

Malheur Bull Trout Experts Workshop

Assessing Brook Trout Eradication & Suppression Strategies (and associated actions) in the Upper Malheur River, Oregon

Date and Location:

October 18-20 at the Malheur National Forest Supervisor's Office, 431 Patterson Bridge Rd, John Day, Oregon.

Problem Statement:

Bull trout in the Upper Malheur are in poor condition due in part from loss of habitat quality and quantity as well as competition and hybridization with brook trout. Future climate change projections suggest water temperatures will further stress cold-water dependent native species like bull trout and redband trout. This workshop will assess strategies to minimize the occurrence and impact of non-native brook trout on native fish populations in the upper Malheur River (particularly bull trout), with a strong focus on the use of rotenone and artificial barriers as a management tool for brook trout to support long-term persistence of bull trout and other native fishes in the Malheur River.

Background:

There are two bull trout core areas in the Malheur Basin; the North Fork Malheur Core Area, which is not occupied by nonnative brook trout, and the Upper Malheur Core Area, in which brook trout are abundant and widely distributed. Hybridization between bull trout and brook trout in the Upper Malheur Core Area is widely documented and recent capture data suggests brook trout outnumber bull trout in some tributaries roughly 60:1. The Burns Paiute Tribe has implemented a mechanical removal program (efishing & netting) for brook trout for multiple years with little impact on abundance and distribution. As a result, the interagency Malheur River Bull Trout Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has recommended implementation of a chemical treatment program along with the installation and maintenance of artificial barriers to eradicate and suppress brook trout in the Upper Malheur Core Area to meet recovery objectives for bull trout.

Overall Workshop Goal:

Engage subject-matter experts in key areas of uncertainty regarding assessing, implementing, and monitoring a large-scale chemical control action and installation of artificial barriers in the Upper Malheur River to eradicate and suppress brook trout and promote long-term persistence of native species such as bull trout.

Specific Workshop Objectives:

- Discuss the need and utility of feasibility assessments in large-scale rotenone actions
- Discuss and assess rotenone treatment strategies and pre-treatment requirements
- Discuss and assess the pros and cons of installation, maintenance and operation of artificial barriers for short and long-term fish management
- Discuss post-treatment reintroduction (re-stocking) strategies
- Discuss and develop recommendations for post-project related monitoring and evaluation

Workshop Host and Planning Team: Malheur Bull Trout Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with representatives from: USFWS, ODFW, USFS, BOR, Burns Paiute Tribe

Workshop Facilitator: Amy Unthank (USFS, Malheur NF)

Workshop Note taker: Chris Allen (USFWS)

TAC members: Erica Maltz (BPT), Kris Crowley (BPT), Brandon Haslick (BPT), Dave Banks (ODFW), Ben Ramirez (ODFW), Kate Olsen (USFS), Hazel Owens (USFS), Steve Namitz (USFS), Dmitri Vidergar (USBR), Justin Martens (USFWS).

Expert Workshop Participants: Stephanie Gunckel (ODFW/USFWS), Mike Meeuwig (ODFW), Nik Zymonas (ODFW), Mark Buktenica (NPS Crater Lake), Nolan Banish (USFWS Klamath Falls), Joe Maroney (Kalispel Tribe), Dan Dauwalter (TU), Don Skaar (MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Joe Benjamin (USGS).

Observers: Brady Allen (BPA), Sienna Lopez-Johnson (BPA), Breanna O'Connor (BLM)