

# Caribou-Targhee National Forest

## Fisheries Program 2010 Annual Report



### *Non-native Trout Continue to Invade Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Strongholds*

#### C-T Forest Fish Bios

**Lee Mabey**  
Acting C-T National  
Forest  
Fisheries Biologist,  
and  
**Corey Lyman**  
Fisheries Biologist

#### External Partners



Trout Unlimited



U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Service



U.S. Natural Resources  
Conservation Service



Bureau of Land  
Management



Idaho Department of Fish  
and Game



Idaho Department of  
Agriculture



Henry's Fork Foundation



Friends of the Teton River

The Caribou-Targhee Forest Fisheries Program returned to 22 Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) strongholds in tributaries of the South Fork Snake River, Salt River and Palisades Reservoir repeating the fish distribution surveys performed 10 years ago, as required by their Forest Management Plans. Survey methods and transect locations were identical to the 2000 survey. While most of these streams maintained stronghold populations of YCT, the surveyors identified some concerns in Burns (Upper), Williams, Horse, and Stump creeks.

Perhaps the most disturbing result of the 2010 survey is that we continue to see the trend that was discovered in lower McCoy Creek in 2009. That trend is the continued expansion of brook trout into previously YCT only tributaries to Palisades Reservoir. In most instances once brook trout become established in small streams, they totally replace the native cutthroat over time.

The changes in Horse Creek this year were rather interesting. The percentages of YCT in the stream remained the same at 71% but brook trout were totally replaced by brown trout. Brown trout are expected to have the same effect on YCT as brook trout, since browns are expected to prey on YCT.

Burns and Stump Creek were previously known to contain only YCT and now they both have small populations of brook and brown trout detected.

We also cooperated with Friends of the Teton River as they repeated their 2005 surveys of 14 Teton River tributaries.

Similar patterns of new invasions are occurring in the Teton River tributaries. Rainbow trout were found on Forest in Trail Creek and also on lower Bitch Creek below the Forest.



2010 Forest Fisheries Crew sampling Indian Creek practicing their e-fishing skills as they battle the hawthorns.

Two streams in Bonneville cutthroat (BCT) country were sampled near Montpelier. Whiskey Creek which was previously 68% BCT is down to 18 % BCT and no longer qualifies as a cutthroat stronghold. Emigration Creek remains 100% cutthroat. Of the 24 streams sampled 16 are still 100% cutthroat and 2 previous YCT streams were found to be fishless. Overall the majority of our stronghold streams contained only cutthroat and were free from the threat of competition from non-native trout. However, the trend of brook trout invasions in the area is troubling and it also appears brown trout are gaining a stronger foothold in places such as Horse Creek.

# Work Continues to Restore Bonnerville Cutthroat to Georgetown Creek



View from restored Alleman Reach looking upstream to diversion near circle

Sometimes I wonder why it takes so long to get a stream back in shape. But if you think how long it took some of these streams to degrade to their present point, it is really a miracle they can get back to some semblance of normalcy in 3-4 years. Georgetown Creek is fairly representative of impacts we see to streams across the Forest though the mining impacts are on a different order of magnitude than what is normally experienced. Still many streams are diverted for irrigation at or near the Forest boundaries creating migration barriers and, in places, drying of the stream. Road crossings and culverts also create passage barriers. There are frequently similar issues off Forest where enlightened landowners also realize that streams should not look like ditches, and cities and counties are willing to cooperatively address passage issues. Just like it's been said: it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a town to restore native trout. In 2009 the fish ladder at the hydro power plant intake was constructed and work began on removal of the Georgetown Mining Road. In 2010 work began on the Alleman property below Georgetown completing the following improvements:



New diversion shown without drum screen

- An irrigation diversion was updated to provide upstream passage
- Diversion was screened to keep fish in the creek
- 1500 feet of new channel and floodplain were built
- 3700 feet of riparian fence was installed
- Partners : Alleman family, TU, IDFG LIP, NRCS, Pacific Corp ECC, Eastern Idaho RAC, FS Hydrologist



Diversion prior to project with 7 foot drop in stream bed elevation



# The Removal of Georgetown Road Continues

The work that began in 2008, in partnership with Trout Unlimited and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to remove the Georgetown Road fill from the valley bottom of Georgetown Creek continues. There is more yet to come in 2011.

Phase III took 6 weeks to complete in 2010 and was ostensibly the last project that Jim Capurso oversaw on the Forest before his departure (more on that later). This year the following milestones were reached:

- Removed over 60,000 tons of material from the flood plain
- Removed the old road and swirly hole (submerged culvert)
- Rebuilt the stream using 9 rock weirs to re-establish the stream gradient
- Large wood and willow plantings were used to roughen and revegetate the floodplain.
- Partners TU, City of Georgetown, National Fish Habitat Action Plan



Road and fill removed from stream bottom (left), Hillside restored ready for seeding (center), Stream and floodplain rebuilt (right)

# Walker Creek Stabilization Project

In partnership with a private landowner, an active area of erosion was stabilized. This was achieved by constructing a series of step pools to bring the creek back to a more even grade and to eliminate a head cut or migrating waterfall. Walker Creek is a tributary to Marsh Creek.

- Built a series of step pools to arrest erosion
- Forest Service provided survey design, permitting and construction oversight
- Partners: Eastern Idaho RAC, Williams Northwest Pipeline, Idaho Association Soil Conservation District



Before Construction



Post Construction

## Box Canyon Crossing Replaced

An undersized culvert on the Box Canyon Road in the SF Mink Creek Drainage was replaced by Bannock County. The old culvert was undersized and repeatedly plugged by beaver which caused overtopping that damaged the road and contributed sediment to the stream. A multi-plate bottomless arch culvert was installed to allow for aquatic organism passage as well as to discourage beaver dams at this location. Partners included Bannock County and Eastern Idaho RAC.



Post Construction

## Passage Progress at Duck Creek



Pre- (left) and post- (right) construction at Duck Creek crossing #3. The under-capacity culvert was replaced by a full span bridge with a natural stream bottom. 1 of 2 replaced in 2010

In 2010 Phase II of the Duck Creek passage project was completed. The Forest Fisheries Program, in partnership with Eastern Idaho Resource Advisory Committee, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Henrys Lake Foundation, initiated the Duck Creek fish passage project, restoring upstream passage at two more of the four fish passage barriers on Duck Creek, a tributary to Henrys Lake. This project benefits Henrys Lake Yellowstone cutthroat trout and other aquatic species. Work on the last crossing is expected to occur in 2011.

## Duck Creek Spawning and Rearing Protected

In 2010, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest closed and restored one eroded water gap, hardened another water gap and provided fencing material to Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) to rebuild a protective electric fence on Duck Creek. These projects were completed to protect spawning and rearing habitat on Duck Creek on National Forest Lands. Duck Creek is one of the top spawning tributaries for wild Henrys Lake YCT. Partners included the Eastern Idaho RAC and IDFG.



Pre- (left) and post- (right) restoration at cattle water gap. Sod mats were placed to define new banks and willows were extensively planted in mud behind new bank. High bank was sloped and seeded.

# *Fish, Recreation and Roads Improve Boatslide Access*

In 2010, personnel from the Forest Road Crew, Ashton/Island Park District Recreation staff and Fisheries Crew partnered up to improve access to the Grandview Boatslide. This is the only access point for boats between Lower Mesa Falls and Stone Bridge and has a loyal group of users. This user created trail had become a collection and drainage system delivering sediment to the Henrys Fork. The access road was consolidated, hardened and drained. Water bars were also constructed on the boatslide itself and more are scheduled for 2011. The slide was also closed to the use of hard bottomed drift boats. Partners in the project included Eastern Idaho RAC and the Henry's Fork Foundation.



Left - Example of road conditions, Right – Road Crew cutting in new access road and placing drainage.

## *Moose Creek Restored*

- Meanders were restored
- Eroding banks sloped and vegetated
- Roads moved away from stream
- Campsites moved off of streambanks
- Partners: Henry's Fork Foundation, Eastern Idaho RAC, Forest Hydrologist



Moose Creek was re-meandered at a straightened reach of stream at old bridge site.

## *Historic Stoddard Mill Kids Fishing Pond Improved*

The Stoddard Mill Pond has been the site of the Island Park Free Fishing Day event for over a decade. This project took a shallow 1/3 acre pond and made it into a fishing pond again for the kids in the area. The following updates were made:

- A web of ATV trails encircling the pond were closed
- Pond was excavated to 5-7 feet deep
- New outlet works to control water depth and retain fish
- Parking area and road were graveled and defined
- New fishing dock supplied by Island Park Sportsmen
- Historical interpretive signs yet to be installed
- Partners: Henrys Fork Foundation, Island Park Sportsmen, Ron Stoddard, Island Park Historical Society, Island Park Services and Falls Plumbing.



Left – Historic use of mill pond, Center – Pond after draining, Right – Pond being excavated by long-arm track-hoe

# Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasives

For years we have been lulled into thinking that introductions of new species is OK and in some instances managers have been responsible for the introductions. Some of these introductions have been game changers for the native fish fauna. However, the new species that are knocking at the door from neighboring states or that are already within the state threaten complete trophic shifts in the food chain or choking of the water with dense vegetation.

The most important thing we, as users of the aquatic environment, can do is make sure all our gear from boats to boots are Cleaned, Inspected and Dried so we are not responsible for moving the bad guys.

[www.cleaninspectdry.com](http://www.cleaninspectdry.com)

In 2010 the Forest Fisheries crew conducted 42 surveys at 14 high use sites throughout the area identifying native plants and looking for invaders.

Training for over 50 seasonal employees from throughout the greater Yellowstone area was conducted in Driggs, Idaho to aid in the identification and prevention of spread of aquatic invasive species.

Groups of outfitters and guides were met with on the Henrys Fork and South Fork to provide education on prevention.

Opportunities were taken at the St. Anthony Fisherman's Breakfast, Eastern Idaho State Fair and Fremont County Fair to provide education. It's estimated that over 5,000 people were reached.



## Recognizing Our Partners

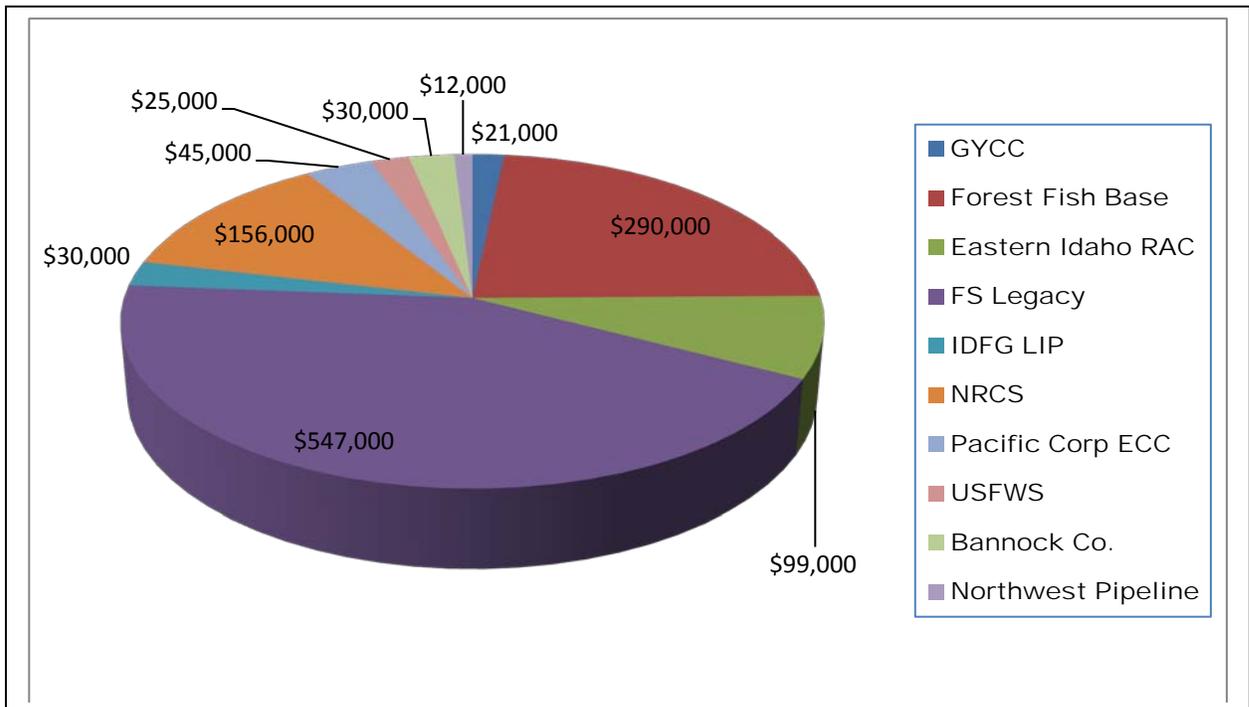
One of the great things about living and working in Southeast Idaho is all the great partners with whom we get to work, whether it's folks from other agencies, non-profit groups, the local citizens or local governments. The majority of people in Southeast Idaho do care about the many natural resources we enjoy here and they want to protect them.

In 2010 at our All Forest Meeting, Matt Woodard of Trout Unlimited (TU) was awarded our Partner of the Year Award. Matt has partnered with us in many ways on many projects and he is as much a part of our successes as we are. Matt is the Project Manger for the South Fork Snake Home Rivers Initiative. He exemplifies the contributions of all our partners in Southeast Idaho. Thank you Matt, and thanks to all of our other partners.



Matt Woodard of Trout Unlimited (left), Presented with our Partner of the year award by Brent Larson, Caribou – Targhee National Forest, Forest Supervisor (right)

# 2010 Caribou-Targhee Forest Fisheries Program Funding



## Changes on the Home Front

As they say the only thing constant is change. In September of 2010 Jim Capurso left the C-T to take over as Regional Fisheries Biologist for Region 6 of the Forest Service, Washington and Oregon. We have been fortunate over the last 11 years to have the leadership of Jim on the C-T. There have been many accomplishments over those 11 years; one only needs to peruse the yearly reports to get an idea of the legacy Jim has left behind. I'm sure Jim will have just as big of an impact in Region 6 as he had here on the C-T. Jim's legacy will continue here as we move forward protecting and enhancing the natural resources we all enjoy.

**Lee Mabey**

Acting Forest Fisheries Biologist  
C-T National Forest



**Jim**, Thanks for setting the bar high here. Good luck and best wishes in Region 1.

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