

# Soldier Creek Project

## What is it?

This is a project on a tributary of Paint Rock Creek to rebuild the perimeter fence through a grazing allotment to keep cattle out of a critical riparian area. This fence is easily jumped by wildlife so they won't be excluded.

## Why are we doing it?

Soldier Creek and Buckskin Ed Creeks (both tributaries of Paint Rock Creek) contain two of the very few (less than 6) remaining populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) in the entire Big Horn Mountain Range. Soldier Creek has only YCT in it. Buckskin Ed now also has brook trout in addition to YCT. YCT used to occupy the entire Big Horn Range. As we have seen from the cutthroat conservation process, YCT are in trouble all over their historic range. Those populations that remain **must be preserved!**

A critical meadow stretch of Soldier Creek that contains a significant portion of the length of prime trout habitat has a perimeter fence (approximately 1.5 mile) around it to keep the cattle out; but that fence is in a state of disrepair. The grazing allotment permittee is willing to give up this meadow stretch to cattle grazing but doesn't have the resources to rebuild it. He has committed to maintain it once it is rebuilt. This project will protect the prime reach of Soldier Creek from further riparian habitat degradation.

## What is involved?

The current fence is a multi-strand barbed wire fence with wooden posts and a top rail of wood. Much of it is either down or the top rail is rotted and the wire pushed down. We will be replacing posts as needed, re-stretching wire where needed, replacing some wire and replacing the top wood rail. A few gates may have to be rebuilt. The total length of fence is about 1.5 mile.

## When are we going to do it

The project will be accomplished July 16-18, 2018. Some are going to go to the site on Sunday, July 15th and a few may need to stay on the 19th to finish up.

## Who is going to do it?

This is a joint project of the East Yellowstone Chapter of Cody and the Little Big Horn Chapter of Sheridan. However, we have lots of partners. The Wyoming G&F has pledged to have a crew there, the Big Horn National Forest have pledged a crew as well, the permittee has agreed to have some of his hands there, a couple of individuals from Worland have agreed to be there, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation are trying to put together volunteers. We have also approached Adiposse and the Cody Outdoor Club to provide some "younger" help.

## What if I can't physically build fence?

We need support of all kinds, even if you can't build fence. Can you prepare lunch, or drive a truck to deliver supplies, or hold a rail while it is nailed, or deliver water to the fencing crews, or bring fence staples, or help with any number of other jobs? We need help at all physical and non-physical support levels. We need **you!**

### **What if I can only commit for one day?**

We need support for any day or all of the days. It doesn't matter. Help whenever you can.

### **Where can we stay and who provides the food?**

Many are planning to camp in the area, either in campers or tents. We will try to camp in the same general area so that we can socialize with the other partners in the evening. If you don't have a camper or tent, go with someone else who does. Or, stay at Deer Haven Lodge which is perhaps 45 minutes away (or Ten Sleep which is about an hour and a quarter away). Everyone will provide their own food and beverage but we may "pot luck" it a night or two. We're planning meal time to be a social time.

### **What should I bring?**

If you are going to help build fence, bring typical fence building tools (post hole diggers, shovels, tamping bars, fencing pliers, wire cutters, chain saw, hammer, fence stretcher, etc) as well as sturdy boots and leather gloves.

### **Who is paying for this?**

Commissioner Dube gave the two chapters a commissioner's big game license that we sold for \$11,000. Those funds should pay for the rails and other fencing materials.

### **What happens after we are done?**

In 2019, a section of steel jack fence will be constructed on both Soldier Creek and Buckskin Ed Creeks (500 ft. of each creek will be enclosed) immediately around the riparian area to keep wildlife out and allow the willows and sedges to grow. This fence can be relocated to new sections of these creeks once the riparian area recovers to protect new reaches. This fence is being paid for out of a WWNRT grant that has been submitted.

In the fall of 2018, the G&F is planning to rescue the remaining YCT out of Buckskin Ed Creek, temporarily relocate them to Soldier Creek, then rotenone Buckskin Ed Creek to remove the brook trout. After completion, the YCT will be restored to Buckskin Ed Creek.