



PROPOSED CHANGES TO 2006 FISHING REGULATIONS

Yellowstone has 13 fish native to its lakes and streams. Native sport fish include the three subspecies of cutthroat trout, fluvial arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish. Non- native fish species that were introduced to the park in the late 19th and early 20th centuries include rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, and lake trout. Along with the native trout species, non- native trout are very important to the angler experience in Yellowstone. However, non- native fishes, especially recently, have contributed to a decline in the park's native cutthroat trout and fluvial arctic grayling.

Why does Yellowstone Need to Change Fishing Regulations?

Currently, the native cutthroat, fluvial arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish are under catch- and- release only fishing rules in the park to reduce mortality due to angling. In most waters, current park regulations allow for the harvest of only two rainbow or brown trout. However, hybridization with non- native rainbow trout and predation by non- native brook trout, brown trout, and lake trout continue to negatively affect native sport fish populations.

To reduce competition, predation, and hybridization stress on native fishes, Yellowstone is proposing to increase harvest limits of rainbow and brown trout in waters where they co- exist with cutthroat trout and fluvial arctic grayling. Two areas with differing regulations are proposed: the Native Trout Conservation Area and the Wild Trout Enhancement Area. A map of these areas and list of the regulation changes are found on page 2.

Regulation Changes Will Strengthen Conservation of Declining Trout Populations

Westslope cutthroat trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and fluvial arctic grayling are currently listed as *Species of Special Concern* in Montana and *Species of Concern* in Wyoming. The westslope cutthroat trout, Yellowstone

cutthroat trout, and Snake River fine- spotted cutthroat trout are listed as *Species of Special Concern* in Idaho. Petitions and court appeals to list native cutthroat trout subspecies and fluvial arctic grayling under the federal Endangered Species Act are currently under consideration by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Yellowstone National Park lies at the core of the current range of Yellowstone cutthroat trout and contains a majority of the historical lake habitat for this subspecies. All known westslope cutthroat trout populations within the Gallatin Range of Yellowstone are now known to be hybridized. Only a small number of fluvial arctic grayling remain in the lower Gibbon River. Taking action now will help to prevent further declines in these populations.

Proposed Park Regulations Will Be More Comparable to That of Neighboring States

The park's current protective regulations on non- native fishes contrast with the bordering states of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho that allow for significantly higher harvest levels. The proposed changes for 2006 will be more in line with the park's neighboring states.

Maintaining Angler Enjoyment in Yellowstone

The National Park Service requires that Yellowstone preserve and restore our precious native trout species to the fullest extent possible. In waters where native fish populations no longer exist and their restoration is no longer feasible, Yellowstone will enhance existing non- native fish populations for angler enjoyment.

The park is committed to maintaining world- class angling opportunities for wild trout. The proposed regulations are designed to protect and enhance nonnative trout populations of the Madison, Firehole, and lower Gibbon rivers, and Lewis and Shoshone lakes. No changes in the closure periods or opening times of specific park areas or waters are proposed.



2006 Proposed Fishing Regulation Areas

Montana Fishing Regulations

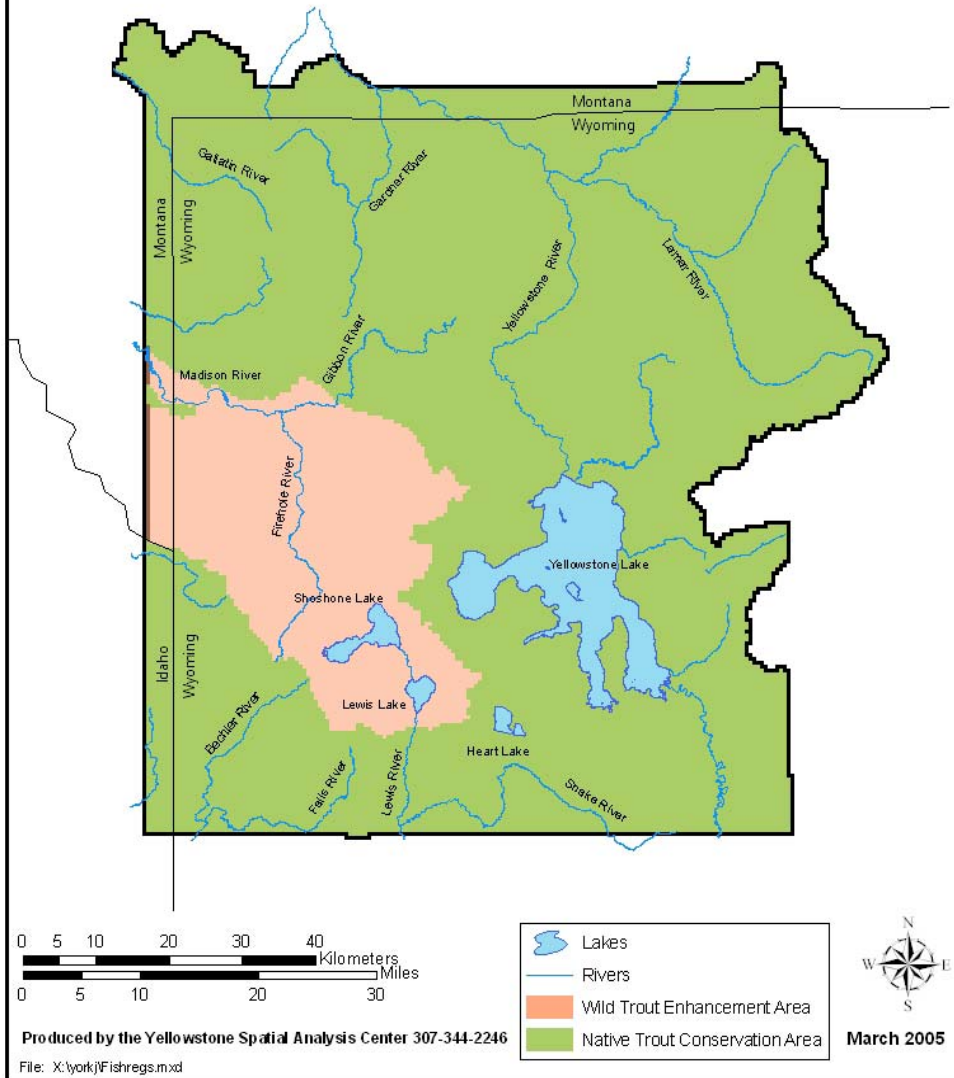
5 combined trout (one trout can exceed 18 inches) in the Gallatin and Yellowstone Rivers and their tributaries.

Idaho Fishing Regulations

- 6 combined trout in the Snake River (2 cutthroat or brown trout) and a maximum of 2 trout (any species from the Falls River).
- No length restrictions in the Snake or Falls rivers.
- No limit on rainbow trout in South Fork Snake River.

Wyoming Fishing Regulations

6 combined trout in all waters except North Fork Shoshone River where the harvest limit is three trout. One trout can exceed 20 inches.



Native Trout Conservation Area¹

2006 Proposed Regulations

- Catch and release of all native sport fish.
- Harvest of 5 combined non- native fish any size per day.
- All lake trout from Yellowstone Lake must be killed.
- No limit on lake trout in Heart Lake.

¹ Remaining native trout drainages including Hebgen Lake tributaries and associated lakes, and the Gallatin, Yellowstone, Shoshone, Snake, and Falls rivers, tributaries, and associated lakes. Streams tributary to Hebgen Lake are Cougar Creek, Duck Creek, and Grayling Creek systems. Does not include the Lewis River system above Lewis River Falls (Lewis and Shoshone lakes and tributaries).

Wild Trout Enhancement Area²

2006 Proposed Regulations

- Catch and release all native sport fish.
 - Catch and release all rainbow trout and brown trout.
 - Harvest of 5 combined brook trout or lake trout.
- Exception:** In the Lewis River system above the Lewis River Falls, this combination may include two brown trout. Only one non- native fish can be greater than 20 inches.

² The Madison River, its tributaries (but not including streams and associated lakes tributary to Hebgen Lake), and associated lakes, the Lewis River system above the Lewis River Falls, including Lewis and Shoshone Lakes and their tributaries.

CHANGES FROM EXISTING REGULATIONS

- Increased harvest from 2 to 5 fish total of rainbow and/or brown trout of any size from many streams. This regulation change would result in harvest limits that more closely match that of bordering states.
- Harvest of 5 rainbow trout (any size) in the Bechler River where they previously all had to be released. Hybrid cutthroat trout, which dominate this system, would remain fully protected with the parkwide total catch and release regulation.
- Harvest of 5 brown trout from Lewis River proper below the falls, where they previously all had to be released.
- Harvest of up to 5 brook trout of any size in Richard's Pond, Fawn Lake, and Blacktail Pond. This change is a removal of the 13- inch size restriction in these waters.
- Increase harvest on lake trout in Lewis and Shoshone lakes from 2 to 5 fish total while protecting large lake trout over 20 inches. Currently the Lake trout population in Lewis Lake is considered stunted and overpopulated.
- Fully protects rainbow trout and brown trout in the Madison, Firehole, and lower Gibbon (below the falls) rivers. Brown trout under 13 inches would be more fully protected, when previously they could be harvested.

USE OF BARBLESS HOOKS IN THE PARK

Fisheries management decisions in Yellowstone are based on the best science available. To date, most scientific studies have found that when angling for trout species, the use of barbless hooks does not result in improved survival after release. The review paper by Schill and Scarpella (1997)¹ suggested that there was no biological basis for a barbless hook regulation. In other words, barbed and barbless hooks cause the same amount of trout mortality.

Recently, comments have been received by Yellowstone regarding incidence of hooking injuries and jaw deformities, especially in some of our very popular streams, such as the Yellowstone River and Soda Butte Creek. A recent study conducted on rainbow trout in Alaska (Meka 2004)² indicated that barbless hooks resulted in fewer hook injuries and reduced handling time of the trout.

Although not currently included in the proposed fishing regulation changes for 2006, Yellowstone is considering whether to use barbless hooks to improve the overall condition and appearance of trout in the park.

¹Schill, D.J. and R.L. Scarpella. 1997. Barbed Hook Restrictions in Catch- and- Release Trout Fisheries: A Social Issue. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 17:873- 881.

²Meka, J.M. 2004. The Influence of Hook Type, Angler Experience, and Fish Size on Injury Rates and the Duration of Capture in an Alaskan Catch- and- Release Rainbow Trout Fishery. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 24:1309- 1321.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Five area public meetings will be held from April 4- 18, 2005. These meetings will begin with an update on the status of the park's fish populations, an explanation of the proposed changes in fishing regulations, followed with a question and answer session with the public. The locations and times for the public meetings are as follows:

Bozeman, MT	Monday, April 4, 6:00- 8:00 Best Western Gran Tree Inn, 325 N. 7 th Street
West Yellowstone, MT	Tuesday, April 5, 5:30- 7:30 Holiday Inn Conference Hotel, 315 Yellowstone Avenue
Jackson, WY	Wednesday, April 6, 6:00- 8:00 Teton County Library, 125 Virginian Lane
Cody, WY	Thursday, April 7, 5:30- 7:30 Holiday Inn, 1701 Sheridan Avenue
Livingston, MT	Monday, April 18, 6:00- 8:00 Best Western Holiday Inn, 1515 West Park Street

Information on the park's fisheries program is available on- line at <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/todo/fishing/index.htm>. Comments will be accepted through August 31, 2005, and may be submitted on- line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>, the website for the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment database (PEPC), or mailed to the following address:

Superintendent – Fishing Regulations
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