

Yakima Bull Trout Working Group

April 8, 2020 Afternoon Session- Web Meeting

Attendees:

Alex Conley and Angus Brookes (YBFWRB); Andrew Matala, Todd Newsome, Russ Byington (YN); Michael Callahan and Rachel Chandler (Ecology); Katheryn Furr and Gary Torretta (USFS); Joel Hubble (KRD); Scott Kline, William Meyer, Maureen Small, Josh Rogala, and Marc Divens (WDFW); Emily Smith and Connor Parrish, (MCFEG); Melissa Speeg and Mitch Long (KCT); Pat Monk, Richard Visser, Wendy Christensen, Clinton Wertz, Candi McKinley, Thomas Appler and Jonathan Penman-Brotzman (BOR); RD Nelle, Robes Parrish, Jason Romine, Katy Pfannenstein, Craig Haskell, and Jose Vazquez (USFWS); Scott Revell (RID); John Reeves (Friends of Lake Kachess).

The meeting began at 1:10 PM

Updates and Announcements:

Emily noted that US Fish and Wildlife has opened their 5-year review; the deadline for providing input date is shortly after the May BTWG meeting. Todd announced that the Yakama Nation bull trout hatchery ran into high mortalities with the Kachess fish, likely due to cannibalism. Next year they plan to narrow the rescue/transport window and limit density in the tank to reduce the range of sizes of fish in the same tank. Todd also noted that Scott Willey is working on the feasibility assessment and will be submitting it to USFWS for ESA consultation and permitting. Pat noted that the BOR is completing a five-year contract with WDFW for ongoing passage monitoring on the reservoir beds and emergency fish passage operations.

Box Canyon Creek / Peekaboo Reintroduction:

Scott lead a discussion about the possibility of reintroducing bull trout above Peek-a-Boo falls on Box Canyon Creek, based on the draft report that was circulated prior to the meeting. He noted that:

- 1) Box Canyon Creek is in BTAP and is one of the smallest populations in the basin, based on both abundance and total available spawning and rearing habitat.
- 2) While bull trout have not been detected above the falls in recent years, young of year were found by Plum Creek Timber in 1994 above both Peekaboo and Bomber falls.
- 3) Before Kachess Dam was built, there was much more habitat available in Box Canyon Creek in the reach that is now seasonal inundated reservoir bed. That habitat is now lost, constraining fish to the reach between the upper reservoir elevation and Peek-a-Boo Falls.
- 4) Above the falls there is a significant amount of high-quality habitat with low-gradient areas and spawning gravels, and cooler water.

The group discussed the proposal to reintroduce fish above the falls. It was mentioned that it might be best to introduce adults rather than young of year, as juveniles might be heavily preyed upon by the abundant cutthroat trout. The group also discussed the need to change fishing and dispersed camping regs to limit poaching and harassment, and the possibility of catching young-of year as they are flushed

into the reservoir. The group agreed that the proposal makes sense to move forward and should be further discussed on the May call.

BTWG YBIP Recommendations:

Alex gave a recap of the morning session discussion of YBIP 2021-2023 YBIP funding recommendations for bull trout; 9 requests were made and discussed; 4 were recommended to fund at requested levels and requests were made for further information on 6 other proposals. Additional projects were identified as priorities for bull trout, but outside of the scope of the current funding recommendations to the Department of Ecology. Drafting and approving final recommendations will be the focus of the May 6 BTWG meeting; the recommendations will be provided to the YBIP Habitat Committee after that.

Kachess Hauling / KDRPP:

Craig Haskell shared USFWS plans to use acoustic tagging to determine the timing of fish passage at the narrows in Kachess Reservoir and to then experiment with trap and haul options to move fish past the narrows. Specific trap methods are being explored, and may include Oneida traps, mobile denil ladders, commercial trap netting; tangle nets, hook/line sampling, and dip netting. This would be done in addition to or potentially in place of a dedicated fish passage structure in the narrows. Transported fish will be tracked to determine if, when and where they spawn. The group discussed how to expand redd numbers to estimate the total numbers of adult migrants in the lake, noting that skip spawning is frequent, and needs to be included in any expansion from redd numbers. The group also discussed the use of portable ultrasound and other techniques to determine the breeding status of handled fish.

Clear Creek Dam Updates:

Clint Wertz updated the group on the Clear Creek Dam Fish Passage Project. The design group will be starting work in June and aims to have a 30% design by the end of the calendar year, with final designs within the next two years. Reclamation can start NEPA around the time of 90% design (Fall 2021) with the idea that construction will take place in 2024-2025. The project design work is funded, but construction funding still needs to be secured, and will likely require a mix of federal and state dollars. Total cost is expected to be \$5-6 million.

eDNA Updates:

Jason Romine reviewed 2019 results and noted that bull trout were detected in Pileup and Quartz creeks, while sampling in the Wenas and Cowiche watersheds did not detect bull trout. While no eDNA sampling is planned for 2020, Naneum Creek is on the list if USFWS crew time is available after planned work in the Upper Columbia is completed.

Temperature Monitoring:

Connor started the temperature portion of the agenda by presenting temperature snapshots he compiled from 2016 eDNA sampling that was done by MCFEG in:

- 1) Taneum Creek, which was cold up high,
- 2) Big Creek, which was all cold except very low in one clear cut,
- 3) Meadow Creek, which was cool and consistent. The group briefly discussed conditions in Meadow Creek, noting that there is full fish passage across the reservoir bed, but that the creek

is lacking in wood and runs through young timber stands and offers only limited potential spawning habitat.

- 4) NF Teanaway which runs from the fringe of possible rearing temps lower down to cold in the historic spawning areas near DeRoux Creek.

Emily displayed the map of past and current BTWG temperature logger locations and led a discussion of where people were planning to conduct temperature monitoring in 2020. During the discussion:

- 1) Emily noted that the US Forest Service will place 20+ loggers in the Yakima Basin, and that work should be coordinated with that of other BTWG members. A portion will be placed in the Little Naches watershed, one in Clear Creek, and others potentially in Taneum Creek and the Manastash watershed. The group talked about the idea of exploring Big Creek as well.
- 2) Todd noted that he could place 10 loggers in Taneum Creek and 10 in Big Creek, and that he could coordinate with MCFEG, WDFW and the USFS.
- 3) Scott Kline noted that he would continue to maintain the logger in Lower Box Canyon Creek, and hoped to place additional loggers, including above Peek-a-Boo Falls.
- 4) Jason noted that he would be maintaining a logger at the mouth of Taneum Creek, Lower Indian Creek Bakeoven Flats on the SF Tieton and two sites on the NF Tieton, and all other PIT Tag antenna sites.
- 5) Mitch noted that KCT and its contractors would maintain loggers in the Upper Kachess Gold Creek.
- 6) Connor noted that MCFEG was not planning to place loggers this year, but that the Bull Trout Task Force may be able to assist others.
- 7) William noted that he was working with Trout Unlimited to continue temperature monitoring on the Teanaway Community Forest; the group discussed whether that might also include sites on USFS land upstream.
- 8) The group did not know if WDFW was continuing to monitor temperatures at the Deep Creek gage station.
- 9) It was noted that John Khor's group was collecting data on Tucker Creek and other Kittitas Valley tribs;
- 10) Todd noted that it might be worth monitoring Fowler Creek, based on anecdotal evidence of past bull trout use.
- 11) Alex noted that it would be valuable to collect data from the American River, Rattlesnake Creek and other currently unmonitored bull trout tributaries, and that ongoing data collection in

all tribbs could be used to detect long-term trends, especially if loggers are redeployed at sites monitored extensively in the 1990s.

Planning for the May 6th Meeting:

The group agreed that there should be another morning session on YBIP funding and an afternoon session to include discussions on Peekaboo Falls, 5-yr review input, and a Gold Creek public scoping update.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.