HUFF Creek — Wyoming

Huff Creek is located at 6,600 feet elevation in the mountain foothills of southwestern Wyoming. Precipitation averages

approximately sixteen inches per year and comes mainly as snow. Peak runoff normally occurs in April or May.

Huff Creek is one of several streams within a 91,000 acre multiple-permittee allotment in the Rock Springs District of the Bureau of Land Management.

Prior to livestock grazing, the riparian area probably was dominated by sedges, rushes and willows. The area was predominately grazed by sheep from the late 1800s until the late 1960s when most permittees converted to cow/calf operations. This conversion prompted aerial spraying of herbicides to kill upland and riparian shrubs and increase grass for continuous, May-September grazing.

Herbicides and intensive grazing eliminated riparian willows and, consequently, beavers. The water table dropped and streambanks eroded. The riparian area shrank and was invaded by sagebrush and rabbitbrush. Stream water temperatures and silt load increased.

Once a popular cutthroat trout fishery, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department estimated Huff Creek's trout population declined from 222 fish per mile in 1958 to 36 per mile by 1978.

In the mid-1970s the trout in Huff Creek were identified as a pure strain of Bonneville cutthroat, then under consideration for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. To provide the fish emergency protection, in 1976 and 1979 livestock were excluded from two stream reaches totaling about one mile in length. Instream structures and rock riprap were installed to elevate the water table, improve trout habitat and reduce streambank erosion.

The area inside the fences responded dramatically. Streambanks healed. The stream channel narrowed

Huff Creek, September 1976

Huff Creek, November 1980