



Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Conserving Wildlife—Serving People

Lander Region Angler News - 2012 Edition

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Fishing Regulation Changes for 2012-2013

Wyoming fishing regulations are officially reviewed, and recommended changes considered, every two years. This year, new regulations went into effect for 2012-2013. There were changes in both statewide regulations and drainage area 2 regulations that anglers in the Lander Region should be aware of.

There were several changes made to the general creel limits that may be significant, depending upon where you fish. Limits for the trout category are now different for streams and lakes. For lakes, the creel limit is still 6 trout, but the only one over 20 inches restriction that had been in place for many years was removed. For streams, the limit is 3 trout and no more than one shall exceed 16 inches.

These changes were made to reflect the inherent differences between lake and stream populations of trout and how they are managed. Generally, lakes and reservoirs in Wyoming require stocking to create and sustain a trout population. Since we stock these fish purely for the benefit of anglers, we prefer they are harvested by anglers rather than die of natural causes in the lake. Streams, on the other hand, are often managed as wild fisheries with no stocking. Growth is often slower and

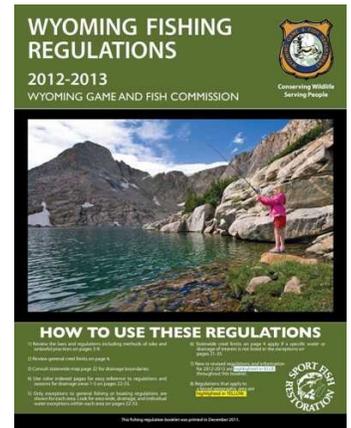
space is more limited. It makes sense to have more restrictive regulations on these waters to insure that an adequate population is maintained to provide acceptable catch rates for anglers.

Because lake trout are often managed to provide a trophy aspect for anglers, they were removed from the trout category and given a separate creel and possession limit. The limit is 6 lake trout, and no more than one shall exceed 24 inches.

Size restrictions were removed from brook trout creel limits to simplify the regulation. The limit remains at 16 fish.

The creel limit for whitefish was reduced from 25 to 6. The reduced limit is due to concerns among managers for this native fish. Whitefish numbers seem to be experiencing declines in Wyoming and other states throughout the west in recent years.

The changes in the Lander area include a modified stream regulation to protect native cutthroat, changes to the Shoshone Lake creel limit, addition of a regulation at Upper Brooks Lake, and deletion of the exception at Christina and Gustave lakes. All streams in Area 2, unless listed separately, have a creel limit on trout of three, no more than one trout shall ex-



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Regulations continued

(Continued from page 1)
ceed 16 inches and no more than one cutthroat trout shall exceed 12 inches. Refer to the graphic on page 2 for tips on distinguishing between cutthroat and rainbow trout.

The creel limit at Shoshone Lake and Shoshone Creek has increased from 4 brook trout to 6 brook trout per day or in possession. Fish sampling and angler catch information indicated that this fishery could support a higher creel limit without negatively impacting the catch rates or average size of the brook trout. The opening date for fishing was changed from June 1 to June 15. This change will hopefully reduce resource damage that occurs when anglers attempt to access the lake when trails and meadows are still extremely wet or partially blocked by snow.

The creel limit at Shoshone Lake and Shoshone Creek has increased from 4 brook trout to 6 brook trout

Beginning in 2012, Upper Brooks Lake has a creel limit on game fish of 6, no more than 2 of which can exceed 12 inches. This fishery includes a combination of brook trout, rainbow trout, and splake. The regulation is intended to protect the population of large brook trout that could otherwise be prone to overharvest. Designating the limit for game fish rather than brook trout prevents confusion and identification problems with the splake that also occur in the lake.

In 1992, a regulation limiting the take of lake trout to 2 fish per day was implemented. The desire of the concerned anglers and the goals of the regulation were to increase catch rates while maintaining or improving size structure and condition of the lake trout. Given its 340-acre

size and difficulty of access, Christina Lake receives very light fishing pressure. Data from netting and angler interviews indicated that the restrictive creel limit had not improved size structure and condition of the Christina Lake lake trout population over the past 20 years. Subsequently the regulation was dropped and Christina and Gustave lakes now fall under the statewide regulations. Which means the limit for lake trout is 6, no more than one of which can exceed 24 inches.

There are many other minor changes that occurred throughout the regulation booklet, so be sure to obtain a copy from a license selling agent or check them out online at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/fishing-1000428.aspx>

KNOW HOW TO IDENTIFY CUTTHROAT TROUT

CUTTHROAT TROUT Distinguished from rainbow trout and hybrids by the presence of red or orange slash under jaw and no white tips on fins. Black spotting is generally concentrated towards tail (except on the Snake River cutthroat which has uniform distribution of fine black spots) and few or no spots on head.



RAINBOW TROUT and RAINBOW CUTTHROAT HYBRID (CUTTBOW) TROUT
Distinguished from cutthroat trout by presence of white tips on fins. Other characteristics include more uniform black spots and more spots on the head, and may or may not have red or orange slash on lower jaw.

Three-Year Research Study on Burbot - Update

Last year's newsletter contained an article which described a three-year burbot research project that was to be conducted through Montana State University. The study is now underway.

Specific objectives of the study include estimating exploitation (mortality from angling), abundance, population growth rate, and large-scale movement patterns of burbot within the Wind River drainage. Graduate student Sean Lewandoski completed his first year of field work in the fall of 2011. He was able to tag 726 burbot in Trail, Ring, Torrey, Upper Dinwoody, Lower Dinwoody, and Bull lakes. Similar numbers of tags will be placed in burbot again in 2012 and 2013. The tags consist of a small plastic disk wired to the back of the fish behind the dorsal fin. Each tag contains its own unique number. Anglers are given a \$10 reward for each tag returned. Anglers should return the tags to Montana State University. Return envelopes are available at lake kiosks. Tags can also be returned online at montana.edu/burbot.

Tag returns will be used to estimate exploitation. Population size, population growth rate, and exploitation rate will be integrated to quantify the effects of fishing mortality on the burbot population for each lake system.

The study, which is a combined effort of Montana State University, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Shoshone and Arapaho Tribes, will improve our understanding of burbot ecology and management, particularly in the upper Wind River drainage, and provide a scientific foundation for management decisions. Outcomes from exploitation studies can result in refining creel limits, length limits, season closures, and prioritization of management actions such as canal screening and habitat improvements. We encourage all anglers who catch a tagged fish to return it to the address on the tag or contact the Game and Fish, USFWS office, or Tribal Fish and Game. Your cooperation will improve the accuracy of the study and allow us to manage burbot in a way that will insure quality fishing into the future.

“We encourage all anglers who catch a tagged fish to return it to the address on the tag or contact the Game and Fish, USFWS office, or Tribal Fish and Game.”



Big Atlantic Gulch

If you are visiting the Atlantic City area and want to wet a line, there's a good chance that you can catch a trout in nearby Big Atlantic Gulch. Big Atlantic Gulch is a man-made pond that was constructed along a series of Beaver Ponds to provide fishing opportunity for visitors of the Atlantic City area. Five hundred Snake River cutthroat trout and 500 brook trout are stocked in the pond annually. Sampling by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in 2011 showed that there are good numbers of both species in Big Atlantic Gulch. Snake River cutthroat trout average length was almost 13 inches and brook

trout average length was almost 11 inches; however, the largest cutthroat trout captured was almost 17 inches and 2 pounds, and the largest brook trout captured was almost 16 inches and 1.5 pounds.

Big Atlantic Gulch is located very close to a BLM campground. To get there from Lander, take U.S. 28 towards Rocks Springs for approximately 25 miles and then turn left on Atlantic City Road. After approximately 2 miles, turn left on Fort Stambaugh Loop Road. Big Atlantic Gulch is located approximately 1/4-mile from the Atlantic City Road/Fort Stambaugh Loop Road intersection.



Snake River cutthroat trout captured at Big Atlantic Gulch.

Burlington Reservoir

Few places in the Lander Region currently offer a better chance to catch a nice rainbow trout than Burlington Reservoir near Lysite. This reservoir is a relatively new fishery that has only been stocked since 2007. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department currently stocks 3,000 rainbow trout annually in Burlington. Game and Fish sampling in 2011 showed that the stocked rainbow trout are thriving and providing excellent fishing opportunity. Gill net catch rates were almost 3 fish per hour, which is very high. In addition to the high numbers of rainbow trout, growth is also fast. The average size of the rainbows captured in 2011 was 18 inches and 2.3 pounds, with the largest fish being over 20 inches and 3 pounds!

To get to Burlington Reservoir from Shoshoni, take U.S. 20/26 east and turn left (North) on County Road 176 at Moneta. Continue driving on County Road 176 for approximately 8 miles until you get to Lysite. Once in Lysite, County Road 176 turns into Fremont Street. From Fremont Street turn right (North) onto Lysite Creek Road and drive approximately 1/2-mile until you reach Burlington Reservoir.



Burlington Reservoir near Lysite is currently providing outstanding rainbow trout fishing.

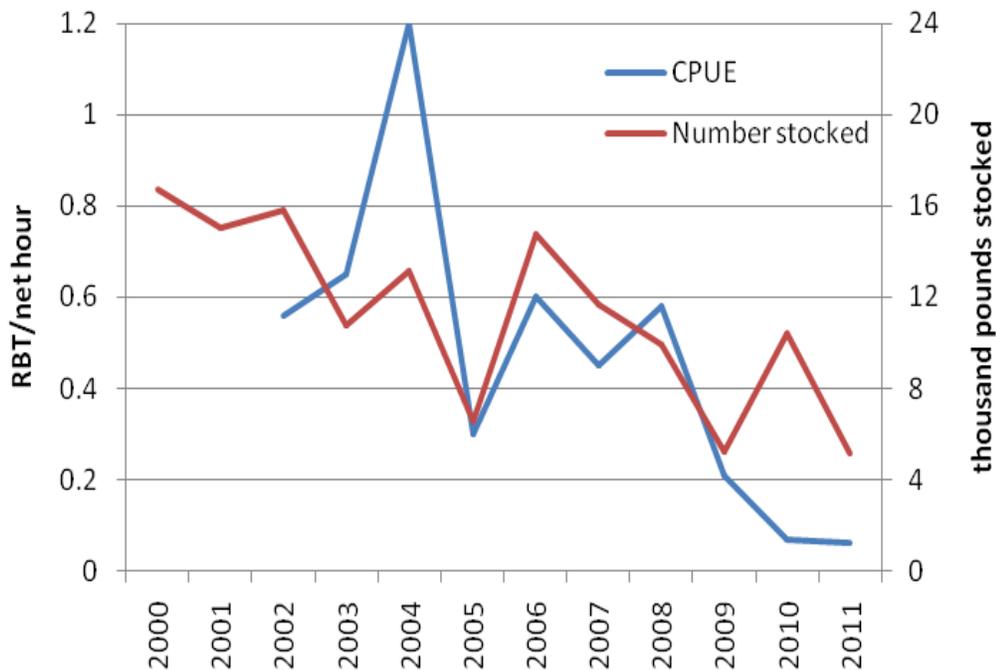
Boysen Reservoir Trout

Boysen Reservoir provides an exceptional trout fishery during most years, but in recent years anglers have likely noticed that the number of trout in the reservoir has decreased. Unlike most of the other species in the reservoir, the rainbow trout fishery is created entirely through stocking. Without hatchery fish, there would not be a rainbow trout fishery.

Trout provide opportunities to shore anglers and also help boost the fishing experience for ice anglers. Most other species tend to be caught best during summer or by boat.

Fisheries biologists sample Boysen Reservoir annually to determine the quality of the trout fishery and the survival and growth of the stocked fish. Fifty thousand 9-inch long rainbow trout are requested each year for Boysen Reservoir. The larger stocking size reduces predation from walleye. Walleye mostly feed on fish smaller than 9 inches. It takes almost a year to raise a 9-inch rainbow trout in the hatchery.

In recent years hatchery production has been hampered by temporary shutdowns to upgrade facilities, repair water systems and raceways, or for the disinfection of hatcheries when disease is identified. The number and/or size of fish stocked in Boysen over the past 5 years has been less than desired for the maintenance of a quality fishery. This year production is on schedule to meet the 50,000 rainbow trout (15,000 pounds) requested for Boysen Reservoir, though some will be stocked in the spring rather than in the fall as requested. Studies have shown that trout stocked in the fall are preyed upon less by walleye when compared to spring stocking. Since rainbow trout grow exceptionally fast in Boysen, within 1 year most fish are 16 inches or larger. We are hopeful that angler catch rates for rainbow trout will increase to a more acceptable level within 1-2 years. Until then please bear with us.



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Relationship between the pounds of rainbow trout stocked compared to the number of rainbow trout captured in nets during trend sampling.

Planting Willows on the Little Popo Agie River

With the help of 120+ Lander 6th graders and members of the Popo Agie Anglers and National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), a willow planting project was completed this spring on WGFD's public access area on the Little Popo Agie River. The upper section of this access area was recently purchased by NOLS for constructing their new Wyss Wilderness Medicine Campus. Shortly after purchasing the land, NOLS contacted WGFD to discuss potential projects that could benefit the Little Popo Agie River watershed, and transplanting willows was suggested. The project was ideal for getting the Lander community and local landowners involved.

Approximately 700 willows were clipped and transplanted along 600 feet of stream at the upper end of the access area over a two-day period. The kids did a tremendous job and learned the benefits that healthy riparian habitat can provide to streams. The transplanted willows will help stabilize eroding stream banks, provide overhead cover for fish, and provide organic material to the stream that is important for macroinvertebrates. There may be additional opportunities to plant willows along this access area the next several

years, so be sure to get out and enjoy the river and volunteer some time the next go around.



Wyoming Game & Fish Department Conserving Wildlife—Serving People

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WE'RE ON THE WEB
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov/>

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE!



Don't Move a Mussel

**BEFORE YOU LAUNCH
IN ANY WATER,**
protect your water resource and
boat motor from invasive zebra and
quagga mussels by doing a
SELF-CHECK

Follow these simple steps to protect your waters:

- ✓ **DRAIN** All water must be drained from your boat. This includes the ballast, bilge, livewell and motor. Leave wet compartments open.
- ✓ **CLEAN** Remove all plants, mud and debris from equipment and boat.
- ✓ **DRY** Dry your boat or equipment 5 days in the summer, 18 days spring/fall or 3 days of freezing.

Help protect Wyoming's
waters by making sure you
Don't Move a Mussel!



Please contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department if you see attached mussels on your equipment or in Wyoming waters. We can provide more information and assistance in removal. Call 1-877-WGFD-AIS - (877-943-3247)



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