

August 2017 Bull Trout Working Group Minutes

Meetings held August 7, 2017 at the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board office

Attendees: Ashton Bunce & Alex Conley (YBFWRB); Cassandra Weekes; Connor Parrish & Emily Smith (MCFEG); David Child (YBJB); Eric Anderson, Scott Kline, Gabe Temple & William Meyer [William Meyer only attended the afternoon session] (WDFW); Dave Fast & Todd Newsome (Yakama Nation); Gary Torretta (USFS); Mitch Long (KCT); Pat Monk & Judy Neibauer (USFWS); Shannon Archuleta (USBR); Bob & Sue Mecklenburg (Gold Creek homeowners).

Morning Meeting: Active Intervention Planning

A half-day morning meeting was held before the Bull Trout Working Group meeting to discuss bull trout active intervention. The goal of the active intervention meeting was to identify which populations may benefit, review propagation strategies, discuss which strategies may be a fit for specific populations, and identify tangible next steps to develop proposals and evaluate their feasibility.

The attendees prioritized Ahtanum Creek, NF Tieton River, Crow Creek, Gold Creek, Kachess River and Box Canyon Creek. The group discussed limiting factors, and identified goals, possible intervention actions, and next steps for Ahtanum, NF Tieton, Crow and Gold, but did not have enough time to discuss Kachess and Box Canyon.

It was agreed upon that a second active intervention meeting should be held so the group could discuss Kachess and Box Canyon, and identify which population(s) we want to develop proposals for. The second meeting will be held September 12, 2017 at the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board office.

1. Review and Approval of Agenda

2. Bull Trout Action Plan (BTAP) update

Cassandra Weekes updated the group on the BTAP update process. The Bull Trout Working Group has worked together to update all of the actions in the 2012 Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan. At the meeting the group approved the remaining revised actions (Naches and Basin-wide sections), which completes the actions update. Cassandra and Alex Conley will work together to clean up the database and update the pages in the Bull Trout Action Plan that pertain to the actions (pages 26-28, 164).

Cassandra presented the Bull Trout Action Plan proposed update schedule through the end of the year. Cassandra will begin editing the text next month. In October the Bull Trout Working Group will review initial text edits and approve the full BTAP action update. In November an independent BTAP meeting will be held to review text edits. In December the BTAP redd graphs will be updated and a meeting to review and approve the text will be held. The full plan update is anticipated to be approved by the YBFWRB Board of Directors in January 2018.

3. Bureau of Reclamation update

There was not an update from the Bureau of Reclamation at this meeting.

Pat Monk gave a brief update on the Clear Creek Dam trap and transport project. In addition to hook and line sampling, the Service began tangle netting this year, which has been very effective. A total of 19 adult NF Tieton bull trout have been transported upstream of the dam this year. It is difficult to distinguish between pure bull trout and bull-brook hybrids, but the rapid genetics testing has determined the genetics of the fish. The SF Tieton and Indian Creek fish encountered have been released downstream.

Judy Neibauer gave a brief update on the status of the Biological Opinion. USFWS is working to finish it by the end of the year; there are six people in the USFWS Wenatchee office that are working full-time on the Biological Opinion.

4. Bull Trout Passage Update

Josh Rogala was scheduled to give an update regarding WDFW's contract with the Bureau of Reclamation to monitor passage at the mouth of bull trout spawning tributaries that flow into Bureau-operated reservoirs. Josh was unable to attend and Cassandra gave the update.

Josh is monitoring passage at Deep Creek (Bumping trib.), SF Tieton River, NF Tieton River and Indian Creek (Rimrock trib.), Gold Creek (Keechelus trib.), Box Canyon Creek and Upper Kachess River (Kachess trib.), and the Kachess Narrows. He is collecting data on connectivity, water depth, passage conditions, fish presence/condition, and correlating that data with reservoir data from the Bureau's Yakima Project Hydromet System Status Report.

- Keechelus
 - Gold Creek is dewatered upstream of the reservoir, as observed almost annually, but not as the creek flows across the reservoir bed.
- Kachess
 - The Upper Kachess River is dewatered from the reservoir upstream .23 mile.
 - There have not been any passage issues observed on Box Canyon Creek as it flows across the reservoir bed.
- Rimrock
 - SF Tieton: the reservoir is still pretty full and the falls at the mouth have not yet developed.
 - NF Tieton: passage is good.
 - Indian: the channel has migrated and is flowing to the east across the forest floor. As of July 25 Indian Creek is braided as it flows through the forest and flows are extremely low. Josh is coordinating a site visit of partners on August 17 and will be determining next steps. He will report back to the group.
- Bumping
 - Deep Creek connectivity with the reservoir is good.

Fish Salvage

As part of the same agenda item, Cassandra updated the group on fish salvage efforts. There have been three salvages on Gold Creek that only yielded two young-of-year bull trout total. There has been one salvage on the Upper Kachess River that yielded nine young-of-year bull trout. A discussion was had as to whether conducting salvage efforts at night would be more successful and it was agreed upon that nighttime salvage efforts would be tried.

5. eDNA Sampling Update

Connor Parrish gave an update about bull trout eDNA sampling. The crew has completed sampling the Waptus and Cle Elum watersheds and will soon be finished with the Cooper watershed. The Waptus was easier than anticipated to sample. Mid-Columbia Fisheries partnered with the US Forest Service to have the eDNA sampling gear packed in at no cost. It took 7 10-hour days to complete the Waptus sampling. The Cle Elum sampling took two weeks to complete, most was easily assessable via roads or day hikes. The Cooper has been a little more difficult and required long days of hiking, but is going well and should be finished soon. After the Cooper watershed is finished, the crew will be moving onto sampling Kachess and Keechelus tributaries, followed by mainstem Upper Yakima tributaries.

6. Bull Trout Task Force

Emily Smith gave an update about the Bull Trout Task Force. The primary goal of the Bull Trout Task Force is to mitigate recreational impacts to bull trout and their habitat. The crew conducts direct outreach to anglers and river recreationists, dismantles recreational rock dams, posts and maintains signage, and assists with data collection and population monitoring.

This season the crew has educated nearly 600 people, hosted six campground presentations, removed 65 rock dams, and assisted with various snorkel surveys and salvage efforts. The crew will soon be beginning spawning surveys.

7. Kachess River and Box Canyon Data Collection

Scott Kline provided an update on the data collection efforts he is coordinating. Scott recently finished snorkeling his target reaches on the Upper Kachess River. In Kachess River downstream of the Mineral Creek trail crossing snorkel crews encountered 16.1 bull trout per 100 m in the reach that dewateres annually and is actively dewatering right now. They observed bull trout stranding while conducting snorkel surveys. Last year, upper reaches that remain watered had 2.5 and 10.7 bull trout per 100 m.

Scott completed a partial habitat survey on the Upper Kachess River from the mouth to the falls and completed high and medium flow measurements for the PHABSIM. WDFW's water science team will process the data and Washington Department of Ecology will run the PHABSIM model.

Box Canyon habitat demarcation was started above Peek-a-Boo falls to prepare for snorkel and habitat surveys. Initial impression of habitat is that there is lots of low gradient habitat with diverse habitats, that many reaches are lacking wood, and that there is a lot of dispersed recreation including rock dams. Scott will continue habitat surveys and snorkel surveys in Box Canyon Creek. He plans to snorkel the mouth to Peek-a-Boo falls, and conduct an exploratory snorkel survey above Peek-a-Boo falls.

Please let Scott know if you're available to assist with habitat surveys or snorkel surveys.

8. Bull Trout Introduction in Taneum Creek

During the meeting Todd Newsome asked for time on the agenda to discuss the potential for a bull trout introduction into Taneum Creek. Todd explained that personnel from the Yakama Nation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and WDFW are working on a proposal to introduce bull trout to Taneum. The project proposes to take up to 100 juveniles and up to 50 subadults from the SF Tieton population each year for five years and introduce them into two locations in Taneum Creek – one on the North Fork and one on

the South Fork. A discussion of what permitting is required was had; US Fish and Wildlife Service requires a Section 7 Consultation.

9. Field Work and Staffing Needs

Cassandra led a discussion about planned summer field work and staffing needs. Cassandra is maintaining a calendar of dates that people need support on-the-ground. Scott Kline is planning a suite of upcoming surveys at Box Canyon Creek and those dates and number of volunteers needed is on the calendar. William Meyer will need volunteer support for salvage, those dates are also on the calendar. Eric Anderson is coordinating spawning surveys and will need volunteers throughout the month of September with sporadic dates in October and potentially into November. If you have a project you need volunteer support on, email Cassandra with the date and number of volunteers needed and she'll add it to the calendar. Cassandra will email out the updated calendar with the BTWG meeting minutes.

10. Climate Change Workshop

Alex Conley informed the group that he still anticipates coordinating a climate change workshop, but funding is uncertain due to the lack of a capital budget, therefore it is on hold.

11. SRFB, YBIP, and Other Funding Sources

Alex led a discussion on how to secure funding to continue to coordinate bull trout recovery efforts and the Bull Trout Working Group. Alex informed the group of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) ranking of bull trout projects and unsatisfactory participation in the SRFB Technical Advisory Group. If anyone is interested in being on the SRFB Technical Advisory Group, please contact Tricia Snyder.

12. Closing Items

Items for the next meeting: YBIP funding, Clear Creek Dam trap and transport update, brook trout white paper, eDNA sampling update, Yakima Basin redd count update... others? Please send potential agenda items to Cassandra.