Present:


Staff: Troy Baker, Jacqueline Boatman, Bob Bower, Bob Chicken, Will Lewis, Brian Wolcott

Guests: Don Anglin, Larry Boe, Jon Brough, Dale Cosper, Darren Gallion, Corrie Thorne, Tony Justus, Clive Kaiser, Matt Rajnus, Randal Son, Teresa Yeager, John Wells

Meeting started: 7:04

Minutes stand approved as corrected

Portended should have been protected

Update on bull trout research in the Walla Walla Basin - Don Anglin and Darren Gallion

- Bull Trout Recovery: Status of Bull Trout in the Walla Walla Basin
  - ESA – Regulatory of the Federal – decisions that are made by the Fish & Wildlife section
  - F&W Service – portion themselves into sections, we are in research section, to provide science to those making decisions. We influence the decisions those decisions but do not make them.
  - Migratory life form of bull trout is the focus of our work in the Walla Walla, to make progress and eventually de-list this fish will come from the recovery plan.
    - 1999 – Bull trout listed, 2004 – USFWS developed draft BT recovery plan
  - USFWS 5 year status review completed - may change to 4 listing as opposed to the one in 1999

John Zerba (reference to statement that the plan is still a draft) – Is it still a draft?

Don Anglin – lot of things going on that have held up status review, Montana, Idaho, not just a technical issue. Concern with impact and that creates activity on more than just the technical front.

Keith Woods – How do we know they are in danger?

Don Anglin – Someone petitions that fish to be listed, then they look into it. That process occurred and ended in the listing of this Threatened species. 2003 or 2004 instead of finalizing recovery plan, let’s do another status review.

- Recovery plan goals:
  - Maintain current distribution within core areas
  - Maintain stable or increasing trend in abundance
  - Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions
  - Conserve bull trout genetic diversity
  - Connectivity

- Recovery objectives and assessment methods in Walla Walla Basin
  - Distribution: Assess occurrence of individual local spawning populations
  - Abundance/trends: Redd counts/Mark/recapture/Trends analysis
  - Connectivity
  - Habitat: Rearing model/Spawning model/Habitat assessment
  - Distribution Recovery objective - Walla Walla River core area, and Touchet river area
  - Abundance: Walla Walla 1500-3000 spawners/Touchet river 500-1000 spawners
  - Trend: Stable or increasing for 10-14 years at indicated abundance levels for both core areas
  - Assessment methods: Redd counts – due to variability in surveys, population abundance and trend assessment requires 25-30 years of data/Mark/recapture – estimate abundance and trend for shorter time series (increased accuracy) higher cost/Trap Counts

Don Anglin - If all we ever do is redd counts we have to run around for 30 years, so we have taken this basin and applied much higher level of monitoring.

Dale Cosper – Traveling up and down the stream and all the other methods used, do you think this has any impact on the bull trout themselves. There are 15 Utah students every day in summer.

Don Anglin – Any problem or question you try to find and fix it, there is no way to do it without affecting the fish.
Dale Cosper – When you say we, and/or the tribes, and/or Utah, regularly trapping fish and marching through the stream. How are the red bands doing? I’ve lived on the SF for 30 years. In 1993 I was told bull trout were having trouble, I don’t have great deal of trust in ODFW. I’m interested in the red bands. They are the treasure of the SF. No one has a clue how they’re doing. You are so focused on bull trout, which are doing just fine, but red bands are in dire straits.

Don Anglin – we are all aware of the ecology of the stream. We didn’t go into the stream looking into the red bands.

Dale Cosper – This is not just about the flowers along the side that being impacted, it’s the other fish.

Larry Boe - We did a study before the flood, and where water temp goes down, bull trout dominate.

Ed Chesnut – The standard of half and half is not the case anymore, now the bull trout are protected and you can take red bands out. Now the 200 -300 left in the river protected bull trout are eating the red bands.

Dale Cosper – There are things that those of us who dwell there know things that other people don’t know, start fishing and in a day catch 50 – 60 red band, it feels frustrating to talk with people who study and I fish there every day. I can tell you that the population of red band isn’t there for a half a mile.

Don Anglin - No species is more important than another. Ecological balance – people started changing things that is where the imbalance started. The bull trout is now in focus, that’s why we are here.

Dale Cosper – Is it not possible while you are focused on one problem that you are not paying enough attention to the other species in the same river? I spoke a year ago and nothing has been done. When will they feel like there has been enough information?

- Redd Surveys: 13 years of redd survey/mark – 2003 to 2006
- Mill Creek Red Counts: Fluctuate from 100 to 90 or so in 2006 -2007 overall you can’t say if it is increasing or decreasing. You need more data
- Abundance: Mark recapture/up and down and it’s a short timeframe – 2003/2006

Ed Chesnut – Does this follow with the water quality and abundance?

Don Anglin - Don’t know. We have reached the criteria in the Walla Walla Basin, now we need a stable increase

- WW River
  - Redd Survey data
  - Mark/Recapture: Marking using PIT tags and Floy tags/Quantitative population estimate
  - We need more data to tell what is going on.
  - Mark/Recapture – suggests 1-2 thousand spawning bull trout

  PIT Tag – 30 days no mortality
  Radio Tags – Mortality depends. One of the early studies things came together in the wrong way. They lost fish. There have been several other attempts, but since it’s more abrasive, we don’t use radio tags any more than we have to. When we use them we try to keep it to 5 or 10. do you find that you put the radio tag in the big fish? No we know what the big fish do, it’s the ones that are not surviving into the spawning that we lose, so those are the ones we focus on.

  Abundance: Population estimates in the SF and mill creek indicates spawning abundance in the WW River is currently within the range identified in the recovery plan
  Trend: Population trends for larger size fish indicate a negative trend in the SF/Mill creek fluvial spawning population has been generally stable/Time series (2002 2006) is too short for a robust trend estimation

Malcolm Millar – How long?
Don Anglin – With everything you have seen here, if we want to build a good data set we have to do the work.
Malcolm Millar – What’s the plan?
Don Anglin – I don’t know, I don’t regulate the funding. The agencies have to know what we have and what we know, the next step could be to continue and another is maybe not. I hope to be able to answer the question before the next field surveys.

Bob Bower – What if there was a breaking the reach into two. Giving a rest to one and study the other.
Don Anglin – 200 and 200 meter sections. They randomly select 20 and 20 sections. It’s not a continuous portion. Based upon that information the impact shouldn’t be too big.

Bob Bower – Are you making an effort to see if the study is doing anything to the population.
Don Anglin – The point of how we work, I’d be shocked if someone said I trashed the very resource I’m trying to protect. How would you go about assessing the population without impact? You can’t do it. If you want to get a handle on what’s going on, you must do the work.
Larry Widner – Is there a reason? Does GPS not work in the canyon? Flags are what is causing the problem.
Don Anglin - Typical flag goes up in August comes down end of September.

- Recovery actions:
  - Reduce mortality of the spawning population: Improve migration and over wintering stream flows/Restore channel function
  - Increase survival and recruitment into the spawning population: Improve stream flows to provide stable habitat conditions for juvenile and sub adult rearing thought the year/Restore riparian habitat for water temperature mitigation and to improve channel function
  - Conserve genetically diverse populations: Genetic exchange among local populations – between core areas/Biological – requires maintenance of migratory life history strategy/Physical – requires physical connectivity and a continuum of stability habitat conditions
  - Passage and suitable habitat: Evaluation of low stream flows relative to passage and physical habitat conditions in mill creek and the Walla Walla River/Evaluation of Yellowhawk stream flows relative to passage and physical habitat conditions
- Connectivity Conclusion
  - Genetic: WW and Mill Creek and Touchet are distinct
  - Recovery actions: Passage – determine the stream flows necessary to eliminate any passage barriers
- Life history:
  - Migratory sub adults: Bull trout need habitat through the year
  - Migratory adults: Overwintering habitat/Migratory corridor/Spawning habitat/Resident adult and sub adults/Habitat in the headwaters with few issues
- Order of importance
  - Substrate (gravel/cobble) size
  - Water velocity
  - Water depth
- Actions: Habitat issue for migratory life history strategy/restore riparian habitat
- Future plans: Continue assessing/guide ongoing restoration actions/evaluate effectiveness

Update on the WMI and current status of the Water Governance Mechanism – Kevin Scribner
The letter from Congressman Walden, which was sent to the governors to encourage the protection, has gotten to the governors and is now at the WA Dept of Ecology director’s desk. The letter had its intended effect. This discussion process is being formed by progress on HCP also. When we talked about moving forward and engaging with the Oregon side the number of people starts duplicating. We’ve had 5 meetings; the group has decided the need to move ahead. Now it’s how to have the conversations in a strategic way. Another effective way is to have conversations between HCP and those not involved in the HCP. I will do my best to keep the Oregon interests at front and center and when any agreements take place there will be an Oregon presence.

Don’t Bug Us – Clive Kaiser, OSU Extension, discussed the importance to the local economy of reducing the impact of untreated fruit trees that host pests that then spread to commercial orchards. This can, and has, impacted whether Washington and Oregon can export apples. Within the City of Milton-Freewater, there are many trees that don’t get treated. If you have a tree you should treat it. That isn’t being implemented, because of lack of outreach. My job is to educate. There is a County ordinance that is up for adoption. City should consider it. The schools are helping by having the children educate the adults.

Groundwater Replenishment Co-Adoption proposal – Matt Rajnus
  - Co-applicants: WWBWC/GFID #13/Walla Walla County
  - Core of the Proposal: Build off of current successes and take it to the next level
  - Kevin Scribner – Ecology dollars; however these funds can reach across the border to the Oregon side.
  - Bob Bower – There is some money available, if we want to do recharge we need to put up our hands.
  - We would like to put in there and we are asking for Watershed Council Board approval.
  - Keith Woods motioned/ Malcolm Millar and Kevin Scribner 2nded All were in favor.

Meeting Ended at: 9:06