

Yakima Bull Trout Work Group

May 6th, 2020 Web Meeting

Attendees:

Josh Rogala, William Meyer, Scott Kline, Marc Divens and Jeff Tayer (WDFW), Connor Parrish, Emily Smith (MCFEG), Jason Romine, Jose Vazquez, Greg Kurz, Craig Haskel, Katy Pfannenstien, (USFWS), John Reeves (Save Lake Kachess), Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Mitch Long, Melissa Speeg (KCT), Mike Callahan (Ecology), Stu Watson, Collette Mckaine (Forterra), Russ Byington (YN), Gary Torretta (USFS), Bob Mecklenburg (Gold Creek) , Richard Visser(BOR), Joel Hubble (KRD)

The meeting began at 1:05PM

After introductions, the group reviewed the agenda. No announcements that were shared.

YBIP recommendations:

Alex explained the YBIP habitat subcommittee recommendation and funding process. During the April meeting, the Bull Trout Work Group (BTWG) reviewed 9 different proposals for 2021-23 YBIP bull trout funding, some new and some ongoing. This review led to requests for feedback and clarification for some projects, and Alex noted that today's goal was to consider that additional feedback and finalize the BTWG recommendations. Alex noted that funding is very uncertain during this time, and that the group had been directed to develop recommendations for both \$1.7 million and \$2 million totals.

At the April meeting there was widespread support for the SF Tieton River bridge project, but the group recognized that it could not move ahead with just funds from the bull trout allocation. Since the April meeting, YBIP partners have proposed funding the SF Tieton with \$700,000 each from the bull trout and general habitat allocations, with another \$700,000 to be provided by Reclamation. The group agreed that the project was a priority that is ready to construct and agreed to recommend \$700,000 for the project. The group then reviewed how this would affect the other projects on the list. Four projects had been recommended for ongoing funding at requested levels in April:

1. Yakama Nation Bull Trout Reintroduction and Monitoring at \$200,000.
2. Bull Trout Task Force; funding for 2 seasonal workers at \$190,000.
3. WDFW Bull Trout Senior Biologist at \$150,000.
4. YBFWRB coordination of the BTWG and its activities, at \$70,000 (later revised to \$67,000 under the \$1.7m scenario).

After accounting for these, reduced funding would be available to other projects:

5. Gold and Kachess Habitat Restoration was originally proposed for <\$1,163,351 and now is amended to \$340,485 under the \$1.7 m scenario, and \$549,548 under the \$2m scenario. Mitch shared a spreadsheet that showed how these amounts would be used, how they hoped to match them with other funding sources, and which work would be prioritized. For the Kachess Project, they hope to secure matching funds and go to construction in 2021. The project is currently at 60% design. For Gold Creek, they are currently in the NEPA process, with the goal of

going to construction in 2023. The group agreed that funding levels should be revisited once designs, match and funding prospects are more certain.

6. Connor presented a revised budget of \$38,200 for two years of turning one of the BTTF positions into a 9-month permanent seasonal position and detailed the tasks that position would work with WDFW on. The group agreed to recommend that amount as part of the \$2 million scenario, but not as part of the \$1.7 m scenario.
7. Connor presented possible budgets and tasks for proposed Teanaway Brook Trout eDNA Analysis. The group recommended providing \$44,000 under the \$2 m scenario, and \$3,000 for work in the NF only in the \$1.7m scenario (the YBFWRB coordination project recommendation was reduced by \$3,000 in the \$1.7m scenario to offset this). Partners are working to secure an additional \$2,000 now to rerun existing samples for brook trout.
8. The group agreed that the Gold Creek Land Acquisition needed to be further developed before implementation funding could be recommended. Partners updates the group on recent discussions to evaluate the prospects and potential funding for the project.
9. The group agreed that it makes sense to defer the BOR Reservoir Bed Channel Sediment Study in order to allow the NF Tieton Bridge Replacement to be completed.

The group then reviewed the revised recommendation and discussed any reservations. Group approved the recommendations with the support of all present and tasked Alex with carrying them to the YBIP habitat sub-committee.

5 year review:

Alex lead the discussion on the USFWS Bull Trout 5-year Review. The Federal Register Notice is out, and comments are due May 11. There has been no public announcement of the process beyond that, but Alex has talked to USFWS leads in Boise and Spokane. Marc noted that he had a meeting with district fish bios and Steve Caromile (WDFW Inland Fish Program lead) about how WDFW would engage. Steve is the point person and he is still waiting to hear from USFWS regarding what data is going to be needed. William Meyer has put together a power point of all Yakima Basin bull trout projects that is a great help of reflecting on all the action items we have done in the basin. Alex presented a draft letter he prepared on behalf of the group expressing interest in participating in the 5 year review process and asking for more information on when and how the BTWG can best engage. The group reviewed the letter and brainstormed how they could help with a threats assessment or other data, but noted that further planning will have to wait until we are given more direction by USFWS. The group approved the letter to go out under Alex's signature.

Gold Creek Update:

Mitch informed the group that the Gold Creek restoration project is in the NEPA scoping period. The USFS mailed and emailed 23000 people and organizations for comment and received back 77 letters excluding duplicates. The comment letters are posted on the project site. They are still in the process of

analyzing the comments, and that the current pandemic most likely affected the commenting period for this project. Once the comments are analysis, they will look at finding a 3rd party NEPA contractor.

Peek a Boo Falls-

Scott presented a PowerPoint on next steps to reintroduce bull trout above Peek-a-Boo falls. He compiled a report of conditions above and below the falls and received good feedback and comments. He noted that looking at NoRWest climate models there seems to be a benefit to get fish above the falls, as it would increase habitat and mediate climate change by providing access to colder areas. It is an extension habitat for the box canyon population fish rather than establishment of a new independent population. It is noted that habitat above the falls still has its share of problems in regard to recreation and fishing, and that the goal of addressing those is part of the long term goal. The group was asked if they have any reservations or topics they would like to address with the proposal and if there are any ideas on how to effectively monitor a project like this.

Scott outlined the plan; first would be adult trap and haul during July-August. Success could be measured by YOY above the falls determine if the relocated ones spawned, or a red survey. Alex suggested that there is a list of questions that could be answered, especially if transported fish are radio tagged after release, that could provide rapid feedback on the success and next steps of the project.

The group discussed having Bull Trout Task Force (BTTF) involved in monitoring and making sure people above the falls are aware of rules and expectations. Permitting for a PIT Tag array, recreation and relocation would have to go through the USFS and USDFW. The Forest Service biologists in Cle Elum are supportive of the project. Placement of arrays, permits and monitoring styles are still being discussed. If the work fits within the existing Section 6 permit, it should be possible to start this year; if a separate Section 10 permit is needed, 2021 is more realistic.

Bull Trout Library:

Emily noted that the Salvelinus confluentus Curiosity Society has compiled a Zotero library on bull trout that includes from the materials from our BTWG library. Emily showed the group how to navigate the website and the group discussed if we want to keep our Yakima site updated or just convert to using the large bull trout database. For now, we will keep updating our Yakima library.

Next meeting and follow up:

Emily ask who would like to participate in a sub-meeting for temperature coordination; Jason, Alex, William, Scott, Russ, and Todd offered their assistance. Our next BTWG meeting is scheduled for July 8th and will cover redd survey coordination, BTTF crew introductions, and the bull trout field work calendar.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 PM