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Friends of the Teton River works for clean water, healthy streams and abundant fisheries in Teton Valley.

Our Vision for the Future:

1. Lead efforts to provide clean water, healthy streams and abundant fisheries in the Teton Valley.
2. Exhibit a bias for action, using science as our platform.
3. Be the voice for water in the Teton Valley.
4. Become a model in the West for watershed research and management.
5. Deliver results through core staff excellence and project expansions in collaboration with key partners.

Friends of the Teton River

WATER LINES

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY FRIENDS OF THE TETON RIVER



Students from Teton Valley Community School helped FTR plant willows along a Teton Creek tributary. The class was still enthusiastic after a cold and muddy excursion.

FTR completes headwater trout population survey

BY RYAN COLYER
FTR Research Associate

At the end of September Friends of the Teton River, in partnership with U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), completed the largest scale research project it has ever undertaken! The project was a complete inventory of trout populations in all the major tributaries to the Teton River (upstream from Bitch Creek). The survey established a quantitative baseline that local and regional fishery managers can utilize in the protection and the restoration of Teton Valley's fisheries.

Why was the survey conducted?

As you know from previous newsletters, IDFG conducts biannual monitoring of trout populations in the main stem of the Teton River. In recent years, this monitoring identified a substantial decrease in the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) population in the upper Teton River. Between 1999 and 2003, the native YCT population declined by nearly 95%, while the non-native brook and rainbow trout populations increased by approximately 300%.

Another study, conducted by the USFS in 1997-1998, hinted that YCT

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Jim Fredericks (left), IDFG and Jim Capurso, USFS, snorkel survey a reach on Bitch Creek during a crew training session.

SURVEY From Page 1

populations were struggling in the Teton River tributaries. They found intact YCT populations in South Badger, Darby, and South Leigh creeks, while YCT populations in the remainder of Teton Valley's streams were declining as a result of competition from non-native Eastern Brook Trout (EBT).

Prompted by potential Endangered Species Act listing of the YCT and a need for an accurate, quantitative assessment of YCT status in the upper Teton watershed, FTR and its partners designed the Tributary Assessment Project.

What did we do?

We assessed fish populations on fifteen major Teton River tributaries, South Badger, Bitch, Darby, South Leigh, North Leigh, Fox, Game, Horseshoe, Little Pine, Mahogany, Milk, Moose, Packsaddle, Teton, and Trail Creeks. On each stream, from the USFS boundary upstream to the extent of water, we identified one hundred meters sample sites every two kilometers, then each site was visited by the survey crew. In some cases this resulted in brutally long days. Accessing the upper sites in Mahogany Creek, Jackpine Creek, or the North Fork of Bitch Creek often meant bushwhacking all day in remote areas through thick vegetation and steep country. Accessing other sites required back-

packing for a week at a time in the Jedediah Smith Wilderness, made possible only through the much appreciated support of pack horses or human volunteers, who helped carry hundreds of pounds of sampling gear. In this fashion, crews moved through country that few people have traveled, and visited over 150 sites.

All sample reaches were block-netted at the top and bottom in order to insure that sampling occurred on a closed population. Electrofishing was conducted using gas or battery operated backpack units. The electrofisher settings of voltage, frequency, and duty cycle were unique to each site, and were determined by physical characteristics such as water conductivity, creek size, water volume, etc. It was important to use the lowest effective settings in order to minimize fish injury.

Activation of the electrofishing unit established an electrical current that traveled from the anode, a five foot wand with a metal ring at the end, to the cathode, a rat-tail like wire hanging from the unit. When fish entered the resulting electric field, their muscles were forced to contract in pulses, their heads became negatively charged relative to their tails, and they were attracted to the anode ring. Fish frequently swam directly to the ring, where they were easily netted by crew members wielding dip nets. All captured

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Fall water education

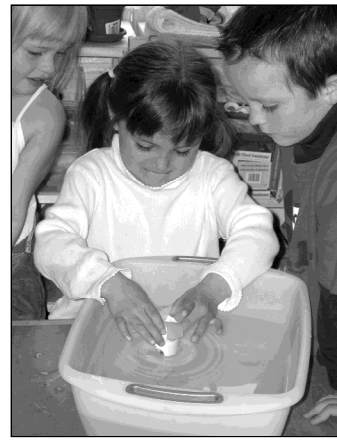
With the start to a new school year, Education Director Anna Lindstedt spent many of her fall days in the field with Teton Valley students teaching about the watershed they live in. More students than ever are involved in the FTR Education Program, thanks to the successful completion of FTR's Teton Watershed Curriculum, which provides classrooms with preparatory and follow-up resources for field excursions.

The Learning Academy joined Anna for the first time this September to explore the biological aspects of water quality. While the



older students learned about macroinvertebrate habitat on Teton Creek, kindergarten and first grade learned about macroinvertebrate body parts while building their own bugs in the classroom.

Also new to FTR watershed education this autumn, Alta Elementary School first and second grade



BUILD-A-BUG. Learning Academy Kindergarten and first graders learned the parts of macroinvertebrates and built their own in the classroom. **FLOAT-A-BUG.** Then they experimented by floating their creations in water.

learned about the water cycle and the importance of water and the weather. Jade Pittel's students will be monitoring a schoolyard weather station throughout the winter months, which includes tracking snowfall to study run-off in the spring. Molly Goodrich's all day kindergarten showed off their enthusiasm for learning by collecting bug life in Teton Creek.

Beginning a year-long stream monitoring program with FTR, the Teton Valley Community School (TVCS) kicked off their watershed study with a campout in Teton Canyon. TVCS third, fourth, and fifth graders braved the rain in their rubber boots to get trained on water quality testing, macroinvertebrate collection, stream velocity and riparian habitat. Students will be collecting data at the same site for six months out of the school year, which will be sent to the "Wyoming Stream Team," a water quality initiative for middle and high school students monitoring streams within the State of Wyoming. This effort, including the monitoring equipment, was made possible through the Teton Science School.

For the sixth year Barb Agnew's Teton fourth graders joined FTR and compared Spring and Teton Creeks.

In the upcoming winter months, look for local student scientists studying water in its frozen form and the release of the Teton Watershed Curriculum on CD-ROM.

Great Progress on restoration work on Teton Creek tributary...

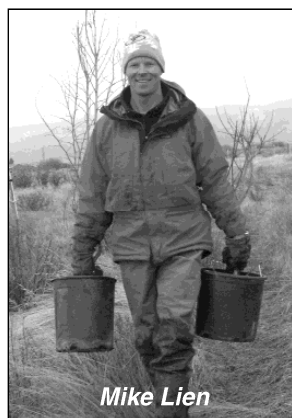


The restoration crew.

Mike Lien has been working hard to complete willow plantings on Unnamed Creek, a tributary to Teton Creek that FTR's graduate student Martin Koenig identified as a critical spawning area for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. FTR is collaborating with the Teton Regional Land Trust to revegetate banks of this important stream. Here are some photos of Teton Valley Community School student volunteers working under wet, muddy and cold conditions. Note the huge smiles!



Sally Watters miraculously stays clean while planting willows.



Mike Lien

SURVEY From Page 2

fish were then identified, measured head to tail, and released unharmed.

Two thirds of the sites were sampled by a single pass with the electrofisher unit. The other (randomly selected) third of the sites were sampled to depletion. This means that the crew conducted consecutive passes with the electrofisher until no more fish were captured. Data from the multi pass sites was later used for the calculation of capture efficiency and fish removal rates (per pass) at each site, which is used to calculate the total population of the stream.

In addition to the fish counts done at each site, a number of habitat parameters were also measured in order to better understand how habitat can affect fish presence or absence. These parameters included stream wetted width, depth, number of pools, number of large woody debris pieces present, stream substrate composition, dominant vegetation types, and water temperature and conductivity.

What did we learn?

Bitch, South Badger, South Leigh, and Darby Creeks are inhabited exclu-



(Left to right)
Jordan Nielson,
Ryan Colyer,
and Phil
Edmonds use a
gas powered
electrofisher to
collect fish on
Jackpine Creek.

sively by YCT. South Leigh Creek contains the densest population of YCT and Bitch Creek contains the largest population of YCT in the upper Teton watershed. We found only Eastern Brook Trout (EBT) in Game and Fox Creeks. We found mixed populations of EBT and YCT in Horseshoe, Little Pine, Mahogany, Moose, North Leigh, Packsaddle, Teton, and Trail Creeks. In all of these creeks where mixed populations were found, EBT dominated the system. This suggests that EBT out compete the native YCT when both species are present.

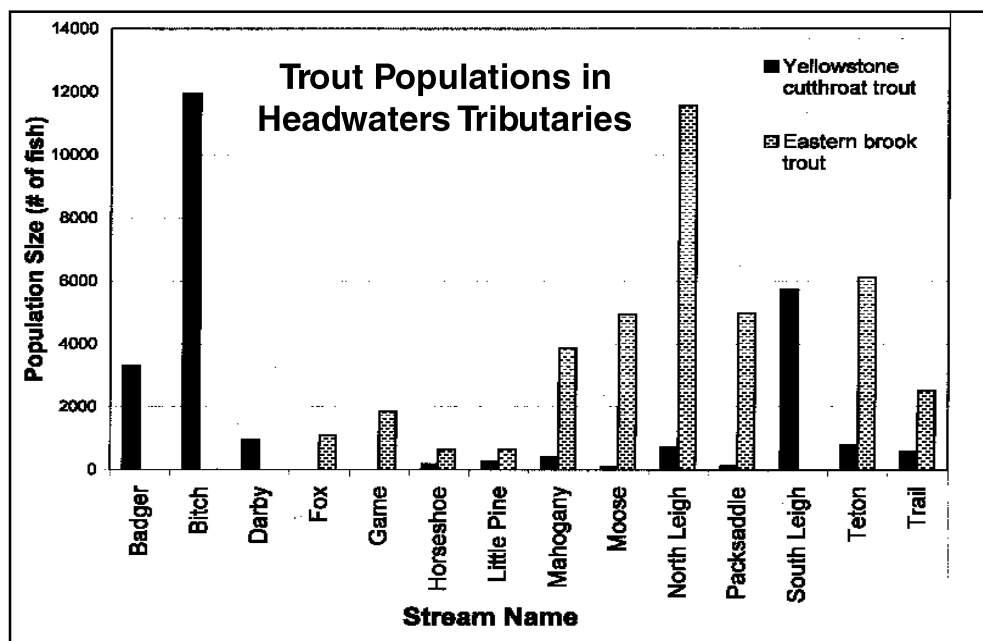
Out of eight tributary drainages

that supported both EBT and YCT, we found only three one hundred meter reaches where YCT outnumbered the EBT. The first place was in the North Fork of Mahogany Creek, where only cutthroat trout were found above a relatively large waterfall. The waterfall probably blocks upstream movement of EBT, and has thereby created an isolated population of YCT.

The second place where YCT were found in greater numbers than were EBT was in a tributary of Little Pine Creek, named Coalmine Creek. There is no obvious explanation for this isolated instance of YCT dominance, but it may have something to do with the limited possibility of fish movement through the steep and narrow sections of Coalmine Creek.

The third place where YCT outnumbered EBT was on Trail Creek, just upstream of the National Forest Boundary. In this case, the cutthroat individuals that were captured were quite large in size, and so could have been fluvial (Teton River resident) fish that had moved into Trail Creek in order to spawn.

We have not yet analyzed the non-lethal fin clips samples that were collected for genetic analysis from the adipose or pelvic fin of all YCT. Genetic analysis is a powerful tool in fisheries



management because it can reveal the extent to which tributary populations are isolated, the extent to which fluvial fish mingle with tributary populations, the extent to which cutthroat populations have been subjected to hybridization with rainbow trout, and it can reveal whether the subject is a native wild cutthroat or the descendent of a planted hatchery fish.

What are the next steps?

All information from this study has been shared with federal, state and local agency personnel, and strategies for native trout protection and restoration are currently being developed.

All of the tributaries in the Teton Valley that were historically fish-bearing streams sustained pure populations of YCT, but this survey has revealed that YCT currently make up just a small fraction of trout populations in the mountain tributaries. Currently, YCT are the lone occupants of only four of our valley tributaries; this is probably due to the presence of fish barriers, such as culverts, diversion structures, or seasonally dry sections of creek, which have prevented EBT migration. The long term survival of these isolated YCT populations can be protected by not removing barriers. However, we will continue to monitor population numbers to make sure that they don't drop below viable levels.

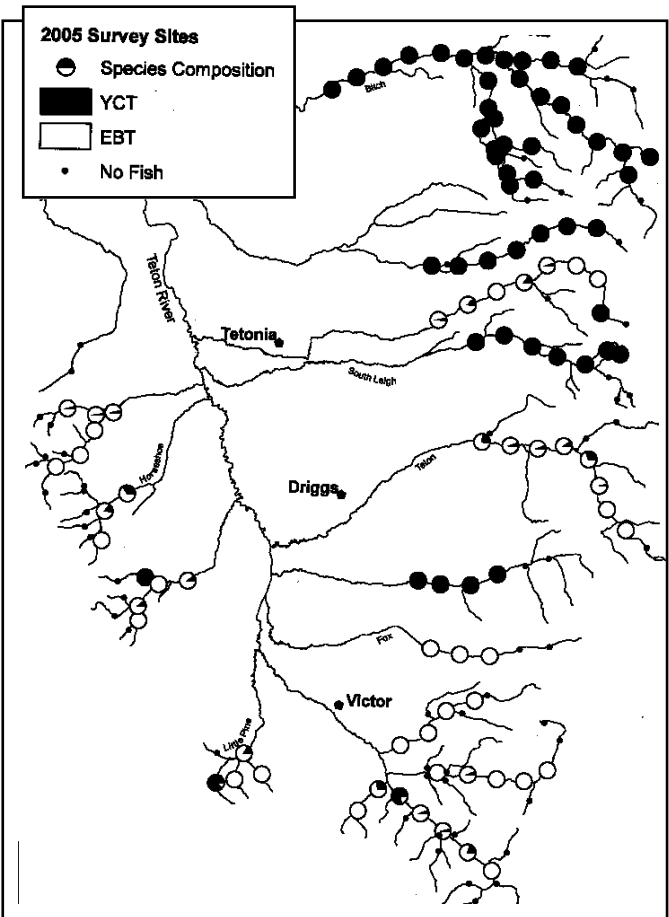
In streams with mixed populations of EBT and YCT, where YCT are struggling to survive, restoration strategies should focus on increasing and preserving fish passage to and from the Teton River. This means providing fish passage through culverts and around diversion barriers and providing streamflow at critical times in the YCT life cycle. This will allow fluvial (Teton River inhabiting) cutthroat to move into the tributaries in order to spawn. This will also make possible the continuous migration of cutthroat into the

tributaries, which will help sustain tributary populations that are currently struggling to persist.

Restoration of a more natural hydrologic regime in the Teton River and its tributaries would give YCT a competitive edge over non-native trout. Peak flows during the snowmelt spring runoff provide YCT with ample water in which to migrate up tributaries to their spawning grounds. Additionally, keeping water in tributary streams until mid to late August enables young, recently hatched YCT to move downstream into habitat suitable for their development and maturation.

Completion of this survey is a massive step toward understanding the current status of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in the upper Teton watershed. We now know the trout species composition, population size, and extent of fish in all of the tributaries of the upper Teton River. The next steps involve focusing fishery restoration efforts where we can most benefit YCT populations. Friends of the Teton River will continue to collaborate with state and federal agencies, regional businesses, private land owners, and local citizens in order to restore and preserve our native trout fishery.

Friends of the Teton River would like to extend many thanks to the numerous supporters and collaborators who made this project possible. Thank you Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, Federation of Fly Fishers, Henry's Fork Watershed Council, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho



State University, Karen Scheid, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Bring Back the Natives, National Forest Foundation, Native Trout Subcommittee of Henry's Fork Watershed Council, One Fly Foundation, Snake River Cutthroats, Targhee Environmental Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Wildlife Forever, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department.



A cutthroat from Trail Creek

FTR reviews 2005, plans for 2006

BY MITCH FELCHLE
FTR Development Director

Happy Holidays! Thank you so much for your great support in 2005! Your energy and enthusiasm kept our staff going when the restoration and research project work at times threatened to overwhelm us. And, we have the results to show your support was well placed!

We just completed a strategic planning process at Friends of the Teton River, using the occasion of our 5th anniversary to remember all that we've accomplished in this and prior years. Even more importantly, where do we go from here? Besides formalizing some important plans for the next few years, we also agreed upon a more streamlined Mission Statement—"Friends of the Teton River works for clean water, healthy streams and abundant fisheries in Teton Valley."

Equally important is FTR's five point Vision for the future:

- 1** Lead efforts to provide clean water, healthy streams and abundant fisheries in the Teton Valley.
- 2** Exhibit a bias for action, using science as our platform.
- 3** Be the voice for water in the Teton Valley.
- 4** Become a model in the West for watershed research and management.
- 5** Deliver results through core staff excellence and project expansions in collaboration with key partners.

Before we outline our plans for next year, please allow us to outline some of FTR's accomplishments that your support made possible in 2005.

2005 IN REVIEW

First, let's look at our efforts to protect Teton Valley's clean water. FTR, in cooperation with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, continued to monitor water quality at 12 sites in Teton Valley. We also conducted a bacteria sourcing project to identify the causes of high E Coli levels in Woods Creek.

Next, let's review what we did to protect healthy streams. Our habitat restoration efforts along Teton River and tributary stream banks continued, decreasing water temperatures, reducing silt in important spawning areas and increasing fishery habitat. FTR also recently completed, with partners Idaho Department of Fish & Game, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and many others a study of all fish barriers on 15 tributaries of the Teton River, providing information never before compiled in the Teton Basin.

Third, what is FTR doing to protect our abundant fisheries? We recently completed fish population studies in 15 tributaries of the Teton River from the U.S. Forest Service boundary upstream to the extent of water. This massive, summer-long project covered over 300 miles of mountain tributaries and provided invaluable data on fish populations.

On October 5th FTR hosted a Research Committee meeting that included a veritable who's who in Upper Snake River Basin fishery experts. The group pulled together FTR's recent research and focused on solutions for Teton Valley's native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, without sacrificing opportunities for anglers to enjoy Teton Valley's abundant number of non-native trout.

Education efforts continued strongly, with Water Awareness Week events, creation of a K-12 watershed education curriculum, classroom and field trip education of over 350 students and public forums for adults.

And that's not all—like many of you, we also took time to have some fun on the River, fishing, boating and wildlife watching on our own. We also celebrated with our members at our 5th year anniversary party on the River, a moonlight float, a dinner for our Stewards donors and other events. This reminds us how important it is to do what we can to pass on to the next generations the Teton River as we know it, and how it's really everybody's business to do that.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2006

While we have many more plans for 2006 than we could possibly cover in this article, five key strategies stand out:

STRATEGY 1. Provide comprehensive, valley-wide watershed education programs for youth and adults. Implementation actions for this strategy include continuation of our highly successful Teton River watershed curriculum for K-12 students, public education forums and new adult watershed education extension classes through our partnership with the Idaho Institute of Technology. The goal of our education programs is to foster a sense of stewardship for water resources.

STRATEGY 2. Implement stream restoration projects on the Teton River and its tributaries. Implementation actions for this strategy include prioritizing tributary restoration pro-

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Thank you Bonnie, welcome Mitch!

In the middle of August Bonnie Self passed the FTR fundraising baton to Mitch Felchle. Bonnie leaves FTR after an incredibly successful two years of development work. Not only did she create a legacy of generous giving, doubling membership, and a strong stewardship tradition, but also organized and streamlined FTR finances. Luckily Bonnie, Rusty and Doug will remain in the Teton Valley and continue to share their



Bonnie Self

remarkable talents with our community. Thank you Bonnie for all that you gave to FTR and Teton Valley's precious water resources.

Welcome to Mitch who brings a tremendous history of fund development, marketing and strategic development work, we're so glad that you've joined the team.

Mitch joined FTR as Development Director. He brings a wealth of experience both working for and consulting with nonprofits, as well as having served in various legal, marketing and strategic planning roles with a Fortune 500 financial services organization. Mitch has spent the past 25+ years visiting Idaho, and he and his wife Dawn have spent the past 16 of those staying in the home they built in Targhee Ranch. He reports that they have always



Mitch Felchle

enjoyed the Valley, but it took Mitch's move here as a permanent resident (Dawn will follow when she can find work here herself) to truly appreciate the kindness and welcoming nature of people in the Valley.

According to Mitch, "Replacing Bonnie Self, who is a friend, will be difficult, but with the help and support of our members we will be able to keep FTR healthy and growing in service to our members and our Teton Valley community."

PLANS From Page 6

jects based on ecological values and landowner interests, establishing an "Adopt-a stream" restoration project for K-12 classes, and continuing to provide opportunities for volunteers to participate in stream bank restoration projects.

Strategy 3. Restore a more natural stream hydrology. This strategy include continuation of our work with Idaho Department of Water Resources and canal companies on diversion monitoring, ongoing work with Trout Unlimited and development of options for stream-flow restoration.

Strategy 4. Protect and recover Teton Valley Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) populations and bring into bal-

ance the Teton River fishery. Implementation actions include solutions for preserving YCT spawning habitat without sacrificing opportunities for anglers to enjoy the Teton Valley's abundant number of non-native trout, development and monitoring of a program for streams with strong YCT populations and implementation of stream bank and stream-flow restoration projects to help restore the natural hydrology of the Teton River.

Strategy 5. Monitor and improve surface and ground water quality in Teton Valley. Implementation actions for this strategy include continuation of our surface water quality monitoring, analyzing groundwater quality data, designing and implementing a cost-effective groundwater monitoring program and continuing work with Teton County Commissioners

and other key stakeholders on appropriate ordinances to protect groundwater quality.

And that's just a summary of some of our more important plans for 2006. We also solemnly promise to have some fun on the Teton River and its tributaries. After all, that's a big part of why we all live here!

We would appreciate your feedback on how we're doing, and what we have planned. Without your interest and support, we wouldn't be here.

We do have one favor to ask of you: please remember FTR (gift form enclosed) as you consider your year-end giving. Your support as we close out 2005 could mean the difference between a good 2005, and a great 2005! Thank you.

2005 Stewards—Thousands of Thanks!

Our 2005 Stewards, listed below, contributed \$1,000 or more in support of FTR's mission this year...and that means "thousands of thanks" go out to them! With this support we can continue to work for clean water, healthy streams and abundant fisheries in Teton Valley. We appreciate our Stewards.

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Dan & Pat Willert
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John & Rosemary Young
Greg Young & Anjali Tate

Old Bill's Donors provide vital support

FTR supporters donated \$67,500 through Old Bill's Fun Run 2005—a new record! Thanks to all of the following donors who contributed to this vital support for FTR. We count on this support each year, and you came through for us again. We also thank the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, which sponsors Old Bill's each year, and the anonymous couple, Mr. & Mrs. Old Bill, and other Co-Challengers who match your contributions to FTR through Old Bill's.

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