

## Feb 19, 2016 Bull Trout Working Group Minutes

Meeting held from 8:30 to noon at the YBFWRB Office

Attendees: Jeff Thomas (USFWS), Mitch Long (KCT), Richard Visser (USFWS), Patty Garvey-Darda (USFS), Judy Neibauer (USFWS), Cassandra Weekes (MCFEG), Darcy Batura (YBFWRB), Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Pat Monk (USFWS), Raychel Parks (WDFW), Josh Rogala (WDFW), Richard Vacirca (USFS), William Meyer (WDFW), Joel Hubble (USBR), Jeff Tayer (IP), David Child (YBJB), Scott Kline (WDFW), Walt Larrick (USBR), Eric Anderson (WDFW), Dave Fast (YN);

On the phone: Joe Benjamin (USGS), Anthony Fritts (WDFW), Gabe Temple (WDFW), Sierra Franks (USFWS).

### 1. Bureau of Reclamation Project Updates

Walt Larrick, Joel Hubble and others updated the group on Reclamation projects. The revised Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being developed by Reclamation. It will include an additional alternative for the floating pumping station, multiple drawdown scenarios, and updates to the Bull Trout Enhancement Plan. It is expected to be finished by the end of year. Members of the Bull Trout Working Group expressed interest in reviewing proposed changes to the Enhancement Plan.

The draft Kachess Reservoir Bull Trout Passage Appraisal report is available. There will be a meeting on February 24 to review the nine conceptual designs proposed in the report. The preferred alternative will be incorporated into the draft EIS.

Judy Neibauer of USFWS updated the group on consultations with Reclamation. USFWS is working on the Biological Opinion for Current Operations & Maintenance of Reclamation's Yakima Project. The new information from the Kachess pump discussions was not in the initial BA but will be included in the BO. A draft Biological Opinion is expected out by the end of July and the final may be out by the end of year. Work on a Biological Opinion for the Kachess EIS will begin once the Current Operations Biological Opinion is complete.

### 2. Gold Creek Habitat Assessment & Conceptual Design

Mitch Long updated the group on the Kittitas Conservation Trust's projects to improve bull trout habitat in Gold Creek. The initial two year habitat assessment project is complete, and causes of dewatered reaches and potential solutions were identified. Last year, KCT received SRFB funding to complete designs for instream and floodplain habitat work recommended in the assessment. Proposed projects will increase stable LWD, reduce channel width, provide bank strength and prevent re-widening. Extensive outreach with the Gold Creek community is ongoing. The goal is to have designs and permits completed for Phase I construction (RM 1.0-2.1) in 2017. Mitch is also planning a design charrette to bring stakeholders together to develop design alternatives for Gold Creek Pond that would restore groundwater hydrology and rewater dry sections of Gold Creek. Mitch provided the group with proposals requesting funding to: 1) Complete 100% designs and permits for Gold Creek instream work (current funds are for completion of 60% designs), and 2) Begin the Upper Kachess River Assessment, which would focus on identifying solutions to dewatering in the lower reaches of the Upper Kachess River.

### 3. USFS Gold Creek Bridge

Patty Garvey-Darda of the US Forest Service Cle Elum Ranger District updated the group on replacement of the USFS bridge across Gold Creek. The I-90 bridge expansion and associated restoration just downstream is complete. The Forest Service has completed 90% designs and NEPA for new 800 foot bridge over the Gold Creek floodplain and another 120 foot bridge for wildlife migration to the west of Gold Creek. Construction costs are estimated at between \$6 and 10 million. The USFS is currently looking for \$30,000 to complete 100% designs, which would include a tighter cost estimate. The group discussed the possibility of including funding for construction in future federal funding requests for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. Patty agreed to coordinate a meeting with a broad group of stakeholders to review funding options.

### 4. Reservoir Bed Passage

Josh Rogala of WDFW updated the group on WDFW and Reclamation's efforts to ensure bull trout passage across reservoir beds in drought years. He noted that we have learned that tributary passage for bull trout in late fall is a problem even in non-drought years. WDFW is working to coordinate tributary monitoring in all years. They will be proactive in checking passage conditions. The Bull Trout Task Force (BTTF) also monitors spawning tributaries for passage, although their crew is stretched thin and works throughout the Yakima Basin. The BTTF is developing a schedule to assist with monitoring tributary passage this summer and early fall; the schedule will be available for review at the next BTWG meeting.

### 5. Upper Yakima Study

Scott Kline presented the draft proposal for the Upper Yakima Bull trout Monitoring Proposal. The document began as a proposal to study passage at the Kachess Narrows, but additional Upper Yakima monitoring needs were identified. The proposal includes many objectives that can be phased, depending on what funding is made available; each element would help move forward priority recovery actions. A small group met after the Bull Trout Working Group meeting to narrow objectives to:

1. Habitat Assessment
  - I. Rearing and spawning habitat survey in Box Canyon, above and below Peak-a-Boo falls
  - II. Temperature and flow data compilation in Box Canyon, Upper Kachess, Gold and Cold Creeks
2. Food Web Study
  - I. Continue food web study in Keechelus and Kachess
  - II. Food web study in spawning tributaries
3. Juvenile Demographics Study
  - I. Determine abundance, population age structure, and spatial distribution at juvenile life history stages
4. Species Assemblage/Interaction Study
  - I. This study would use information about Box Canyon and Gold Creeks obtained in the food web and juvenile demographics studies to determine how/if population enhancement and/or fish passage barrier removal should be implemented at Box Canyon and Cold Creeks

## 6. Bull Trout Action Plan updates

Cassandra presented progress updating the actions identified in the Bull Trout Action Plan. At the last BTWG meeting, the group agreed to review and update the actions for the first time since 2012. Cassandra and Alex updated the format of the Actions to include status updates and next steps and worked with others to begin filling in updated content. Cassandra walked the group through the format changes and gave an overview of the proposed content updates. The group agreed to set bi-monthly meetings that are aligned with Bull Trout Working Group meetings at which the group would review and approve updates to actions for specific groups of populations. The group reviewed grouping the BTAP populations into six groups so we will cycle through the BTAP action updates once per year, and recommended that we start with the Ahtanum, Kachess Lake and Gold Creek populations.

## 7. Project Proposals for the Integrated Plan Habitat Subcommittee

In December, the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Habitat Subcommittee noted that YBIP funds may be available to fund priority Bull Trout projects. The subcommittee asked the BTWG to provide information on priority projects to consider for funding. Alex walked the group through the summary of potential projects he compiled based on discussion with BTWG members. The group edited the list and agreed that the following proposals should be forwarded for consideration:

1. Gold Creek Instream Habitat Project Design & Permitting (\$115,000)
2. Kachess Habitat & Flow Assessment & Project Development (\$200,000)
3. Upper Yakima Bull-Trout Monitoring Project (\$?)
4. USFS Gold Creek Bridge Replacement (\$8 million)
  - a. Updated cost estimate needed now (\$35,000)
5. USFWS/USGS Translocation/supplementation Feasibility Study (\$350 – 400k for both basins)
  - a. Any translocation actually happening, or is this filling data gaps? A: Filling gaps.
  - b. Rework & generalize as a decision support tool.
6. USFWS Clear Creek Passage (\$?)
  - a. Work that Jeff & Pat are doing this summer is probably covered by YRBWEB
  - b. Will need more funding if we get into design and implementation
7. Gold Creek Guardrail (1,840 feet & 2 gates): \$250k
  - a. Patty will write up a description
8. Box Canyon Reservoir Bed Fish Passage
  - a. Moving forward on design of preferred alternatives for fish passage facilities at the mouth of Box Canyon is a priority.

## 8. Concluding Items

The Bull Trout Working Group agreed to meet more frequently. Cassandra will set up a schedule of bi-monthly meetings with a set day, such as the second or third Thursday of every even-numbered month (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec).