

Wild Trout Management in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Basin

Carson J. Watkins
Idaho Department of Fish and Game



Presentation Overview

- Current fishery management in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Basin
- Wild trout population trends
- What we learned after the extreme summer conditions during 2015
- Questions



Evolution of Rules and Regulations

2013 - 2015 Fishing Seasons and Rules Including Steelhead

Second Edition 2014



Photo courtesy Kathryn Powell.



Take advantage of the Idaho Fishing Planner at
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/fishingPlanner/>



RULES

January 2013
through
December 2015

Three-Year
Book!



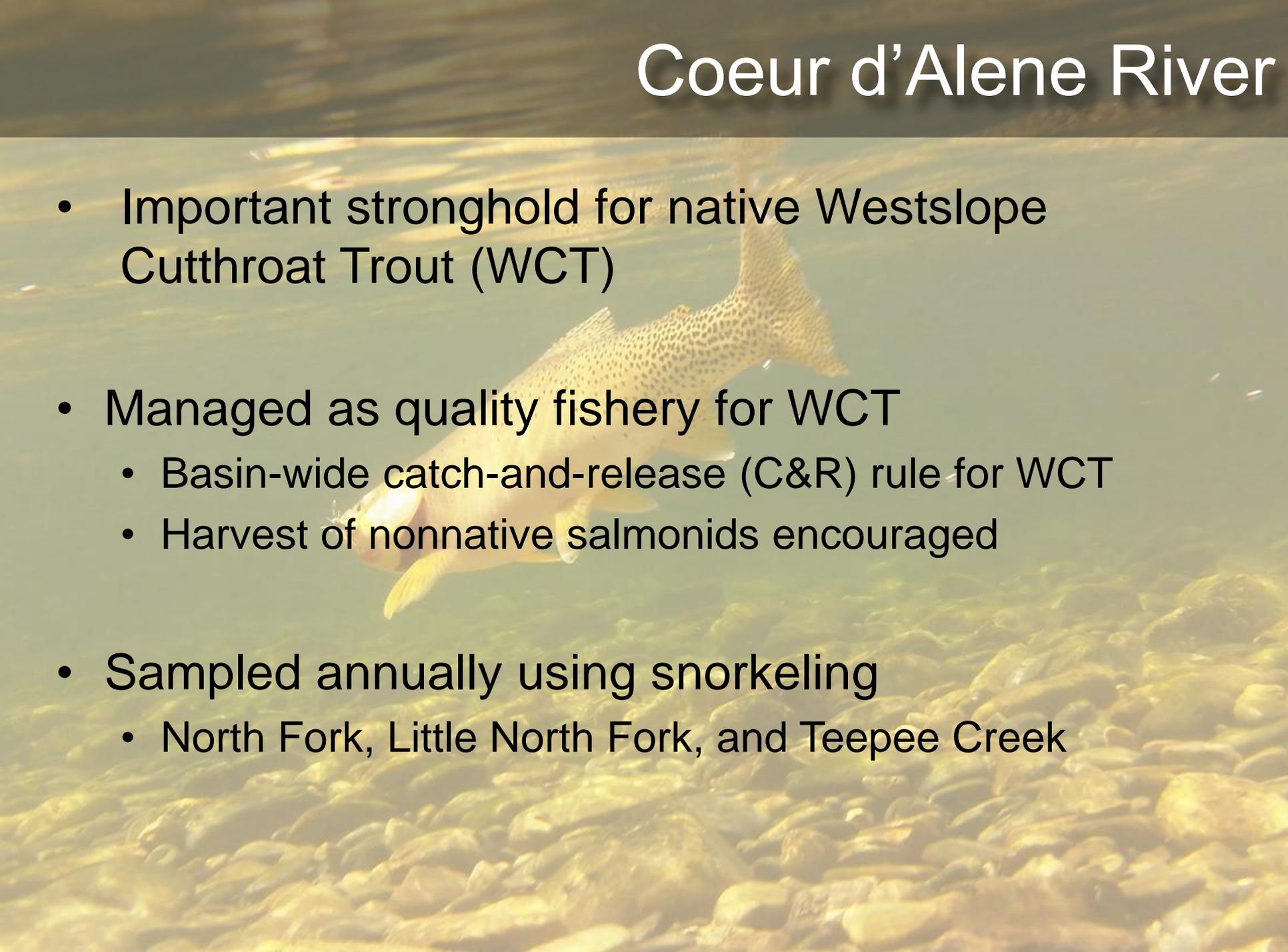
Partial funding of this publication
is from the Federal Aid in Sport
Fish Restoration Program as a



St. Joe River			
Year	CdA Lake to N.F. St Joe	N.F. St. Joe to Prospector Cr.	Prospector Cr. to headwaters
1941-1945	15 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 25 fish		
1946-1950	10 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 20 fish		
1951-1954	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 20 fish		
1955-1970	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 15 fish		
1971	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 15 fish	3 fish, none < 13 inches	
1972-1975	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 10 fish	3 fish, none < 13 inches	
1976	10 fish, only 5 > 12 inches and 2 > 18 inches		3 fish, none < 13 inches
1977-1987	6 fish, only 2 > 16 inches		3 fish, none < 13 inches
1988-1999	1 fish, none < 14 inches		Catch-and-release
2000-2007	2 fish, none between 8"-16"	Catch-and-release	
2008-pres	Catch-and-release	Catch-and-release	

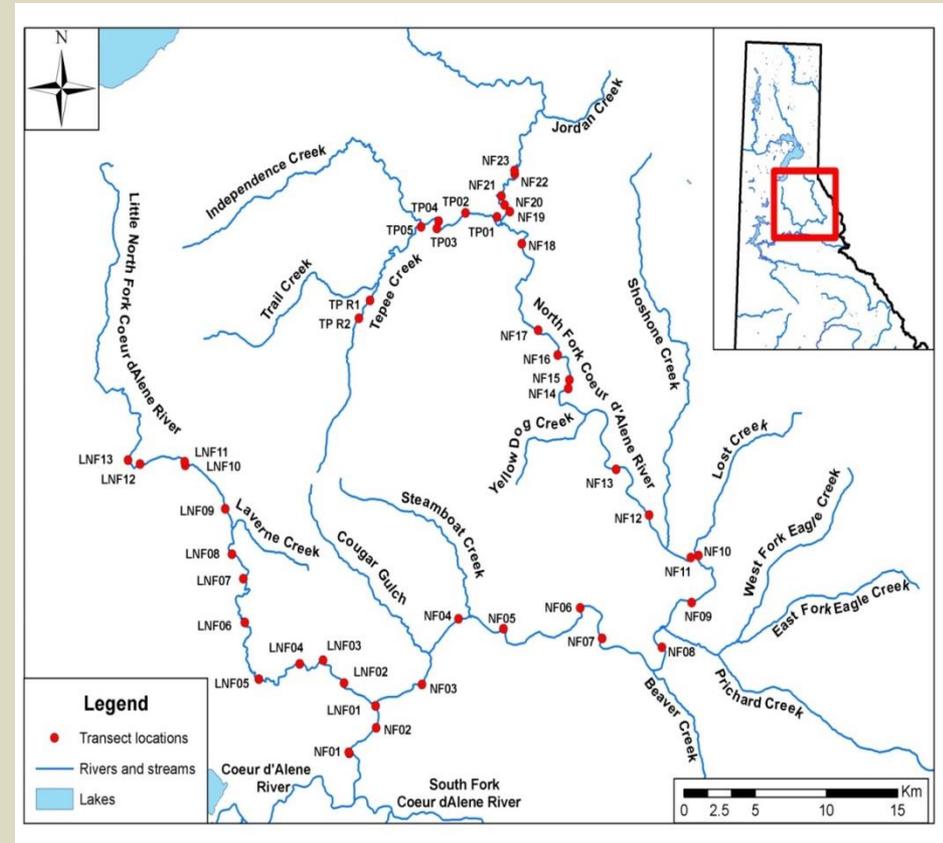
Coeur d'Alene River			
Year	CdA Lake to Yellow Dog Creek	Yellow Dog Creek to headwaters (NF CdA)	Laverne Creek to headwaters (LNF CdA)
1941-1945	15 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 25 fish		
1946-1950	10 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 20 fish		
1951-1954	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 20 fish		
1955-1971	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 15 fish		
1972-1974	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 10 fish		
1975	7 lbs plus 1 fish - not to exceed 10 fish	3 fish, none < 13 inches	
1976	10 fish, only 5 > 12 inches & 2 > 18 inches		3 fish, none < 13 inches
1977-1985	6 fish, only 2 > 16 inches		3 fish, none < 13 inches
1986-1987	6 fish, only 2 > 16 inches	Catch-and-release	3 fish, none < 13 inches
1988-1999	1 fish, none < 14 inches		Catch-and-release
2000-2007	2 fish, none between 8"-16"		Catch-and-release
2008-pres	Catch-and-release		Catch-and-release

Coeur d'Alene River

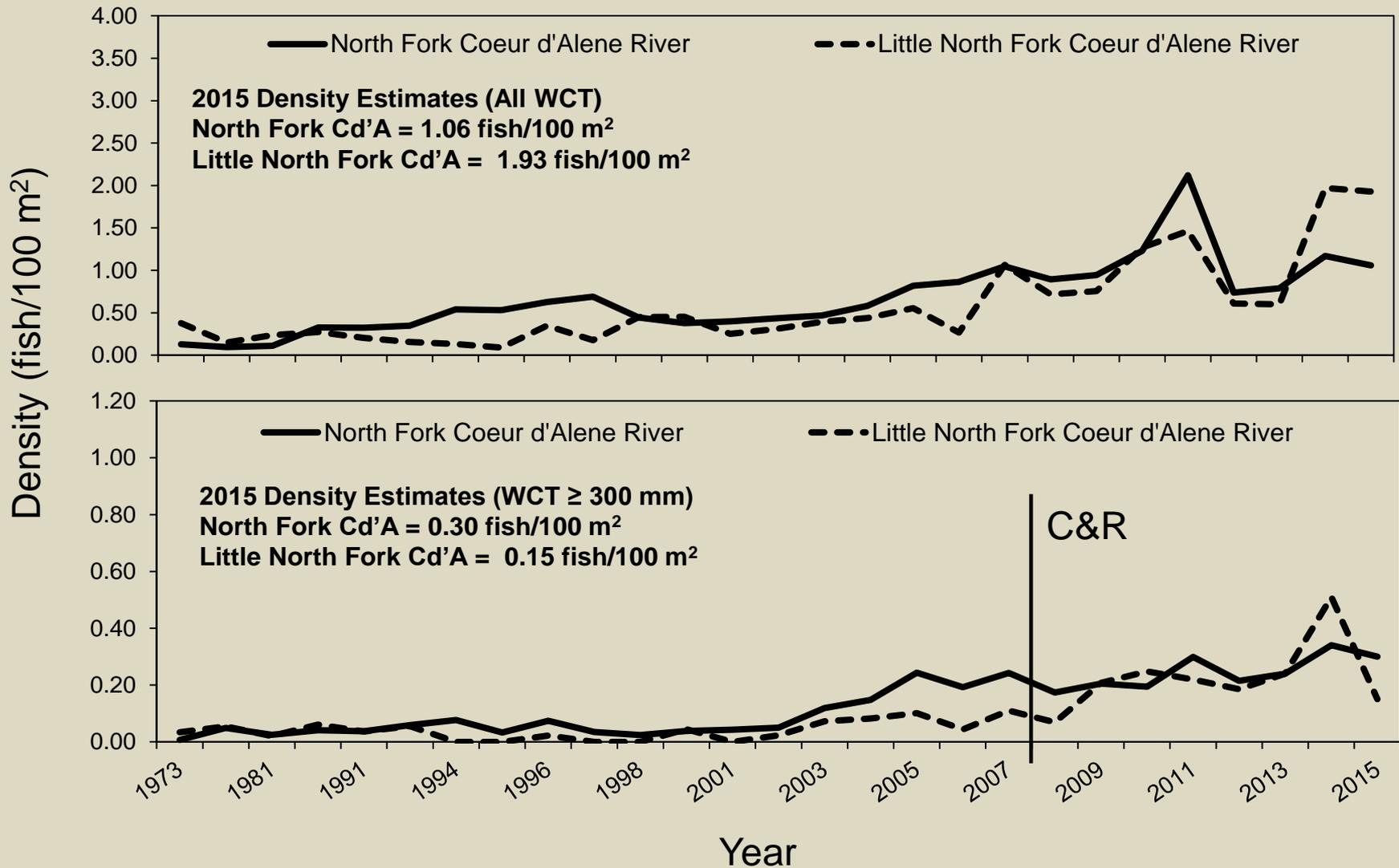
- Important stronghold for native Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT)
 - Managed as quality fishery for WCT
 - Basin-wide catch-and-release (C&R) rule for WCT
 - Harvest of nonnative salmonids encouraged
 - Sampled annually using snorkeling
 - North Fork, Little North Fork, and Teepee Creek
- 
- A photograph of a Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) swimming in clear water over a rocky riverbed. The fish is positioned in the center-left of the frame, facing left. It has a light-colored body with numerous dark spots and a distinctive red or orange stripe along its side. The water is clear, and the rocky bottom is visible through the surface. The background is a soft, out-of-focus view of the river's surface and the rocky bed.

Monitoring Design

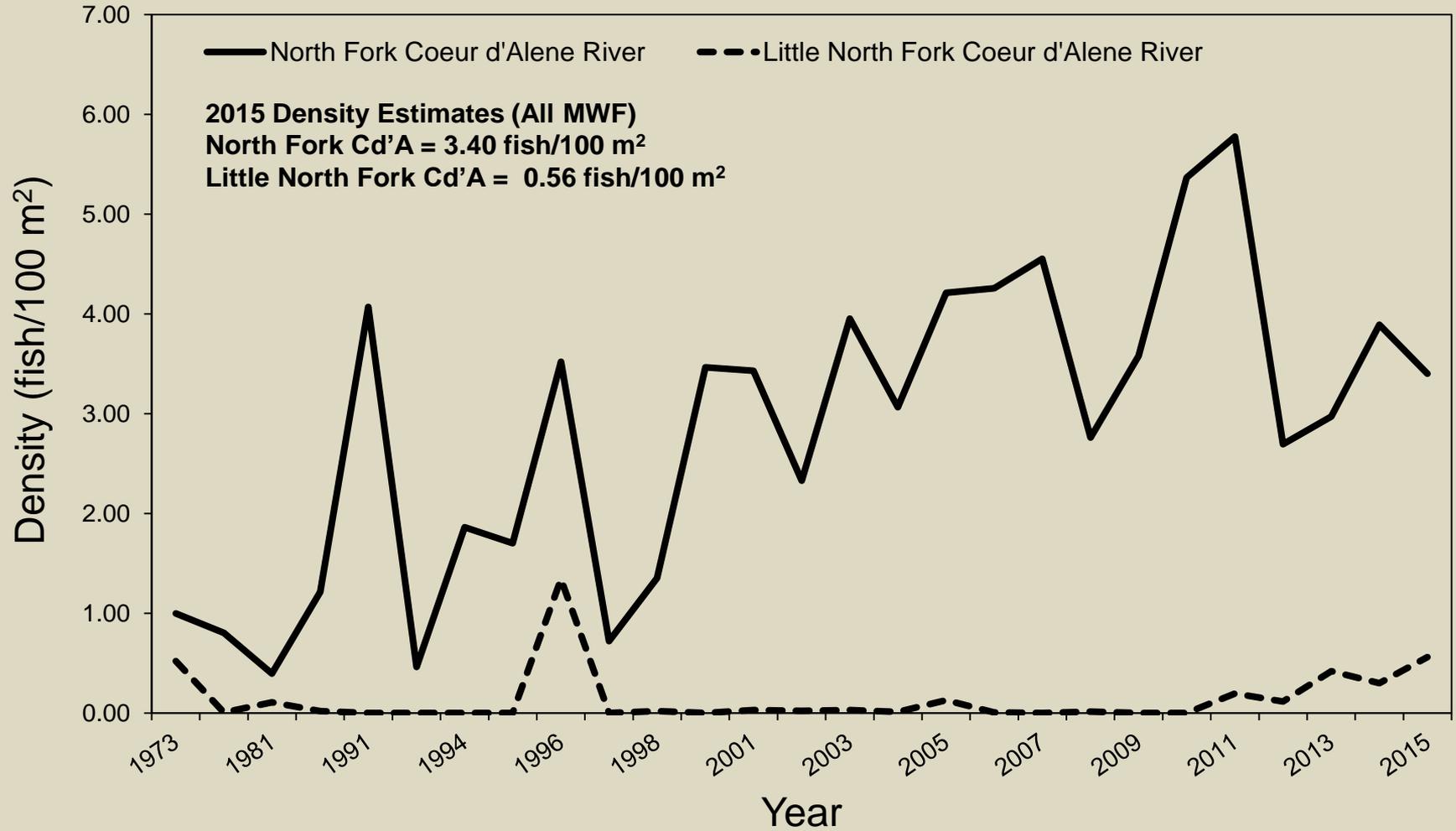
- Standard index sites ($n = 44$)
 - Established in 1973
 - Capture habitat variability
- Standard downstream sampling technique
 - Abundance
 - Size structure
 - Assemblage structure



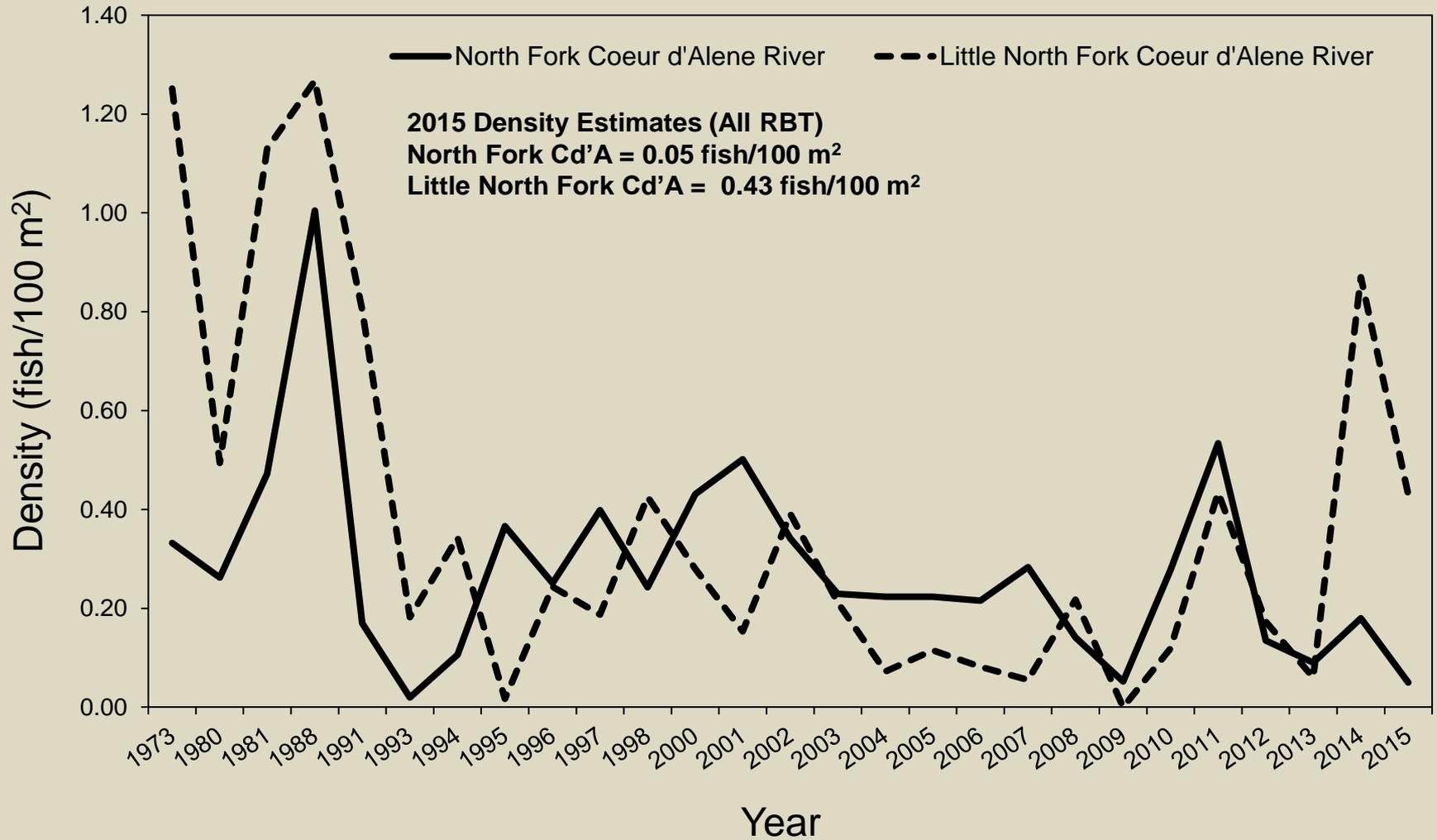
Westslope Cutthroat Trout



Mountain Whitefish

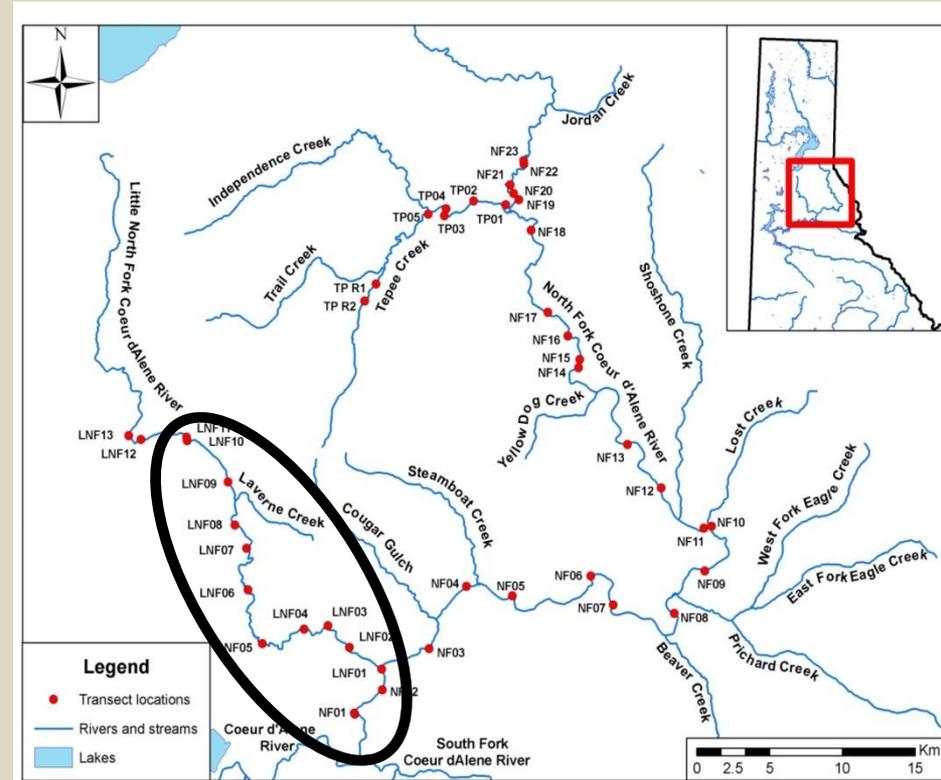


Rainbow Trout



Brook Trout

- Detected at 10 sites over past 20 years
- Consistently detected at 4 sites
- Decreased frequency of occurrence and abundance over last 10 years



Challenges in 2015

- Record warm temperatures and low flows
 - Public angst
 - Concerns about angling-related mortality
 - Neighboring states (WA, MT) implemented emergency rules
- Here's an overview of what stood out from 2015...

- Density estimates of all size classes similar to 2014 and above 10-year mean
- Densities were spatially altered, but not in a consistent pattern around the region
 - Density of WCT ≥ 12 " declined substantially in LNF
 - Mean temperature $\sim 4^\circ$ higher than main river
 - Little available habitat
- No dead fish observed during survey; No reports of dead fish from anglers
 - Good indicator of direct mortality from extreme conditions (angling-related or otherwise)
- Conclusion: Extreme temperatures did not measurably influence mortality

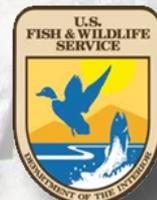
Looking Forward

- Maintain long-term trend data in Coeur d'Alene River
 - Informs statewide management of WCT
 - Evaluate distributional changes of nonnative fishes
 - Evaluate population-level responses to changing weather and climate patterns
- Better understand basin-wide adfluvial production dynamics
 - Graduate research (U of I)
 - Life history traits
 - Production sources
 - Coarse-scale movement patterns
 - Habitat use





Thank you!



Access Site Development

- IDFG acquired new property in 2015
 - 11 acre parcel
 - Formerly ITD owned
- Benefits include:
 - Float fishing access
 - Wade fishing access
 - Conservation benefit
 - Hultman Gulch Springs
 - Catch-out pond development



Access Site Development



Access Site Development

2016 Plans

- Access road
- Parking area
- Boat launch
- Sign board
- CXT installed?

Future Plans

- Pond development



Future Access Opportunities

Pritchard Float Access

- Interest from NIFC

Cataldo Float Access

- Investigating potential options