



Utah FWCO Monthly Report (March 2020)

Overview

The Utah FWCO in Vernal, UT assists partners with Fish Passage, the NFHP and with TWGs. Groups in partnership are Trout Unlimited, Utah's DWR, tribal governments and Universities. A big part of the office's workload is with Hill AFB near Ogden, UT. This newsletter will highlight some of the activities undertaken in collaboration with these groups in March, 2020.

Native American Tribes

Ute Tribe

Coordinated reduced work plans based on COVID-19 regulations with native American tribes in Utah. The project most affected is the Myton Townsite Diversion fish passage project (on the reservation) with deadline Sept. 30. As of Feb. 2020 project funds (including Ute Tribe match) are in place and available. Utah's DWR is involved, but actions associated with COVID-19 and associated regulations have caused us to not start this spring's scheduled activities. Manning the trap is scheduled for this time of year.

We have also coordinated efforts with the Ute Tribe's fish hatchery located at Big Springs along the Uinta River. Past duties have included propagation of Brown, Rainbow, CRCT and Tiger trout, and all related, daily hatchery tasks.

(Ute Tribe continued)

At times, these have been carried out solely by the FWCO, however, this level of assistance has been contingent upon hiring seasonal FWCO employees. This year the tribe is expecting less assistance based on this position not being filled.

The main effort with tribes has been to acquire 2020 access permits. Application for Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation access has been made but not yet received.

Goshute Tribe

Reporting no progress on the Goshute Indian Reservation.

Paiute Tribe

The stream restoration project on the Shivwit's reservation is underway. Though the Utah FWCO is not physically rendering assistance, the tribe continues this work. Their effort in March was mainly burning debris piles. The goal is to improve habitat for virgin spinedace along the river while maintaining southwest flycatcher habitat by planting cottonwoods and willows in their stead.

Fish Passage

The FWCO received funding for fish passage improvements in Raft Creek in N.E. Utah. We are indeed grateful for the opportunity to work with the UDWR in this capacity.



Additionally, three barriers in Zion National Park were visited with Park Service employee Robyn Henderek. We evaluated each while considering impacts to both native and non-native species in the event that the barriers are removed. Further plans were made to discuss barrier modification and designs with William Rice and FishOne Engineering staff.

State Assistance

The FWCO, in partnership with the UDWR worked together on a proposal (SOW) to be presented to the Virgin River Recovery Program. The project focus is to control beaver in the Santa Clara River.

We also assisted the UDWR to summarize fourteen years of (Santa Clara River) data; this is for the Virgin spinedace SSA being done by the SLC ES office.

We received collecting permits authorizing AIS samples (for whirling disease) to be taken from Jones Hole Creek in Dinosaur National Monument, and for the Escalante River project, for the three initiative species and razorback sucker.

Hill Air Force Base

The FWCO partnered up with Hill AFB in Ogden, Utah to hire a seasonal employee. Holli Holmes will be joining our team on 12 May. Her duty station will be at Hill Air force Base working with FWS biologist Nick Brown on various wildlife projects in Utah's West Desert.

Back to work after a newly installed guzzler was picked up, thrown up hill and landed upside down. This was a disheartening event and unexpected; its weight included hundreds of pounds of cement used to anchor it down. We plan to reconstruct the structure as soon as allowed to return to the field.



Outlook

The Utah FWCO will continue working with our partners to better conserve our fish and wildlife resources in Utah.

Our priorities at Hill Air Force Base are strong and will continue, as will our emphasis on fish passage in streams where fish habitat is fragmented by barriers, and in our important role to assist in trust responsibilities with Native American Tribes.