

**Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
Custer National Forest Fisheries Project Report
FY 2008**

Unit: Custer National Forest – Beartooth Ranger District – Fisheries
Project Name: Beartooth Ranger District Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Inventory and the Sage Creek Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Reintroduction Project
Project Description: The emphasis of the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Inventory proposal was to hire a seasonal fisheries technician and to partially fund a returning fisheries technician. The seasonal employees were to work cooperatively with Montana, Fish Wildlife and Parks and BLM fisheries crews in an effort to inventory Yellowstone cutthroat trout waters of the Beartooth Ranger District. The intent of the inventory would be to update existing knowledge of the presences/absence and population status of YCT, to evaluate habitat condition, to identify areas suitable for YCT reintroduction or population expansion, and to update existing genetics data. The emphasis of the Sage Creek YCT Reintroduction Project was to secure seasonal technicians to aid in the physical and chemical (Rotenone) removal of non-native brook and rainbow trout from over 17 miles of historically YCT occupied habitat in the Sage Creek drainage on CNF, private, and Crow Reservation lands. Thereafter, pure strain Yellowstone cutthroat trout were to be reintroduced to the waters (2010).
GYCC Funding Received: \$12,500 (\$7,500 Inventory; \$5,000 Sage Creek)
Partner Funding/In-Kind Received: \$30,000 Inventory Project – Actual \$12,500 \$28,000 Sage Creek – Actual \$0
Status of the Project: Over 20 miles of stream habitats on the Beartooth Ranger District were assessed for YCT presence/absence, habitat suitability, potential barriers to upstream migration, and water temperature in summer 2008. Streams included in this inventory included: Bear Canyon, Cave, Lost Water, and Piney creeks in the Pryor Mountain Range and Little Rocky, Picket Pin, and Trout creeks of the Absaroka Beartooths. The Sage Creek YCT Reintroduction Project was not implemented in 2008 due to a lack of landowner cooperation in the headwaters of the drainage. The landowner had originally supported the project, then decided not to allow access, and has since agreed to cooperate and supports implementation in 2009.
Products that can be shared across the GYA: (GIS data layers, maps, new protocols and methods) Data collected in 2008 will be used to update existing information in the 2008 Yellowstone cutthroat trout status assessment.
Project results: (Information worth sharing on methods, results, partnerships, etc) All 12.5 stream miles inventoried in the Pryor Mountain Range were determined unsuitable for YCT inhabitation (intermittent flows or dry). In the Beartooth Mountain Range, upper Trout Creek was determined to be fishless and suitable for YCT introduction upstream of a natural

Note: You may expand and reduce size of blocks.

barrier (however, habitat availability is limited to less than one stream mile). Little Rocky and Picket Pin Creeks both harbor low density YCT populations. Inventory in these drainages focused on fish passage at road crossings, post blow down large woody debris densities, identification of barriers downstream of known population segments, genetic sampling, population estimates, habitat limitations, historic mining impacts, and illegal ATV use in and along the stream course. Data collected in these drainages will be vital to future management decisions, to protect and expand these populations.

GYCC and USFS funding for the Sage Creek YCT Reintroduction Project was used to contract the MT Natural Heritage Program to conduct a macroinvertebrate inventory in the Sage Creek drainage and to analyze and report their findings by Spring 2009. Although sensitive macroinvertebrate species were not detected in the Sage Creek drainage in the past, the CNF decided that updated data was needed prior to chemical removal of nonnative salmonids in 2009.

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Submit to Virginia Kelly: vkelly@fs.fed.us 406-587-6704. Contact Virginia with questions.