If you have not already, please look at the new fishing regulations before you begin fishing. Grab a copy where you get your license or the booklet is on our web site http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/fishing-1000428.aspx.

New or revised regulations in the 2012-2013 booklets are highlighted in blue and many changes were made in 2012.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, anglers can now keep six trout of any size in lakes and reservoirs throughout Wyoming, but only 3 trout from a river or stream, with only one of the three trout over 16 inches. However, there are exceptions to the general limit for certain waters in different drainages. In the North Platte River Drainage from the Bessemer Bend bridge downstream to Guernsey dam, the existing regulation of 6 trout with only one over 20 inches will be maintained by a special regulation.

Changes for 2012 also allow for 6 trout of any size to be kept from the North Platte River from Alcova Dam to Gray Reef Reservoir. The department stocks fingerlings and brood culls in this area to help accommodate the harvest. The creel and possession limits for brook trout will also change. Previously, anglers could keep up to 16 brook trout, but only six of these fish could be over eight inches. With the new regulations, anglers will be able to keep and possess up to 16 brook trout of any size.

Fishing regulations are reviewed every two years with changes occurring at the start of even number years. It is always a good idea to check the regulations prior to fishing, but it is particularly importing to check for any changes at the beginning of an even numbered year.

**Aquatic Invasive Species**

Good news about Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). During 2011, 53 waters were sampled for mussels, as well as aquatic plants, crayfish, snails, and clams. All results have been negative for the presence of mussels and other AIS. In 2011, a total of 42,804 inspections were conducted on 32 waters throughout Wyoming from May 21 through September 15. Due to the revision to the high risk inspection protocol in 2011, high risk inspections increased by 86% to 115 compared to 2010. However, only 14 decontaminations were conducted in 2011, 36% fewer than 2010, indicating that boaters are being much more diligent about following drain, clean, and dry protocol. Four mussel encrusted boats were intercepted in 2011; three, previously in Lake Mead, NV, were intercepted in Jackson and one, previously in New York, was intercepted at Flaming Gorge Reservoir.
On a snowy afternoon on December 1, 2011 the first shipment of rainbow trout eggs arrived at the new hatchery facility at the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery. The upgrade to Dan Speas Rearing Station located southwest of Casper at Bessemer Bend began with the purchase of additional land in 2004. Actual construction began five years ago and the eggs in the hatchery signals the completion of construction.

Approximately 1.9 million eggs will be hatched in the facility during the first year. The majority of the fish raised at the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery are rainbow trout. In the first year two strains of rainbow trout as well as brook and brown trout will be hatched. A portion of the first shipment of about one million eggs will be stocked as fingerlings this spring in the Laramie and Casper regions. Others will be held until fall growing to 9 inches to be stocked in the North Platte River Reservoirs. Still others are destined for Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

The first shipment of eggs was from our Fall Rainbow brood stock at Boulder Fish Hatchery. The eggs went from the Boulder Hatchery to the Tensleep Hatchery to mature and then on to Dan Speas Fish Hatchery where they hatched in about 14 days. At two inches the fry were moved from the hatchery building to the circular raceways where they will grow about an inch a month until they are the desired size to be stocked. All of our hatcheries work together with each facility providing what they do best for the process to minimize cost and ensure an adequate supply of trout to maintain our sport fisheries.

The extensive $12.46 million modification was funded by money appropriated by our Wyoming Legislature and construction was done by Wright Brothers and 71 Construction of Casper. Final preparations are underway to open the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery to the public on April 27, 2012.
33-mile ponds

There is an area about 30 miles north and west of Casper we refer to as the 33 Mile Country. Three roads form a triangle, Thirty-Three Mile Road (County Road 110), Long Canyon Road (Dead Horse County Road 114) and Wild Horse Trail (County Road 113) that is primarily Bureau of Land Management lands with numerous small stock watering reservoirs in and around the triangle. While the reservoirs are small, most less than five surface acres, when conditions are right, these small reservoirs provide good little fisheries.

Stocking in the area began in the 1960s and by the 1980s the Game and Fish Department was stocking as many as 25 reservoirs in the area. Unfortunately, beginning in the early 1990s with the years of drought, many of the small reservoirs began receiving less runoff until many became so low fish could not survive. The record snowpack that has kept the large reservoirs in the North Platte System full the past couple of years has not been as kind to the smaller reservoirs in the 33 Mile Area. Many reservoirs are completely dry and the ones with water are very low. The low water creates problems for trout and other species stocked in the area in both the summer and winter. In summer the low water causes warmer water temperatures and lower oxygen levels and in winter lower oxygen levels which means trouble for fish.

We continue to evaluate the reservoirs each spring to determine which reservoirs have adequate water levels to support fish. If conditions have not improved from last fall, we may not stock any of the reservoirs this spring. Dissolved oxygen sampling in February 2012 showed winterkill was likely on Antelope, Big Muddy and Sheepherder Reservoirs.

Until conditions improve you might explore other locations to try your luck. One source of information about fishing locations is our new fishing guide. The guide provides location, fish species present and type of facilities at the water. The guide is available on our web site at http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/fishing-1000428.aspx or at our offices. Another source of information on places to wet a line is our Walk-In Area Fishing Atlas that is also available at our offices and web site at http://gf.state.wy.us/plpwhmprogram/frmWalkinFishingHome.aspx
We conducted a population estimate on the North Platte below Robertson Road in October. The trout population stood at 960 fish per mile with 1,070 pounds of trout per mile. Rainbow trout comprise 94% of the overall trout population with brown trout representing 6%. Rainbow trout average 14 inches in this reach with individuals as large as 6 pounds captured. The brown trout through this reach are slightly larger on average but as with the rest of the North Platte River, the largest trout present by far tend to be brown trout with the occasional brown over 10 pounds caught.

The 2011 population estimate is about average for this reach. Being located 42 miles downstream of Gray Reef Dam, this reach can be impacted by high summer temperatures and silt accumulation making it far less productive than sections closer to Gray Reef. It is interesting to note that trout growth in 2010 and 2011 was exceptional with fish at age 1 and 2 being nearly 2 inches longer than is typical for this reach. High water conditions likely served to keep temperatures and turbidity down while increasing invertebrate production and drift.

Big Muddy Access area to Rabbit Hill Access area is the lowest reach that we routinely monitor trout populations on. In October 2011, we estimated 500 trout per mile and 780 pounds of trout per mile which is meeting our population objective for this reach. Over 98% of the fish are rainbow trout with only about 10 browns per mile. Rainbow trout average 15 inches with individuals to 6 pounds captured.

The section from Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park downstream to the Dave Johnston Powerplant is annually stocked with 20,000 fingerling Firehole rainbows. In 2010 we began a study to evaluate the stocking program to see what percentage of the rainbow population are hatchery fish and whether or not continued stocking is justified. While the study will run through at least 2014 to fully evaluate, our results from the first year are interesting. We found that 50% of the 12-16 inch rainbows (1 year old fish) in this reach were from the 2010 stocking, and that the stocked fish averaged 2 inches longer than their wild counterparts.

Due to Alcova Reservoir spilling in 2010, 2011 and for a short period in 2012, walleye have made their way into the North Platte. Anglers are reporting catching a few below Gray Reef Dam. There has been some confusion surrounding what to do if you catch a walleye. The restricted creel limits on the river apply only to trout. If you catch a walleye, feel free to keep it (within the walleye limit of course, which is 6 walleye per day or in procession, with no length restrictions).
The North Platte—Cardwell

We conducted a population estimate on the Cardwell Access in October, 2011. The overall fish population in this reach has expanded since 2004 and currently stands at 950 trout per mile and 1,560 pounds of trout per mile. The effects of two years of high flows through this reach are now being evaluated. It is apparent that high flows in 2010 limited rainbow trout reproduction. Flows in 2010 increased in late May, which is after rainbow trout spawn but before the fry hatch and emerge from the gravel. The increased water depth and velocities likely scoured the majority of redds. Brown trout on the other hand fared well in 2010 as they spawn in the fall with the fry emerging in February and March, before the onset of high flows. The flows at Cardwell ramped up much earlier in 2011, which had the opposite effect. Flows increased in mid March, likely washing most of the newly emerged brown trout downstream into Alcova Reservoir. We measured an 84% decline in young of the year brown trout in 2011 compared to 2010. Rainbows on the other hand were just beginning to spawn when the flows ramped up, hence they were able to establish redds in the presence of high water. We captured nearly 3 times more young of the year RBT in 2011 than in 2010.

The overall picture for 2012 looks good. There will be a relative lack of rainbow trout in the 14-17 inch range, but the number of rainbow trout larger than 18 inches will be high due to a lot of 3 and 4 year old fish present in the population. There will be few 14-16 inch browns present but the number of browns larger than 18 inches should be at an all time high. If you decide to try your luck in this reach please be aware of the special fishing regulations for this reach. Above the vehicle bridge the limit is one trout per day or in procession. Below the bridge the limit is also 1 trout per day or in procession but all trout less than 20 inches must be released. Fishing is allowed with artificial flies and lures only below the bridge. As with any predominantly catch and release fishery, it is always a good idea to pinch the barb on any flies and replace treble hooks on lures with single hooks.
The Miracle Mile trout population is roughly comprised of 50% rainbow trout and 50% brown trout. The ratio of rainbow to brown trout does vary from year to year and from season to season as fish move in and out of Pathfinder Reservoir. Also, the rainbow trout population is composed of Firehole River and Eagle Lake rainbow trout which are both stocked in the Miracle Mile, fall-strain rainbow trout which are stocked in Pathfinder Reservoir, and wild rainbows hatched right in the Miracle Mile. We have been conducting monthly electrofishing through the fall and winter of 2011-2012 to document changes in the Miracle Mile species assemblage and determine if fall-strain rainbow trout that are stocked in Pathfinder Reservoir spawn in the Miracle Mile.

Brown trout were most abundant during November, a month that is close to the peak of their spawn. Pathfinder Reservoir-stocked fall rainbows (identified by their stubby dorsal fins) were most abundant in December; they comprised 18% of the catch during this month. Some of these fish moved in to the Miracle Mile from Pathfinder Reservoir within a few weeks from when they were stocked. Although the fall rainbow trout moved into the Miracle Mile, there was no evidence that they were attempting to spawn. We did see a few rainbows with milt or eggs, but most of these ripe fish were not fall rainbow from Pathfinder Reservoir. It appears that rainbow trout of all strains spawn during the winter in the Miracle Mile to some extent.

We will continue monthly surveys at the Miracle Mile through September of 2012. We will be interested to see if the Snake River cutthroat trout stocked in Pathfinder Reservoir in the fall of 2011 will run into the Miracle Mile this spring and summer. The last time cutthroat trout were stocked in the system was 2003. In the past Pathfinder-stocked cutthroat have comprised up to 12% of the angler catch in the Miracle Mile.
The rainbow trout population in Alcova should be the highest it has been since 2004. In response to increasing walleye predation on stocked trout, we have been increasing the number and size of rainbows being stocked into Alcova. Based on our gillnet surveys, there should be plenty of trout available for anglers in 2012. The majority of rainbows are around 13-14 inches (these are fish that were stocked last fall) with some fish in the 16-19 inch range. Due to the short life-span on rainbow trout and the fact that Alcova is not a particularly productive water body, rainbow trout seldom exceed 20 inches. That is not to say there are not large trout in there though. We occasionally stock brown trout into Alcova. Browns are more apt to feed on minnows and in particular the abundant crayfish population. Because of their foraging habits and longer life span, browns in excess of 10 pounds are not unheard of in this lake.

We will be continuing the walleye tagging study on Alcova in 2012. We will be capturing and tagging walleye in April and May. The bright orange tags are about 1 inch long by ¼ inch wide and are placed just behind the dorsal fin on the walleye’s back. If you catch a tagged walleye, clip off the tag (even if you release the fish) and turn it in to us. The tags are reward tags and are worth $5, $10, $20, $50 or $100. We will need to know the length of the fish, whether you harvested or released it, the date you caught it and approximate location on the lake. Tag return envelopes can be found at fee stations around the lake. The information on the envelope needs to be filled out, put the tag in the envelope and drop into one of the fee canisters. Alternatively, the tags can also be turned in at the Casper Regional Game and Fish Office.
Glendo Reservoir

Walleye
The Glendo Reservoir walleye population was dominated by age-2 fish in 2011. The 2009 year class was a very strong one. Walleyes in our annual netting survey averaged 14.6 inches and 1.2 pounds. As would be expected, anglers reported high catch rates of fish under 15 inches, the minimum legal size at Glendo Reservoir. The good news is that these fish will have grown to legal size in 2012.

Yellow Perch
The Glendo Reservoir yellow perch population goes up and down in abundance in a cycle of about two years. This pattern is typical of a population whose abundance is influenced by the abundance of its predators (i.e., walleye). Yellow perch were in the down period in the cycle in 2011, so numbers were relatively low. Average length was just under 9 inches and fish up to 10.9 inches were found in our netting survey.

Catfish
Although the Glendo Reservoir channel catfish population has been in a bit of a slump, there were signs in 2011 that the population may be on the rebound. Catfish catch rate in our netting survey increased slightly from the last three years. But more importantly, we found young (12-15 inch) channel cats for the first time in several years. These young fish were probably stocked in 2008. Still, most catfish in Glendo are large; average size in our netting was 22.1 inches and 5.3 pounds. The largest channel catfish we sampled was over 30 inches and 11 pounds.

North Platte River – Dave Johnston Power Plant to Glendo Reservoir
We have been conducting a study to determine if channel catfish naturally reproduce in the North Platte River between Dave Johnston power plant and Glendo Reservoir. As part of this study, no catfish were stocked from 2000-2004. Few catfish we have found were hatched during this period, suggesting limited natural reproduction in this reach of river. Stocking resumed in 2005, 2007, and 2008, but we have yet to find any catfish from these stocking events. They may just be too small to sample effectively.

The catfish in North Platte River tend to be large. The average channel cat in our 2011 sampling was 23 inches and five pounds.
Pathfinder Reservoir
crested the spillway in 2011 for the second straight year and the high water has really enhanced the fishery. The additional habitat and increase in productivity that comes with a full reservoir has increased growth and body condition in the trout and walleye populations.

Trout
The favorable conditions in Pathfinder Reservoir have allowed rainbow trout to grow in excess of 20 inches by three years of age. In years with lower water, three year old rainbow trout are 18-19 inches. Large rainbows were common in spring creel surveys. Anglers reported that 89% of the fish they caught were rainbow trout. Average length of a rainbow trout measured in the creel survey was 18.8 inches; with 91% of harvested rainbows at least 16 inches and 35% at least 20 inches. Our angler catch rate management objective of 0.3 fish per hour was exceeded in 2011.

Walleye
The walleye population continues to be dominated by large fish. A very strong 2005 year class resulted in an abundance of 18-22 inch fish. Mean size of walleyes in our fall netting was 17.6 inches and 2.56 pounds. The largest WAE caught in our annual netting was 32 inches and over 14 pounds. Average year classes in 2008-2010 mean that there is a fair number of walleye out there, but if you catch one, there is a good chance it will be big and hefty. The abundant forage that comes with high water years can make it more difficult to catch walleyes at Pathfinder Reservoir.
**Seminoe Reservoir**

The rainbow trout population in Seminoe Reservoir is in great shape going into 2012. Our netting surveys show the rainbow trout numbers are at the highest they have been in over 10 years. The increased population is a result of increased size and number stocked plus the fact that water levels have rebounded since the drought resulting in better habitat conditions which increases survival. Rainbow trout average around 15 inches in this lake but few grow to exceed 20 inches. The number of brown trout captured in our gill netting has dramatically increased over the last two years. We do not stock browns in this lake but the high flows coming into Seminoe in 2010 and 2011 likely moved browns into the lake from the North Platte River. The browns are taking advantage of an abundant crayfish population so we expect brown trout growth to be excellent. In addition to rainbows, we stocked 22,000 Snake River cutthroat into Seminoe in October 2011. These fish will likely be around 13-14 inches this spring.

The walleye population has been declining over the last three years and 2011 was no exception. Walleye reproduction in 2005 was excellent, but was poor from 2006 – 2009. The 2005 fish were nearing 16 inches in 2011, and from our netting surveys in the fall it is apparent many of these fish were likely harvested. With few 3-5 year old fish present, the bulk of walleye harvest was focused on this single year class. We cannot tell how walleye reproduction in 2010 or 2011 looks because the fish are not readily captured in our nets until they are two years old. There are still plenty of walleye in the lake, but anglers should expect to have to work a bit harder for a limit in 2012.

**Dome Rock Reservoir**

Numbers of Snake River cutthroat trout in Dome Rock Reservoir have stabilized to more typical levels following the population boom in 2010. The spike in the cutthroat population was due to an increase in survival of 10-inch fish stocked in 2009 as opposed to the 4-5 inch fish that we typically stock. Growing fish to 10 inches in a hatchery can be difficult and expensive, so we prefer to let the fish do most of their growing after they are stocked. Cutthroat in Dome Rock Reservoir grow pretty fast. Maintaining moderate numbers of fish reduces competition and should allow the fish to grow even faster. If you fish Dome Rock, remember it is managed under a “trophy” regulation where the limit is one trout (all trout less than 20 inches must be released), fishing is permitted by the use of artificial flies and lures only.
Unlike their crustacean relatives lobsters and crabs, crayfish (also known as
crawdads or mudbugs) are found only in freshwater. The North Platte
River system is home to two species of crayfish; _Orconectes virilis_ (aka
virile or northern crayfish) and _Orconectes immunis_ (aka calico or paper-
shell crayfish). The high water in the North Platte reservoirs has benefited
crayfish by creating additional habitat and flooding aquatic vegetation.
Crayfish are scavengers, eating just about anything they find while wander-
ing along the bottom. They will eat plants, bugs, and dead fish that they
may come across. The Seminoe and Pathfinder reservoir populations have
become quite abundant and crayfish in these reservoirs are large. Some
individuals are so big, they resemble small lobsters.

People are not the only animals that feast on crawdads. They are important
forage for frogs, toads, turtles, birds, raccoons, mink, and of course fish. In
Seminoe and Pathfinder reservoirs, most of the walleye and trout stomachs
we see have crayfish remains in them. Crayfish are partially responsible for
the increase in body condition we have seen for both trout and walleye in
Pathfinder Reservoir in recent years.

You do not need a permit or license to collect crayfish for personal use in Wyoming. Minnow traps baited with a
piece of meat are very effective for catching crayfish. If you do not have a baitfish seining license valid for the
water that you are trapping in, any fish captured in the traps must be released immediately. Crayfish can be trans-
ported and stored alive, but it is illegal to release them in a different water than where they were collected. Crayfish
can also be used as live bait, but only in the water where they were collected. The introduction of invasive crayfish
is the largest threat facing native crayfish populations.

Crayfish are underappreciated critters. They are important parts of the aquatic ecosystem and real delicacy if you
can catch enough of them.

There are many ways to prepare crayfish such as Etouffee, jambalya, gumbo, crawfish pie, or crawfish
chowder. Our favorite way to prepare them is a good old fashioned crawdad boil. This recipe is for
about 2 gallons of water and around 50 crayfish, de-
pending on their size. You can scale it up or down
from there (this recipe serves 4 adults):

2 gallons of water
1 cup salt
½ bottle liquid crab boil (more if you like it spicy)
½ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce (optional)
10 cloves garlic
2 onions (quartered)
2 lemons (quartered)
10-15 small red potatoes
4-6 ears of sweet corn
40-60 live crayfish

Put everything except the crayfish in a large pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the
potatoes are soft. Add the crayfish and cover. When the water begins to simmer again turn off the
heat and stir. Cover the pot again and let the crayfish soak for 10 minutes. Pour the contents of the
pot through a strainer to drain off the liquid and serve hot. The tails are excellent and can be dipped in
butter or hot sauce. Don’t forget the claw meat, it rivals the best king crab and can be extracted by
gently cracking the claw with pliers.
The Wyoming Youth Fishing Challenge aims to provide you with angling challenges that will expand your fishing skills. To prove your prowess the Wyoming Game and Fish Department will issue collectable certificates to all eligible youth who complete one of the following challenges! Go catch a fish! In fact, catch a number of them!

Eligibility requirements: Any youth, 18 and under fishing Wyoming waters, all fish must be caught in Wyoming, photos must be taken with the youth and the fish at the water of capture, verification sheet must be submitted to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for authorization, fish can be caught over multiple years (prior to the 19th birthday), Native fish do not have to be caught from their native range except for the cutt slam.

**Cutt Slam**—Catch Wyoming’s four cutthroat subspecies in their native range in Wyoming

**Trout Trio**—Catch any three species or subspecies of trout found in Wyoming

**Wyoming’s Wild One**—Catch any one of these fish that are native to Wyoming: sauger, channel catfish, stonecat, black bullhead, whitefish, shovelnose sturgeon, burbot

**Cool Catch**—catch any one of these fish: golden trout, grayling, tiger trout, northern pike, tiger musky, kokanee, whitefish

**Pan Pair**—Catch any two species or subspecies found in Wyoming: bluegill, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, yellow perch, rock bass, white crappie, black crappie

**Habitat Counts**—Catch a fish from three of the different habitats: lakes, beaver ponds, small streams, tailwater rivers and large freestone rivers

**Percid Prize**—Catch two of the three fish in the Percidae family: sauger, walleye, yellow perch

**Bass Battle**—Catch any one of the following: smallmouth or largemouth bass

**Hatchery Hop**—visit four separate Wyoming fish hatcheries or rearing stations

**Master Angler**—Complete any five of the nine total challenges to receive special recognition from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Trout Unlimited, The North Platte Walleyes Unlimited and the 4-H sportfishing program

Obtain and submit verification sheets to:

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Aquatic Education Coordinator
3030 Energy Lane
Casper, WY 82604
307.233.6404