

Anglers: Rainbow Trout in the South Fork Snake River May be Worth Money!

A new program by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Trout Unlimited has started on the South Fork. Fish and Game has tagged 575 rainbow and hybrid trout in the South Fork with coded wire tags. Each tag has a number etched on it, and is worth anywhere from **\$50 to \$1,000!** Tags were placed in the snout of rainbow trout and are not visible to the naked eye. To determine if the rainbow trout you caught has been marked with one of these tags, the head must be turned in to IDFG.

How Do I Turn in My Catch?

Anglers can turn in rainbow and hybrid trout heads to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game three different ways:

- Turn in rainbow and hybrid heads to the Fish and Game regional office in Idaho Falls.
- Bring in rainbow and hybrid heads on the first Friday of each month to have the heads scanned.
- Fill out a contact information form and turn in rainbow and hybrid heads to freezers placed at the Conant and Byington boat ramps (May through September only).

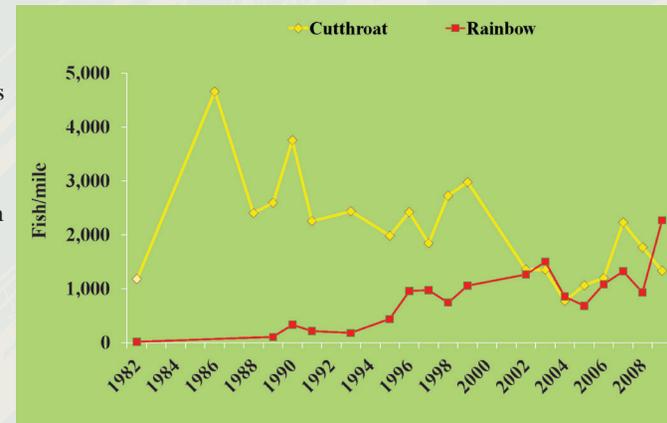
NOTE: Leave the head attached while transporting fish to the Fish and Game office or freezers.

What if I Don't Want My Fish?

- Anglers can donate their catch to the Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership (EICAP)
- EICAP will distribute donated fish to local families in need
- Donated fish and fish heads will be collected at freezers placed at the Conant and Byington boat ramps (May through September)
- Anglers may also donate fish at the Idaho Falls Fish and Game regional office
- **Please clean your fish on the river not at the freezers**

Why Should I Harvest a Rainbow Trout from the South Fork?

Native Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the South Fork are an important component of the recreational experience in Eastern Idaho and are vital to the local economy and area businesses. The willingness of cutthroat to rise to a dry fly and their historically high abundance in the river attract tens of thousands of hours of angling effort annually. However, cutthroat are threatened by nonnative rainbow trout that compete for limited resources such as food and cover, and hybridize with native cutthroat. Offspring from these hybrid crosses are fertile and can continue to hybridize and reduce the genetic purity of cutthroat. **Recent research has shown that the biggest threat to the long-term persistence of cutthroat is hybridization with non-native rainbows.** Luckily, however, this provides the best opportunity for anglers to help out. By harvesting all rainbow trout caught, you can directly help cutthroat trout in the South Fork remain the dominant fish species.



Population Trends

Rainbow trout were introduced and stocked into the South Fork up until the 1980's. Although rainbow trout have not been stocked since then, they have established wild populations that started to expand in the 1990's. Data collected in the October 2009 population survey shows that for the first time in the history of the South Fork, rainbow trout now outnumber cutthroat trout in the upper river. The increase in abundance is the result of flows during the 2008 spawning season, which favored rainbow trout production. Moderate flows during the spring have been shown to favor rainbow trout while hindering cutthroat trout. The opposite has also been proven to benefit cutthroat – high spring flows at the right time of the year can hinder rainbow and help cutthroat. The increasing trend in rainbow abundance, coupled with the potential for listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act prompts additional and aggressive management of rainbows in the South Fork.



Increase Harvest — Angler Incentive Program

- Although rainbow trout harvest is much more common than in the late 1990's, anglers still release more than 50% of rainbow trout caught in recent years.
- Increasing rainbow harvest will benefit Yellowstone cutthroat trout
- Reward money for rainbow trout and hybrid heads will be distributed through Dec. 2011
- **Eradication is not the goal, suppressing the rainbow trout population to levels like the 1990s is.**

Identify Your Catch!

- Current fishing rules and regulations remain in effect on the South Fork Snake River
 - No harvest of Yellowstone cutthroat trout
 - Rainbow and hybrid trout — no limit
 - 2 brown trout more than 16 inches
- Only rainbow trout and hybrids have been tagged for the incentive program
- Rainbow trout and hybrids are easily identified by their white-tipped fins
- Cutthroat trout do not have white-tipped fins and have not been tagged - **Do not harvest cutthroat trout!**



- Anglers — All cutthroat trout must be released. Please use good judgment when releasing cutthroat trout. If a fish is hooked deeply, clip the line as close to the fish's mouth as possible and release as opposed to trying to remove the hook. Also, handle fish gently, remove from the water only when necessary, and keep handling time to a minimum. With your help we can ensure that unintentional injuries are minimized.

What Else is Being Done to Save Cutthroat Trout in the South Fork?

- Weirs and fish traps are in place on the four main tributaries and provide refuge for spawning cutthroat trout
- Flow releases from Palisades Dam are tailored to benefit cutthroat and impede rainbow trout when possible. Irrigation demands and reservoir storage capacity make flow alteration unlikely in some years.

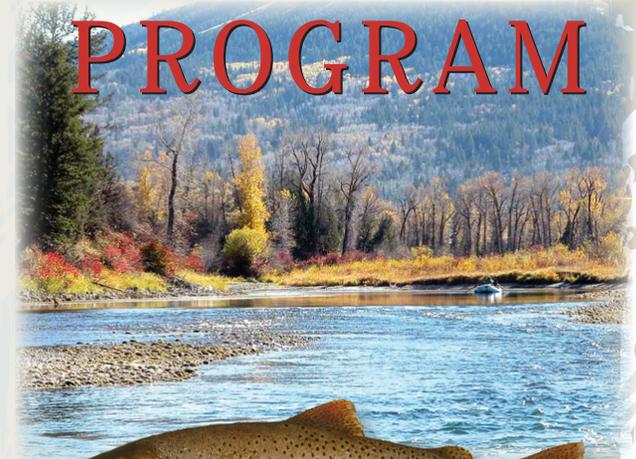
- Research on South Fork cutthroat trout survival, abundance, and movement is being conducted to improve our understanding and management of these natives
- Evaluation of methods to eliminate loss of cutthroat trout into canals such as the Dry Bed are ongoing.
- Research is being conducted to determine how to reduce hooking related mortality



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ANGLER INCENTIVE PROGRAM



HELP NATIVE YELLOWSTONE CUTTHROAT

Angler cash incentives offered through December 2011

Return rainbow and hybrid heads for tag-scanning and win from \$50 to \$1,000

South Fork Snake River

