

CARIBOU-TARGHEE NATIONAL FOREST FISHERIES PROGRAM 2001 ANNUAL REPORT

C-T Forest Fish Bios

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External Partners



US Bureau of Reclamation



US Fish and Wildlife Service



Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality



Idaho Dept Fish & Game



Federation of Flyfishers



Trout Unlimited



Bonneville Cutthroat Surveys Completed Search for Yellowstone Cutthroat Continues

After 2 years of fish distribution surveys in the southern part of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, the Forest Fish Crew completed all the streams within the range of Bonneville cutthroat trout. The surveys provide the Forest and our partners with valuable fish population, habitat quality, and population genetic data. The surveys identified habitat restoration opportunities. We recently used the data to develop a range map of Bonneville cutthroat trout distribution on the Forest. In 2001, 36 streams within the range of Bonneville cutthroat trout were surveyed on the Forest. Of those streams, the Forest identified 13 as Bonneville cutthroat trout stronghold streams.

In 2001, Yellowstone cutthroat trout distribution surveys continued on the Forest. The streams on Westside Ranger District were completed this year. Additional streams were surveyed on Soda Springs, Palisades, and Teton Basin Ranger Districts. Of the 45 streams we surveyed in the range of Yellowstone



Montpelier District Ranger Dennis Duehren and C-T Forest Supervisor Jerry Reese assist the Forest Fish Distribution Crew by netting fish while sampling North Creek.

cutthroat trout in 2001, 24 were Yellowstone cutthroat trout stronghold streams. Primary survey partners include US BOR, USFWS, and Idaho DEQ. In 2002, Yellowstone cutthroat trout surveys will continue on Soda Springs and Ashton/Island Park Ranger Districts.



Bonneville cutthroat trout sampled by the Forest Fish Distribution Crew.



Forest Fish Distribution Crew sampling Cub River.

Four Gauntlets Constructed and in Operation to Save Snake River Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout

In order to exclude non-native fish from major tributaries to the South Fork Snake River and protect the genetic integrity of South Fork native Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations, fish collection weirs were constructed in lower Rainey, Burns, and Palisades Creeks. In an interagency partnership this summer, an Idaho Department of Fish & Game construction crew built the Pine Creek weir. These four weirs are the centerpieces

of an interagency effort to protect native fish in the South Fork. The weirs intercept all upstream-migrating fish. The native Yellowstone cutthroat trout are allowed to pass upstream to spawn and non-native fish, such as rainbow trout, are excluded. The weirs also provide an excellent opportunity to collect fisheries data during operation. IDFG Fish Tech Scott Host operated the weirs at Burns and Palisades Creeks, last spring as part of his M.S. thesis.



IDFG's Scott Host works up a Yellowstone cutthroat trout captured in the Burns Creek Weir.



Burns Creek fish weir, constructed in 2000 with USDA Forest Service and other partners' funds.

Stream Bank and Channel Protection at Preuss Creek



In Fall 2001, a fence was constructed along Preuss Creek, a major Bonneville cutthroat trout stream, to exclude cattle using the livestock driveway.

In 2001, the Montpelier Ranger District took further steps to restore Bonneville cutthroat trout habitat in Preuss Creek, a tributary to the Thomas Fork of the Bear River. A cattle driveway has traditionally contributed large amounts of sediment to Preuss Creek at its crossing and the concentration of cattle at the crossing had been the cause of trampled stream banks.

Bill Janowsky, Soda Springs/Montpelier Zone Fisheries Biologist, and the Zone Fire Crew worked together to construct a fence excluding cattle from Preuss Creek and directing them across the stream in a location that would minimize stream channel and bank impacts.

Free Fishing Day: A Perfect Day to Drown a Worm

The Caribou-Targhee National Forest hosted 3 Free Fishing Day Celebrations throughout Southeast Idaho in 2001. The Free Fishing Day Derbies were held at Mill Pond in Island Park, the Little Lemhi Boy Scout Camp near the South Fork Snake River, and Kelly Park Pond in Soda Springs.

It was a perfect day to drown some worms and relax on the shore of one of those fishing ponds while young children flailed sharp hooks in the air. Nearly 300 children and their parents participated in the events. Forest Service employees hosting the Free Fishing Day events included Bill Janowsky and Darrel VandeWeg at Kelly Pond, Jim Capurso and Bud Alford at Little Lemhi Boy Scout Camp, and Robin Jenkins, Melissa Jenkins, and Ted Kellogg at Mill Pond.



A keeper caught at Kelly Park Pond.

Idaho Department of Fish & Game employees hosting the events included Lynn Merrill at Little Lemhi Camp. Idaho Department of Fish & Game stocked each of the ponds prior to Free Fishing Day, increasing the young anglers' success rates.

Kid's prizes were contributed by local merchants, including Walmart, K-Mart, Shopko, Hydes Drift Boats, Cal Ranch Stores, Target, Sportsmans Warehouse, and Fred Meyers. At the end of the day, every kid went home with prizes in their arms and smiles on their faces.



A stringer of trout caught at the Little Lemhi Scout Camp.

Sinks Symposium: February 27th in Pocatello

Have you ever wondered how fish found their way into the streams that drain into the desert sinks of Southeast Idaho, such as Medicine Lodge and Birch Creek? This is a question that has interested fisheries biologists for many years. Bart Gamett (Salmon-Challis National Forest), Rob Van Kirk (Idaho State University), and James Capurso (Caribou-Targhee National Forest) have organized the Sinks Symposium to help shed light on this question. The Sinks Symposium: Exploring the Origin and Management of Fishes in the Snake River Plain Sinks Drainage of Southeast Idaho will be at the West Coast Hotel in Pocatello on February 27th. It is presented by the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Native Fish Committee, USDA Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, US Bureau of Land Management, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The admission is free, but pre-registration is a must. Pre-register by January 15, 2002 through e-mail to jcapurso@fs.fed.us. To learn more, see... <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/fish/symposium.htm>

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Return to Thurmon Creek, Habitat Improved

On June 13, after nearly 100 years of absence, Yellowstone cutthroat trout were re-introduced to Golden Lake and its inlet streams in Harriman State Park and the surrounding National Forest land. In the fall of 1999 and 2000, an interagency team led by Idaho Department of Fish & Game treated the lake and its inlets with piscicides. In May, monitoring indicated total eradication of brook trout, but rainbow trout were still present in low numbers. The team decided to re-introduce native Yellowstone cutthroat trout to the system.



On a snowy June day, an Idaho Fish & Game hatchery truck delivers Yellowstone cutthroat trout to Golden Lake for re-introduction.

Early summer 2001, the Caribou-Targhee Fisheries Crew performed a physical habitat survey on Thurmon Creeks, the 3 inlet streams to Golden Lake. The data was interpreted and used to develop a restoration plan for the Thurmon Creeks. Some of the restoration measures were implemented during the summer, including the placement of large wood in the stream by draft horses and the removal of 2 culverts at crossings of abandoned roads. A review of livestock grazing in the system has been initiated by the Ranger District and Harriman State Park.



A team of draft horses were used to place wood in the Thurmon Creeks in October.

Blackfoot River Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Restoration

The Soda Springs Ranger District made major improvements to Yellowstone cutthroat trout habitat in the Narrows area of the Blackfoot River. While the Blackfoot Narrows Road Project addressed sediment concerns, the Mill Creek Culvert Project facilitated the upstream passage of Yellowstone cutthroat trout into a spawning tributary of the Blackfoot River. Bill Janowsky, Soda Springs/Montpelier Zone Fisheries Biologist, scored the funding and directed the implementation of both projects.

Magnesium chloride was applied to the heavily used Blackfoot Narrows Road to minimize runoff and airborne sediment delivery to the river and tributaries. The culvert at Mill Creek under the Narrows Road was replaced to facilitate the upstream migration of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Both projects were funded through the Forest Service 10% fund.



A fish passage culvert is placed at Mill Creek, a tributary to the Blackfoot River.

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Restoration on Dubois and Teton Basin Ranger Districts



Strategically placed boulders physically convert a streamside road to a trail along the West Fork of Indian Ck, Dubois RD.



An excavator returns Horseshoe Creek back to its channel after it was captured by a road due to the failure of a culvert on Teton Basin Ranger District.

Restoration efforts for Yellowstone cutthroat trout are underway across the Forest. In most cases, restoration opportunities are identified through our stream surveys. Two shining examples of restoration projects occurred in Indian Creek on the Dubois Ranger District and Horseshoe Creek on the Teton Basin Ranger District.

Indian Creek was identified as a C-T Forest Yellowstone cutthroat trout stronghold stream through our fish distribution survey. A common restoration practice is restoring the stronghold streams and radiating restoration measures from that “toehold”. That’s what was done on the West Fork of Indian Creek, where a redundant, eroding, motorized trail was stabilized and truck and ATV traffic were excluded. This work was conducted by Joe Weller of the Dubois Ranger District.

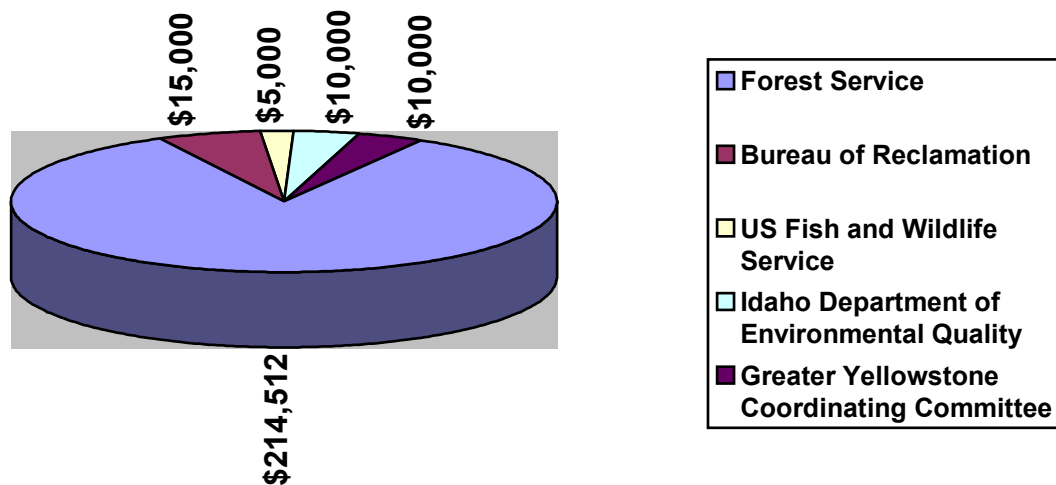
At Horseshoe Creek, on the Teton Basin Ranger District, Lee Mabey directed excavator work to return a stream to its original channel. A culvert had failed on a closed road, diverting Horseshoe Creek down an old roadbed. This restoration opportunity was identified during our 2000 beaver reintroduction inventory. The Forest road maintenance and fish crews removed the culvert, recontoured the stream channel, and re-connected the stream to its old streambed and riparian zone.

Thomas Fork (Montpelier RD) and Fall Creek (Palisades RD) Watershed Analyses Completed

A watershed analysis is an interdisciplinary, holistic look at the resources and ecological relationships within an analysis area. The process, in a nutshell, documents the past and current conditions in the watershed, uses this information to identify trends, and recommends actions to address trends. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest completed two watershed analyses in 2001. Both watershed analysis teams were led by Capurso, who also wrote the fisheries sections.

Montpelier Ranger District produced the Thomas Fork Watershed Analysis and Palisades Ranger District, the Fall Creek Watershed Analysis. The Thomas Fork analysis area included some of the most important Bonneville cutthroat trout habitat on the Forest and the Fall Creek analysis area included some of the most important Yellowstone cutthroat trout habitat on the Forest. The reports culminated with several prioritized restoration opportunities. Several of the fisheries restoration items are currently being initiated.

2001 Caribou-Targhee Forest Fisheries Program Funding



The C-T Forest Fisheries Program: It's the People

The year 2001 was a great one for the C-T Forest Fish Program. I measure success by our accomplishments in the exploration, protection, and restoration of our fisheries resources and our service to our internal and external partners. Much of our accomplishments can be attributed to the quality seasonal biological technicians that work with us during the field season. In 2001, 2 teams surveyed aquatic and riparian habitats and 2 teams surveyed fish populations throughout the Forest. The data and reports generated from those surveys put Forest decision-makers in a position of making more informed decisions. The reports enable us to produce high quality NFMA and NEPA analyses and enlightened restoration projects.



2001 C-T Forest Fisheries Crew

I'm certain the key to this excellent fisheries program is the quality of its fisheries personnel. Alex Gouley, our fisheries co-op student for the last 3 years, has graduated from Utah State University. He now serves as the Fisheries Biologist at Dubois Ranger District. Lee Mabey is the Zone District Fisheries Biologist for the Ashton/Island Park and Teton Basin Ranger Districts within the Henrys Fork Drainage. Bill Janowsky is stationed in Soda Springs and is the Zone Fisheries Biologist for Soda Springs and Montpelier Ranger Districts. Ted Kellogg serves the Forest as the Forest Fisheries Biological Technician and is responsible for the quality of stream surveys. In addition to my Forest Program Manager responsibilities, I provide Fisheries Biologist services to Palisades and Westside Ranger Districts. We all work together and with other internal and external partners in the conservation of our Forest fisheries resources.

James Capurso
Forest Fisheries Biologist
C-T National Forest



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