

News Release



Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709
Phone: 208/378-5243 Fax: 208/378-5262
<http://www.fws.gov/idaho>

March 12, 2010
Contact: Ted Koch, 208-378-5293

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Reopens Comment Period for
Proposed Bull Trout Critical Habitat Revision**
New comment period closes April 5, 2010

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced its intent to reopen the comment period for the proposed critical habitat revision for bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The original closing date for comments on the proposed critical habitat designation and the draft economic analysis was March 15, 2010. The notice has not yet published in the *Federal Register* but the Service is announcing that the new comment period will close **April 5, 2010**.

In total, the Service proposes to designate approximately 22,679 miles of streams and 533,426 acres of lakes and reservoirs in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana and Nevada as critical habitat for the wide-ranging fish. The proposal includes 985 miles of marine shoreline in Washington.

If finalized, the proposal would increase the amount of stream miles designated as bull trout critical habitat in the five states by 18,851 miles and the amount of lakes and reservoirs designated as critical habitat by 390,208 acres. This includes approximately 166 miles of critical habitat proposed in the Jarbidge River basin, where no critical habitat was designated in 2005. No change is proposed in the 985 miles of marine shoreline in Washington that were designated in 2005.

The proposal, developed by a team of federal scientists, is intended to provide sufficient habitat to allow for genetic and life-history diversity, ensure bull trout are well distributed across representative habitats, ensure sufficient connectivity among populations and allow for the ability to address threats facing the species.

State-by-state descriptions of the critical habitat units, maps, photographs, general biological information and other materials relating to today's announcement may be found at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/bulltrout>. In addition, a Justification Document, also on the website, has been prepared to explain the Service's rationale for why each critical habitat unit is essential for the conservation of the bull trout.

Nine public informational meetings were held throughout the Service's Pacific Region, concluding on March 3, 2010. Meetings were hosted in Bend, Oregon; Chiloquin, Oregon; LaGrande, Oregon; Post Falls, Idaho; Missoula, Montana; Elko, Nevada; Wenatchee, Washington; Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon. A public hearing was held in Boise, Idaho.

Written comments on the proposed critical habitat revision and on the draft economic analysis can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal*: <http://www.regulations.gov>.

In the box that reads "Enter Keyword or ID," enter the docket number for this proposed rule, which is FWS-R1-ES-2009-0085. Check the box that reads "Open for Comment/Submission," and then click the Search button. You should then see an icon that reads "Submit a Comment." Please ensure that you have found the correct rulemaking before submitting your comment.

- *U.S. mail or hand-delivery*: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2009-0085; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, 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

- FWS -