, a total of 361,950 walleye fingerling (1500/lb.) were stocked into the lake from Garrison National Fish Hatchery.

Our September netting program for Ocean Lake is designed to monitor the walleye population. 2004 marked the second straight year of increased catch in the sample. The sampling also showed that another strong walleye

year-class has entered the fishery. The new group of smaller fish is likely from fish stocked in 2000 or 2001. This age group should augment the fishery as the older age group (stocked in 1997) begins to be lost to old age.



We anticipate that anglers should continue to benefit

from increased walleye numbers. If you haven't tried fishing at Ocean lake in the past several years, we encourage you to give it a try. Early spring and mid-summer are often good times to catch walleye at Ocean. Because turbid water can hamper the feeding efficiency of predatory fish, we suggest you fish after 2-3 days of calm weather. The lack of wind action allows some of the suspended solids to settle out of the water column and feeding conditions for walleye improve.



**"We anticipate that anglers should continue to benefit from increased walleye numbers in Ocean Lake"**

## Dry Creek Drainage

Located just off the Wind River Reservation are several lakes at the headwater of Dry Creek. You can choose a short hike from Cold Springs (access from the Wind River Reservation) or take off from the Torrey Lake Trailhead.

There are many species of trout in the Dry Creek drainage. Golden trout seem to be the most popular. Lower Glacier and Golden lakes have only golden trout, some of which are nice sized. There are also Yellowstone cutthroat trout, brook trout, rainbow

trout and splake in the drainage.

Norman and Rock lakes in the South Fork of Dry Creek have hybrid goldbows.



**Goldbow**



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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.*

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## Aquatic Nuisance Species

Every water body is a unique ecological system. A particular fish, water plant, or other aquatic life form that belongs in one stream or lake may not belong in another. When a new organism arrives it may upset the delicate balance of the system, causing ecological or economic harm, thus the invading species is considered a nuisance. The common carp, the New Zealand mud snail, and the whirling disease organism are good examples of nuisances that can reduce the quality of Wyoming fisheries. Please don't move fish species from one water to another, **it is illegal!** Desirable fish in one water can become a nuisance in another.

Follow the procedures listed below every time you come in contact with any body of water. Because you never know where a nuisance species has been introduced, but has yet to be discovered. By doing so, you can protect your waters from harmful aquatic hitchhikers.

There are hundreds of different harmful species ranging from plants, fish, amphibians, crustaceans, mollusks, diseases or pathogens. Some organisms are so small you may not even realize they are hitching a ride with

you. So, it is important to follow this general procedure every time you leave any body of water.

- Remove all visible mud, plants, fish/animals.
- Eliminate water from all equipment before transporting anywhere.
- Clean and dry anything that came in contact with the water.
- Do not release or put plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.

**Being careful will help preserve the quality of Wyoming fishing.**

