

## **NATIVE FISH AND HABITAT SURVEYS IN TWO SOUTHEASTERN WYOMING PRAIRIE WATERSHEDS**

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In southeastern Wyoming, the Lower Laramie River and Horse Creek watersheds are considered aquatic priorities due to their high densities of native fish species and state species of concern. Yet, little is known about the distribution and habitat requirements of native fishes within these two prairie watersheds. The recently developed Warmwater Stream Assessment (WSA) was applied throughout these two regionally important watersheds to assess native species presence and habitat conditions. Assessments were applied to 30 sites in the Lower Laramie River and Horse Creek watersheds in 2005. A total of 16,991 fish were captured in the surveys representing twenty native species, ten introduced species, and nine families. Four species of concern were collected including common shiner, hornyhead chub, plains topminnow, and suckermouth minnow. Overall, instream habitat varied among the sites and was mainly influenced by water development practices throughout these watersheds. The fish distribution and habitat information collected from these two watersheds will aid in future conservation efforts focused on species of greatest concern in southeastern Wyoming prairie watersheds.