

WGFD

December 2010



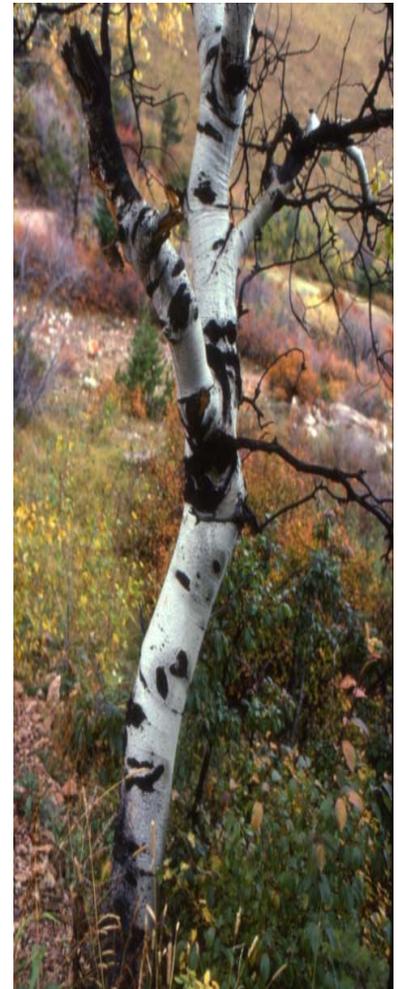
CONSERVING WILDLIFE ~ SERVING PEOPLE

State Wildlife Action Plan E-Newsletter

Finalized Revised Wyoming State Wildlife Action Plan to be Presented for Approval at January 2011 Commission Meeting

The public comment period for Wyoming's revised State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is complete. The revised SWAP was available for public comment on the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's (WGFD) website between September 15 and October 31, 2010. The revised plan was accompanied by an explanation of changes to the 2005 SWAP and commenting instructions. Additionally, public meetings were held in Casper, Green River, Jackson, Lander, and Laramie to provide an overview of the revised SWAP and receive public feedback. Through this process, comments were received from 21 organizations and individuals.

The SWAP, with public comments incorporated, is now available on the WGFD's website (<http://gf.state.wy.us/SWAP2010/Plan/index.asp>) and will be presented to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission for approval at their January 28, 2011 meeting. This meeting will be held at the WGFD's headquarters in Cheyenne. The public can make additional comments on the finalized SWAP at this meeting before the Commission votes to approve the plan. Upon approval by the Commission, the SWAP will be submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for review by April 1, 2011.



Inside this issue:

System Being Established to Track State Wildlife Grants	2
Learning More about River Otters in the Green River Basin of Wyoming	2
Northern River Otters Wyoming Range and Distribution	3
Project Improves the Conservation of Wyoming Prairie Fish	3
Questions or Comments?	4



System being Established to Track State Wildlife Grants

The USFWS is working closely with states to develop a web-based, GIS information management system for tracking and reporting on State Wildlife Grant (SWG) projects. SWG is a program that provides federal financial assistance to states to develop and implement SWAPs. Money through the program is allocated to states by a formula based on the state's geographic size and population. Wyoming typically receives \$600,000 to \$700,000 annually from SWG.

The system, called "Tracking and Reporting on Actions for Conservation of Species" (TRACS), is intended to accomplish the following objectives:

- Promote strategic use of SWG funding for the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats;
- Foster landscape-level cooperation on regional wildlife conservation issues; and
- Provide program transparency and accountability to the public and Congress on how SWG funds are spent.

The TRACS database will be publicly accessible online and serve as a hub for information and data networking. The system will allow searches of its database by species, geographic region, or conservation issue being addressed. TRACS is

planned to derive its content directly from pre-existing state databases. A prototype of TRACS is currently being tested by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The prototype will then be extended to adjacent states (Oregon, Montana, and Idaho) for application and testing. The system is planned for national implementation in the fall of 2011 and similar systems will eventually be extended to all federal wildlife assistance programs. WGFD representatives are participating on a project advisory group which is helping to design the system.

Learning More about River Otters in the Green River Basin of Wyoming

In Wyoming, river otters are known to occupy most of the western two thirds of the state. Upon European settlement the species was extirpated from most of Wyoming, with the exception of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, due to unregulated trapping, but since has recolonized much of its former range. Wyoming river otters are found in lakes, streams, and aquatic habitats in cottonwood riparian, riparian shrub, willow, and marsh-swamp land habitats. While observations of otters in Wyoming are not uncommon, little is known about their overall abundance or population trends. Additionally, otters are

particularly sensitive to environmental degradation, pollution, and human disturbance which could be a concern in areas experiencing rapid human development.

To increase understanding about the abundance and survival of otters in Wyoming, the WGFD and the University of Wyoming are conducting research in the Green River Basin in southwestern Wyoming. River otters are both elusive and difficult to capture, which can make determining population size difficult. These

University of Wyoming graduate student and technicians collecting river otter scat samples along the Green River in southeastern Wyoming in 2010. Scat samples will be used in the lab to extract DNA to estimate abundance of river otters



challenges can be partially overcome using noninvasive genetic sampling of hair and scat. River otters have the behavioral characteristics of consistently using latrine sites. Latrine sites are easy to identify in a variety of habitats and allow scat to be collected without disturbing the otters. Hairs are collected with snares which are wire cables designed to cinch snugly around the animal and then break

free, gathering hairs from the coat without harm to the animal.

Hair and fecal samples were collected from three sections along the Green River and its tributaries. Water samples were also collected on all three river sections, to evaluate water quality, and these will be correlated to the otter survey results. Water samples will be analyzed for dissolved carbon levels and metal concentrations, as well as conductivity and temperature.

Field work for the project began in the spring and summer of 2010. For all three river sections, a total of 302 scat samples and 18 hair samples were collected. Data analysis for the first season's field work will begin in the spring of 2011 with a second field season resuming shortly thereafter. Final findings of the project should be available in July of 2012 and will include developing protocols and sampling designs for long-term monitoring of river otters in southwest Wyoming rivers.

Northern River Otters Wyoming Range and Distribution



SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.

Project Improves the Conservation of Wyoming Prairie Fish

Little is known about fish that inhabit prairie streams in Wyoming compared to other fish species. Some of Wyoming's native prairie fish include the flathead chub, finescale dace, plains minnow, brassy minnow, suckermouth minnow, and goldeye. In 2010, the WGFD completed a project to enhance its ability to conserve native prairie stream fish and increase its understanding of their distribution in the state.

In cooperation with private landowners, native fish were sampled in 36 sites within the Little Powder, Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, and Cheyenne river drainages of northeast Wyoming. Information from these surveys was augmented by additional surveys from a separate prairie

stream fish project in southeast Wyoming. Researchers gained insights into species distribution and habitat preferences by comparing the presence of fish with field observations of habitat features.

The WGFD was also able to increase its knowledge of stream locations with large numbers or unique assemblages of native fish which could be important for future conservation efforts. An interagency meeting was held in the spring of 2010 with regional WGFD fisheries crews and habitat extension biologists, and collaborating agencies such as conservation districts and Natural Resource Conservation Service about the results of the project and potential management implications.



Collecting Native Fish on Lance Creek



WGFD

5400 Bishop Blvd
Cheyenne, WY 82006

Phone: 307-777-4600
Fax: 307-777-4699
E-mail: glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us

Conserving Wildlife—Serving People



T. Durkin

We're on the web:

<http://gf.state.wy.us/SWAP2010/Plan/index.asp>

Questions or Comments?

Questions or comments about the SWAP or this newsletter can be forwarded to:

Glenn Pauley
State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
5400 Bishop Boulevard
Cheyenne, WY 82006
Phone: (307) 777-4637
Email: glenn.pauley@wgf.state.wy.us



We're on the Web!
See us at:
<http://gf.state.wy.us/>

To be added to the mailing list, send an e-mail to joinswapenews@ewyoming.gov from the email account at which you would like to receive the newsletter. You may unsubscribe by sending an e-mail to leave-swapenews@ewyoming.gov. To subscribe or unsubscribe, leave the subject line and body of the email blank.