Dry Fork North Fork Blackfoot River Recon Trip Report

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Trip Dates: 08/27/25-08/29/25
09/15/25- 09/19/25

08/27: Hiked up to the confluence of Cabin Creek and Dry Fork. Dry Fork streambed dry until approximately 100 meters below Cabin Creek confluence (47.22533, -112.94788). Water present in Dry fork at this point is almost certainly due to Cabin Creek influence. Below the Cabin Creek confluence there is a deeper pool where Cutthroat Trout were observed (47.22315, -112.94655). I walked approximately one mile up Cabin Creek from the confluence and the creek had water throughout. Above Cabin Creek confluence with Dry Fork the streambed is completely dry.

08/28: I hiked up the Cabin Creek trail approximately 6 miles. The trail had been cleared this year and was in good condition. Cutthroat trout were observed visually throughout the creek until I hit what I assume is a low water barrier (47.27872, -112.90247). No fish were observed above the barrier. The creek averaged approximately 15ft bankfull width and had consistent flow throughout, water was approximately .5ft deep. No Bull Trout were observed and I doubt that a resident population exists in Cabin Creek. After hiking back to the main trail I went to the start of a large beaver pond complex on Dry Fork (47.23797, -112.96808). There was water present and one Cutthroat was observed in one of the ponds. There was little flow connecting the beaver ponds and the streambed below the ponds at trail crossing was dry (47.23698, -112.96756).

08/29: I hiked two miles along Cabin Creek in hopes of catching a Cutthroat Trout and to see if there were any barriers lower down on the creek that I missed. No fish were caught and no barriers were found.

09/15: Hiked from North Fork trailhead to Dwight Creek. The only water observed in Dry Fork on hike up was locked into the beaver pond complex. Water in Dry Fork ended here, below trail crossing to Dwight Creek (47.25698, -112.98493). Water in Dwight Creek goes subsurface from this point here (47.25971, -112.99395) to confluence with Dry Fork, water is present in the creek channel above this point.

09/16: I went up Dwight Creek trail today. The trail is in good condition and had been cut out this year. Water was present the entire length of Dwight Creek and no barriers were observed. Cutthroat trout were visually observed and caught (47.24686, -113.0483). Habitat in Dwight Creek looks a bit more suitable for a resident population of Bull Trout when compared to Cabin Creek. There is deeper, faster water and lots of woody debris in the creek. Dwight creek had an average bankfull width of 10ft. No Bull Trout or Redds were observed in Dwight Creek. Many more Cutthroat were observed in Dwight Creek when compared to Cabin. At the end of the day I went up the tail along Dry Fork above the Dwight Creek confluence to find if/where water is present. The point that I found where the water begins and does not go subsurface upstream in Upper Dry Fork is here (47.26546, -113.00356).

09/17: I went as far as I could up what I call Upper Dry Fork Trail. The trail has not been maintained since before the Reef/Rice Ridge Fire and the remnants of the trail are mostly burned over. No barriers, Bull Trout or Redds were observed. Cutthroat Trout were visually observed and caught in Upper Dry Fork (47.28018, -112.99682). Habitat in the stream looked decent for a population of resident Bull Trout with good stream depth and complex habitat. If there are Bull Trout in Upper Dry Fork I would expect

them to exist high up in the drainage where unfortunately I could not get to. eDNA and or electrofishing would be necessary to verify if bull trout do exist in Upper Dry Fork.

(Cutthroat Trout from Upper Dry Fork)

09/18: I went up to the unnamed lake very close to Upper Dry Fork (47.27747, -112.98809). I expected there to be some connectivity between the lake and Upper Dry Fork but there was none. The lake is easy to get to following game trails. I walked around half of the lake and it appears completely fishless. Max depth seems to be around 12ft and there are no inflows or outflows. I assume the lake must have very low dissolved oxygen levels in the winter.

09/19: Hiked out to trailhead from cabin.

In summation I believe that the likeliest spot for Bull Trout to exist would be Upper Dry Fork. eDNA samples should be taken and the trail cleared/repaired if possible. That being said, personally I doubt that there are Bull Trout in any of the water that I explored during this reconnaissance trip.

Notes:
All waypoints, photos and link to map are contained in this google sheet document
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iYWd2g-gGirpxFHvBGSF41WiciKmcymLWv4tOOK-Cak/edit?usp=sharing