

Yakima Bull Trout Working Group

Thursday, August 5, 2021

9:04 AM

Attendees:

Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Emily Smith (MCFEG), Melissa Speeg, Mitch Long (KCT), Michael Callahan (ECY), Mark Divens, William Meyer, Scott Kline, Darren Friedel, Steve Caromile (WDFW), Bob Weaver, Richard Visser, Judy Neibauer, Robes Parrish, Craig Haskell, Jason Romine, Aimee Taylor (USFWS), Pat Monk, Clinton Wertz (BOR), Shubha Pandit, Russ Byington, Todd Newsome (YN), Katy Pfannenstien, Gary Toretta (USFS), Bob and Sue Mecklenbergs (Gold Creek Homeowners), Robert Kope

Updates and announcements:

Alex informed the group that the SFRB has funded the Phase 1 Upper Kachess River project and should go to contract come September.

Clear Creek Dam:

Clint Wertz updated the group on the Clear Creek Dam project. They have just collected the 60% design comments, changes have been made to the outlet, inlet, and an addition of a fish window for public viewing. The current dam is semi-automatic, and the new dam will be fully automatic. There will also be an intake structure in the reservoir to get cold water to the ladder. The design should be complete in January 2022. Permitting will begin next year, NEPA will begin in September. Total overall cost is estimated around \$8-10 million. Project completion goal is spring 2025.

While implementing the project, due to a tight construction window there will need to be a campground closure. There are also large trees (about 50) that will need to be removed during construction, BOR is looking for partners to use them for instream habitat.

ScCS:

Emily led the group on a discussion about this year's ScCS, which will be held virtually on August 17, 18, and 19. Emily and Alex will be presenting a Yakima Basin update. If anyone would like to join Emily and Alex's timeslot please contact Emily. Todd noted that he will have a few slides to add about the YN hatchery program. Aimee Taylor and Craig Haskell will be presenting on Aimee's acoustic telemetry study. William and Marc created a presentation that may want to be used again for ScCS this year. Clear Creek dam was mentioned as it was a previous ScCS location, and it would be good to share with the larger bull trout group the proposed designs at the dam. Pat Monk and Clint Wertz may present on Clear Creek dam.

2021 Field Season Calendar:

Scott Kline showed the 2021 field season calendar, there have been a lot of people signing up, but more people are needed to sign up in September. You can find the latest version of the calendar on the BTWG website under previous meetings.

Peek-a-Boo Falls:

Scott Kline spoke to the peek-a-boo falls passage project. He noted that a demographic model is a major part of a reintroduction plan. He is looking at getting more information this year about timing of adults in Box Canyon, and potentially when the best time to capture them would be. The overarching question for reintroduction is "If we take adult bull trout up stream, what will that do to the existing population?". So far sighting adult bull trout has been slow, and only 2 have been seen at the falls.

Passage at the falls would be required for a successful reintroduction plan. Bruce Heiner looked at the falls and collected basic survey information to discuss options for passage. There needs to be more measurements at all different flows and knowing the timing of fish to know when passage is necessary. Melissa Speeg took Pollyana (interfluve) out to peek-a-boo to get her thoughts on possible passage options.

The group then discussed possible options including boulders to create pools and only focusing on passage on the lower 6 feet of the falls.

Next steps will include more data collection, viewing of big pool falls downstream, and KCT, Pollyana, Bruce, and Scott to collaborate on passage options.

Poaching:

Captain Bob Weaver, Darren Frideal, and Marc Divens led a discussion on bull trout poaching. In the working group there has been a lot of discussion of poaching risk and how to mitigate for uneducated anglers. Darren informed the group that there was just a meeting discussing poaching further and possibly more closures at the mouths of streams. Most violations happen in areas that are already closed to fishing and they have increased patrols of known poaching areas. Marc and Darren are currently working on getting a creel survey in the area to get a better understanding of what is going on. Enforcement in the area is not only checking anglers, but they are also adding in education and asking if people know how to identify a bull trout. With increased enforcement, word gets around the area and people respect the rules more.

Bob Weaver, captain of region 3, spoke to the enforcement side of bull trout violations. He displayed a table of all bull trout related violations in the last 11 years, totaling 71. He noted that with increased recreation during the pandemic, a lot of the violation don't deal with anglers, but rather other recreational activities like ATVs. If a violation happens in bull trout waters, they add the species to the citation. Most of the fishing violations happen in already closed waters, most anglers that enforcement talks to are uneducated about bull trout identification. The system is unable to break down violations by stream, but rather a general area.

The group opened up for discussion about regulations and protocol. It was noted that BTTF is in the area often and run into the same issue of uneducated anglers. The signs that are posted about bull trout could use some updates, currently they are green and don't seem visually important. Changing the color and verbiage on signs would be a good next step, a small group might get together between meetings to discuss outreach material. Bull Trout Task Force also has bull trout indentation cards that enforcement can use as well to hand out to anglers.

If you see a violation happening, reach out to your state patrol dispatch (509)-575-2320 or report For Non-Emergency Violations/Poaching: Call WDFW toll-free 1-877-933-9847, (1-877-WDFW-TIP); or use the dedicated WDFW email address (reportpoaching@dfw.wa.gov). To report fish and wildlife related crimes and incidents, call WILDCOMM at (360) 902-2936, Option 1, OR 1 (877) 933-9847.

Fish Rescue Update:

Scott Kline informed the group that there have been 3 nights of rescue on the Kachess River, 200 YOY and 1 juvenile bull trout have been relocated upstream. 3 juveniles from Cold Creek pool were tagged and placed back in the pool. 2 rescues have happened on Gold Creek, 67 YOY have been rescues, 41 of them were taken to the hatchery by YN. 5 juveniles were rescued and taken upstream. Todd noted that all the fish from last year are out of the hatchery and they had a 95% success rate.

Todd informed the group that they are hoping to have permits in the next few weeks for collection of SF Tieton fish to raise and reintroduce in Taneum, is the NEPA is complete in time.

Acoustic Telemetry:

Aimee Taylor displayed her recent data from her acoustic telemetry study. 3 fish that were tagged last year have continued to be monitored. One fish "Jeremy" stayed on the top of the water, under the ice, all winter and then went deep after the ice melted. That fish stays on the North side of Kachess but hasn't been detected since July 9. Another fish, "Juno", has a way larger home range, and stays at the same water level, that fish has continued to be detected. The 3rd fish has a home range close to the North side and was last detected July 22.

July of this year they released 10 acoustic tagged Kachess fish and placed them in the reservoir. They added receivers in the Keechelus reservoir as well.