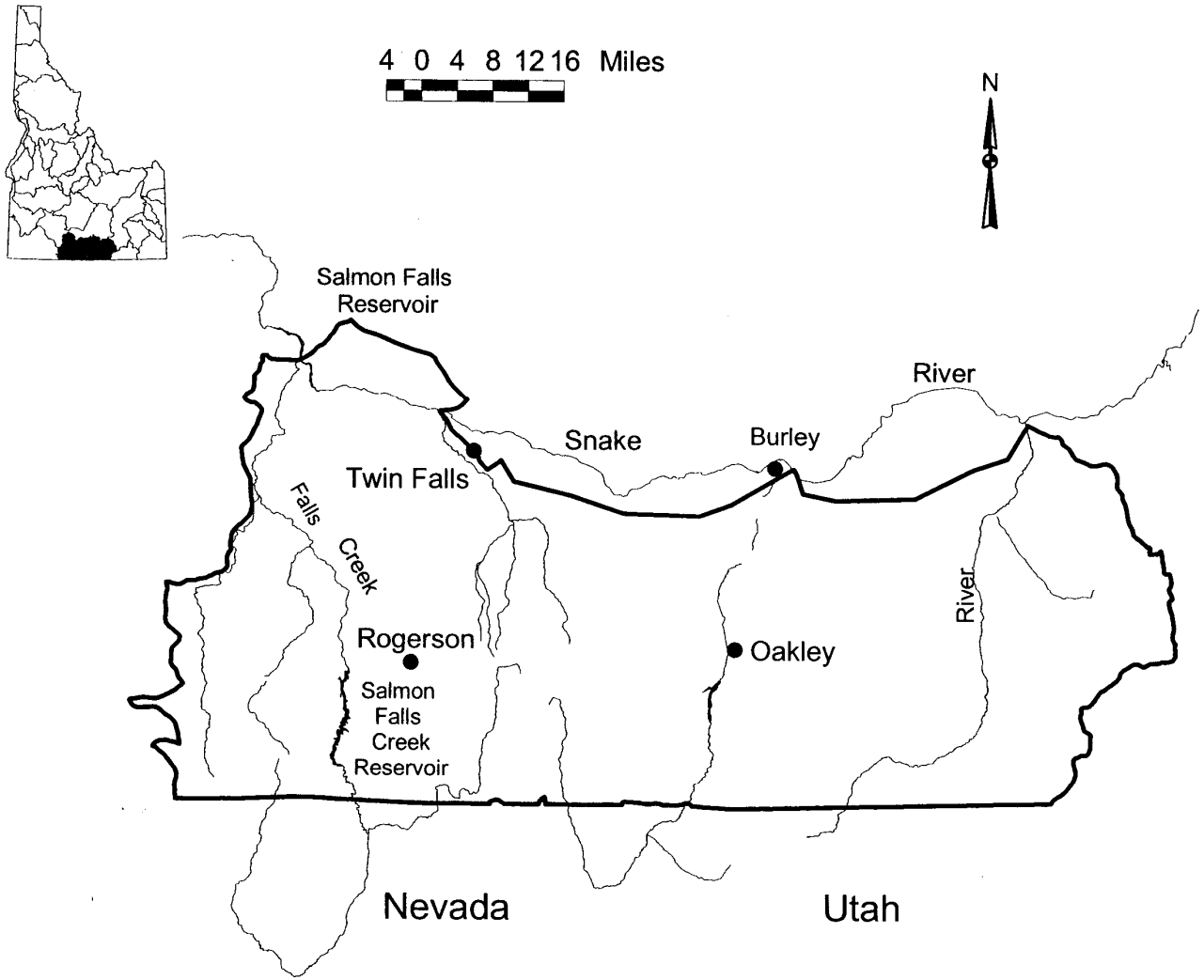
Salmon Falls Creek, Rock Creek, Goose Creek, and Raft River drainages of the Snake River



24. SALMON FALLS CREEK, GOOSE CREEK, ROCK CREEK, AND RAFT RIVER DRAINAGES

A. Overview

There are four major drainages south of the Snake River between C.J. Strike Reservoir and Massacre Rocks - Raft River, Goose Creek, Rock Creek and Salmon Falls Creek. The four drainages have a combined drainage area of over 6,870 square miles. Three major reservoirs; Oakley, Salmon Falls Creek and Roseworth, and one minor reservoir, Sublett, store water for irrigation and flood control. These reservoirs all support trout fisheries varying from fair to excellent. Sublett has excellent trout reproduction in tributary streams.

All of these drainages have streams that support good wild trout populations. Species found in different portions of the area are rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, brown and brook trout. Populations of native cutthroat trout are found in the Raft River and Goose Creek drainages. Native cutthroat trout populations in some areas have declined as a result of land uses degrading habitat, water diversions and introduction of other species, particularly rainbow trout. Programs for maintaining or improving existing cutthroat trout populations and restoring remnant populations will be emphasized. Leatherside chub, a species of concern, is present in Goose and Raft river drainages.

Beaver ponds furnish much valuable trout habitat on many of the smaller streams of the Raft River and Goose Creek drainages. Large portions of streams in the Raft River, Goose Creek and Salmon Falls Creek drainages have been degraded by overgrazing and poor land use practices in past years.

Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir was completed in 1912 and until the spring of 1984 was considered a closed system. As a result, it has received plantings of many species of fish through the years. Record snows in the drainage caused the reservoir to fill and spill for the first time in the spring of 1984. No evidence has been found to indicate that any fish survived the spill below the reservoir. It currently has a greater variety of game fish species than any other reservoir in the area. Game species currently in the reservoir are rainbow trout, brown trout, kokanee, yellow perch, black crappie, smallmouth bass and walleye. Salmonids are maintained by hatchery stocking. Walleye and kokanee are the two most recent additions and both species have done well. With the addition of walleye, numbers of nongame fish have declined and an additional forage species, the spottail shiner, has been introduced to supplement the forage base.

The walleye fishery in Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir has been extremely well received and is very popular with a large segment of anglers. An angler survey undertaken on the reservoir in the summer of 1995 indicated approximately 2,900 walleye were taken by anglers and the number taken per year has been steadily increasing. Some walleye in the reservoir are now reaching trophy sizes, with the current state record being a 16 pound 2 ounce fish caught in 1996. Walleye have also been introduced into Oakley Reservoir in 1989. Unfortunately, naturally reproducing walleye populations tend to be very cyclic with a few years of strong year classes followed by years of low numbers. To effectively manage for these boom and bust cycles, harvest rules need to be variable and adjusted on at least a two-year cycle. Trout fishing remains good in the reservoirs with the stocking of larger catchable rainbow trout instead of fingerings.

Angling pressure varies considerably throughout the drainages. It is high on Roseworth, Sublett and Salmon Falls Creek reservoirs, but is relatively light on streams in the Salmon

Falls Creek and Raft River drainages. Easily accessible streams in the Goose Creek and Rock Creek drainages receive very high use.

There are three alpine lakes, which support game fish in the Raft River drainage: The Independence Lakes on Mount Independence near Oakley and Lake Cleveland on Mount Harrison. The Independence Lakes have good cutthroat trout and arctic grayling populations that result from fry plantings. Lake Cleveland is accessible by road, and the fishery is maintained by catchable rainbow trout stockings and fingerling cutthroat trout.

B. Objectives and Programs

1. Objective: Develop management options for fishing on cyclic walleye populations in Salmon Falls Creek and Oakley reservoirs.

   Program: Establish annual monitoring programs for both reservoirs to determine year class strength of Age 1 and 2 walleye. Develop suitable biennial fishing rules based on year class strength to take advantage of strong year classes.

2. Objective: Improve forage fish populations in Salmon Falls Creek and Oakley reservoirs for walleye.

   Program: Improve habitat for forage fish spawning and rearing during low water years by working with local fishing clubs to create additional vegetative structure for yellow perch spawning and rearing.

3. Objective: Protect and restore wild Yellowstone cutthroat populations in drainages above Shoshone Falls.

   Program: Work with land management agencies on reestablishing watersheds and riparian habitats in drainages with recent fire damage.

   Program: Work with land management agencies on improving degraded riparian habitats with the implementation of improved grazing practices.

   Program: Maintain Yellowstone genetic integrity by stocking only sterile rainbow trout in cutthroat drainages.

   Program: Work with local WAG's to improve water quality and reduce sediment loadings.

   Program: Identify 319 grant funding opportunities to improve water qualilty.

4. Objective: Protect leatherside chub populations in Goose Creek and Raft River drainages.

   Program: Provide information to land management agencies and public on identification, population status and distribution of leatherside chub in the drainages.

   Program: Work with local regulatory agencies and landowners to minimize impacts of livestock grazing on riparian areas.

5. Objective: Improve water quality for fish habitat in lower reaches of streams in section.

   Program: Work with regulatory agencies and landowners to reduce sediment and nutrient loads in streams flowing into the Snake River.

Drainage: SALMON FALLS CREEK, ROCK CREEK, GOOSE CREEK, AND RAFT RIVER DRAINAGES

Water	Miles/acre	Fishery			Management Direction
		Type	Species Present	Management	
Salmon Falls Creek from mouth to Balanced Rock Park	26/	Mixed	Rainbow trout Smallmouth bass	Put-and-take trout	Stock catchable rainbow trout at Balanced Rock Park. Allow increased harvest of smallmouth bass by removing minimum length limit.
Salmon Falls Creek from Balanced Rock to Salmon Falls Creek Dam	18/	Mixed	Rainbow trout Brook trout Smallmouth bass	General	Maintain wild trout fishery. Allow increased harvest of smallmouth bass by removing minimum length limit.
From backwaters of Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir to Nevada border	7/	Mixed	Rainbow trout Brown tout Smallmouth bass Walleye	General	Maintain wild trout fishery.
Shoshone Creek from Nevada border to mouth of Big Creek	10/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brown trout	Wild	Work with USFS and BLM to improve habitat through grazing and beaver management.
Shoshone Creek from mouth of Big Creek to headwaters	12/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout	Wild	Work with USFS and BLM to improve habitat through grazing and beaver management.
Big Creek from mouth to headwaters	14/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brown trout	Wild	Work with USFS and BLM to improve habitat through grazing and beaver management.
All other streams in Salmon Falls Creek drainage	57/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout	Wild	Evaluate need for harvest restrictions to maintain native trout where present.
Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir	/3,400	Mixed	Walleye Rainbow trout Kokanee Yellow perch Smallmouth bass Black crappie	General	Intensify management of walleye with annual monitoring of both walleye and forage species. Establish fishing rules depending on walleye year class strength. Emphasize species diversity. Catch rate of 0.5 fish/hour on salmonids.
Roseworth Reservoir (Cedar Creek Reservoir)	/1,500	Coldwater	Rainbow trout	General	Emphasize rainbow trout in reservoir. Improve carryover with fall fingerling plants in good water year. Catch rate of 0.5 fish/hour.
Rock Creek from mouth to Twin Falls Highline Canal	21/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brown trout	Put-and-take trout	Continue cooperation with local and state agencies to continue Rock Creek rural clean water projects. Continue stocking hatchery rainbow trout at high use sites. Assure adequate minimum instream flows and other environmental protection at hydro sites. Work to improve fish passage. Experiment with rainbow trout fingerlings to improve catch rates to 0.7 fish/hour. Year-round season.

Rock creek and tributaries from Twin Falls Highline Canal to headwaters	15/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brown trout Brook trout	Put-and-take trout	Continue cooperation on Rock Creek rural clean water project. Stock catchables in high use areas.
Goose Creek from Oakley Reservoir to headwaters (within Idaho)	44/	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout Rainbow trout	Wild	Improve quality of cutthroat trout fishery. Improve catch rate to 1.0 fish/hour. Use only sterile rainbow trout in drainage. Stock only in Oakley Reservoir and Trapper Creek.
Big Cottonwood Creek from Walls Ranch to headwaters	15/	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout	Wild	Place emphasis on cutthroat trout and preservation of stream habitat. Maintain catch rate of 1.0 fish/hour.
Oakley Reservoir	/1,350	Mixed	Walleye Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout Yellow perch	General	Intensify management of walleye with annual monitoring of both walleye and forage species. Establish flexible fishing rules depending on walleye year class strength. Maintain catch rate of 0.5 trout/hour. .
Tributaries to Sublett Reservoir	30/	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout Brown trout Rainbow trout	Wild	Manage as a wild trout fishery with emphasis on preservation of stream qualities for spawning and rearing. Consider re-establishing native cutthroat trout. Continue cooperation with USFS and Sublett Irrigation District to maintain riparian vegetation and protect stream habitat. Maintain catch rate of 1.0 fish/hour.
Sublett Reservoir	/113	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout Rainbow trout Brown trout Kokanee	General	Stock with fall fingerling cutthroat trout. Closely monitor spawning runs of rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and brown trout for spawning success. Experiment with kokanee and evaluate. Maintain close cooperation and coordination with Sublett Irrigation District to assure public access. Catch rate of 0.5 fish/hour.
Cassia and Clyde creeks Conner to Forest boundary.	5/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brook trout Cutthroat trout	Put-and-take trout	Stock and evaluate return to creel. Catch rate 0.7 fish/hour.
Other streams in Raft River and Goose Creek drainages	361/	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout Rainbow trout Brook trout	Wild	Emphasize protection of native cutthroat trout in streams where present. Maintain catch rate of 1.0 trout/hour. Evaluate streams for reintroduction of native cutthroat trout. Emphasize harvest opportunity for brook trout. Work with landowners and land management agencies to improve habitat.
Independence lakes #1 and #2	/28	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout Rainbow trout Arctic grayling	General	Stock cutthroat trout every three years and Arctic grayling as available in Independence #2. Catch rates of 0.7 fish/hour. Support USFS policy of non-motorized access only.
Lake Cleveland	/6	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout	Put-and-take trout	Accessible by road. Stock annually with hatchery rainbow trout and cutthroat trout fingerlings. Evaluate fingerling plants. Catch rates of 0.7 fish/hour.