

EVALUTAION OF INTRODUCTIONS OF SPOTTATIL SHINERS AND CISCO TO IMPROVE WALLEYE FORAGE IN TIBER RESERVOIR, MONTANA

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Tiber Reservoir's walleye (*Sander vitreus*) population, like many introduced walleye fisheries in the Northwest, went through a 'boom and bust' cycle following their introduction into the reservoir in 1971. Walleye quickly became established and expanded, but rapidly

depleted the available forage in the reservoir. Growth and body condition of walleye subsequently declined. Spottail shiners (*Notropis hudsonius*) were introduced into Tiber in 1984 to provide additional forage in the reservoir. Spottails quickly became the dominant shoreline forage, but no measurable improvements in the walleye population were discerned from this introduction. Further efforts to improve Tiber's forage base led to the introduction of cisco (*Coregonus artedii*) in 1997 and 1998. Cisco quickly established and became a dominant component of Tiber's fishery within two years of their introduction. The development of this population resulted in dramatic changes throughout Tiber's food web, yet no improvements in the walleye population have been realized. Managers are now faced with the question of exploring other management options or taking a 'wait and see' approach. Growing discontent amongst anglers may make future management decisions more political than biological.