



Frequently Asked Questions About the

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan for the Jarbidge River Population

What is recovery?

Recovery is the process by which the decline of an endangered or threatened species is arrested or reversed, and threats neutralized so that its survival in the wild can be ensured. The goal of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is the recovery of listed species to levels where protection under the ESA is no longer necessary.

What is included in the draft recovery plan released today?

The plan describes the Jarbidge River Recovery Team's best assessment of what actions are required to ensure the long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex, interacting groups of bull trout distributed throughout their native range so the species can be de-listed. The Jarbidge River draft recovery plan includes recovery strategies for six local populations of bull trout in the Jarbidge River Core Area: the East Fork Jarbidge River (including the East Fork headwaters, Cougar Creek, and Fall Creek); West Fork Jarbidge River (including Sawmill Creek); Dave Creek; Jack Creek; Pine Creek; and Slide Creek. It also addresses recovery of migratory bull trout in this population.

Who developed this draft bull trout recovery plan?

The draft recovery plan for bull trout was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, and Tribal biologists from Idaho and Nevada with knowledge of bull trout and the local habitats they depend on for survival. These biologists formed the Jarbidge River Recovery Team.

How was the draft recovery plan for this population of bull trout developed?

The Jarbidge River Recovery Team met and reviewed all known available information about bull trout and streams in the local area. This review incorporated data from State and Federal agency population surveys and habitat assessments. Historical references were also consulted for background information on activities and conditions in the watershed. The Team's local knowledge and professional judgment were used to guide development of the draft recovery plan. Focusing recovery on a more local area allows recovery tasks to be tailored to specific areas and encourages implementation of tasks by local interests.

What is the relationship between the draft recovery plan and the critical habitat proposal?

The draft recovery plan and the critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery team, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposal. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation that require special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.

Who would be affected by recovery efforts?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It represents the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of actions necessary for the recovery of the species.

What are the recovery objectives?

To recover bull trout, the following four objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout within the Jarbidge River Core Area and expand distribution where possible (See the recovery plan for more details).
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of both resident and migratory bull trout in the Jarbidge River Core Area, with a focus on the migratory life history form.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity and increase natural opportunities for genetic exchange among bull trout populations and migratory fish within the Jarbidge River Core Area.

What are the criteria for assessing whether recovery objectives are being achieved?

The biological and ecological components of the Jarbidge River Core Area for bull trout within the Jarbidge River population must be fully functioning. The necessary components include:

- Habitat is sufficiently maintained or restored to provide for the persistence of broadly distributed local populations of bull trout within the core area.
- Adult bull trout are sufficiently abundant to provide for the persistence and viability of the core areas and to support both resident and migratory adult bull trout. This level of abundance is estimated to be within a range of 270 to 1,000 spawning fish per year.
- Measures of bull trout abundance within the core area show stable or increasing trends based on 10 to 15 years (representing at least two bull trout generations) of monitoring data.
- Habitat within the core area is connected so as to provide for the potential full expression of migratory behavior, allow for the re-founding of extirpated populations, and provide for the potential of genetic exchange between populations.

What actions will be needed to achieve recovery?

Recovery tasks are detailed in the draft recovery plan. However, recovery tasks in each unit will address the following seven categories:

- Protect, restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for bull trout.
- Prevent and reduce negative effects of non-native fish and other non-native taxa on bull trout.
- Establish fisheries management goals and objectives compatible with bull trout recovery, and implement practices to achieve goals.
- Characterize, conserve, and monitor genetic diversity and gene flow among local populations of bull trout.
- Conduct research and monitoring to implement and evaluate bull trout recovery activities, consistent with an adaptive management approach using feedback from implemented, site-specific recovery tasks.
- Use all available conservation programs and regulations to protect and conserve bull trout

- and bull trout habitats.
- Assess the implementation of bull trout recovery, and revise the recovery plan based on evaluations, as necessary.

How long will it take to recover bull trout?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to implement actions to significantly reduce or eliminate identified threats and recover bull trout. However, if the actions in the recovery plan are all implemented, we estimate it could take 15 to 25 years or longer (three to five bull trout generations) to recover bull trout depending on population responses.

How much will recovery cost?

Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the recovery of bull trout throughout their range could cost about \$500 million spread over 25 years. For the Jarbidge River population, the cost is estimated to be \$6 million spread over 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. These estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on potential costs.

How can private landowners have a role in recovery?

The Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to enhancing opportunities for non-Federal landowners to participate in the conservation of listed and imperiled species. One example is the “Safe Harbor” program, which provides regulatory assurances to non-Federal landowners who voluntarily implement measures that contribute to the conservation of listed species on their lands. These Safe Harbor Agreements eliminate landowners’ concern that restoring habitat and allowing the return of listed species to their property might result in future land-use restrictions under the ESA. The Fish and Wildlife Service also offers grants for endangered species conservation and recovery. Working with our State partners, the Fish and Wildlife Service awarded approximately \$106 million in Federal funding in Fiscal Year 2002 under five types of endangered species grants. **[For more information on our grant programs, please see our grants web page at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants>.]**

How can I obtain copies of the recovery plan and other documents?

The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region’s website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout>.

How can I comment?

A 120-day public comment period for the draft recovery plan begins July 1, 2004, and ends on October 29, 2004. Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to Bob Williams, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234, Reno, Nevada 89502-7147; or faxed to 775/861-6301.