

December 2016 Bull Trout Working Group Minutes

Meeting held December 1, 2016 at the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board office

Attendees: Gary Torretta, Eric Merten & Tom Matthews, USFS; Mitch Long, KCT; Scott Kline, William Meyer & Eric Anderson, WDFW; Jeff Trammell, YN; Richard Visser, USBR; Bob Margulis, TU; David Child, YBJB; Alex Conley, YBFWRB; Judy Neibuaer, Jeff Thomas & Pat Monk, USFWS; Ashton Bunce. On the phone: Bill Brignon, USFWS; Gabe Temple, WDFW; Luke Schultz & Joe Benjamin, USGS.

1. Review and Approval of Agenda

2. Bull Trout Action Plan (BTAP) update

Cassandra Weekes updated the group on the BTAP update process. A BTAP work session for the remaining Upper Yakima populations – Cle Elum, Teanaway, upper Yakima River – was held before the Bull Trout Working Group meeting to review the proposed 2016 action updates and additions for each population section. A revised draft will be sent out in mid-December and final comments will be incorporated by early January so we can approve the 2016 update for the Cle Elum, Teanaway and upper Yakima River sections at the January Bull Trout Working Group meeting.

During the morning session, the group also reviewed and recommended final edits to the Kachess populations (Box Canyon and Kachess River) action updates. The group agreed that once Cassandra incorporates the final comments received, it will be considered approved. The group agreed to begin updating the BTAP actions for the Rimrock populations prior to the next meeting.

3. Understanding Bull Trout Reintroduction Strategies

Bill Brignon with USFWS gave a presentation on bull trout recovery planning using structured decision making. Bill discussed how captive rearing environments affect the development and survival behaviors of bull trout and how these effects may influence the efficacy and ultimate success of reintroduction, and how structured decision making is used to evaluate the tradeoffs of alternative reintroduction strategies. Bill's dissertation can be found at:

<https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/59777/BrignonWilliamR2016.pdf?sequence=1>.

4. Yakima Basin 2016 Bull Trout Redd Counts

Eric Anderson gave an update on bull trout redd counts throughout the Yakima Basin. In 2016 the total redd count for the Yakima Basin is 350 redds, up just slightly from 2015 (342 redds). Things to note are:

- Zero redds in the SF Ahtanum
- Low count in Rattlesnake Creek, 6 of 15 redds were below the established index area
- Indian Creek redd counts remain low and there is a 5' high log jam that is hindering passage
- In the NF Tieton, all redds were in the NF Tieton and none were in Hellbender Creek. Hellbender Creek experienced high flows, altering the channel location. Hellbender is now running through the forest floor
- Deep Creek redd counts remain low; there was significant dewatering in 2016 despite being a good water year. Deep Creek dewatering occurred upstream of the braids and again upstream Copper Creek
- Redd counts for Upper Yakima populations remain low

Eric will be sending out the summary of bull trout redd counts to the Bull Trout Working Group email list next week.

5. Bureau of Reclamation update

Richard Visser gave an update on Bureau of Reclamation projects. The Bull Trout Enhancement plan is being updated. Reclamation is adding a few projects to the BTE including a set of USFS projects to restore watershed health for Box Canyon and the upper Kachess River and Clear Creek Dam passage. The updates will be reflected in the Supplemental EIS for KDRPP and KKC.

On Box Canyon Creek, Reclamation is committed to moving the passage work forward. The cultural survey work is expected to be completed in 2017. Reclamation and WDFW are working together on the conceptual designs. Once conceptual designs are complete they will be reviewed by the Fish Passage Workgroup. If the workgroup is supportive, Reclamation will complete design work in house or contract the work.

In January the Fish Passage Workgroup will meet to discuss and review options for passage at Clear Creek Dam, and will also look at the Kachess Narrows passage conceptual design

Reclamation is looking into testing the Whoosh next summer at Cle Elum dam to transport sockeye over the dam if funding is available.

6. Gold Creek Habitat Assessment project

Mitch Long presented to the group the existing condition hydraulic model that represents the 0 – 100-year flood event. The model was created using unsteady state modeling and shows the areas inundated for the entire range of flows. The DRAFT 30% designs were also presented to the group. Next steps include finalization of the 30% designs and proposed condition modeling. KCT and NSD have received numerous comments and concerns from all stakeholder groups regarding the modeling and DRAFT design efforts and are working to incorporate them

into the final 30% designs. KCT is currently working with the SkiTur Valley Maintenance Association regarding their comments. KCT and NSD will be holding an additional landowner meeting on Dec. 2, 2016 in Seattle to continue to work through their comments and concerns. A major concern for the community is flooding and the potential for the project to increase the STVMA's and other property owners flood risk. The STVMA has been asking for some type of insurance or bond to be put in place to help cover any private property damage from flooding as a result of the instream restoration project.

7. Salvage During Dewatering

William Meyer presented on the impacts of dewatering on young-of-year and juvenile bull trout, and discussed mobilizing a team to conduct fish salvages during the summer when tributaries are dewatering. William is going to create a schedule of salvage efforts and present it at the March Bull Trout Working Group meeting.

8. Temperature Monitoring

Cassandra Weekes led a discussion about temperature data collection and storage, and asked the group where they store temperature data. The group discussed options for storing temperature data, such as Ecology's EIM database, USFS, and NOAA databases. The group agreed there is a need to properly store and share temperature data. Cassandra will look into the database options discussed and also contact Dan Isaak to discuss data storage.

9. eDNA Sampling

Cassandra updated the group on eDNA sampling for bull trout. At the September Bull Trout Working Group meeting the group agreed that eDNA sampling was a high priority. In October Cassandra worked with partners to write a Western Native Trout Initiative proposal for eDNA sampling in the Upper Yakima Basin where the largest data gaps exist. We will find out if the proposal is selected for funding in spring 2017.

Richard Visser discussed eDNA funding with the group; Richard secured \$30,000 of IP funds for eDNA sampling. The funds will be administered through DOE. Ecology and Mid-Columbia Fisheries are working on a scope of work for eDNA sampling. Cassandra will coordinate a meeting in February to discuss what work can be completed within the budget.

10. DSS Modeling of the Upper Yakima

Judy Neibauer updated the group on the USGS pilot study for the Upper Yakima. USGS staff are creating a model for the Upper Yakima Basin using local input. A subset of the Bull Trout Working Group met a few weeks ago to review the first iteration and provide input on the development. USGS is incorporating feedback received.

The model will serve as a tool that will help make decisions about the best use of resources for recovery actions, including salvage. The model will outline fundamental objectives for the persistence of bull trout, help to identify alternatives with regard to recovery tasks, including salvage, and facilitate management decisions.

11. USGS Vulnerability Assessment

Alex Conley led a discussion about the USGS Vulnerability Assessment. Alex discussed his interpretation of Jason Dunham's maps and encouraged the group to review the maps. Alex offered to have Jason Dunham come to Yakima and discuss the Vulnerability Assessment. A Yakima meeting with Jason Dunham would give the Bull Trout Working Group the opportunity to discuss the maps and provide direct feedback.

11. Closing Items

The group discussed topics for the next meeting, including a Clear Creek Dam / NF Tieton update, Bok Canyon and Upper Kachess River juvenile demographics update, brook trout removal discussion, and follow up on the temperature data storage.

The next meeting will be held in the end of January 2017.