

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are indigenous to the Clackamas River subbasin, but have not been observed in the North Willamette watershed in recent years. The last documented bull trout observation occurred in 1963, though unconfirmed reports of bull trout continued into the mid-1970's. When the Clackamas River Subbasin Fish Management Plan was developed in 1992 there was inadequate information to conclude whether bull trout continued to persist, or if the population had been extirpated from the watershed. In response to this uncertainty, the adopted Fish Management Plan included direction to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to “determine the status of the bull trout in the Clackamas subbasin” (OAR 635-500-0880(2)(b)).

Bull trout were listed as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1999. A draft Recovery Plan for this species was subsequently completed in October 2002. One of the recovery objectives specified in the draft plan is to “(1) Maintain current distribution of bull trout in core areas and restore distribution where recommended.” Recovery criteria specific to the Willamette River Recovery Unit included reference to a recommended action in the Clackamas River: “(1) Distribution criteria will be met when bull trout are distributed among three or more local populations in the recovery unit: two in the Upper Willamette River core area and one in the Clackamas River core habitat.”

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

No formal public involvement has been completed on this issue at the current time. ODFW anticipates convening a public involvement process in the near future to assist the agency in determining whether to propose reintroduction of bull trout to the Clackamas River subbasin.

ISSUE 1

STATUS OF BULL TROUT IN THE CLACKAMAS RIVER BASIN

ANALYSIS

Prior to, and since adoption of the Clackamas River Subbasin Fish Management Plan in 1992, a variety of survey efforts have been completed in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service to address the uncertainty surrounding the status of bull trout in the Clackamas River subbasin. These surveys were designed to inventory potential bull trout habitat, and to document the presence of bull trout in suitable habitats in the upper Clackamas subbasin. The results of survey efforts conducted through 2004 have led staff and cooperating agencies to conclude with a high level of confidence that bull trout are extirpated from the Clackamas River basin.

In 2003, the Clackamas River Bull Trout Working Group initiated an effort to assess the feasibility of reintroducing bull trout to the Clackamas subbasin pursuant to the draft Recovery Plan for this species. The feasibility study evaluated habitat and ecological factors associated with a potential reintroduction effort.

In December 2007, the “Clackamas River Bull Trout Reintroduction Feasibility Assessment” was published. The assessment concluded that reintroduction of bull trout in the upper Clackamas River is biologically feasible given the availability and abundance of suitable habitat, the availability of suitable donor stocks, and evidence that causes of the original decline of bull trout have been sufficiently mitigated. This report is available through the USFWS website:

<http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/Data/BullTrout/ReintroductionProject.asp>

OPTIONS

The agenda item is informational only at this time. At a future meeting, staff will propose an administrative rule change to update the Clackamas River Subbasin Fish Management Plan pursuant to the updated information regarding the status of bull trout in this watershed (OAR 635-500-0880), and may seek Commission direction concerning the possible reintroduction of bull trout at that time.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

DRAFT MOTION	No action requested at this time.
EFFECTIVE DATE	N/A