

Fish and Game nets fish in Ashton Dam salvage

Salvaging trout

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JOYCE EDLEFSEN jedlefsen@uvsj.com



Photo caption:

STANDARD JOURNAL/JOYCE EDLEFSEN Idaho Fish and Game Department personnel use electrofishing techniques to salvage fish in a deep pool near the closed up exit of a bypass tunnel at the Ashton Dam. PacifiCorp, which is rehabilitating the nearly 100-year-old dam, invited the agency to salvage the fish.

ASHTON - From the west canyon rim below the Ashton Dam, the men in boats with nets were dwarfed by the dam and power plant.

They oared their boats around and around in a deep pool next to where water has been flowing from a bypass tunnel, netting fish they saw stunned from electrical shocks sent into the water.

The men were Idaho Fish and Game Department personnel invited by PacifiCorp to salvage the fish in the pool. The pool was created as part of a reconstruction effort to rehabilitate concrete at the power plant on the downstream side of the dam.

The salvage effort took most of the daylight hour Feb. 10.

"We were successful up there," says Fish and Game Fisheries Manager Dan Garren. "We worked until nearly dark that night, and moved approximately 1,400 adult trout from the pool to the river (the Henry's Fork) downstream."

"Whatever fish remain in that pool are likely to survive just fine unless something drastic and unforeseen occurs," Garren says in an email.

If fishing season were open downstream in the river, anglers likely would be lined up to try their luck there.

According to Greg Schoby, a regional fish biologist who helped tally the count of fish salvaged and moved that day, more than 2,100 fish were netted.

Of the 2,126 fish, 1,214 were rainbows, 301 were browns, 8 were brook trout and one was a cutthroat. Some 602 whitefish also were netted and moved.

A 2004 trout survey of that stretch of river counted about 1,700 trout per mile there.

"We got 1,500 out of that pool," Schoby says. "That's a lot of fish."

The trout likely are still in the neighborhood, but that won't do anglers much good right now. The nearest stretch of the Henry's Fork that's open for fishing starts at the Vernon Bridge.

Just in case reports about the number of trout salvaged gets anglers in the mood for fishing, Schoby says anglers have been reporting good success downstream from the Vernon Bridge lately.