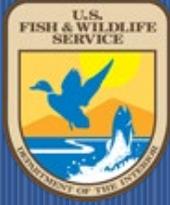


# Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

BILLINGS–BOZEMAN–LEWISTOWN, MT

July 2020



Most of July was spent in telework status or limited on-station work (following COVID JHAs) to prepare for upcoming fieldwork planned for August. Following are some highlights of our work. One interesting project was the centralizing of digital images collected over the past decade to support DFP student Dana Arnold. There is nothing like looking at old imagery to make one realize how quickly time goes by.

## St. Mary Bull Trout:

Jim Mogen and George Jordan continued participation on an interagency team established to identify mitigation measures that could be implemented at the St. Mary Canal to help reduce entrainment of bull Trout.

Biological technicians Jason Marsh and Geoff Popken worked to ensure equipment was ready for our annual St. Mary Bull Trout surveys planned August 4-14.

Because of COVID concerns, Jim and George worked with the Tribal IMT to secure permissions to access tribal lands so sampling complied with Tribal ordinances.

## Tribal Trust:

Biologists Andrew Gilham and Michael (Josh) Melton continued to work on updating older tribal fish management plans and coordinating stocking to support tribal recreational fishing.

We received a genetics update on the status of several Blackfeet streams for which we had tissue samples. The data revealed that Roberts Creek was the only pure population of Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This analysis also revealed a significant number of pure individuals in East Fork of Lee Creek. However, this population has not been sampled in 16 years. Therefore, we will collect new tissue samples during annual Bull Trout surveys.



Bull Trout in Slide Lake pool 5, circa 2017. Photo: USFWS-Jim Mogen

## *Other Happenings:*

George's 120-day detail as acting Center Director for the Bozeman Fish Tech and Health Center complex ended when Jeff Powell assumed his new position as Center Director July 20<sup>th</sup>.

Judy KobusFisk continued to keep the office running, ensuring purchase requests, payroll, bills, etc. are all processed and ensuring the station is as functional as possible during these odd times.

Andrew received feedback from Dr. Mike Brown, South Dakota State University, on the latest iteration of the Arctic Grayling Standard Weight Equation manuscript. The manuscript will be re-submitted after he has worked through final edits.

Geoff stepped up to assist the Great Plains FWCO with analyzing game camera data collected as part of a Sikes Act project.

Jim worked with Lynn Kaeding, USFWS-retired, on initial preparations of a Bull Trout manuscript, that should provide population estimates and temporal trends for four primary migratory spawning Bull Trout populations in the St. Mary drainage, as well as apparent survival probabilities and their temporal trends for sub-adult and older fish in those populations.

Jason continued, in his spare time, to work on his Master's Thesis based on work our station did evaluating a habitat restoration project on Red Rock Lakes NWR. Additionally he has been working with staff biologists to try to extract juvenile (i.e., age-2 and 3) Bull Trout survival estimates.

Josh worked with Wyoming Fish and Game and the Crow Tribe to coordinate including some of our archived tissue samples into a range-wide genetics analysis of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout starting with the Bighorn/Wind River GMU.

*For more information, click on the following logos  
Or feel free to contact any of the Montana FWCO  
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