MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FISHERIES DIVISION
JOB PROGRESS REPORT

State: Montana Title: Statewide Fisheries Investigation

Project No.: F-46-R-3 Title: Survey and Management Recommendations

Job No.: II-B, Segment 1 Title: Flint Range Lakes

Project Period: July 1, 1989-June 30, 1990

ABSTRACT

Eighty lakes in the Flint Range were surveyed by helicopter in July 1990. Sixty-three were gill netted. Twelve lakes yielded no fish. Four of these were not appropriate for trout. Forty-eight lakes with fish will be managed with only natural reproduction. Three lakes containing fish will be maintained by stocking. Eight lakes apparently suitable for trout have been stocked experimentally.

INTRODUCTION

During July, 1989, a cooperative survey of lakes in the Flint Range in Deer Lodge, Granite, and Powell counties was conducted. Funds for aircraft operations were provided by the Deer Lodge National Forest and personnel and equipment expenses were funded by MT DFWP. The Flint Range is richly supplied with mountain lakes, some of which have been stocked since the 1930s by FWP. Undocumented introductions of fish no doubt began much earlier (see letter from Frank Trask, 1936). Management of the Flint lakes has been piecemeal and it was felt that a modern survey could provide the basis for a more synoptic management strategy. Demand for mountain lake angling is substantial and heavy fishing pressure may be focused on waters reported to contain large fish. In order to avoid concentrating angler use of a few productive waters to the detriment of the fishery and the recreational experience, data in this report are presented in a general fashion, without specifics of fish size.

METHODS

Lakes were surveyed by gill nets placed from a float equipped helicopter. Nets used were 125 feet long, 5 feet deep, of a sinking design, and composed of 25 foot panels of 3/4, 1, 1 1/4, 1 1/2, 2" bar measure monofilament. Nets were set with small mesh inshore and lifted after approximately 24 hours. Netting locations on lakes were recorded on the data sheets. A single net was used in each lake. Fish caught were identified, weighed, measured, and the data recorded. Fish suitable for consumption were given to local charitable groups.

Lakes were selected for survey on the basis of stocking history, past management data, and visual inspection from the aircraft. Waters were netted if there were any indications of ability to hold fish. Lakes which were extremely

shallow, had no obvious inlet and outlet, and no management history were not netted.

RESULTS

Eighty lakes were visited by helicopter. Sixty-three of these were judge potentially suitable for trout and netted (Table 1). In twelve of the lakes sampled, no fish were taken in the nets. Of these twelve, four were felt to be unsuitable on closer inspection and eight were judged worthy of experimental stocking. Fifty-one of the lakes netted yielded trout. The vast majority of these, forty-eight, appeared to have some degree of natural reproduction. This judgement was made on the basis of comparison of stocking dates and species stocked to size distribution and species of fish taken in nets. Three lakes were found to contain only fish species and sizes consistent with stocking data. Table 1 contains synoptic data for the lakes surveyed.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on evidence of natural reproduction, it is recommended that forty-eight lakes be managed without supplemental stocking. The extent of natural reproductive success should be effective in regulating angler use and harvest. If angler concerns develop about populations in any of these lakes, netting assessments can be used to determine whether stocking might be warranted.

Three lakes were netted in which all fish caught seemed to be of hatchery origin. These lakes, Albicaulis, Alpine, and Little Thornton, should be continued on the planting program. Stocking intervals for Alpine and Albicaulis should be reduced to every other year to improve growth potential.

The eight lakes netted and found barren which were considered potentially suitable for trout were Martin, Meadow Lakes 1, 2, 3, 4, Racetrack, Rainbow and Unnamed (6N 12W, S18, SE 1/4 NE 1/4). These were planted in 1990 with 800, 500, 400, 300, 400, 1800, 600, and 600 four-inch westslope cutthroat. Evaluation of these stockings should take place in 1993. Meadow Lakes 3 and 4 and Trask Lakes 3 and 4 will be considered inappropriate for management.

Flint Range lakes will be managed on the basis of natural reproduction in forty-eight lakes, biennial stocking in two lakes, and at discretionary intervals as required in nine others.

Table 1. Flint Range Mountain Lakes

Lake Name	Code	Stocked	Netted	Reproduction	Management Recommendation
Albicaulis	7296	Rb	Rb	No	
Alpine	7315	Rb	Rb	No	
Altoona	7324	Ct			No net too shallow
Big Pozega	9006	Rb	Rb,Ct	Yes	
Bohn	7410	WsCt	Ct	Yes	
Boulder Lower	7448	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Boulder Upper	7447	WsCt			No net too small
Caruthers	7524		Ct	Yes	
Copper Creek #1	7562	Ct, Rb	Brook	Yes	
Copper Creek #2	7563		Brook	Yes	
Copper Creek #3	7564		Ct, Brook	Yes	
Copper Creek #4	7565				No net mud hole
Crystal	7581	Rb	Brook	Yes	
Dead Mans	7619	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Dolus Lake #1	7638		Ct	Yes	
Dolus Lake #2	7639				No net mud hole
Dolus Lake #3	7640		Ct	Yes	
Dolus Lake #4	7641		Ct	Yes	
Doney	7657				No net mud hole
Dorathorn	7676		Ct	Yes	
Elbow	7765		Rb	Yes	
Fisher	7809	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Fred Burr	7885	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Goat Lakes	8037		Ct	Yes	
Gold Creek	8094	Ct	Rb	Yes	
Goldberg Reservoir	8132	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Greer	8160	Ct	Rb	Yes	
Hidden (Trask #6)	8227		Brook	Yes	Trask Lake #6
Hidden	8208				No net mud hole
Hunters	8446	Rb	Ct	Yes	
Jones	8341	Rb	Ct	Yes	
Little Pozega	9007	Rb	Rb	Yes	
Little Racetrack	8474	Rb	Rb, Ct	Yes	
Lower Altoona	8493	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Lower Bowman	8522	Rb	Rb	Yes	
Lower Elliot	8540		Ct	Yes	
Martin Lake	8607	Ct		No	Empty net
Meadow Lake #1	8661				Empty net
#2	8683	Rb			Empty net
#2	8662				No net mud hole
#2	8684	Rb			Empty net
#3	8663				No net mud hole
#3	8685	Rb	Ct	Yes	
#4	8664	Rb, Ct	Rb X Ct	Yes	
#4	8686	Rb			Empty net
#5	8687	Rb			Empty net
#6	8688				Empty net
Middle Bowman	8712		Rb	Yes	
Mt. Ben	8778	WsCt	Ct	Yes	

Table 1. Con't

Lake Name	Code	Stocked	Netted	Reproduction	Management Recommendation
Muel	8854	WsCt	Ct	Yes	
Porcupine	8977		Ct	Yes	
Powell	8987	Brown			Dried up
Racetrack	9044	Rb		No	Empty net
Rainbow	9063	Rb		No	Empty net
No name by	No number		Rb		Stocked as Rainbow L.
Ivanhoe Mine	8N 12W S14				in 1988 small pothole
Ryan	9120	WsCt	Brook	Yes	
Sidney	9185	Rb	Rb	Yes	
Stewart	9253	Rb	Rb	Yes	
Thompson	8056	Ct	Brook	Yes	
Thornton Big	9367	Rb	Rb	Yes	
Thornton Little	9368	WsCt	Ct	No	
Tolean	9343				No net mud hole
Trask Lakes #1	9451				No net mud hole
#2	9452	WsCt	Brook	Yes	
#3	9453	WsCt			Empty net
#4	9454				Empty net
#5	9455		Brook	Yes	
#7	9457		Brook	Yes	
Tungsten	9348	Rb			No net mud hole
Twin Peaks	9465				No net mud hole
Unnamed Pothole #1	9483				No net mud hole
#2	9484		Ct	Yes	
#3	9481				No net mud hole
#4	9500				No net mud hole
#5	9519				Empty net
Upper Altoonce	9538	Ct			No net shallow
Upper Bowman	9567		Rb	Yes	
Upper Elliot	8797	Ct	Ct	Yes	
Upper Swamp Gulch	9640		Ct	Yes	
Lower Swamp Gulch	8575				Swamp no net

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DRAWER B.

DEER LODGE, MONT.

3/1/'36.

Dear Don:

I was very glad to receive your letter and shall try to comply with your request.

I cannot find much in the way of pictures. I know that I have some more negatives but no prints. The lake picture is of the second lake looking east. The one of Frank jr. was taken about ten years ago as you can judge by his size. The other was taken in 1931 according to the date on the back. I should like especially to have this last one returned.

Regarding the dates, I have made no record but think I can give the information pretty well from my memory. The first planting was made in 1918. Your father and Jack Stienberger brot the fish from the hatchery to Rock Creek Lake. I think there were about ten thousand or more. I loaded them all into two milk cans and carried them on a horse up the west fork of Rock Creek where I kept them over nite in a box lined with screen and placed in the creek. Next morning, I took the horse with the fish over the mountain to the South Fork. There is no pass. We went over a high ridge about 9000 feet high. I don't think a horse has ever been over there before or since. I was alone. These fish were put into the top lake and the next one down in the chain of four lakes. Time September 1918.

The next year, 1919, I tried to stock the Elbow Lake which as you know is not in the chain. I made a flat can holding five gallons and fitted with pack straps to carry on my back. Weight when filled about 50 pounds. I think that Ray Williams brot the fish from the Anaconda Hatchery to Rock Lake. The time was July and the day very warm. I went alone again. The trail was not well marked then and I was not well acquainted with it anyway so I took considerable time on the way. My ice gave out. When I got along by the Little Lake (Sometimes called the Midway Lake) which also is not in the chain, my fry began to show signs of considerable distress so that I dumped them into this lake in order to save them. They did well in there tho as it was the best fishing grounds for the first several years.

The next year, 1920, I stocked the Elbow Lake. Time in September and very stormy. I took these fish up the West Fork and again kept them over nite in the screen box in the creek. A prospector, Henry Skinner, went across the mountains with me. We carried the fry in my pack can.

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on our backs and encountered a bad blizzard crossing the divide.

The following year, 1921, in September, Ray Williams and I carried two can, one of blackspotted and one of Rainbow trout, up the South Fork from Rock Creek Lake. We put them into the first (big) and second lakes of the chain. I had thot that the first fish planted in the two upper lakes of the chain would work down but they had not done so at that time altho they undoubtedly would have eventually. I believe now that it was a mistake to mix the two kinds of trout as the resulting hybrids are sterile but we did not know this at that time. The fishing by that time was very good in the Little (Midway) Lake.

The next planting was with eyed eggs. I don't remember the exact date, probably around 1928. They did not do well tho I believe that some of them hatched, especially in the Little Lake. It has no inlet for natural spewning so that it was becoming pretty well fished out by that time. Some small fish appeared there a couple of years later and probably came from these eggs.

A year or two later, Frank jr. and I caught a dozen or so Eastern Brook (adults) in Thompson's Lake and carried them across the mountain in my pack can and put them into the top lake of the chain. I think a few Eastern Brook were caught last summer.

About 1930, Frank, Nick Bielenberg and I carried two cans of Black Spotted fry up in the Fall and distributed them among all of the lakes. We probably had around eight thousand.

About 1932, I organized quite a large expedition including Alf and Einer Enger, Frank Mac Cormick, Bob Thornfeldt, Frank jr. and myself. Bob and I took a pack horse with two cans to some shallow lakes above Thompson's lake but the fish evidently suffocated in the winter. The other fellows carried three pack cans full up the South Fork again.

In 1934, I got another bunch together, including Andy Birch, Tommie Headley, Chas. MacDanielsjr. and Evert Mosier and myself, We carried three five-gallon cans up the South Fork and distributed them among the lakes again.

I think that covers it. Hope it is what you want. Also am curious to know what you are going to do with it. I had one real good ski trip this winter. Con Tavener and I went up the West fork of Rock Creek to its source, over the divide and down the South Fork of Gold Creek to Pioneer.

Frank Trask