



Wyoming Game & Fish  
Department

Conserving Wildlife—Serving People

# Lander Region Angler News - 2013 Edition

Lander Region Angler News

2013 Edition

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## Habitat Funding – How WGFD puts your money to use

Snow capped mountains, vast vistas, abundant fish and wildlife, and large swaths of public access are a few of the qualities I've come to love about Wyoming since moving here in 2005 to work for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) as a habitat biologist. Over these past eight years of work I've learned habitat is a difficult concept to thoroughly explain and connect to fish and wildlife populations. However, I'll bet that many of us will agree habitat is the most important factor contributing to the abundance and diversity of wildlife in Wyoming. The WGF commission believed that same statement back in April 1986 when the WGFD Trust Fund was established for the purpose of protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat throughout Wyoming.

The WGFD Trust Fund was created by transferring \$2.2 million from the general fund of the Game and Fish, 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. The interest from the corpus has been annually used to fund habitat projects around the state such as prescribed burns, noxious weed treatments, wetland developments, education materials, and fish passage projects to name a few. The corpus remains untouched to ensure money is available to fund future habitat projects. This fund drives many of the duties habitat biologists perform for residents of Wyoming. Major aspects of our job include collection and assessment of habitat data and using it to develop projects that improve habitat while also collaborating with federal agencies, nonprofits, and landowners with similar goals. We also evaluate projects after completion, assist with

**For every  
conservation stamp  
purchased at  
\$12.50..., the  
WGFD will turn  
that into  
a minimum of  
\$47.00 of habitat  
work...**



Photo by Jill Randall, WGFD. Prescribed burns are used to improve vegetation communities that will benefit many species of wildlife.

(Continued on page 2)

## Lander Region Fisheries Staff:

### Fisheries Management

Kevin Johnson Regional Fisheries Supervisor  
Joe Deromedi Fisheries Biologist  
Paul Gerrity Fisheries Biologist

### Aquatic Habitat

Dennis Oberlie Aquatic Habitat Supervisor  
Nick Scribner Aquatic Habitat Biologist

### Dubois Hatchery

Guy Campbell Hatchery Superintendent  
Bill Yaracz Senior Fish Culturist  
Peter Star Fish Culturist

## Habitat Funding continued



Photo by Nick Scribner, WGFD. Data collection provides important details for habitat project planning and assessment of completed projects to improve future treatments.

(Continued from page 1)

research, and develop partnerships with a multitude of people and organizations. Lastly, we spend a considerable portion of our time writing grants, securing matching funds, and working with project cooperators to make each dollar stretch as far as possible.

Over the past five years the WGFD Trust Fund has awarded on average \$1 million per year for a myriad of projects. Furthermore, every dollar of Trust Fund has been matched with a minimum of \$2.80 to a maximum of



Photo by Nick Scribner, WGFD. Fish passage projects improve the fishery and benefit landowners by reducing maintenance and updating irrigation infrastructure.

\$16.50 from other sources of funding that include Federal and State agencies, private landowners, and nonprofit organizations such as Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Ducks Unlimited. Together, these sources have contributed from \$4 million to over \$18 million towards habitat

conservation each of the past five years. A majority

of this money comes directly back to local economies of WY when we use local contractors to complete many of these projects. For example, during 2012 over 25 different contractors were used in the Lander Region alone to complete projects that included survey and design work for stream restoration on the Middle Popo Agie River, habitat treatments along the Lander front for mule deer, fish passage and irrigation improvements near Dubois, noxious weed treatments region wide, and several other projects. Expand those numbers statewide to the other seven regions and you're talking a lot of business for numerous contractors.

Over the past year you have likely heard and read many things about the current and future financial status of the WGFD. As many of you know, our department sought additional funding through a license fee increase during the 2013 legislative session that ultimately did not pass. As a result, several cuts were made to our FY14 budget that runs from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. One of the significant cuts was

a 50% reduction, or approximately \$500,000, in Trust Fund dollars available for habitat projects. As described earlier, if we take into account the matching money from our various partners we have secured for every Trust Fund dollar the past 5 fiscal years this cut represents nearly \$2 million this year and potentially much more.

Periodically, I hear questions and complaints of why a conservation stamp is needed when you purchase a license. There is another way to think about it the next time you buy a conservation stamp: for every stamp purchased at \$12.50, the WGFD will turn that into a minimum of \$47 dollars of habitat work on the ground to benefit fish and wildlife. It may even provide work for you, your family, or friends. We appreciate your support and hope this sheds some light on how WGFD puts your money to use supporting habitat conservation efforts throughout Wyoming.



Photo by Nick Scribner, WGFD. Education workshops teach youth and adults about habitat conservation that usually includes hands-on activities.

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matched with a minimum of  
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\$16.50 from other sources...**

## Tayo Creek Drainage

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of fish in Coon  
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trip...***

Every year the WGFD samples different groups of lakes in the Wind River Mountains with gill nets to evaluate fish populations. Because there are so many lakes to survey, most lakes are only sampled once every decade. Lakes within the Tayo Creek drainage were the focus of the Lander Fisheries Management Crew in 2012. Tayo Creek is located within the Popo Agie Wilderness of the Shoshone National Forest, and is a tributary to the Middle Fork Popo Agie River. Lakes within the Tayo drainage can be accessed by either the Worthen Meadows Trailhead on the Loop Road or the Sweetwater Gap Trail in the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Gill netting in 2012 found that the Tayo drainage supports a variety of fisheries. Coon Lake is probably the most popular lake among anglers within the Tayo drainage because it is one of the best golden trout fisheries in the Wind River Mountains. Coon Lake's reputation as a good golden trout fishery was supported by high gill net catch rates of golden trout and golden trout/cutthroat trout hybrids. Although most of the golden trout and hybrids captured were only between



*Photo by Paul Gerrity, WGFD. Coon Lake is one of the best golden trout fisheries in the Wind River Mountains.*

11 and 12 inches, the high number of fish in Coon Lake should ensure that most anglers will be satisfied with their trip into the lake. Squirrel Lake, which contains arctic grayling, is another fishery that offers an opportunity to catch a unique fish species in the Tayo Creek drainage. 2012 netting surveys found good catch rates for grayling up to almost 14 inches. Anglers wanting to catch rainbow trout can visit Hank's Lake, which is only a ½-mile hike off of the main hiking trail. Hank's Lake gill netting catch rates were not as high as some other lakes within the drainage; however, rainbow trout measuring almost 14 inches were captured. Good brook trout fisheries also exist in the Tayo drainage in Poison and Mountain Sheep lakes. Catch rates in both of these fisheries were high; however, brook trout greater than 10 inches were rarely observed. Some anglers also attempt to fish Tayo and Upper Tayo lakes, which are just south of Wind River Peak.

Reports of an occasional golden trout being caught from these lakes are received; however, no fish were captured in 2012 gill nets.

Although most of the lakes within the Tayo Creek drainage currently have naturally-reproducing fish populations, the fish originally got there through WGFD stocking. Some of the lakes were stocked as early as the 1930s. Squirrel Lake is the only lake within the Tayo drainage that still receives periodic stocking because adequate spawning habitat does not exist in the lake or the inlet and outlet streams. To maintain the Squirrel Lake fishery, grayling are stocked by helicopter every four years.

For more information on the Tayo Creek drainage, please contact fisheries biologists out of the Lander regional office.

## Forever Wild Workshops—A Family Affair



*Photo by Tasha Sorenson, WGFD. Lander Region Fisheries Supervisor Kevin Johnson helps Madeleine Sweeney clean a fish while her sisters Julia, Catharine and Teresa look on.*

The Lander Region was fortunate in 2012/2013 to be involved in a new program that focuses on teaching entire families the enjoyment of hunting, fishing, and experiencing the outdoors. The program is called Forever Wild Workshops and was developed by Tasha Sorenson, Conservation Education Specialist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Lander's location made it particularly well-suited to serve as the location for the pilot program. "There's hunting and fishing 30 minutes or less away from any location in Lander," Sorenson said. "If we're going to do a hunt, it's not going to be a three-hour drive—it's right out their back door." The program is unlike many past efforts to recruit new hunters and anglers which were focused on children. This program is geared toward families with the

philosophy that if the entire family is involved, there is a much better chance that the participants will continue with the activities after the exposure and training phase has ended. Hunting and fishing becomes a family activity, with all members supporting each other. The families were picked based on their lack of experience, lack of opportunity (knew no one who could teach them), and a genuine interest to learn the skills and knowledge being offered. The chosen families agreed to commit to a full year of the program.

Since Forever Wild Workshops' inception in the spring of 2012, 33

participants from five families have participated in workshops. The first workshop, held at Worthen Meadows Reservoir, was primarily focused on fishing, but also included recreating safely in bear country, packing for a day-hike, and basic first aid. The second workshop combined lake fishing on Louis Lake with stream fishing on the Middle Popo Agie River. Participants were also introduced to fly-casting, fly-tying, and spinner making.

The third workshop spanned three days and included a hunter education class as well as a range-day introduction to shotgunning, .22-caliber rifles/pistols, big-bore rifles, muzzleloaders, and 3-D archery target practice. Instruction also included survival skills, small-game processing, hunting ethics, and wildlife conservation.

Workshops in October and November included several days of deer hunting, with many of the participants



*Photo by Tasha Sorenson, WGFD. The Forever Wild Families ice fishing on Torrey Lake.*

successfully harvesting deer. Wind River Mountain Outfitters graciously offered guided elk hunts for two of the older children, both of whom harvested their first elk.

During March of 2013, all of the families participated in an ice fishing outing to Torrey Lake. It was a beautiful day and even though the fish failed to fully cooperate, the participants were able to learn the skills and techniques unique to fishing through the ice. One brown trout and one lake trout were caught, but the rainbow trout which had been providing great angler success throughout the winter were noticeably uncooperative. Following fishing, the families were instructed on the ins and outs of planning for a hunt and obtaining hunting tags for the various big game species. To round out the day a tour

was taken of the Dubois Fish Hatchery where all learned about the science of fish culture.

The initial group of families will complete the program at a "Rite of Passage" weekend during the summer of 2013 at the Game and Fish Department's Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp just outside of Dubois. There will be activities for the whole family from fishing, canoeing, game tracking, dutch oven cooking, hiking, archery, traditional skills, map & compass, etc.

As national statistics show a long-term decrease in overall hunting and fishing participation, state agencies are focusing on recruiting new hunters and anglers, and on retaining those who are occasional participants. Through the

Forever Wild Workshops pilot project, Game and Fish is helping the Wildlife Management Institute and other state and non-governmental wildlife agencies refine the evaluation tools they use to determine whether recruitment and retention efforts are working.

The Forever Wild Workshops are operating with support by sponsors and donors such as North Platte Walleyes Unlimited, Sierra Trading Post, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Federal Ammunition, Allwayz Manufacturing, Central Wyoming Community College, Sinks Canyon Center, and Brunton/Primus.



Photo by Tasha Sorenson, WGFD. Forever Wild families on a tour of the Dubois Fish Hatchery.

## Fish Lake

Fish Lake is a 28-acre lake located just south of the headwaters of the Wind River at 9,200 feet in elevation. It is managed as a recreational Yellowstone cutthroat trout fishery through the stocking of around 2,000 fish annually. Current regulations allow the harvest of three trout, but only one may exceed 16 inches.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department evaluates trout survival and trout stocking programs by assessing fish abundance in nets. Comparing the number of fish caught per hour in each net set provides a comparison between years, or trends for fish abundance. In July, two nets were set in Fish Lake to evaluate annual stocking and obtain trend data. Catch rate in 2012 was 25.9 cutthroat/hour. Catch rate in nets has been relatively high the past few years. Mean length was 13.2 inches for Snake River cutthroat trout and 13.0 inches for Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Catch rates in similar fisheries typically yield less than 10 fish per net/hour, yet provide quality fishing. Based on the trend information, you can expect fishing to be excellent at Fish Lake in 2013.

Species	Number Caught	Catch/hour	Average Length (inches)	Length Range (inches)	Average Weight (pounds)
Snake River Cutthroat	85	17.6	13.2	10.1-16.2	0.77
Yellowstone Cutthroat	40	8.3	13.0	9.9-17.8	0.77

## Torrey Lake



Photo by Joe Deromedi, WGF. Torrey Lake should provide good fishing opportunities in the future.

Torrey Lake, located near Dubois, provided good fishing this past year and should provide good fishing opportunities in the future. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocks Torrey Lake with rainbow trout and it was noticed several years ago that survival of stocked fish was low. The department studied the fishery and determined that predators, such as brown trout, lake trout, and burbot were eating stocked rainbow trout. The stocked rainbow trout were small enough for larger predatory fish to eat, and predatory fish abundance was relatively high.

In response, larger sized rainbow trout have been stocked in recent years, and survival has been much higher. Stocking trout that are too large for predators to eat is a common management strategy. Considering the high abundance of rainbow trout, and the opportunity to catch a trophy brown trout or lake trout, Torrey Lake is a good water to fish this year.

## Jensen and Long Creek Reservoirs

The WGFD attempts to maintain sport fisheries in many small ponds in the Sweetwater Station & Jeffrey City areas of Wyoming. The fisheries in these ponds appeal to many anglers because they are easily accessible with an automobile, receive low fishing pressure, and provide great fishing. Each pond is surveyed by the WGFD approximately every 5 years to evaluate the survival, growth, and condition of sport fish and to determine if any management changes are needed.

Jensen Reservoir and Long Creek Reservoir are two of the waters that were surveyed by the WGFD in 2012. Jensen Reservoir is located at the southwest base of Green Mountain, and can be accessed by the Crooks Gap Road. Through 2011 Jensen Reservoir was managed with annual stocking of 500 rainbow trout, but began receiving an additional 500 brook trout each year beginning in 2012. Gill netting in 2012 found rainbow trout that weighed almost 3.5 pounds, although overall numbers were somewhat low. The stocking of additional brook trout beginning in 2012 should increase angling opportunities in the reservoir.

Long Creek Reservoir is located approximately 10 miles north of Highway 287, near the southeast base of the Long Creek Mountains. The reservoir is managed through the stocking of 1,000 brown trout every two years. 2012 gill netting showed good numbers of stocked brown trout, as well as low numbers of wild brook trout. Most of the brown trout ranged from 7 to 12 inches; however, some brown trout exceeded 20 inches.

For more information on the small pond fisheries in the Sweetwater Station and Jeffrey City areas, please contact WGFD fisheries personnel out of the Lander Regional Office.



*Photo by Paul Gerrity, WGFD. Rainbow trout over 3lbs. can be found in Jensen Reservoir.*

## Wind River

Sampling of the Wind River near Dubois in 2012 revealed that trout abundance has increased in recent years, which should lead to good fishing opportunities. Population estimates were 953 trout/mile in Dubois, and 822 trout/mile at public fishing areas downstream of Dubois. Brown trout made up 98% of the trout in the Wind River in Dubois and 81% of the trout downstream of Dubois. Rainbow trout and cutthroat trout made up the remaining portion of the population estimates. Mean length ranged from around 11 inches for brown trout up to 14.3 inches for rainbow trout.

Fishing opportunities should be good in early spring prior to runoff, and again in late summer and fall. Runoff increases turbidity, which decreases catch rates for trout from mid May through early July, depending on temperatures and snowpack.

## Watercraft Inspections at Borders



Photo WGFD.

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 like to catch.

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 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 Lander Region, watercraft check stations will be operated at Boysen Reservoir and other 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](http://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 at



Photo WGFD.

## What are Aquatic Invasive Species?

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are organisms that are not native and cause significant harm to an ecosystem when introduced. Harmful impacts can occur to municipal water supplies, recreation, agriculture, aquaculture, and other commercial activities.

Aquatic invasive species including amphibians, crustaceans, fish, plants, and mollusks are currently present in Wyoming, most notably the New Zealand mudsnail and Asian clam. While these species cause problems and need to be controlled, the most significant known threat to Wyoming is from zebra and quagga mussels based on their proximity and demonstrated impacts in neighboring states.

### Wyoming's 5 Most UNWANTED AIS:



- Zebra and quagga mussels are very prolific and can completely infiltrate waters very rapidly. They remove nutrients from water, clog pipes and waterways, damage boats, and out-compete native mussels.
- They are transported in water on boats as microscopic larvae or attached to the hull, motor, or other hard surface of a boat as juveniles or adults.



- New Zealand mudsnail present in some Wyoming waters.
- They are very prolific and can out-compete native snails and can alter water chemistry at high densities.
- In mud on fishing gear, especially waders. They can also disperse downstream through water currents once established in an area.



- Asian carp, not present in Wyoming waters
- They out-compete native fishes, reduce forage for other fish, and can transmit disease.
- They are transported downstream in water and overland in bait buckets and illegally by people.



- Rusty crayfish, present in some Wyoming waters.
- These crayfish are voracious and out-compete natives and reduce plant diversity and abundance.
- They are spread unintentionally through baitfish introduction or by illegal introductions.



- Aquatic plants such as, such as Hydrilla, Eurasian watermilfoil, and Curly Pondweed. Some are present in Wyoming waters.
- Clog lakes, out-compete natives, alter water chemistry, reduce fish forage.
- Transported as small plant fragments attached to trailered watercraft, or through the aquarium trade.

-For more information on these aquatic invasive species visit <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>.

## The X-Stream Angler



Beginning July 1, 2012 the Game and Fish Department offers a new program to showcase some of the state's most important streams and the work we've done to protect the water flowing in those streams for the public. The X-Stream Angler program was created to encourage anglers and anyone else who values flowing waters to seek out the many popular, and not so popular, streams where instream flow water rights have been obtained over the past quarter century to protect fisheries.

At present, the list of streams with instream flow water rights includes 130 stream segments and it's growing every year. Regardless of whether you've never fished a stream or are a die-hard angler, there's now more incentive than ever to start fishing or keep fishing in some of the state's more X-Stream places.

## Become an X-Stream Angler:

Applications, maps, and other information listed below can be found on the WGFD website at:  
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/fishing-1000838.aspx>

- **Find streams to fish** and get driving directions on the Interactive Instream Flow Segment Map
- **Fish in at least three** instream flow segments after July 1, 2012
- **Download and fill out** the application form
- **Attach a photo of you** standing next to or in each stream fished
- **Submit the application** to be officially recognized as an X-Stream Angler

All X-Stream Angler's receive a high quality twill cap with the X-Stream Angler logo. If you fish in 7 or more instream flow segments you will receive a premium oil cloth cap with the X-Stream Angler logo.

### Wyoming Game & Fish Department Conserving Wildlife—Serving People

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov/>

JOIN



US ON



FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE!

## 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)



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