

Summary of Fish Sampling in Racetrack Pond

Summer 2010



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Introduction and Methods: Racetrack Pond, sometimes referred to locally as Paracini Pond, is a 35-acre pond located near Racetrack, Montana. Previously, little was known about the fishery present in the pond because of its private ownership and lack of sampling. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pond supported a trout fishery at one time, but no data could be found to substantiate this. The potential transfer of this private pond into public ownership stimulated the need to better understand the current fishery present in the pond. On August 12, 2010 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks with assistance from staff of the Natural Resource Damage Program and the Department of Environmental Quality completed fish sampling on Racetrack Pond. Fish sampling consisted of two 125' by 4' experimental gillnets set out overnight. The first net was set on the east side of the pond relatively near the outlet. This net was set in 0' (shore) to 7' of water. The second net was set on the west side of the pond near the middle of the west shoreline. This net was set in 0' (shore) to 12' of water. In addition to the gillnet data, several depth measurements were collected around the pond as was bottom and surface water temperature.

Results: In both nets, largescale sucker was the most abundant species captured (Table 1). The species appeared to be very common in the pond with 18 captured in the first net and 22 in the second. Most of the fish captured were of larger, older size classes. Other species found to be present in the pond (in order of abundance in the nets) included yellow perch, mountain whitefish, and brown trout (Table 1). None of these species appeared overly common based on the relatively low numbers captured in each of the nets.

A bathymetric map of Racetrack Pond was not completed on the August 12, 2010 visit. However, several depth measurements were taken around the pond. Based on these limited measurements it appears that much of the pond is between about 7 feet and 12 feet in depth. The maximum depth measured was approximately 12 feet .

Water temperature was measured toward the center of the lake in about 11 feet of water. Water temperature was collected at noon and was 68.2°F on the surface, and 66.9°F on the bottom.

Discussion: Based on the data collected from this sampling effort it appears that Racetrack Pond currently supports a rather limited recreational fishery. Only two brown trout were captured in the gillnets suggesting this species is relatively rare in the pond. Additionally, yellow perch numbers appeared to be fairly low with most fish being rather small. Largescale suckers are abundant in the pond, but this species is not considered to be a sport fish and is not generally targeted by anglers. The pond appears that it would support a trout fishery if supplemented with hatchery reared fish. However, warm summer water temperatures may limit the success of some species (e.g. westslope cutthroat trout) in the pond. It does not appear that the pond would support any natural trout recruitment.

Given the presence of several species of fish commonly found in the Clark Fork River (i.e. largescale sucker, mountain whitefish, and brown trout), it is likely that Racetrack Pond is at least marginally connected to the Clark Fork. This is not desirable from a fisheries management standpoint, and may need to be addressed if the pond is to be managed as a recreational trout fishery in the future. Also the presence of yellow perch in Racetrack Pond is somewhat of a concern. This species was likely illegally

introduced into the pond to provide a recreational fishery. Management actions may be needed to control yellow perch in the future.

Table 1.

Gillnet data collected from Racetrack Pond on August 12, 2010. (N= Native Species; I= Introduced Species)

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number Captured</u>	<u>Mean Length (mm)</u>	<u>Length Range (mm)</u>
Net #1			
Largescale Sucker (N)	18	476	334-572
Yellow Perch (I)	5	207	153-268
Mountain Whitefish (N)	2	380	375-384
Brown Trout (I)	2	572	568-576
Net # 2			
Largescale Sucker (N)	22	452	238-528
Yellow Perch (I)	3	152	146-156
Mountain Whitefish (N)	3	367	353-378