

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Pacific Regional Office  
911 NE 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181  
Phone: 503/231-6121  
Fax: 503/231-2122  
<http://pacific.fws.gov>

# News Release



April 29, 2008

08-31

Contact:  
Ted Koch, 208-378-5293  
Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211

## **Status Review of Bull Trout Completed**

*Species still threatened in the United States, additional analysis will be done*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed its 5-year status review of the bull trout with two recommendations: Retain threatened status for the species as currently listed throughout its range in the coterminous United States for the time being and evaluate whether distinct population segments (DPSs) exist and merit the Endangered Species Act's protection.

Bull trout are found in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Nevada. In 1998, the Service identified five separate DPSs in the lower 48 states warranting protection under the Act and began listing these population units. In 1999, the five population units were listed as one threatened DPS. This review reaffirms threatened status for bull trout throughout the coterminous United States. It also recognizes that scientists agree that multiple distinct populations of bull trout exist and that the Service should evaluate whether these distinct population segments need the protections of the Act.

“This status review considered information that has become available since the time of listing and included a rigorous analysis by independent scientists and Fish and Wildlife Service managers,” said Ren Lohofener, Director of the Service's Pacific Region. “The health of bull trout populations varies by location but overall, the species in the United States still needs protection.”

Evaluating the status of multiple distinct populations may help the Service account for the variable health of bull trout populations and focus the recovery efforts of states, Native American tribes and others on populations that need recovery.

There are many advantages of evaluating whether individual DPSs of bull trout in the United States exist and need the protection of the Endangered Species Act, Lohofener said. “We can focus regulatory protection and recovery resources to bull trout populations in trouble, we can remove the regulatory burden of the ESA where its protections are not needed, we can provide more incentives locally to implement recovery actions, and we can analyze effects of projects over a more discrete and biologically relevant area.”

The 5-year review considered information that has become available since the original listing of the bull trout, such as: population and demographic trend data; genetics; species competition; habitat condition; adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and management and conservation planning information. The review assessed whether new information suggests that the species' population is increasing, declining or stable; whether existing threats are increasing, stable, reduced or eliminated; if there are any new threats; and if new information or analysis calls into question any of the conclusions in the original listing determination as to the species' status.

The Service used a structured decision-making process comprised of two panels. The first panel included seven scientists from outside the Service who brought academic and scientific expertise to discussions about the scientific aspects of risk affecting bull trout. A panel of seven Service managers observed these proceedings and asked questions. In a separate session, the Service managers discussed policy, weighed all of the new information and deliberated on their recommendations concerning the appropriate listing status of the species. A panel of peer reviewers then looked at the managers' findings and recommendations.

Bull trout are a member of the char subgroup of the salmon family. Their habitat requirements include the "Four Cs": cold water, clean streambed gravel, complex stream habitat features and connected habitats for migration across the landscape. Bull trout are primarily threatened by poor water quality (warm water and streambed sediment loads), habitat degradation (loss of pool habitats and large wood cover in streams), degradation of migratory corridors (dams and stream dewatering blocking spawning migrations), and past fisheries management actions (introductions of non-native, competing species such as brown, lake and brook trout).

With the completion of the 5-year status review, the Service will implement the recommendation to evaluate whether distinct population segments exist and then evaluate whether any of these populations merit protection under the ESA. Any proposed change in DPSs or listing status would be subject to a separate rulemaking process that would include public review and comment before being finalized.

The 5-year status review and other related information can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/bulltrout/>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).