

**Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Strategic Habitat Plan Implementation Questionnaire**

Region: Pinedale

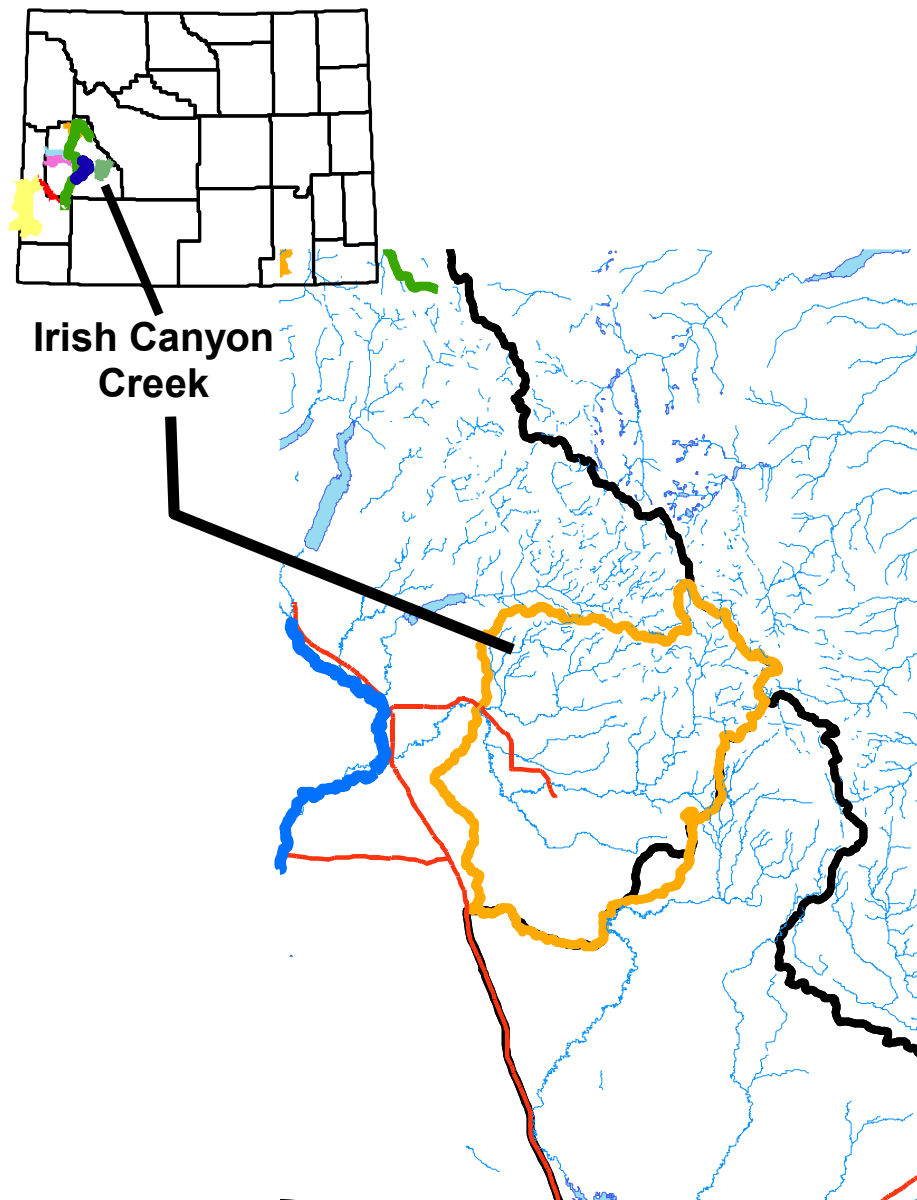
Priority Number: 9

Watershed Name: Irish Canyon Creek

HUC:1404010206

Contributors: Roadifer, Sexauer, Cavalli

A tributary of the East Fork River watershed (located within the above HUC 10), Irish Canyon Creek, make up the Pinedale Region's sixth (or seventh?) priority for the Fish Division. Native Colorado River Cutthroat trout (CRC) are found in these tributaries and are most limited by habitat degradation (grazing management and riparian/aspen community conditions) and competition with nonnative trout. Irish Canyon Creek supports a self-sustaining population of genetically pure CRC. Analysis from samples collected in 1996 indicated that the fish are a unique strain. Both of these streams drain the central southwest slope of the Wind River Range.



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LAND STATUS 5% Private, 95% Public

SPECIES THAT COULD BENEFIT FROM ACTIVITY IN THIS WATERSHED:

Habitat restoration efforts in these drainages would be focused on the native CRC. Long-term watershed restoration efforts could provide benefits to assemblages of both native aquatic and native terrestrial wildlife species through the enhancement of watershed health and function by improving management and addressing identified vegetative succession concerns.

CURRENT HABITAT CONDITIONS/LIMITING FACTORS:

The CRC population in Irish Canyon Creek is currently most limited by habitat conditions, resulting from a combination of vegetative succession and past and present human impacts (roads, grazing, timbering, fire suppression, etc.). These land management practices are considered the biggest threats to achieving long-term conservation goals for this population of CRC. Nonnative trout (brook and rainbow trout) have not been found in this stream and there is a natural barrier about 0.5 above the East Fork River. However, the CRC population in Scab Creek is currently most limited by competition and hybridization with nonnative salmonid species (brook and rainbow trout). Also, these same land management practices could further limit this population. Restoration of healthy and diverse plant communities, particularly aspen and riparian, would optimize CRC habitat over the long-term while providing benefits to numerous other wildlife species. Nonnative trout would need to be removed from Scab Creek.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS/AGREEMENTS

Restoration of the vegetative communities in these watersheds is most limited by the lack of the ability to control livestock grazing to provide for rest of vegetation treatments and proper follow up management following treatments. Readily available alternative locations to alleviate grazing pressure/demands in this watershed would provide greater opportunities for vegetation treatment/enhancement projects.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES/PROPOSED PROJECTS

Current habitat project planning efforts in these watersheds are limited. No known vegetation treatment projects are being planned. Conflicts with livestock management (resting treatments) would likely limit treatment opportunities. Allowing prescribed burning within wilderness areas would also likely further complicate vegetation treatments in this area.

Irish Canyon Creek: Concentrated grazing use is a concern in this watershed. The road along much of the creek may also contribute to sediment loading and logging could be a concern in portions of this watershed. CRC populations in Willow and Beaver Creeks, tributaries to Irish Canyon Creek, apparently migrate to and from Irish Canyon Creek. The connected CRC populations in these streams may be (is?) considered a metapopulation.

Scab Creek: A middle segment of this stream, which includes some BLM lands, supports a self-sustaining, somewhat hybridized (C rated ?) CRC population. Although the fish appeared to be a CRC variety, genetic analysis from samples collected in a 1996 survey indicated a YSC variety. The meadow below Federal lands is in poor condition and unable to withstand the high run-off events from the steeper gradient upstream. The degraded condition of this meadow is apparently due to long-term overgrazing from elk and cattle. This meadow is located less than 1 mile from the Scab Creek elk feed ground managed by the WGFD.

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Scab Creek is in the Silver Creek Grazing Allotment of the B-T National Forest. A Forest Service supported permittee monitoring effort has been on-going in this allotment since 1996. Forest plan standards and guidelines for riparian areas and fish habitat were not being met according to data collected in 1995 and 1996 by the FS Fisheries Biologist. It is not clear if these problems have been resolved.

Theses streams are managed with emphasis on conservation of CRC populations. Conservation goals to assure the long-term prosperity of CRC include establishment of self-sustaining metapopulations, maintenance of the habitat in areas that currently support self-sustaining CRC populations, and management of other areas for increased abundance. The Forest Service has agreed, in principle, to this plan through the Tri-State CRC Conservation Agreement and Strategy.