

Yakima Bull Trout Working Group June 21, 2016 Minutes

Meeting held from 1-4:30pm at the YBFWRB Office.

Attendees: Judy Neibauer, Pat Monk, Jeff Thomas and Richard Visser (USFWS); Josh Rogala, Eric Anderson and Scott Kline (WDFW); Joel Hubble and Walt Larrick (BOR); Danielle Squeochs (DOE); Jeff Trammel (Yakama Nation/YKFP); and Alex Conley (YBFWRB).

1. Bull Trout Action Plan (BTAP) update

Alex Conley updated the group on the BTAP update process. The BTAP 2016 Ahtanum update was approved by the group as a final working draft, ready to be incorporated into the 2016-17 update of the BTAP. A BTAP work session for the Gold Creek section was held before the Bull Trout Working Group meeting to review the proposed 2016 Gold Creek action updates. The feedback from the work session will be incorporated into a revised draft of the Gold Creek actions that will be provided for review and approval at the next working group meeting.

During the BTAP work session meeting, the group discussed adding standardized spawning index reaches and/or spawning reach length with redds/km for each population. The group agreed that these data, along with a life cycle model, would be beneficial to add to the BTAP, as time and resources allow.

The group discussed Gold Creek as the priority for currently available bull trout funds. They also reviewed the potential to salvage bull trout parr in Gold Creek as pools go dry and raise them to 10+” before releasing them back into Gold Creek. A small group will meet to brainstorm salvage options for Gold Creek and other populations. Bull trout salvage will be included on the September Bull Trout Working Group agenda.

The group discussed how to reduce vehicle access on the reservoir beds at Keechelus and Kachess. It may be good to begin with direct education and signage, then determine if there’s a need to install guardrails at both reservoirs.

2. Rangewide Bull Trout eDNA Assessment

Mike Young with the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station presented the rangewide bull trout eDNA project that he is coordinating. To implement the project, they are recruiting biologists from across the region to contribute by collecting eDNA samples at locations they’ve identified. There are numerous locations in the Yakima Basin. If we can collect eDNA samples at locations they’ve identified then they will analyze the samples at a reduced cost of \$25 per sample.

We will arrange a meeting specific to eDNA sampling to determine if this is something we can pursue this summer. The group discussed utilizing the Bull Trout Task Force and volunteer interns to collect the samples.

3. Bureau of Reclamation project updates

The Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Station EIS is moving forward; the goal is to have a draft supplement to the EIS out for comment in spring 2017. There may be an opportunity for USBR to work with partners to update/revise the Bull Trout Enhancement Plan as part of the EIS between now and December. USBR will notify the working group when this may occur.

USBR is planning to do a cultural survey at Box Canyon Creek this fall when the reservoir is down. This will support both any emergency excavation and longer-term plans for construction of a passage project. The cultural survey will be followed by geological and design work.

USBR will be reviewing Clear Creek Dam existing designs and options to create effective fish passage. Walter Larrick will share Clear Creek design drawings with the group.

The Current Operations Bi-Op is making progress. USFWS is drafting a jeopardy analysis. There have been 20 project elements identified which is a very large number. The draft Bi-Op will be out in December-January. Jeff Krupka will reach out to stakeholders for input as RPAs are developed.

4. Juvenile data collection at Box Canyon Creek

Scott Kline updated the group on the development of an Upper Yakima monitoring plan. There are short-term goals and long-term goals. The short-term goal is a juvenile demographics study in Box Canyon Creek that will take 18-20 people days.

There was discussion regarding which questions we're looking to answer with data collected. The group recommended a timeframe of August and early September to survey Box Canyon Creek and the upper Kachess River.

5. Review and coordination of summer field work

The group discussed the need for presence/absence sampling in the North Fork Teanaway. A small group will conduct redd and snorkel surveys this fall in the NF Teanaway and De Roux Creek. The NF Teanaway and De Roux are good candidates for eDNA sampling.

The group discussed surveying the mainstem Yakima. A challenge is there's a lot of area and also potential to misidentify Chinook redds as bull trout redds. The group supported having Eric include the mainstem Yakima on the 2016 redd survey schedule.

The group discussed extended redd surveys in lower Rattlesnake Creek including Hindoo and Dog Creeks, the North Fork Tieton from below Clear Creek Dam to the confluence with Indian Creek, and in Ahtanum Creek below the South Fork confluence and in the North Fork Ahtanum outside of the index area. Eric will evaluate these options as he develops the draft fall redd survey schedule.

We agreed to ensure good coordination with other ongoing field work such as temperature and flow monitoring.

6. Bull Trout Enhancement Plan and YBIP budget

The group reviewed the draft list of bull trout projects to be included in the Department of Ecology's 2017 – 2019 budget request for Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) projects. Yakima Basin Integrated Plan managers have set a potential target budget of 1.7M to be used to fund bull trout projects identified in the Bull Trout Enhancement component of the K projects EIS. The YBIP Habitat Subcommittee requested that the Bull Trout Working Group review a draft list of actions, recommend changes to selected actions if needed along with reasons for changes, and provide support of the final project list. The group reviewed the list presented by Richard Visser, and agreed that it looked ready to submit to Ecology. The group did not the need to continue to follow up on what is and is not proposed for nutrient supplementation in bull trout habitat.