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³⁹ Meeteetse Conservation District bucks in-stream flow request

By **GIB MATHERS**
Tribune Staff Writer

An in-stream flow application that would guarantee sufficient water for cutthroat trout habitat in Meeteetse-area waterways has met opposition from the Meeteetse Conservation District.

The in-stream flow application, submitted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, would utilize water from the Greybull and Wood rivers and their tributaries in the Meeteetse area. The department's goal is to improve habitat for Yellowstone cutthroat trout, said Jason Burckhardt, fish biologist at the Cody Game and Fish office.

Meeteetse-area drainages are some of the last Wyoming strongholds for genetically pure Yellowstone cutthroat trout,

Burckhardt said.

Steve Jones, Meeteetse Conservation District resource manager, said there might not be enough water for future water development in the area, such as storage, agricultural, industrial or municipal use, if the application is approved.

Game and Fish fish biologist and in-stream flow specialist Paul Dey of Cheyenne said approving the application could affect future water rights. But those effects would be minimal and would have no impact on current water rights, he said.

The Wyoming Water Development Commission would hold the legal water rights, Dey said. Because there is no provision to periodically review the rights, the claim would be held in perpetuity, he said.

The commission has conducted a feasibility study concerning the in-stream flow

proposal, but Jones said that study has not been released to the public yet.

The commission employed a hydrologist to determine the amount of flow in the waterways.

If the requested amount of water is available 50 percent of the time, the commission deems the application reasonable, Dey said.

The state engineer's office held a public hearing on the proposal Nov. 30 in Meeteetse, Jones said. Officials granted an extended comment period. Those comments were due Dec. 30.

The Meeteetse District is not opposed to protecting cutthroat habitat and offered some options in its own report.

"We would prefer to find other avenues to support the fishery than an in-stream water right," Jones said.

A few of those options included working with landowners to make irrigation more efficient, developing livestock grazing that promotes more ground cover, providing fish passage around barriers and protecting environments around waterways from livestock.

Since 1986, 59 out of 100 Game and Fish in-stream flow petitions have been granted by the state engineer's office, Dey said. Granting those petitions often takes years, he said.

Dey guessed a decision concerning this application could be made within the next two years.

The Game and Fish has published reports of in-flow studies on its Web site. The reports can be viewed at <http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/instreamflow/index.asp>.



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39 Fishing and friends

86-year-old Jim Eads, formerly of Buffalo, continues to hit the ice at Healy for himself and sharing with others

BY KATIE HULET

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Unlike younger sports enthusiasts, Jim Eads of Sheridan doesn't take out a fancy auger or even an ice hut in which to stay warm.

At 86, Eads doesn't let his age – or much else – stop him from getting out on the ice and catching a few fish.

Eads uses a long metal pipe to pick through the 10-inch ice and sits on a bucket instead of cozy lawn chair. You won't find a radio playing next to him either.

It's just him, his one fishing pole and a sled full of fish.

Eads, after all his years of fishing, has become somewhat of an expert. And although he isn't willing to share all of his secrets, he does offer some advice for novice anglers.

"If you want to catch bigger fish, you must use bigger bait," he said. According to him, rules and regulations at Healy Reservoir require fishermen to use either wax worms or live bait in the winter. But from April through November, those rules change and require fishermen to use flies or lures.

It's a rule that's been in effect for a year or so to control fish population, according to Warren Mischke, Sheridan information and education specialist with the Game and Fish Department.

"The reason they changed the law is because we had a population of perch show up in Healy. Because of that population of perch we wanted to catch those," Mischke said.

Game and Fish recommended using live bait in winter months on the privately owned reservoir, and prohibit it during the summer months when anglers go after trout.

For some anglers, the change isn't a big

deal – as long as they can keep hitting the ice in the winter and the cool waters in the summer. For Mischke, he's just glad to see people of all ages enjoying the reservoir.

"I'm excited that a person of any age can go out and experience the wilds of Wyoming and enjoy the wildlife and have a good day fishing," he said. They "don't have to sit at home and rock away their life."

Winter fishing has been a favorite pastime of Eads' for many decades, going back to his childhood. It was during high school that it became a regular part of his life. At that time he and his family moved into Buffalo from the Ucross area, making it easier for him to get to the frozen water during the wintertime.

Eads spends a majority of his time ice fishing with his good friend and roommate, Leloie Brewer. "Leloie is a real sweet lady," he said.

Brewer is 84 years old and Eads said both of them are still in great shape. It is their good health that allows them still to take to the ice, unlike many of their friends of the same age.

They don't just stick to local fishing holes like Healy Reservoir either. Often they will make trips during the winter to Boysen Reservoir just outside of Shoshoni, or to Fort Peck in Montana and sometimes to Nelson Reservoir near Glasgow, Mont.

According to Eads, his friends are the reason that he enjoys ice fishing so much. "I like to share my daily catches with many of my friends," he said. "Particularly those who are unable to make it out on the ice now."





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One of those friends is Jack Meldrum of Buffalo. The two men have been friends for many years. And now that Meldrum can no longer accompany his buddy on the ice, Eads makes sure to continue bringing him perch and even trout at times.

"I just brought him a bag full of perch the other day," Eads said. "There were some trout in there too. I always make sure that I clean and prepare them for Jack so that they are easier for him to cook up."

And Meldrum does enjoy the fish. Meldrum's daughter Louise Anderson said her father told her, "I am just getting paid back for all the fish that I have taken friends over the years."

She also said her dad commented: "But

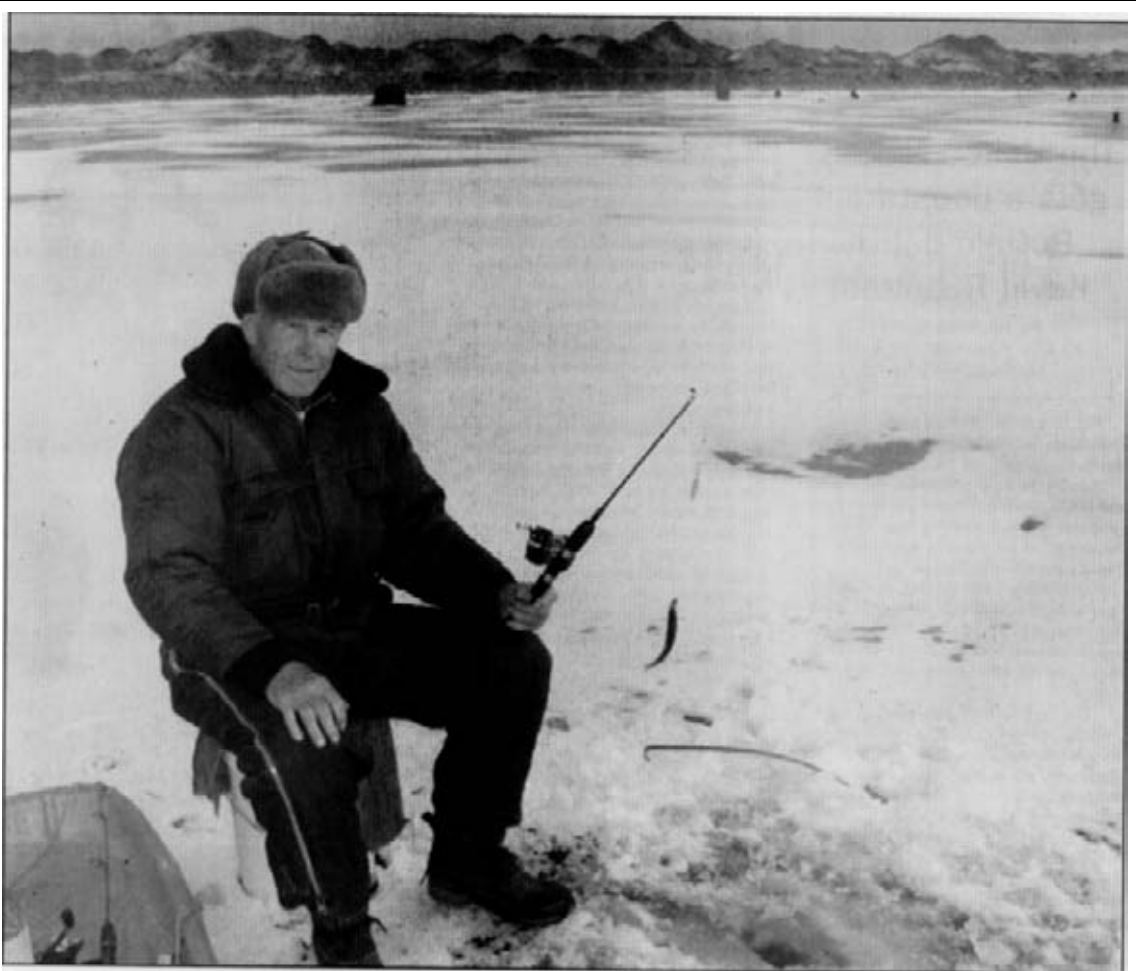
leave it to Jim and he will catch a fish when no one else out on the ice can. He's quite the fisherman."

Besides the perch and rainbow trout that Eads and Brewer catch at Healy Reservoir, he said they sometimes have even gotten lucky enough to bring in a few small-mouth bass.

"I caught one the other day that was at least a couple of pounds," he said.

The bass aren't his favorite, though. Eads prefers to catch perch because he says that they are better eating.

"I most often filet the perch and fry them up when I get home," he added. "But on special occasions, I like to make fish chowder that the Basque Indians used to make."



With huts dotting the ice in the background on Healy Reservoir, Jim Eads of Sheridan just uses a trusty bucket as a chair with the cool air surrounding him as he carries on a decades-long passion for winter fishing. Bulletin photo by Katie Hulet