



# Utah Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Monthly Report (Jan. & Feb. 2021)

## Overview

The Utah Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Vernal, Utah assists partners with Fish Passage, National Fish Habitat Programs and Tribal Wildlife Grants. Agreements are held with Trout Unlimited, Utah's Department of Wildlife Resources, Tribal governments, and Universities (Brigham Young University and Utah State University). A major role of the office is with Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah. This newsletter will highlight activities with these groups during the months of January and February 2021.

## Riparian Restoration

The FWCO and the Paiute Tribe's resource specialist met with ES Salt Lake City to apply for funding based on climate change and riparian improvements in the Santa Clara River. Several applications were sent out and efforts are being made to implement this work with the Shivwits Band. We're also creating an avenue of funding for the Band by big dollars held by the BIA (thanks to Yvette Converse SLC ES).

## Fish Passage

Progress was made making plans at four fish passage sites in the Virgin River in Zion's National Park. William Rice attended another meeting that included employees from Zion National Park, DWR and FishOne Inc. to design these barrier removal projects in the Park. He has also assisted several

projects that were closed out in GrantSolutions.

The DWR and Ute Tribe is closing an agreement for a FP structure at the Myton Townsite Diversion. Funding was moved from the DWR to the Tribe for modifications needed to improve the structure's function.

We also put effort into proposing 2021 Fish Passage Projects in the Price and Duchesne Rivers with Trout Unlimited.

## The Paiute Tribe

The FWCO plans to participate in several activities with the Paiutes, they include riparian restoration, controlling the beaver population in the Santa Clara River, and desert tortoise surveys with the Shivwits (one of five Paiute Bands). Last year 6 tortoises were located on the reservation (Shivwits Band), previously no tortoises had been found.

Funds from the VRP for 2021 have been allocated by SLC ES, and we are currently fund sourcing for riparian improvement resources for Virgin Spinedace restoration in the Santa Clara River.

## The Northern Ute Indian Tribe

Funding for the Myton Townsite Diversion has been transferred from the DWR to the Ute tribe, the remaining fish passage funds for this agreement have been de-obligated, and the cooperative agreement is about to be closed out.

We attended (on-line) the annual Ute Tribe coordination meeting with the tribe and UDWR. Plans were made for the FWCO to assist the Colorado River Fisheries Recovery Program remove smallmouth bass from the White River.

We helped the tribe acquire the required permits (Federal) and assisted their coordination with the recovery program. They will be electroshocking the White River from near the eastern border of Colorado to the White River Bonanza Bridge. Maybe we should call them the Ute Fish and Wildlife assistance office!

We coordinated tribal participation (with the DWR) to collect and fertilize eggs from broodstock in Lake Fork Lake. This experience will help them establish their own broodstock and protocol for taking native Colorado River cutthroat trout eggs in Cedar View Reservoir. Plans are to have the tribe stock larger CRCT in the Reservoir to develop this brood for an egg source that will boost native trout production at their Big Springs Fish Hatchery.

## Hill Airforce Base

Nick Brown and Jase Taylor have been busy with range restoration work on the UTRN. They have been preparing the ground and planting seed and are hoping for needed spring precipitation that is much needed for the seed to take. We probably have close to 1000 acres planted. We are also testing out a new prototype seed drill to hopefully improve our seeding efforts in the West Desert. We will compare seed drill results to determine the best method for planting. The data will help optimize our habitat restoration and fire prevention efforts on the Base.

The Air Force's C-130 spray crew came in and sprayed hundreds of acres of pre-emergent for fire breaks and future restoration sites but unfortunately the unit was called out on a mission and could not spray the 1500 acres planned this year. We are working with USGS (Matt Germino) over a several year period to look at the benefits and best practices of herbicide sprays to fight invasive species on the bombing range. Hopefully, through this research, we will be more effective in preserving the remaining native habitat and be successful in our restoration efforts. We have also started our fall restoration work, which should be well over 600 acres if the weather cooperates. The contracted seed was delivered, and the tractors are rolling out almost every day.



Jase and Nick working on seed drill

## Jones Hole Creek

Whirling Disease samples and test results from Jones Hole Creek turned up positive in salmonids in 2020 and 2021 and pose a serious infection threat to Jones National Fish Hatchery. Learning of this threat has upshot the time vested in preventative measures. Since the positive find, a barrier in

The Craners area guzzler was fixed, it was destroyed by historic high winds last year. This guzzler is designed to assist our attempts to provide water and extend the summer range of California Bighorn Sheep living on the Newfoundland Mountain Range, and to benefit other wildlife such as Golden Eagles.



the west bypass canal was re-built (by T.Anderson), we backpack electroshocked the upper end of the creek (4 passes), set traps, and provided substrate and water samples to the Fish Health Center in Bozeman (for traces of spores and tubifex worms). We have completed groundwork to conduct a dye test that will help determine if it is feasible to treat the creek's headwaters near the spring. We put together a workgroup to coordinate preventative efforts between the NPS, UDWR and Regional Office. From this group signage for the creek in DNM has been completed (by UDWR). We appreciate Kevin Johnson's lead and efforts to provide team guidance and interconnect progress. Travis Anderson (Acting Superintendent for the hatchery) built the barrier and drained the tailing pond to remove salmonids from the clarifier. Tests for WD spore eDNA from the pond came up negative prior to draining. Lacey Hopper (from our Fish Health Center Bozeman, MT) responded to the threat, evaluated the situation, and took a second, larger water and substrate sample for a more complete analysis. The Ute Tribe and UDWR assisted in the four electrofishing passes.

We appreciate all who have supported and assisted these efforts.



Ute Indian tribe electrofishing the headwaters of Jones Hole Creek

## COVID- 19 in Utah

Fortunately, no one in our complex tested positive for the virus during Jan. and Feb. We are continuing to practice preventative measures to stay clear of this nasty virus.

At the year mark for this virus we again reflect on the negative impacts and difficulties it caused, but, though there were setbacks many projects continued and were completed. Many proposals for 2021 projects were made and we are planning for a productive 2021 field season. We are hopeful that available vaccines strengthen our ability to complete fieldwork this year.