

July 25th, 2019 Yakima Bull Trout Working Group Notes

Attendees: Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Jason Romine, and Greg Kurz (USFWS), Melissa Speeg, Mitch Long (KCT), Cassandra Weekes, William Meyers, Scott Kline, Josh Rogala, Darren Friedel, Marc Divens and Eric Bartrand (WDFW), Kelsey Martin, Aimee Taylor, Connor Parrish, Emily Smith (MCFEG), Todd Newsome, Russ Byington, Dave Fast (YN), Michael Callahan (Ecology), Stu Watson (Fortera), Pat Monk (BOR), Cindy Raekes and

On phone: Ann Lewis, Jose Vazquez (USFWS), and Bob and Sue Mecklenburg (Gold Creek homeowners)

1. Updates and announcements

The meeting started with introductions, review of the agenda, and announcements. Emily reminded the group that the annual *Salvelinus confluentus* Curiosity Society (ScCS) meeting will be held August 27-29th in the Klamath area. Alex noted that DNR is convening forest planning efforts for the Ahtanum and South Fork Tieton watersheds and encouraged bull trout working group members to engage in the process. Alex also noted that he and Cassandra and others had visited the Lower WIP Diversion on Ahtanum Creek to see if it looked like a barrier to bull trout during June/July migration windows, and that it merited further evaluation.

2. YBIP update

The group reviewed the YBIP funding recommendation developed at our June meeting. Alex noted that the recommendations, as adjusted to the final funding level, were accepted as presented by the YBIP Habitat Subcommittee. The updated funding table will be sent out with the minutes. It was also noted that funding for Clear Creek Dam was deferred based on feedback from BOR, with all the new state funding for the fish passage element to go towards the Cle Elum passage project.

3. BOR update

Pat Monk announced to the group that the Clear Creek Dam project on hold and will only restart once a qualified project manager is hired. He also noted that the YTID Diversion Move Evaluation proposal was received by BOR ; the proposed project would evaluate bull trout and steelhead habit benefits from reconfiguring the YTID diversion and canal. Pat also noted that WDFW Box Canyon drought passage assistance funding to WDFW was extended until the end of December. He noted that the water supply has held well due to the cool weather, and that a meeting regarding Nelson Dam was held. Lastly Pat mentioned a failure around the outlet channel of the Kachess Dam. It will most likely be addressed by a major safety of dams project in 2024. Reclamation will be doing more intensive fish surveys of the outlet area in preparation for that work.

4. Clear Creek Dam Letter

The group briefly reviewed the draft letter to Reclamation and Ecology on Clear Creek Dam and the South Fork Tieton Passage Project that Alex prepared and circulated based on direction given at the last meeting. Several Work Group members noted that they would need to seek agency approval prior to signing such a letter. The group requested that Alex revise the letter so that it could go out under his

signature, based on the Board's role convening the Bull Trout Work Group, and circulate it to the group for review.

5. eDNA Results and Acoustic study

Jason Romine presented the results from the eDNA samples that were taken last field season. They found positive but patchy bull trout presence in the Little Naches watershed. The group expressed excitement at these results, and noted the need for follow up snorkel surveys to see if the fish are spawners or migrating sub adults. Jason then presented a draft proposal for an acoustic telemetry study in Kachess Lake to look at bull trout migration patterns through the narrows and into spawning tributaries. The acoustic tags will provide temperature and depth readings, and possibly, with the right receiver set up, could provide 2D positions. The goal would be to tag 3 fish from Box Canyon and 3 fish from the Upper Kachess River with both PIT tags and acoustic tags. Jason is currently working on the study design and Section 10 permit modification for ESA coverage.

6. BTTF Crew Leads

Kelsey Martin and Aimee Taylor introduced themselves to the group as this summer's Bull Trout Task Force crew leads. Kelsey and Aimee, with the help of MCFEG interns, have been removing rock dams, education anglers, presenting at campgrounds on the weekends, and supporting YN and WDFW on the rescue and demographic surveys in the basin.

7. Reservoir Bed Passage Update

Josh Rogala presented his observations and measurements of current passage and reservoir levels. He noted that the reservoirs are low and passage is more than likely going to be an obstacle in some of the spawning streams. There is a major problem with vehicles driving on the reservoir bed of Keechelus Lake at the mouth of Gold Creek. Pat noted that the dewatering that happens in upper section of Deep Creek is happening more frequently and extensively as the creek bed aggrades. These dry reaches are cutting off access to previously heavily used spawning areas. He noted that he is going to look at past redd locations and counts to see if we may be having a change in time and location due to this dewatering. Scott Kline noted that he had done some analysis of this in the 2015 report on Bumping Lake tributaries. Josh ended his presentation asking for emails from anyone who wants to be on his mailing list for weekly passage updates. You can reach out to Josh at Joshua.Rogala@dfw.wa.gov if you would like to be added

8. Rescue update

Scott and Russ updated the group on how the bull trout captive rearing and rescue efforts have been going. They have had a crew out at least 1 night a week for the last 4 weeks at the Upper Kachess River and Gold Creek. So far they have rescued and transported 359 fish, including 7 one year+ fish in the Upper Kachess River, and 9 fish from Gold Creek in total, including 3 one year + fish. The fish at the La Salle hatchery are doing very well and there have been no mortalities. The next plan is to try to rescue in the dewatering reach in the slide area of Gold Creek to see if they can get some Gold Creek fish for captive rearing at the LaSalle Hatchery.

9. Redd Survey Coordination

Marc Divens displayed the 2019 redd survey calendar that starts at the end of August and finishes in November. All the known bull trout spawning streams will be surveyed 3 times, with new iPad data sheets and collection methods. He still has a few spots on his calendar that need to be filled with surveyors.

10. Gold Creek and Box Canyon Project Update

Mitch gave an update on Gold Creek. The next steps for the project are to hold a series of fieldtrips to the site for community members in late August /early September. The USFS is pulling together an interdisciplinary committee for soils, hydro, and cultural uses for the proposed NEPA process. Mitch next spoke to their Box Canyon project; they are going to be putting wood in the stream at the end of August.

Melissa led a conversation about the Upper Kachess River Project. She mentioned that the project is at a slowdown as they are getting the scoping document ready for the USFS. Aja Woodrow is the new USFS project lead. The NEPA analysis should be done early next year, but the funding for construction may be limited.

11. Future meeting dates and topics

The next Yakima Bull Trout Work Group meeting will be October 29th. The group proposed holding the morning session at the La Salle hatchery to see the bull trout the Yakama Nation is rearing and discuss next steps for the reintroduction feasibility analysis.