

Yakima Bull Trout Working Group Meeting

Thursday, October 7, 2021

8:58 AM

Attendees: Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Emily Smith (MCFEG), Cindy Raekes, Craig Haskel (USFWS), Andrew Matala, Shuba Pandit, Todd Newsome (YN), Steve Caromile, William Meyer, Scott Kline, Bruce Heiner (WDFW), Melissa Speeg, Mitchell Long (KCT), Gary Toretta, Kathryn Furr (USFS), Michael Callahan (ECY), Paul James (CWU), Scott Willey, Richard Visser (BOR)

Updates and Announcements

Alex noted that is the last meeting USFWS recovery funds were mentioned and that the group members might want to be on the look out for opportunities. Melissa noted that KCT has had success in applying to the Columbia River office for funds for the Upper Kachess project. The USFWS RFPs for recovery grants are due Nov. 1, 2021. The upcoming USFWS funds may be a good fit for Gold Creek design. The group should receive an update from USFWS on the 5-year review at our next meeting, or in early 2022.

Hatchery and Reintroduction

Todd Newsome informed the group that there are 3 tanks of rescued bull trout being reared at the hatchery that were rescued from dewatered areas this summer. The tanks include 269 fish from Upper Kachess River, 230 fish from Upper Kachess River, and 87 fish from Gold Creek. Only 1 mortality is known so far. They are healthy and eating brine shrimp.

There is a possibility of funding to build a new hatchery facility in Easton. It is still in the very early stages. Design ideas are 3 circular tanks, and 6 rectangle tanks. The goals of the facility would be to continue and increase the life boating of upper basin bull trout populations.

The Yakama Nation has been working with the BOR on reintroduction permits. They plan to make a rough draft of a proposed action for each tributary where reintroduction is a possibility. That document will be presented to the MIPT at the end of the month. Hopefully reintroduction will start in the next few years.

Todd showed photos that were captured of the sockeye spawning near Salmon La Sac campground. There are some visible brook trout and one fish that looks bull trout-ish (possible hybrid). eDNA was brought up that they aren't sure where the full extend of our bull trout or brook trout is, and the group may want to look harder in a few more places including China Falls and Parks Lake. Mitch noted that the Cle Elum River is in the process of becoming a Wild and Scenic River and that may make future brook trout project plans harder to achieve. A Cle Elum watershed evaluation should be done to incorporate desires into the Wild and Scenic designation, pass anything on to Mitch for the lands subcommittee.

YBIP 10 Year/ Box Canyon/ Sediment analysis

Richard Visser led a discussion starting off with Box Canyon Passage. The BOR has contracted with HDR to move passage to a 60% conceptual design. They asked reviewers to look at the designs and give feedback. The contract might have to be extended depending on comments. Richard has the drawings for those interested.

Sediment Analysis: Richard spoke to the sediment study that is going to look at habitat and passage on rimrock lake/ Tieton. Over the last couple years, they have put in a proposal and a scoping study was funded. What that means for the BTWG is that TSC will be working on this and be the primary producer, but they will need assistance with local knowledge. The goal is to look at ways to improve passage and

look at processes that are going on and incorporate those into passage and habitat restoration projects. There will be a kickoff meeting for this next month.

10 Year YBIP: currently YBIP is going through the 10-year process and updating the habitat subcommittees 10-year plan. YBIP would like to use the plan to create a capitol plan for use in consultation. Habitat is not the forefront of the whole plan, and steelhead are the current focus. There should be a draft document by the December meeting for the group to review.

Bull Trout Strategy

Alex led the group in a conversation about what strategy the group wants to take going forward regarding the BTAP and prioritizing projects. He noted that prior to covid the group used to look at each individual population in the BTAP and re-asses. With the 10-year plan in motion, it is a good time to get back into updating the BTAP. Next steps would include strategizing what populations need the most help and prioritizing the needs of each population. The group discussed options for updating population status' and it was agreed that monthly 2-hour meetings where one population is addressing each meeting starting with the most at risk, is a better option then a 3-4 hour working session every other month. The redd counts need to be updated as well. The group opened for discussion on other products they would like help with or see created. Todd mentioned that for the NEPA process, each tributary where there is a desire for reintroduction, there will need to be an assessment done, which he could use help on. It would include the reintroduction worksheets that were complete for the Taneum. This will need to be done in winter/spring.

Gold Creek/ Upper Kachess River Updates

Melissa Speeg spoke to two projects, she informed the group that NSD is making a surface water model for Gold Creek right now, once the model is complete, they can hire a 3rd party NEPA contractor. The Upper Kachess River project is still making progress, USFS is currently working through the NEPA. They do have 100% design complete with implementation planned for 2022, they are looking for trees to use on the project and they will need a helicopter to bring in the wood.

Bull Trout Task Force

Emily Smith presented on behalf of the BTTF crew leads Emily Euker and Kelsey Martin. This is Kelsey's 3rd year and Emily's 1st. They removed 90 rock dams in Yakima County and 62 in Kittitas County, they assisted on rescues, redd surveys, and demographic surveys. They educated 124 people and posted 51 signs in Kittitas County and 79 people and 46 signs in Yakima County, numbers were still affected by COVID. Emily then displayed the redd counts for this year with the surveys that have been completed. The fire kept the crews out of a few areas including Rattlesnake and Deep Creek, and there were clarity issues at NF Tieton. Overall redd counts are looking to be lower than previous years.

Gary showed pictures of the Schneider Springs fire at Rattlesnake area. There is very high tree rate along the river, which is result in a lot of wood in the stream. The BEAR team will start their assessment in the next coming days to look at risk of landslides and debris flows.

Trap and Haul

Craig informed the group about the 2021 trap and haul efforts. 25 bull trout and 3 hybrids were captured at CCD, 3 bull trout at Keechelus 1 was implanted with an acoustic tag, 0 fish at Bumping, 0 fish at Tieton despite 2 attempts, and no attempts at Kachess yet but are planned for later this month. It was also noted that 2 new arrays are set up in the lower SF Tieton and below the Keechelus dam. There may be the need for assistance in later October with trap and haul.

Demographic Survey 2021

Scott presented on the 2021 demographic surveys that were completed, the data is not processed yet, so it is just general observations. 3 night surveys in the upper section prior to dewatering and 3 night surveys in the dewatering section were done in the Upper Kachess River. Very similar to previous years findings. 3 night surveys were done at Box Canyon, 2 in the spawning reach and 1 below. There did seem to be an increase in YOY seen above pig pool falls, hopefully due to the wood placement project. A full report will be done in winter. Scott then started a conversation about Peekaboo falls. Passage has been a goal for some at the falls and Scott got information that Rosa is slow at this time and offering to do some cross sections of the stream for assessments for passage. There will need to be some labor-intensive surveys done at Peekaboo falls and in Box Canyon.

2022 BTWG

Emily noted that we need to select 2022 meeting dates, the first Thursday of every other month is our current schedule making future dates February 3, April 7, June 2, August 4, October 6, and December 1. There is some conflict with other meetings, so best to switch to afternoon meetings. She then opened the discussion up for what the group wants to see in 2022. Scott noted that some of his work should be decided with the working groups guidance. Richard mentioned that the group will play a large role in the sediment study mentioned earlier in the meeting and it may be a working session topic. The BTAP being updated needs to be a priority for the group going forward. The group also needs to continue its temperature coordination work, along with coordinating fieldwork.

Adjourned 11:35 PM