

TAKE ACTION TO RECOVER BULL TROUT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Revised Draft Recovery Plan for bull trout has been released and is missing important components to achieve recovery.

Please comment so that the bull trout recovery plan actually works.



What's in the revised draft recovery plan?

- ⇒ Manage and ameliorate primary threats
 - Focuses on the identification and effective management of known threat factors to bull trout.
- ⇒ Work cooperatively with partners to implement bull trout recovery actions
- ⇒ Adaptively manage the bull trout recovery program
- ⇒ Focus recovery efforts on actions, and potentially within recovery units which provide the greatest resiliency against difficult to manage threats such as climate change
 - Acknowledges that some bull trout core area habitats will likely change (and may be lost) over time due to climate change effects.
 - Prioritizes and implements recovery actions in those areas where success is likely.

What's missing from the revised draft recovery plan?

- ⇒ Habitat standards
 - There are no habitat-based standards, guidelines or goals to attain recovery.
 - There is no correlation between the threats and the physical and biological features essential to bull trout conservation.
- ⇒ Demographic criteria
 - There are no population numbers, sizes, trends and distribution parameters to ensure that populations will increase.
 - There are no population criteria so that demographic threats, such as inbreeding, loss of genetic variation and loss of evolutionary potential do not occur.

- ⇒ Monitoring
 - The draft plan relies on adaptive management yet there are no monitoring requirements.
- ⇒ Recovery
 - The draft plan allows an arbitrary 25% of bull trout local populations in the Coastal, Mid-Columbia, Upper Snake and Columbia Headwaters Units to be extirpated without consideration of whether those populations are significant or essential to the recovery units.
 - At the time of listing (1998-1999) bull trout numbers had already been reduced by 60%; under this plan bull trout local populations can be lost yet bull trout will be “recovered”.
- ⇒ Threat evaluation
 - The draft plan doesn't effectively or objectively evaluate threats.
 - Many threats to bull trout and their habitat are not identified.

What you can do

- ⇒ Submit comments to the US Fish and Wildlife Service telling them to address the deficiencies in the draft plan. Obviously threats must be ameliorated to recover bull trout however, the recovery plan needs demographic, habitat and monitoring components in order to measure whether bull trout populations are increasing.
- ⇒ Tell the USFWS about threats to bull trout and their habitat in your area.
- ⇒ Spread the word to other individuals, groups and agencies and ask them to weigh in on the draft plan.
- ⇒ How to comment:
 - *Download the Revised Draft Recovery Plan:*
http://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/20140904%20Revised%20Draft%20Bull%20Trout%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf
 - *Send comments by December 3, 2014* to:
 - Mail* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office,
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709
 - Fax* 208-378-5262
 - E-mail* fw1bulltroutrecoveryplan@fws.gov

Why Bull Trout are Important

Bull trout need the coldest, cleanest water of all salmonids. Their stringent habitat requirements make them an excellent indicator of water quality.

The Five C's characterize good bull trout habitat:

- **Clean** water with very little fine sediment in the stream bottom. Fine sediment fills up the spaces in the spawning gravel, restricts oxygen flow and smothers bull trout eggs.
- **Cold** water temperatures are very important for bull trout. If water temperatures rise above 59 degrees F then it creates a thermal barrier that restricts migration and use of available habitats.
- **Complex** streams with intact riparian vegetation to provide shade, woody debris, bank stability and deep pools.
- **Connected** watersheds allow the fish to migrate. Bull trout spawn and rear in stream habitats. At about two years of age they migrate from their spawning stream and mature in lakes or rivers, traveling up to 150 miles. They return to their natal stream to spawn but unlike salmon make the journey between stream and lake many times in their life.
- **Comprehensive** protection and restoration of bull trout habitat must be done throughout the range of this native fish.

The decline of bull trout is primarily due to habitat degradation and fragmentation; blockage of migratory corridors by roads, culverts or dams; poor water quality from warm temperature, sediment or pollutants; past fisheries management practices such as introductions and management of non-native fish; impoundments, dams, or water diversions; and non-native fish species competition and predation. Climate change is an additional threat to the cold water that bull trout need to survive.

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