

ISRP Comment

The ISRP suggests one year funding to explore feasibility of capturing bull trout in Bonneville Reservoir with subsequent funding contingent upon demonstration of the efficacy of capture techniques.

The project hinges on the ability of the sponsors to effectively capture bull trout in the reservoir. There is considerable uncertainty associated with this objective because bull trout apparently are rare and difficult to capture in the mainstem Columbia. Without an effective method of capture the essential parts of the proposed work could not be accomplished.

Response

WDFW and YN appreciate the ISRP's comments and recommendation. However, we suggest that a minimum time frame for this study is 2 years, not 1. A two year study would allow for unforeseen environmental conditions as well as an ability to investigate alternative methods if the proposed methods are unsuccessful. For example, if flows are extremely high or low in the Columbia River, bull trout may not utilize Drano Lake as they have previously. Also, if bull trout counts are very low at Powerdale Dam, there may not be enough bull trout in the system to adequately evaluate methods. The need for gathering information on bull trout will not be eliminated if the first year attempt is unsuccessful.

Further, we will be testing multiple gear types during the first year of the study. After evaluating the first years data, we presume that we will be able to identify those gear types that are the most effective at capturing bull trout. By providing an additional year to conduct the study, we will be able to better assess the level of effort necessary to characterize the population of bull trout using Bonneville Reservoir by focusing our collection efforts using the gear(s) identified during the first year of study. Without the additional year, conclusions regarding the efficacy of sampling bull trout in the reservoir may be overly optimistic (e.g., we can do it because we caught one) or pessimistic (e.g., we can't do it because we only caught one). If none of the gear types deployed during the first year of the study prove effective, the second year of the study would provide additional opportunity for testing alternate gear types.