

PPL MONTANA, LLC
THOMPSON FALLS UPSTREAM FISH LADDER PROJECT
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
December 5, 2012 @ 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office
Missoula, Montana

PPL Montana, LLC held the Thompson Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on December 5, 2012 at the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office in Missoula. The meeting started at 9:00 AM and was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

MEETING ATTENDEES

Name	Agency	Email	Phone (406)
Brent Mabbott	PPL Montana, LLC	lbmabbott@pplweb.com	533-3447
Jon Jourdonnais	PPL Montana, LLC	jhjourdonnais@pplweb.com	490-1802
Andy Welch	PPL Montana, LLC	atwelch@pplweb.com	533-3412
Steve Leathe	PPL Montana, LLC	saleathe@pplweb.com	268-2347
Brian Sugden	Plum Creek Timber Co	Brian.sugden@plumcreek.com	892-6368
Wade Fredenberg	USFWS	Wade_fredenberg@fws.gov	758-6872
Jim Vashro	MFWP	jvashro@mt.gov	751-4550
Kenny Breidinger	MFWP	kbreidinger@mt.gov	827-9320
Jay Stuckey	MFWP	jstuckey@mt.gov	827-9205
David Schmetterling	MFWP	dschmetterling@mt.gov	542-5514
Ladd Knotek	MFWP	lknotek@mt.gov	542-5506
Randy Apfelbeck	MDEQ	rapfelbeck@mt.gov	444-2709
Craig Barfoot	CSKT	craigb@cskt.org	675-2700 ext. 2295
Shana Bernall	Avista Corporation	Shana.bernall@avistacorp.com	847-1293
Aubrey Benson	USFS	aubreebenson@fs.fed.us	329-3950
Jen Mickelson	USFS	jmickelson@fs.fed.us	329-3896
Rob Roberts	Trout Unlimited	rroberts@tu.org	543-1192
Ginger Gillin	GEI Consultants	ggillin@geiconsultants.com	240-3231
Kristi Webb	Steigers Corporation	kristi.webb@steigers.com	203-4827

THOMPSON RIVER MASTER PLAN DISCUSSION

Ginger Gillin, GEI Consultants presented a power point presentation on the Draft *Thompson River Bull Trout Enhancement and Recovery Plan* (Master Plan) that was submitted to the TAC members for review on November 27, 2012.

All comments should be sent to Ginger Gillin (ggillin@geiconsultants.com) no later than Wednesday, December 19, 2012. GEI will finalize the Master Plan by December 31, 2012.

The Master Plan proposed the following Ranking Criteria for focusing on bull trout enhancement and recovery:

- Preserve the best quality migratory bull trout habitat
- Improve, as needed, migratory bull trout habitat which is presently used by migratory bull trout
- Extending the range of migratory bull trout

Recommendations made during the discussion and review of the Master Plan:

- Focus efforts on migratory bull trout subwatersheds: Fishtrap, WF Thompson
 - Jen Mickelson, USFS identified a culvert removal and potential road abandonment project in the Beartrap Creek (tributary to Fishtrap Creek)
 - Culvert is located about ½ mile upstream of the confluence
 - Bull trout were present below the culvert, but not known upstream of culvert (2011 data)
- Focus efforts on the mainstem Thompson River, downstream of Fishtrap Creek
- Learn more about potential migratory fish utilization of other subwatersheds, such as Big Rock Creek
- Complete new surveys in streams where bull trout have been documented in the past, but current bull trout presence in subwatershed is unknown (e.g. Shroder, Deerhorn, Chippy)
- Update the Master Plan to identify natural barriers (e.g. Murr Creek drainage, Bear Creek)
- Identify success criteria that address the goal of increasing juvenile bull trout recruitment
 - Identify prioritization (Fishtrap Creek, WF Thompson, mainstem Thompson below Fishtrap, etc.)
 - Develop monitoring plans
 - Habitat
 - Bull trout populations
 - Presence and distribution of nonnative
 - Angling pressure
 - Fisheries
- Land and Water Consulting 2004 report on Fishtrap: Resend to TAC group and have the TAC members review and provide GEI updates as appropriate. Brian Sugden, Plum Creek offered to provide a brief summary of changes since document was prepared in 2004.

Action Items:

- Comments on Master Plan to Ginger Gillin by December 19, 2012.
- GEI finalize Master Plan by December 31, 2012.
- Agencies prepare and submit proposals for project work, studies, monitoring, etc. to Brent Mabbott by January 22, 2013.
- Meeting on Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 10:00 AM in Thompson Falls (Whitefish Credit Union) to review and discuss proposals.

THOMPSON FALLS FISH PASSAGE PROJECT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2012 Ladder Operations Update

- Presentation on 2012 Fish ladder results compared to 2011 – Brent Mabbott
- Real Time Research is automating the ladder, electrofishing, and gillnetting data collection efforts. The system should be finalized by end of year (2012) and ready for use in 2013.
- Brent is coordinating with Jeff Monoco to update the fish ladder user manual and anticipates a final version by Spring 2013.

Recommendations:

- 1) PPL Montana proposed to set the ladder in orifice mode for the entire 2013 season. After 2 years of alternatively running the weirs in notch and orifice mode, it has been concluded that all species

observed at the ladder can ascend during orifice mode. **TAC supported the recommendation to operate the ladder in orifice mode in 2013.**

- 2) PPL Montana proposed having the ladder open a couple of extra weeks in the fall to allow more fish the opportunity to move upstream. The workup station would be closed and fish would be free to pass through to the reservoir. PPL Montana proposed to install a camera to identify which fish moved upstream.
 - a. MFWP hesitant to open the ladder up, even at end of season, due to concerns about the potential for walleye to move upstream
 - b. PPL Montana request TAC think about proposal. Need time to order camera and set up if TAC agrees.
- 3) The remote PIT tag antennas in the fish ladder have been configured (October 2012) to read both HDX and FDX PIT tags.
- 4) PPL Montana recommends to cease PIT tagging of fish below dam during electrofishing efforts in 2013. The objective was to assess upstream movement of ladder, and data is now available for approximately 50 fish from 2011 and 2012. The TAC did not make a decision on this recommendation and requested that the recommendation be included in the 2012 Annual Report. If this recommendation is accepted, PPL Montana would no longer electrofish below the dam unless it was for the evaluation of gas bubble trauma (GBT). GBT monitoring would be concurrent with TDG monitoring efforts (see Water Quality section).

2012 Baseline Fisheries Data Collection and Results

PPL Montana presented a powerpoint summary of the results from 2012 spring and fall electrofishing and fall gillnetting sampling. The data presented will be included in the 2012 Annual Report.

Recommendations:

1. Fall electrofishing Paradise to Plains – Monitoring completed annually from 2010 to 2012. Recommend sampling every other year, no sampling in 2013 and start in 2014.
 - a. MFWP supported this recommendation.
 - b. 2012 Annual Report will include this new schedule of sampling every other year, starting in 2014 for the Paradise to Plains reach of the Clark Fork River.

2012 TAC Funded Proposal

Summary of 2012 TAC Funded Projects

- Bull Trout Genetics
 - Amount \$10,000
 - **TAC Approved**
- Consultant for Thompson River Drainage Evaluation (TRiver report)
 - Included thermographs in Thompson River during summer 2012
 - Amount \$35,000 (consultant)
 - Amount \$ 4,475 (thermographs)
 - **TAC Approved**
- Avista - HDX Remote Reader in lower Prospect Creek
 - Amount \$2,507

- Installed in 2012
- Data not available until 2013 (earliest)
- **TAC Approved**
- Avista – Bull Trout Sex Identification Marker
 - Amount \$9,154
 - **TAC Approved \$2,000**
- Trout Unlimited – Placement of large woody debris placement in South and West Forks of Fish Creek in 2012
 - Amount \$20,000
 - 5 reaches, 21 structures of LWD placed, 250 trees
 - DNRC donated trees and assistance
 - DNRC and FWP lands
 - Total Cost \$25-30,000
 - Post-project monitoring – snorkeling surveys, habitat surveys, pre- and post- project photo points
 - Summary of project will be included in the 2012 Annual Report.
 - **TAC Approved**

2013 Funding Proposals

- **2013 - Strategic Prioritization of Native Trout Restoration Actions in the Lower Clark Fork Using Spatially Explicit Decision Support Modeling**
 - Amount - \$6,704
 - **TAC Vote – Approved**
- **2013 – 2015 Juvenile Bull Trout Movement into and through Thompson Falls Reservoir**
 - Characterize movements of juvenile bull trout in the Thompson River and through Thompson Falls Reservoir
 - Amount - \$50,000 in 2013; \$25,000 in 2014; \$25,000 in 2015
 - Need to send out proposal to TAC for review
 - Decision by TAC voting members (MFWP, USFWS, CKST, PPL Montana)
 - Not voted on during meeting
 - **TAC Vote – To be voted on at next meeting, January 29, 2013**
- **2013 Bull trout genetics funding**
 - Amount - \$10,000
 - 2013 – Fish, Cedar, and Little Joe bull trout genetics (MFWP Ladd Knotek)
 - 2013 – Jocko River (Craig Barfoot) if Fish, Cedar, and Little Joe not sampled.
 - **TAC Vote - Approved**

Update on Status of Fidelity Account for TAC Projects- Brent

- End of 2012 ~\$147,000
- \$100,000 will be added on January 1, 2013

2012 Water Quality Results

2012 Water quality monitoring at Thompson Falls Project results, and proposal for 2013 data collection–
Andy

Recommendations:

- Mimic 2012 spill schedule
- Propose to stop TDG monitoring unless forecasted flow is for very high peak flow. Have lots of data points (10 years) with flows less than 75,000 cfs. Not as much data for the larger flow events.
- Recommend just evaluate TDG at the higher flows (greater than 75,000 cfs)
- Provide streamflow forecasts with TAC members and make call in spring (~April). Need to make a decision by April 1, 2013 in order to get new equipment at the high bridge in 2013.
- Andy will send email to entire TAC updates of spring forecast
- Brent – do we need to continue GBT fish above 55,000 cfs?
 - Recommend fish GBT monitoring when TDG monitoring is completed. Coordinate with Andy each spring.

Avista Bull Trout

Report on bull trout captured by Avista and transported upstream –Shana (Avista)

- 37 adult bull trout below Cabinet Gorge Dam (CGD)
- 15 bull trout moved above CGD
- 7 bull trout moved above Noxon
- 8 bull trout moved above Thompson Falls
 - 7 of 8 assigned to Fishtrap /Thompson
 - 1 Cedar Creek
- How does this compare to 2011?
 - In 2011, only 5 bull trout were transported above Thompson Falls, while 8 Region 4 fish were moved to Noxon pool to evaluate movement to Thompson Falls dam. In 2012, TAC agreed to move all Region 4 fish caught below CGD upstream of Thompson Falls Dam.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE

- **January 29, 2013 (Tuesday) at 10am in Thompson Falls (Whitefish Credit Union)**
 - Proposals due (send to Brent) by Tuesday, January 22, 2013
- Next Annual TAC Meeting, December 2013

2012 ANNUAL REPORT SCHEDULE

Task/ Deliverable	Preparers	Submittal to TAC	TAC Comments Due	Comments Incorporated - Submit to TAC for Final Approval	Finalized with Approval from TAC Complete	E-File with FERC	E-Archive on Website
ANNUAL REPORTS	PPL Montana, MFWP, GEI, Steigers	15-Feb-13	1-Mar-13	12-Mar-13	22-Mar-13	25-Mar-13	25-Mar-13

Note: The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated January 15, 2008 defines the TAC quorum as one voting representative from PPL Montana, USFWS, CSKT, and MFWP. Quorum decisions by the TAC will require each of these agencies to be present in person or by proxy.