

Yakima Bull Trout Working Group February 14, 2019 Meeting

Afternoon Work Group Meeting

Attendees

Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Emily Smith and Connor Parrish (MCFEG), Scott Kline, Darren Friedel, Marc Divens, William Meyer, Josh Rogala and Jeff Tayer (WDFW), Russ Byington and Ashton Bunce (YN), Mitch Long and Melissa Speeg (KCT), Gary Torretta and Eric Merten (USFS), Jason Romine and Rob Randall (USFWS), Justin Bader (NYCD), Pat Monk (USBOR).

By Phone: Jose Vasquez (USFWS), Michael Callahan (Ecology), Todd Newsome (YN), Judy Neibauer (USFWS), Michelle Capp (USFS)

1. Introductions and Updates

After introductions, the group welcomed new participants Russ Byington (the new Yakama Nation Bull Trout Biologist) and Darren Friedel (the new WDFW region 3 Fish Biologist). Alex noted that Emily Smith, with Mid-Columbia Fisheries, is now on board to help support the Bull Trout Working Group, and that funding from Ecology using YBIP funds is now in place to support the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board's work to convene the group. Alex gave brief updates on the planned bull trout panel at the 2019 SRFB Salmon Recovery Conference and USFWS efforts to work with the State of Idaho and other partners to evaluate the status of the Upper Snake Bull Trout Recovery Unit.

2. Yakama Nation Bull Trout Project Update

The Yakama Nation has hired Russ Byington as their bull trout biologist. Russ gave a presentation on what that position includes. This year, he will assist Marc on redd surveys, assist Scott on bull trout rescues, and rear rescued bull trout in the Yakama Nation's LaSalle hatchery. In the hatchery, fish will be fed a diet of daphnia, brine shrimp, blood worms, and eventually trout fry. In phase I, which is currently being permitted, hatchery reared fish will be returned to their river of origin. Phase II will include pilot reintroduction in Taneum Creek, analysis of other proposed reintroduction sites, and implementing a pilot program to remove brook trout in the Teanaway.

There will be a MIPT (Monitoring Implementation Planning Team) made up of a small group of individuals who will advise the Yakama Bull Trout Projects. Additional tasks for the project include creating a bull trout data base and writing a scientific paper on captive rearing of bull trout.

3. 2018 Redd Survey Annual Report

Marc Divens reviewed the summary report of 2018 bull trout redd counts that he recently completed. Marc picked up where Eric left off and based this year's report on Eric's previous reports. He noted that this year, a GPS point was taken at each redd, so we can see changes in distribution over time. He is planning to have all survey teams use iPads next year; they were piloted this year and shown to be very efficient. This year, surveyors used a standard redd survey data form, which will be the basis for the iPad data form and allow creation of an online database of redd data. Marc has also compiled an updated Excel spreadsheet showing survey results for all years since the 1980s; contact him if you would like a copy. It was noted that the extended survey for SF Tieton has not been added to the 2018 redd report yet.

The group reviewed the graph of all redd survey data over time. Jeff Tayer noted the recent declines in our stronger populations (Rimrock and Deep Creek populations), even as weaker populations show a slight increase. While some declines are likely due to the 2015 drought, these trends are concerning, and may mean that even our stronger populations are at more risk than we have previously considered. The group expressed interest in comparing the trends over time in the Yakima Basin with other populations across the state where redd trends over time are available (e.g. the Wenatchee Basin) to get a better idea of what is happening at the state and recovery unit level.

4. BOR/YBIP Updates

- a) Richard Visser noted that finalizing the design for the Box Canyon passage structure is on hold until the project sponsor and direction is clear; this will be worked out as part of planning for the implementation of the Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant. Roza and other irrigation districts will be the leads for the pump project. Federal YBIP legislation that would authorize construction of KDRPP is being voted on in congress. At this time, there are no updates on the KDRPP EIS or the USFWS Biological Opinions for KDRPP and the Yakima Project Operations. The final EIS and Biops should be out in the spring, but timelines are being adjusted given the impact of the shutdown on USFWS and NOAA.
- b) Jason Romine reviewed plans for trapping and hauling bull trout found below Yakima Project Storage Dams in 2019. The Bureau is funding USFWS to continue Clear Creek trap and haul pilot trap and haul below Bumping, Kachess and Keechelus Dams. Fish will be hauled to above each dam and released. Genetic testing will be used at Clear Creek and Bumping Dams, but not at Kachess and Keechelus. The USFWS is hiring two positions in Yakima and will also have time from Leavenworth staff. They plan to install a pit tag detector in Indian Creek in addition to the ones in Clear Creek, the North Fork Tieton and SF Tieton. Jason is open to suggestions for methods fish trapping. Work will start in May. Scott Wiley is completing section 10 permits for the project. Tieton Dam may be included next year, potentially with use of the floating fish trap used in the Cle Elum Whoosh trial.
- c) Mitch Long and Jeff Tayer reviewed the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Habitat Subcommittee proposal to allocated remaining bull trout contingency funds from the YBIP Ecology budget to support hiring and independent contractor to work with KCT and the Forest Service to compete NEPA scoping at Gold Creek. This will provide a path forward for instream work in Gold Creek and proposed modifications to Gold Creek Pond to improve instream flows in Gold Creek. The working group expressed support for using the contingency funds this way, and noted that if any funds are left over, they could be used to support the fish rescue evaluation efforts.
- d) Jeff Tayer noted that the Governor's budget did not fully fund the proposed YBIP request, and that the Habitat Subcommittee may ask the bull trout to help developed a reduced funding recommendation for bull trout projects.

5. BTAP Naches update

Alex Conley: led the group in a brief review of the Bull Trout Action Plan Actions and Next Steps for the Naches populations (Crow Creek, American River, and Rattlesnake Creek).

The group noted that the American River has been a relatively strong population with good habitat, but has faced challenges from poaching and the 2017 fires that resulted in heavy sedimentation and

documented bull trout mortalities. Extended redd surveys may have been done in 2015 during SCCS, but that needs to be double checked with Eric's previous reports.

Actions in the American River include working on identifying projects with the Forest Service, using the BTTF to do outreach and education, including at known poaching hotspots, and ensuring effective enforcement of fishing regulations. Judy reminded the group of the importance of the FMO actions in the Naches, Tieton and Yakima Rivers.

The group discussed the BTAP actions regarding nutrient enhancement, both for the American River and more broadly. Dave Fast noted that we had started to develop a pilot, but that it had been put on hold. The group reviewed past WDFW carcass placements (which used fish from Priest Rapids hatchery until the program was terminated due to a parasite in the fish) and current YN coho project carcass placements (which use carcasses that are cooked to eliminate pathogens). Connor noted that he is hoping to do some stream nutrient evaluations in 2019 to guide future discussions. The group agreed to schedule a fall 2019 Bull trout Working Group morning work session to discuss possible nutrient enhancement work.

Crow Creek is a small and at risk population with hard to access spawning and rearing areas in designated wilderness. Actions for Crow Creek include BTTF education, outreach and recreational dam removal in the Little Naches watershed, and supporting habitat restoration in the Little Naches watershed. The group noted the need to review possible actions to reduce possible impacts to bull trout at Crow Creek Campground. The group noted that instead of additional exploratory surveys, eDNA samples could be used to determine if bull trout are present above the current redd survey reaches. They also noted the need to determine if USFS is still monitoring stream temperatures in Crow Creek.

The group reviewed the proposed Rattlesnake Creek actions, including BTTF education, outreach and recreational dam removal, addressing campsite impacts, and redesign diversion impacts on passage in lower Rattlesnake in dry years (a need that became evident in 2015). Justin Bader noted that the North Yakima Conservation District is reinitiating work with Nile Ditch water users to identify water conservation options for the McDaniel's Diversion.

The group noted that there is a need to review and update the contact person information for all BTAP Actions and Next steps.

6. Threats matrix

Emily Smith presented a spreadsheet crosswalking the 2012 BTAP threats analysis with the threats matrix that USFWS has proposed to use to evaluate Core Area and Recovery Unit viability. The group discussed the work needed to complete the spreadsheet and update the BTAP threats, and Alex, Marc, Judy, Pat, Jason, and Rob offered to assist in that work.

7. TAG focus actions for the SRFB Grant Process

Alex Conley explained the role of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Focus Projects list in the Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant review process. He noted that the TAG has asked the BTWG for input on bull trout specific priorities to add to the list. The group reviewed a list of Priority 1 actions and next steps from the BTAP that were potentially suitable for SRFB grants, and recommended that the TAG:

- a) Add two new Focus Actions:

- 1) Riparian and Floodplain Restoration in Bull Trout Spawning and Rearing Reaches (above Tampoico) Ahtanum Action #3
 - 2) Implement Instream and Floodplain Restoration in the Upper Kachess River (Kachess Action #1)
- b) In future years, consider if following are ripe:
- 1) McDaniels Diversion work on Rattlesnake Creek
 - 2) Further restoration work in Box Canyon (once current project completed)
 - 3) Further stages in Gold Creek
- c) Review existing focus actions and add BTAP Action references to those that implement both Steelhead Recovery Plan and BTAP priorities.

8. eDNA

Connor Parrish noted that he hoped that 2019 BTF staff will be able to collect some eDNA data. Jason noted that the USDFW is planning on doing 19 eDNA samples on Pileup Creek. Jason also noted that results from 2018 samples in the Little Naches watershed were not yet available. The group also discussed the possibility of sampling in Cabin Creek and the Waptus watershed. Participants agreed that it would be valuable to see a map of existing samples at the next meeting so that priority areas for 2019 sampling can be determined.

9. Revisor Passage

Josh Rogala gave a presentation on the reservoir bed fish passage monitoring that he completed in 2018. He stated that Gold Creek dewater every year, and that we need more signs that tell people not to drive on the creek bed, as it is happening frequently and creating issues. Box Canyon Creek did not dry out this year. The Kachess River went dry very quickly; you can watch pools dewater in a matter of hours. Indian Creek has crazy channel alignments and every year it changes its mainstem channel, this year, it did stay watered. The SF Tieton River has a waterfall that shows up when the revivor is drawn down enough and this year a culvert got washed in and was removed very promptly. The NF Tieton River and Deep Creek stayed connected. Josh plans on monitoring for passage in 2019 as well.

10. Next steps

We would like to get a calendar set for our future BTWG meeting, we will send out a doodle of possible next dates and work on getting a schedule made for the remainder of the year.

The bull trout library is a wonderful resource that we want to keep current and updated- please send any articles related to Yakima basin bull trout to Emily at education@midcolumbiafisheries.org.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 PM