

## East Yellowstone Chapter of Trout Unlimited

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<http://www.eastyellowstonetu.org/>

### **September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

**Location & Time:** The Irma Hotel, Governor's Room, Cody, WY; 6:30p.m.

#### **In Attendance**

Dave Crowther, Lorna Anderson, Bob & Judy Capron, Elaine & Bill Tabacinski, Mark Vondersaar, Tom Reed, Linda Trask, Dave & Cathy Sweet, Tom Anderson, Ross Gorman, Donna & Randy Moore, Jim & Diane Blakeslee, Bill, Carissa & Vana Camp, Laura, Madison, & Joshua Burckhardt, Dave McMillan, Bobby Rock, Amanda Wilson, Birney Holberg, George Simonton, Dave & Jan Bensink, Larry & Maxine Thomas, Lew & Ellie Wisner, Joe Skorypski, Dick Pontius, Mark Trotochaud, Art Schueneman, Catherine Milord

#### **Program:** Dave Sweet - Update On Yellowstone Lake

- The East Yellowstone Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been involved in the project to preserve cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake for 10 years; the following are some of the key events during that time:
  - November, 2007, Pat Bigelow made a presentation on the Yellowstone Lake cutthroat situation
  - January, 2008, Save Yellowstone Cutthroat Committee was launched; included Dave Sweet, George Simonton, Jason Burckhardt; organized a fundraiser
  - August, 2008, Science Reviewing Panel convened at Chico Hot Springs to discuss the cutthroat situation
  - June, 2009, a presentation was made to the TU National Board of Trustees; Jackson Gross was hired to look at suppression measures
  - August, 2009, Hickey Brothers contracted to perform gill netting on Yellowstone Lake
  - August, 2010, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Suzanne Lewis visited by committee to discuss cutthroat situation; were thrown out of her office and told that TU's help was not needed
  - March, 2011, Superintendent Daniel Wenck hired; "new day in Yellowstone National Park" for the cutthroat project
  - May, 2011, Yellowstone Lake Working Group formed; memo of understanding established; \$1 million/year funding for gill netting was pledged
  - August, 2011, first telemetry study at Carrington Island
  - September, 2012, gill netting goal was met for first time
  - 2012, saw first increase in Yellowstone Cutthroat population in 20 years
  - 2013, TU National listed Yellowstone Lake as a Critical Focal Area
  - June, 2013, WY Wildlife Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT) awarded TU \$150,000 for telemetry studies (\$50,000 was requested)
  - 2013, saw decrease in Lake Trout population
  - 2013-2015, there was a massive public relations campaign to counter attorney Peter Moyer's efforts to oppose the Yellowstone Cutthroat Restoration Project
  - January, 2014, WWNRT awards TU \$621,000 for telemetry and investigation of alternative suppression measures
  - 2015, National Park Service takes over responsibility for Lake Trout suppression
  - 2015-2016, Lake Trout travel corridors outlined
  - 2016, Grizzlies observed feeding on cutthroats
  - 2017, WWNRT grant ends
  - 2017, have seen 40% drop in Lake Trout population
- As part of the Park-wide cutthroat restoration project, 2.6 million Lake Trout have been removed from Yellowstone Lake since 1994
- A graph was displayed showing numbers of Lake Trout gill netted by year
  - Graph showed declines in numbers catch per unit effort in large gill nets – that is, fewer large Lake Trout being caught, indicating a lower adult Lake Trout population (large Lake Trout more likely to consume cutthroats)
  - Graph that shows recent declines in Yellowstone Lake biomass consistent with this finding

- Data from telemetry studies provides information on movements of Lake Trout that can be used by the gill netters
  - Arrays that yield fine scale movements provide information about spawning locations
  - 3D plots of specific channels provide information about depth and position of Lake Trout; movements over nets were observed, leading to gill net design change
  - National Park Service aircraft telemetry studies corroborate with TU data
- Alternative Suppression Measures (alternative to gill netting Lake Trout) include: Electroshocking (somewhat limited by low conductivity of Yellowstone Lake pure water), tarping, suction dredging, carcass dumping (dumped on spawning beds, consume oxygen, increases fungal growth, reduces survival of Lake Trout eggs), sediment treatment (sediment also decreases Lake Trout egg survival)
- Graphs of cutthroat sizes by year show increase in small and midsize cuts
- TU staffer Walt Gasson from Cheyenne found cutthroats in the Thorofare in 2015
- Visual surveys show increased numbers of cutthroats in tributaries and more observations of grizzly bear feeding on trout (2016 video shown, cutthroat spawning tributary Little Thumb Creek and grizzly)
- The Yellowstone Cutthroat Restoration Project has received around \$20 million over the last 10 years, which includes \$1.1 million from TU, \$5 million from the Yellowstone Lake Foundation, and around \$1 million per year from the National Park Service

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order by President Tom Reed followed by introductions by those in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes of May, 2017 Meeting:** a motion was made, seconded, and approved.

**Acceptance of Treasurers Report:** report covers June through August, 2017; period expenses include \$1340 for invasive species signage; income includes \$5840, half of proceeds from sale of Commissioners License; current account balance is \$82,000, which includes \$26,000 in outstanding commitments (invasive species signage, joint Cody/Sheridan projects, Sunlight Creek project, assistance to Fish & Game for rebuild of rotary fish screen on Trout Creek); a motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the Treasurer's Report.

### **Committee Updates**

#### **Conservation – Bob Capron and Laura Burckhardt**

- Summer projects reviewed
  - Obstruction removal work on the Little Bear Creek tributary in the Beartooths
  - Field trip to Clarks Fork to assess what can be done to increase fish populations; will return in October examine fish access to potential spawning tributaries
  - Field trip to the Bighorns on "Eclipse Day" to look at Game & Fish projects to assess possibility of reducing brook trout and improving cutthroat habitat
- Fish Rescue is coming up soon – last week of October and 1<sup>st</sup> few days of November; Volunteers Needed.
- Game & Fish project on Medicine Lodge Creek in the Medicine Lodge Archaeological Site State Park to rebuild around 1 mile of the stream channel; hand-seeing, so won't need hydroseed mulch
- Game & Fish project on Sunlight Creek; section of river is flowing down forest service road; will re-establish correct flow via blasting – will need volunteers to rescue Brook trout

#### **Fundraising – Birney Holberg and George Simonton**

- Letter and brochure that describes EYTU mission & projects that will be sent to target donors is under development; should be finalized by end of September

**Web Site & Facebook Coordinator – Lorna Anderson:** feedback is always appreciated; Lorna thanked Amanda Wilson for her assistance.

#### **Wyoming TU Council – Dave Sweet**

- The Fall WY TU Council Meeting will be in Green River the last weekend in October.

**Unfinished Business:** nothing in this category this meeting

### **New Business:**

- New EYTU Chapter Logo: Tom Reed passed out options for members to vote on; will tally votes and discuss final selection at next meeting

### **Other Discussion:**

- Update on Invasive Species Signage; Robert Crooks was unable to attend tonight's meeting; Tom Reed reported that \$1300 was raised by the Cody Anglers Club and we matched \$1000; Robert Crooks is working with Game & Fish on signage design; Signs will define penalties for illegal stocking and will be posted at various reservoirs; will get media involved once signs are ready to install
- River Fest in August, Amanda Wilson volunteered at TU booth; was combined with Buffalo Bill Dam Day;
- Amanda Wilson reported on BLM improvements at Hogan Reservoir; handicap accessibility, bear boxes, fire rings, future boat ramp.
- Bill Tabacinski reported that there is a new person at the Optimist Club who will be meeting with Bill to discuss how to improve the Kids Fishing Day and what the goals of the event should be
- Update on Commissioner's Big Game License – Tom Reed sent written request along with an EYTU brochure to Commissioner Rael; George Simonton will follow up with a telephone call.
- Remember to use Amazon Smile for your Amazon purchases.

### **Adjourn Meeting.**

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, The Irma. Liz Purdy of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition will discuss the impact of gold mining on the Yellowstone River**