

ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Whirling disease found in Yellowstone

During the 1998 field season, staff from Yellowstone's Aquatic Resources Center confirmed the presence of whirling disease in the park. In recent years, the disease, caused by a parasite that attacks the cartilage of young fish, has been found in streams around the park, but previous sampling efforts had not indicated its presence within Yellowstone. In three separate tests, native Yellowstone cutthroat trout taken from Yellowstone Lake near the mouth of Clear Creek, a major spawning tributary, tested positive for whirling disease. Fish affected by the disease are unable to feed normally, which often results in their being more subject to predation, starvation, and premature death. Biologists will test additional fish from in and around the lake during the summer of 1999 to learn more about the extent of the disease.