



SNAKE RIVER HEADWATERS 2020: THE YEAR IN REVIEW



Snow is blanketing the valley and the Tetons this November, reminding us that no matter what the year may bring us at a community, national, or global level, it will most certainly bring us snow (and more snow). There is something very comforting about this time of year in Jackson – watching the snow build up for the ski season ahead and the fishing season beyond it, seeing familiar faces around town as the tourists go home at last, and enjoying time at home with a cup of tea or making a slow batch of soup.

It's been a wonderful time to reflect on 2020, both its successes and challenges, and turn our thoughts towards what 2021 may bring us. Here at the local level, our Snake River Headwaters Initiative had a very successful and productive year. Thankfully, our day-to-day work was conducive to working from the safety of home or outside in the field, socially-distanced, and we were therefore able to stay focused on our on-the-ground restoration and reconnection projects for native cutthroat trout. Earlier in the year, we put the finishing touches on our project on Bar BC Spring Creek, and over the summer, we completed our multi-year project on Tincup Creek and the Tribasin project in the upper Greys River. And just a few weeks ago, we started a new, large-scale restoration project on Swift Creek in the Salt River watershed.

Of course, the year has had its challenges as well. We've missed out on the opportunity to connect with our local members and supporters through events and outreach, and our Adopt-a-Trout youth education program has been put on hold for the year. One project was delayed in part due to COVID, and federal, state and local grant funding for projects may be affected by shrinking budgets and shifting priorities in the future. We've done our best to adapt, and feel lucky that project construction and many of our outdoor volunteer days have been able to proceed safely.

As we look towards 2021, we remain optimistic and grateful for the continued support of this community, members of our newly-launched Cutthroat Club, and our partners. We have a number of high priority projects in the pipeline that we will work towards advancing in the next year – on Spread Creek, Blackrock Creek, the upper Hoback River, the Snake River, Lake Creek, and 3 Channel Spring Creek.



Until then – we wish you a wonderful, safe, healthy, and snowy winter ahead, and hope to hear from you when you have a quiet moment.

All the best,

Leslie Steen
NW Wyoming Program Director

Thank you to all of the partners, supporters, and volunteers that helped to make 2020 a success!
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2020 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



Snake River cutthroat trout observed during a snorkel survey of the project area in July.

BAR BC SPAWNING RUN PROTECTED FOR 2020 MIGRATION

Bar BC Spring Creek is one of the most productive spawning spring creeks in the Jackson Hole area. It has been studied by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department since the 1960s for spawning trends, and is the source of wild genetics for its hatchery-raised Snake River cutthroat trout. In December 2019, we kicked off a partnership project to replace an undersized culvert under the Gros Ventre levee that was acting as an impediment to cutthroat trout spawning migration, and restore the habitat immediately upstream. We completed the project in February of this year – well in advance of the summer 2020 spawning run.

5 MILES OF TINCUP CREEK COMPLETED AFTER 4 YEARS

This summer, we wrapped up the fourth and final year of restoration work on Tincup Creek on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, a Salt River tributary known for its native fishery that includes cutthroat trout and northern leatherside chub, a sensitive species of concern. Thanks to the in-kind and financial support of the project's many partners and volunteers, the project was very cost effective, and resulted in over 5 miles of stream being treated with restoration techniques that reconnected the stream to its floodplain, increased habitat diversity and quality for fish, and reduced erosion.



Interpretive signage overlooking the creek highlights the many partners involved in the project.

RESTORE & RECONNECT



Partners and volunteers from 4 TU chapters pitched in to plant willows at the new Shale Creek bridge on Wyoming Public Lands Day.

OVER 21 MILES RECONNECTED FOR GREYS RIVER CUTTHROAT

Starting deep in the Tribasin Divide country, nestled between the Wyoming and Salt River ranges, the Greys River flows and grows for over 60 miles and is home to a healthy, wild, and native Snake River cutthroat trout fishery. This summer, together with the Bridger-Teton National Forest and other agency and nonprofit partners, we replaced 4 undersized culverts in the upper Greys River watershed that were acting as barriers to fish migration. In total, over 21 miles of spawning and rearing habitat were opened up by this project, an opportunity that arose as a result of a timber sale in the area.

SWIFT CREEK PROJECT IN THE SALT MOVES FORWARD

This October, we embarked on a large-scale, collaborative project involving over 20 partners that will restore 1 mile of lower Swift Creek in the Salt River watershed. Swift Creek has been impacted by a range of historic land uses which have degraded trout habitat in its lower reaches and contributed to instability and land loss. The project prevents the loss of 800 feet of valuable trout spawning habitat important to the Salt River fishery, and will serve as a demonstration project that partners believe will inspire additional work in the Salt. Construction is dependent on winter weather conditions, and is expected to be completed by summer 2021.



Construction on the Swift Creek project will work to stabilize the stream and restore fish habitat.

RESEARCH AND FISH RESCUES SET THE STAGE FOR THE FUTURE



JHTU volunteers and local guides pitch in to rescue fish on the Lake Creek Ranches property in October.

This field season, we worked with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) and Grand Teton National Park to study entrainment (fish entrapment and loss) in several irrigation ditches around Teton Village and in the Buffalo Fork. Data from these studies will be used to inform future project work. In addition, fish rescues on 3 irrigation ditches resulted in over 4,400 native fish being returned to nearby waterways and provided additional insight into entrainment issues. We also worked with the WGFD to help inventory aquatics crossings along County and State roads as part of the recently-passed SPET initiative for Teton County wildlife crossings

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We would like to thank the following supporters for their commitment to the Snake River Headwaters Initiative with a major gift in the past 18 months:

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**Cutthroat Club member - for more information, please contact us!*

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We apologize for any errors or omissions.