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News Release



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Host Public Open House on Proposed Critical Habitat Designation for Bull Trout

ELKO, NV... The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will host a public open house on February 17, 2010, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Elko Convention Center, Gold Room, 700 Moren Way, Elko, Nevada, to answer questions and accept written comments on a proposal to designate critical habitat for the bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The Service proposes to designate approximately 22,679 miles of streams and 533,531 acres of lakes and reservoirs in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Nevada, as critical habitat for the bull trout. If finalized, the proposal would increase the amount of stream miles designated as bull trout critical habitat in 2005, in the five states by 79 percent, or 17,866 miles, and the amount of lakes and reservoirs designated as critical habitat by 74 percent, or 390,208 acres. This includes approximately 166 stream miles of critical habitat proposed in the Jarbidge River Basin (85 stream miles in Nevada), where no critical habitat was designated in 2005.

Under the Endangered Species Act, critical habitat identifies geographic areas that contain features essential for the conservation of a listed species. Critical habitat designations provide extra regulatory protection that may require special management considerations and the habitats are then prioritized for recovery actions.

The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve or other conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to non-federal lands. A critical habitat designation does not impose restrictions on non-federal lands unless federal funds, permits or activities are involved. However, designating critical habitat on federal or non-federal lands informs landowners and the public of the specific areas that are important to the recovery of the species.

Written comments on the proposed critical habitat designation and on a draft economic analysis of the proposed designation can be submitted by one of the following methods and must be received by March 15, 2010:

- *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: RIN 1018-AW88; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

- Hand deliver written comments at a public informational meeting.

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.