

Bull Trout Working Group Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2015 1-5pm

Location: Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board, 1200 Chesterly Drive, STE 280 Yakima, WA

Attendees:

Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Ashton Bunce (CWU), Brian Miller (NYCD), Cassandra Weekes (MCFEG), David Ward (HDR), Eric Anderson (WDFW), Gable Temple (WDFW), Gary Torretta (USFS), Jeff Krupka (USFWS), Jeff Thomas (USFWS), John Easterbrooks (WDFW), Josh Rogala (WDFW), Judy Neibauer (USFWS), Justin Bader (NYCD), Matt Love (VNF, LLC), Mitch Long (KCT), Pat Monk (USFWS), Paul James (CWU), Richard Vacirca (USFS), Richard Visser (USFWS), Rob Randall (USFWS), Scott Kline (WDFW), Teresa Merriman (BOR), Walt Larrick (BOR), Wendy Christensen (BOR), William Meyer (WDFW).

On the phone:

Jason Dunham (USGS), Joe Benjamin (USGS)

Topic	Notes
2015 spawning season update	<p>Eric Anderson gave an overview of bull trout redd counts in the Yakima Basin. The overall count for 2015 is 343 redds. He noted that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) No redds were observed in the North and South Forks of Ahtanum Creek; 2) Indian Creek redd counts are still down; 3) Rattlesnake Creek has a large log jam that is a passage barrier to most fish, with all but one redd below the log jam; 4) Deep Creek redd counts were way below average, presumably due to the low-flow passage issue across the reservoir bed; 5) Upper Kachess River and Gold Creek are incomplete surveys due to dewatering late into the fall followed by significant rainfall and high flows which caused unfavorable survey conditions.
USFWS Final Bull Trout Recovery Plan and Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan updates	<p>Judy Neibauer presented an overview of bull trout, their ESA status and the Service's recently released Final Bull Trout Recovery Plan. Judy explained how the final Recovery Unit Implementation Plan (RUIP) links threats to corresponding actions. USFWS would like to work with the Working Group in the future to evaluate threats in the basin using the threats evaluation method specified in the Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Alex Conley and Cassandra Weekes updated the group on the status of the Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan (BTAP) updates. Cassandra is completing a crosswalk between the final USFWS RUIP and the BTAP to show how the actions in the BTAP implement Recovery Plan priorities. The group agreed to update the actions in the BTAP to reflect the links to the recovery plan, progress to date, and next steps. Cassandra and Alex will develop an initial draft update for review by a small group, so that draft updates can be presented at the next Working Group meeting. Several working group members volunteered to be part of the initial review team.</p> <p><i>Next step: Small group to develop proposed BTAP updates to be presented at the spring Working Group meeting.</i></p>

<p>Integrated Plan Bull Trout Elements and Baseline Data</p>	<p>Jeff Thomas, Walt Larrick, Richard Visser and others updated the group on the status of Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) bull trout elements. The final MOU for bull trout enhancement through the Integrated Plan was signed in October 2015. The December 2014 Bull Trout Enhancement Plan is also in place and should be used to guide YBIP investments. Walt Larrick noted that some YBIP funding may be available to implement bull trout actions, and asked for input from the group. Richard Visser emphasized that all such requests should go to the YBIP habitat committee.</p> <p>William Meyer presented baseline data that was collected in the Teanaway watershed using YBIP funding. The data includes road inventories, stream surveys, LiDAR, etc.</p> <p><i>Next steps: Richard will send out the signed MOU and BTEP to the Working Group. Working Group will provide input to the Habitat Committee on next steps for priority bull trout actions.</i></p>
<p>Bureau Current Operations Consultation</p>	<p>Jeff Krupka and Walt Larrick updated the group on the Bureau's Section 7 consultation for current Operations. It's a large, complex consultation and is likely to be completed by fall of 2016 at the earliest. The Bureau has asked that it be placed on hold right now so that all parties can focus on completing consultation for Roza's emergency pumping plant proposal.</p>
<p>Kachess Pumping Plant</p>	<p>Reclamation and Ecology have placed development of Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant on hold. There is no schedule yet for release of the final EIS.</p> <p>Roza Irrigation District is the lead for the Kachess Emergency Temporary Floating Pumping Plant project. Their goal is to have floating pumps in place if 2016 is a drought year, and they have budgeted \$60 million for the project. Matt Love with Van Ness Feldman is working through the permitting for the project. He encourages people to contact him with questions at mal@vnf.com. Consultation and permitting will need to happen on an accelerated schedule for construction to begin in April; all authorizations will be for a single year of operation. Yakima Project operations will need to be adjusted to allow drawdown of Kachess Reservoir in April to allow construction.</p>
<p>Bull Trout Vulnerability Assessment</p>	<p>Jason Dunham presented his range-wide vulnerability assessment for bull trout. The model used variables such as stream temperature and connectivity to estimate the probability that bull trout can persist in a given habitat patch. There are currently 973 suitable patches for bull trout. The model predicts by year 2040 there will be 310 suitable habitat patches and by year 2080 it is reduced to 159 patches. There is a Google Earth patch attribution layer that is available. He shared preliminary results for the Yakima Basin; final results will be available this winter. Dunham's vulnerability assessment will play a direct role in prioritizing bull trout recovery actions in the face of climate change.</p> <p><i>Next Steps: Working Group to review final results when available and discuss their use in prioritizing supplementation, reintroduction and other actions.</i></p>

<p>Clear Creek Dam Fish Passage Assessment</p>	<p>Jeff Thomas updated the group on the Clear Creek Dam Fish Passage Assessment project. Trapping fish up the NF Tieton has ended, but the study is still ongoing. The PIT tag arrays will continue to be maintained for the next few years. Genetic testing has shown that almost all of the bull trout caught right below Clear Creek Dam assign to the NF Tieton. In 2016 USFWS is proposing to catch bull trout by hook-and-line below Clear Creek Dam and transport the fish above the dam into Clear Lake.</p>
<p>Low Flow and Dewatering</p>	<p>Cassandra Weekes showed a PowerPoint of low flow and dewatering observed throughout the Yakima Basin in summer 2015. The Working Group discussed the challenging conditions found this year and noted that many of the conditions highlighted happen annually, although the drought exacerbated the conditions this year, and are likely a cause of this year’s poor redd counts. The group discussed the need for early planning to ensure adequate response in future years.</p> <p><i>Next step: Josh Rogala will follow up with Perry Harvester about WDFW leading a group this winter to develop plans for responding to low flow and dewatering actions in anticipation of a potential drought next year.</i></p>
<p>Concluding Items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next TWG meeting will be in February • An email will be sent out regarding a sub-group meeting to discuss bull trout enhancement project proposals to be submitted to the IP Habitat Subcommittee.