



Native Fish Conservation Plan for Yellowstone National Park

Project Scoping

March 29, 2010

Dear Interested Party:

Yellowstone National Park proposes to develop and implement a plan for conserving native fish from threats of nonnative species, disease, and climate-induced environmental change. The Plan will provide guidance and an adaptive management framework for making decisions regarding fisheries and aquatic resources conservation over the coming decades. Urgency exists because native fish are disappearing from Yellowstone waters including:

1) Yellowstone cutthroat trout of the Yellowstone Lake ecosystem are vanishing due to predation by introduced lake trout, whirling disease, and effects of long-term drought,

2) Yellowstone cutthroat trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Arctic grayling in streams and lakes throughout the park are being lost due to predation, competition and/or interbreeding (hybridization) with introduced nonnative fish species.

The park's goal is to curtail further losses and restore habitats to support native fish population recovery.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that: 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives; 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values; 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts; and 4) describes an adaptive management approach for conservation decisions over the coming decades.

The National Park Service encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Plan/EA. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and I invite you to voice your ideas, comments, or concerns in this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Suzanne Lewis
Superintendent*

Yellowstone National Park

Waters Under Consideration

The Plan/Environmental Assessment will evaluate a strategy which attempts to conserve native fish by restoring habitats throughout the Park.

Possible actions will not take place in the mainstem Madison or Firehole rivers.

Possible Actions

The Plan/EA will analyze a comprehensive toolbox of methods that may include:

- Large-scale removal of lake trout;
- Restoration of tributary access for spawning cutthroat trout;
- Construction/modification of barriers to upstream movement of nonnative fish;
- Removal of nonnative fish from selected streams and lakes;
- Introduction of genetically-unaltered native fish into restored habitats;
- Improve monitoring facilities; and
- Development of thresholds and implementation of long term monitoring to provide for adaptive management.

Resources and Concerns

The Plan/EA will analyze potential impacts to a number of resources including:

- Geology, soils, and vegetation;
- Wildlife and species of special concern;
- Non-target species (amphibians, aquatic insects);
- Water resources, floodplains, and wetlands;
- Cultural and ethnographic resources;
- Air quality, lightscapes, soundscapes;
- Global climate change;
- Socioeconomics;
- Visitor use and experience;
- Park operations; and
- Human health and safety.

Overview of the Process

Project milestones include:

- Public scoping - Closes April 30th;**
- Preparation of Plan/EA – Summer 2010;
- Public review of Plan/EA – Fall 2010;**
- Analysis of public comments – Fall 2010;
- Preparation of decision document; and
- Expected announcement of decision – Winter 2011.

** Milestone with opportunity for public comment

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

- Do you have any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
- Are there other actions that you think should be considered?
- Do you have other ideas, comments, or suggestions for us to consider during the development of the native fish conservation plan/EA?



NEPA PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT PERIOD

Public comments will help the NPS identify issues, develop alternatives, and guide the analysis during preparation of the EA. Comments may be submitted on-line to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell> the website for the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) database, hand-delivered to the park's headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming, or mailed to:

Native Fish Conservation Plan
Yellowstone National Park
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

*Comments must be received by **April 30, 2010.***

Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Four public scoping open houses will be held during April 2010. The open houses and times are:

Bozeman, MT

April 12, 2010, 6-8 PM
Comfort Inn, 1370 North 7th Avenue
Madison Room

Cody, WY

April 13, 2010, 6-8 PM
Holiday Inn, 1701 Sheridan Avenue
Two Dot Room

Jackson, WY

April 14, 2010, 6-8 PM
Snow King Resort, 400 E. Snow King Ave
Timberline I Room

West Yellowstone, MT

April 15, 2010, 6-8 PM
Holiday Inn, 315 Yellowstone Avenue
Geyser Room

Additional information on the park's fisheries program is available on-line at

www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/todo/fishing/index.htm

<http://www.greateryellowstonescience.org/topics/biological/fish>