

# YL Update for “The Trout Tale”

## February 23, 2013

Since the last issue of “The Trout Tale”, much has happened on our Yellowstone Lake project. On February 21<sup>st</sup> the Working Group that has been coordinating the efforts of the multiple NGO’s and agencies engaged in the effort met at Mammoth Hot Springs. This meeting reviewed the progress of netting suppression, telemetry studies, population trends of both Yellowstone cutthroats and lake trout, fundraising status for both short term suppression and longer term ova suppression, and directions for the upcoming season.

As Project Manager from Wyoming TU for the Yellowstone Lake work, I couldn’t be happier. Cooperation between the diverse groups has never been so strong and the indicators for “success” have never been better.

Lake trout suppression on Yellowstone Lake is now seen as a two pronged effort. One can’t succeed without the other. In the short term, gill netting has been expanded to reach a critical milestone of units of effort (basically the length of nets in the water for a specified number of days) and a critical milestone of lake trout removal which will lead to a population crash. This coming season should see even higher levels of gill netting, and subsequent lake trout removal, as the contract netting company adds a third boat to the fight. Trap netting will continue to target the larger, spawning age fish in shallow water. We may finally be at a level of lake trout removal that reverses the course of population expansion. In the longer term, ova suppression is now seen as an important component of total lake trout control rather than a separate research study.

The telemetry program, that we all have helped fund, is now starting to pay real dividends. The statistician that was hired in November is really starting to pick apart the overwhelming amount of telemetry data. His conclusions are just starting to guide the netting as depth and temperature preferences, as well as movement patterns of the lake trout by season, are being understood. In addition, his analysis has pointed to several potential new spawning beds around the lake. Meanwhile, the VPS (*Vemco Positioning System*) array system at Carrington Island has pinpointed the exact location and extent of that spawning bed as well as the timing of its use by the lakera.

Experiments are also underway to utilize new technology to kill those lake trout eggs at Carrington. Electro-shocking continues to be considered the best methodology as two outside contractors are being considered for specific systems. In addition, the NPS employed vacuum technology on a limited basis at Carrington last fall.

All indicators of both lake trout and YCT populations are pointed in the right direction. We are a long way from winning back this system; however, we are definitely going in the right direction

after so many years of decline. Every parameter from lake trout CPUE (*catch per unit effort*), to distribution netting of both species, to angler surveys indicate positive trends.

We cannot let up, however. We all know that there is a long way to go, and we all know that the trend will reverse back without constant diligence. Our fundraising is a critical part of that. The telemetry season of 2013 is so important. Our hydro-acoustic tags that we all helped purchase have only limited battery life remaining. We must take advantage of that battery life this year by deploying as many VPS arrays on potential spawning beds as possible. That takes money. The NGO partners are currently trying to raise \$118,000 to support this year's work. We currently have \$43,000. If you personally or your chapter can dig even deeper, we can meet our goal. Consider sending in whatever you can to "Save the Yellowstone Cutthroat" c/o WY TU, 250 1<sup>st</sup> St, Lander, WY 82520.