

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
12-MONTH FINDING  
BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT**

**1. What is the Bonneville cutthroat trout?** The Bonneville cutthroat trout (BCT) is one of 14 subspecies of cutthroat trout native to the Rocky Mountain region. It commonly has large spots that are more evenly distributed on the sides of the body rather than concentrated near the tail as in the Yellowstone subspecies, but there is a high degree of variation within the basin. BCT are generally dull in color compared to other cutthroat subspecies; however, coloration can vary depending on environmental conditions and local genetic composition.

**2. Where are BCT found?** Bonneville cutthroat trout are native to streams and some lakes in the Bonneville Basin within portions of Utah, Wyoming, Idaho and Nevada. Several out-of-basin populations once existed in the headwaters of the Virgin River basin from the west slope of the Pine Valley Mountains and on the west slope of Wheeler Peak.

**3. What is a 12-month finding?** Publication in the *Federal Register* of a 12-month finding makes public the Service's decision on a petition to list a species as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). That finding is based on a thorough assessment of the available information on the species, as detailed in the species' status review. One of three possible conclusions can be reached as part of the finding: that listing is warranted, not warranted, or warranted but presently precluded by other higher-priority listing activities involving other species. In the case of BCT, the Service found that the BCT is not likely to become a threatened or endangered species within the foreseeable future. Therefore, listing of the BCT as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA is not warranted at this time.

**4. Why did the petitioners think the Bonneville cutthroat is threatened?** The petitioners stated that populations of BCT have been greatly reduced because of habitat destruction from logging and associated road building; adverse effects on habitat resulting from livestock grazing, mining, urban development, agricultural practices, and the operation of dams; historic and ongoing stocking of nonnative fish species that compete with or prey upon BCT or jeopardize the genetic integrity of the subspecies through hybridization; and excessive harvest by anglers. The petitioners further asserted that programs to protect and restore BCT, including the Utah Conservation Agreement, Wyoming Interagency Five-Year Plan and programs in Idaho and Nevada, are inadequate or nonexistent and populations of this fish continue to be threatened by a wide variety of ongoing and proposed activities.

**5. What did the Service find regarding the status of BCT?** The Service found BCT currently occupy a total of 1372 km (852 mi) of stream habitat and 28,352 ha (70,059 ac) of lake habitat with a total of 291 populations as reported in data received through compilation of the status report. This number is in comparison to 14 BCT populations deemed pure in 1984. It is important to note that additional populations continue to be identified as stream waters previously thought to be occupied by hybrid or nonnative salmonids are found to be pure. In addition, conservation actions to protect and restore BCT are being implemented and have become fundamental components of state wildlife and land management agency planning which should provide continued improvements in the status and habitat of BCT.

Additionally, BCT populations are found in all five geographic regions of the Bonneville Basin including Bear Lake and tributaries, the Bear River drainage (north slope Uinta Mountains, Smith's Fork, Thomas Fork, Cub, Logan, Little Bear and others), northern Bonneville drainages (Ogden, Weber, Jordan, Provo and Spanish Fork rivers), western Bonneville drainages (Deep Creek mountains, Wheeler Peak, Snake Valley) and southern Bonneville drainages (Sevier, Beaver and Virgin rivers).

**6. What other protections are afforded these BCT?** There are numerous Federal and state regulatory mechanisms that, if properly administered and implemented, protect BCT and their habitats throughout the range of the subspecies. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service, state game and fish departments, and National Park Service reported numerous ongoing projects that are completed or being completed for the protection and restoration of BCT and their habitats. In addition, each state wildlife agency has in place conservation plans, conservation agreements or other such interagency cooperative efforts to ensure the long-term conservation of BCT. A range-wide Conservation Agreement was finalized in 2000 and includes all four state wildlife agencies as well as the Service, the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission, and the National Park Service. Such an agreement is anticipated to improve coordination and effectiveness of conservation actions across state boundaries.

**7. Where did the Service find its information on BCT?** The Service received information pertinent to BCT from several state game and fish departments, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, tribal governments, and private corporations, as well as private citizens, organizations, and other entities. The Service also reviewed information on BCT obtained from refereed journal articles, agency reports and file documents, telephone interviews, meetings and written correspondence with fisheries managers and species experts familiar with BCT.

**8. How were hybrid BCT taken into account in the status review?** For the purposes of the status review, the Service assumed that the fish stocks that state game and fish departments classified as BCT were genetically pure, even though the precise genetic characteristics of each of those stocks may not have been known or the stocks consisted of intercross progeny that were the product of some low or non-detectable level of interbreeding between BCT and a nonnative salmonid. Over the past three decades, different standards and techniques were used by state wildlife agencies to determine purity. Currently, state agencies rely on genetic analysis, meristic or physical characteristics as well as stocking and stream history to determine purity. Only BCT deemed 99% pure can be used to establish brood or transplant new populations. BCT deemed 90% pure or greater are protected and conserved as pure in their natural environment. BCT less than 90% pure may be protected if that population is considered to have unique local adaptations or other important characteristics worth protecting.

**9. If WCT is a subspecies, why is it given consideration under the Endangered Species Act?** The Endangered Species Act can protect subspecies of vertebrate animals, such as the BCT.