

## June 2017 Bull Trout Working Group Minutes

Meeting held June 2, 2017 at the Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board office

Attendees: Ashton Bunce, Alex Conley & Trisha Snyder (YBFWRB); Cassandra Weekes (MCFEG); David Child (YBJB); Eric Anderson, Scott Kline & William Meyer (WDFW); Dave Fast & Jeff Trammell (Yakama Nation); Eric Merten, Tom Matthews & Gary Torretta (USFS); Mitch Long (KCT); Pat Monk & Jose Vazquez (USFWS).

### 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 was held before the Bull Trout Working Group meeting to review the proposed 2017 updates for the Broad Scale and Multi-Pops actions. A revised draft will be sent out by the end of June and final comments will be incorporated by mid-July so we can approve the 2017 update for the Broad Scale and Multi-Pops actions at the August Bull Trout Working Group meeting.

At the Bull Trout Working Group meeting Cassandra asked the group if there were any final comments or feedback on the BTAP Naches populations (Deep, American, Rattlesnake, Crow, Naches FMO) update that the group worked on together in April. Gary Torretta stated that he still had feedback to provide, and the group agreed to wait for his feedback before finalizing the Naches actions.

### 3. Bureau of Reclamation update

No update was provided at this meeting.

### 4. Trap and Transfer Project at Clear Creek Dam

Pat Monk provided an update on the Trap and Transfer project at Clear Creek Dam. USFWS will begin the project in mid-June and will be using gill and/or tangle nets in addition to hook-and-line to retrieve bull trout from the pool below the dam. The Bureau is constructing a stainless steel tank to hold captured bull trout while a rapid genetic analysis is performed (about 24 hours turnaround time). Indian Creek and SF Tieton bull trout will be released downstream – only NF Tieton bull trout will be transported above the dam. Bull-Brook hybrids will be removed.

### 5. Approaches to Fish Salvage

Pat Monk led a discussion about Young of the Year (YOY) bull trout; he hypothesizes that due to limited rearing habitat, there may be a flush of YOY that get washed out to the reservoir with high flows in the spring. Once the YOY are in the reservoir their mortality rate is extremely high. Pat suggested these fish may be a potential source for translocation into other systems. The hypothesis can be tested by placing a screw trap downstream of spawning areas to see if YOY are trapped while moving downstream. Meeting attendees expressed support for the idea of using a screw trap to assess if YOY can readily be caught moving downstream of quality rearing habitat.

## 6. Upper Yakima Salvage Plan

William Meyer presented the Upper Yakima Salvage Plan he developed. Due to critically low bull trout populations in the Upper Yakima (Gold Creek, Box Canyon Creek, Upper Kachess River), it's important we do everything we can to reduce further decline, including salvage of fish found in isolated pools during dewatering events. William recommended moving the juveniles and subadults upstream so they are not pushed out into the reservoir and subject to high mortality rates. William drafted a calendar of tentative dates that volunteers will be needed to conduct salvage beginning in mid-July; volunteers will be needed weekly on Mondays and Thursdays. When the time comes, William will send out an email to the BTWG that contains precise dates and tasks.

## 7. eDNA Sampling Update

Cassandra Weekes provided an update on the eDNA project. Cassandra is continuing to work on the logistics of sampling. For Waptus River sampling, Mid-Columbia Fisheries is partnering with the USFS Cle Elum Ranger District to have the gear transported by pack mules when the USFS trail crew goes in to perform work at Waptus Lake; this partnership is at no cost. If pack mules are needed when the USFS partnership is unavailable due to logistics, Three Peaks Outfitters can provide the service during one of their existing trips for ~\$150, which is much cheaper than originally anticipated.

Jose Vazquez with US Fish and Wildlife Service gave a brief update about the planned eDNA sampling in the NF Teanaway.

The WNTI grant proposal written to support eDNA was unsuccessful. However, Mid-Columbia Fisheries wrote an ALEA grant proposal that included some eDNA sampling supplies and it was funded.

Jose Vazquez will be conducting an eDNA sample collection training on July 11 – all are welcome, additional details to follow. The eDNA crew will begin conducting samples on July 12.

## 8. Gold Creek Habitat Restoration: Preliminary Designs

Mitch Long presented on the current status of the Gold Creek Habitat Restoration project. The preliminary designs are complete and will be available on the FTP site next week. The designs encompass three different types of engineered log jams, similar to the work the Yakama Nation implemented on the mainstem Yakima River upstream of the Cle Elum hatchery. The proposed restoration will activate the western floodplain to help store water for baseflow conditions. Mitch would like to begin construction in the next two years, but must get signed landowner agreements from the Ski Tur (STVMA) homeowners. Currently they are opposed to altering the pond, therefore Mitch is proposing to drop the design of pond modifications from his current SRFB proposal and proceed with the instream restoration as a phase I of the project.

Mitch asked the Bull Trout Working Group if they were in support of only proceeding with the instream restoration as a phase I, with the pond alteration coming at a later time as a phase II. The Bull Trout Working Group meeting attendees expressed support for this revised proposal.

## 9. Discussion: Decision Support Modeling and Next Steps

Alex Conley led a discussion about possible USGS partnerships for consideration by the Bull Trout Working Group. Alex offered to arrange a 1-2 day workshop in Yakima with Jason Dunham. The workshop would focus on understanding the USGS Rangewide Bull Trout Vulnerability Assessment and specific climate change impacts on Yakima Basin bull trout. Bull Trout Working Group meeting attendees were supportive of this workshop.

Alex also suggested the Bull Trout Working Group host a half-day local workshop to discuss specific bull trout populations, our hypotheses of what limits them, and how we might use supplementation or translocation to address those limiting factors. The meeting would let us select specific proposals for further development and feasibility analysis in collaboration with USFWS, USGS and others. The Bull Trout Working Group attendees were supportive of this and agreed to host the meeting the morning before the August Bull Trout Working Group meeting.

#### 10. Planning: Field Work and Staffing Needs

Cassandra Weekes led a discussion about planned summer field work and staffing needs. Cassandra started a calendar and has been filling it in with dates that people need support on-the-ground. Scott Kline is planning a suite of surveys at Box Canyon Creek and the Upper Kachess River – those dates and number of volunteers is on the calendar. William Meyer will need volunteer support for salvage, those dates are also on the calendar. Eric Anderson is coordinating spawning surveys and will need volunteers throughout the month of September with sporadic dates in October and potentially into November. If you have a project you need volunteer support on, email Cassandra with the date and number of volunteers needed and she'll add it to the calendar. Cassandra will email out the calendar with the BTWG meeting minutes.

#### 11. Closing Items

Suggested topics for the next meeting:

- eDNA update
- Bull Trout Task Force update
- SF Tieton passage
- Bull Trout Action Plan

Others? Please send suggested topics to Cassandra.