

**2015 BULL TROUT MANAGEMENT PLAN AND INCIDENTAL TAKE  
ANNUAL REPORT**

**WELLS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT**

**FERC PROJECT NO. 2149**

April 15, 2016

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bull Trout Management Plan (BTMP) and Incidental Take Annual Report includes information on existing bull trout measures required by the Wells Hydroelectric Project (Wells Project or Project) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) operating license including the U.S. Department of Interior's Federal Power Act section 18 Fishway Prescriptions; the Clean Water Act section 401 Water Quality Certification; and Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 7 bull trout consultation for the relicensing of the Wells Project. The 2012 Biological Opinion (BO) for the Wells Project (resulting from ESA consultation) requires Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County (Douglas PUD) to monitor incidental take during Wells Project license implementation activities and submit a bull trout annual take report to the Central Washington Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on or before April 15<sup>th</sup> each year. Article 406 of the license requires Douglas PUD to submit an annual report of management plan activities by May 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

Since measures required by the BO are largely consistent with the measures found in the BTMP and because the reporting requirements for the BTMP, BO, Clean Water Act section 401 Water Quality Certification, and the FERC license are largely consistent, this 2015 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report will be used to demonstrate compliance with all of Douglas PUD's bull trout obligations for the Wells Project.

The goal of the BTMP is to identify, monitor, and address impacts on bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) resulting from the Wells Project in a manner consistent with the USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the terms of the Section 7 Incidental Take Statement (ITS). The BTMP is intended to continue the implementation of management activities to protect bull trout during the new license term in a manner consistent with the original Wells Bull Trout Monitoring and Management Plan (Douglas 2004). The Protection, Mitigation and Enhancements presented within the BTMP are designed to meet the following objectives:

Objective 1: Operate the upstream fishways and downstream bypass systems in a manner consistent with the Wells Project Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). In 2015, Douglas PUD maintained safe, efficient and timely passage through the downstream juvenile fish bypass system and upstream adult fishway passage structures for bull trout and conducted video monitoring of the Wells Dam fishway viewing windows during the fish passage season. Douglas PUD continued to operate the juvenile fish bypass system at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the HCP.

Objective 2: Identify any adverse Project-related impacts on adult and sub-adult bull trout passage. In 2015, Douglas PUD began to develop a study plan designed to study bull trout passage and survival at the Twisp River Weir and Wells Dam. The study will take place in 2016 and 2017.

During 2015, 90 adult bull trout were counted passing through the fish ladders at Wells Dam. No sub-adult bull trout were observed at Wells Dam in 2015. As such, no new sub-adult bull trout monitoring activities are necessary at this time..

Objective 3: Implement reasonable and appropriate options to modify upstream fishway, downstream bypass, or operations if adverse impacts on bull trout are identified and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures. No adverse impacts to bull trout were identified in 2015.

Objective 4: Periodically monitor for bull trout entrapment or stranding during low Wells Reservoir elevations (i.e., below 773' mean sea level [msl]). In 2015, Douglas PUD lowered the reservoir as required to facilitate a construction project at the mouth of the Methow River. On September 2, 2015 the Wells Reservoir was lowered to 772' msl. On September 3, 2015 Douglas PUD biologists conducted a bull trout stranding survey. This was the second bull trout stranding survey conducted since the issuance of a new operating license for the Wells Hydroelectric Project. The first bull trout stranding survey took place on February 24, 2014. During both the 2015 and 2014 survey no bull trout were observed.

Objective 5: Participate in the development and implementation of the USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan including information exchange and genetic analysis. Should bull trout be delisted, the Aquatic Settlement Work Group will re-evaluate the needs and objectives of the BTMP. In 2015, Douglas PUD continued to participate in regional and technical meetings specific to bull trout recovery including the development of the Recovery Unit Implementation Plan for bull trout. Genetic samples will be collected in 2016 during the bull trout passage and survival study.

Objective 6: Identify any adverse impacts of Project-related hatchery operations on adult and sub-adult bull trout. In 2015 bull trout were encountered in the Twisp and Methow Rivers and Wells Dam fish traps. In addition, bull trout were encountered during the Twisp River Population study. However, all encounters fell below take limits listed in the USFWS Biological Opinion for Douglas PUD.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bull Trout Management Plan (BTMP) is one of six resource management plans developed by Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County (Douglas PUD). The BTMP directs the implementation of measures to mitigate Wells Hydroelectric Project (Wells Project or Project) impacts, if any, on bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and to monitor incidental take of bull trout at the Wells Project. The BTMP directs the long-term management of bull trout in the Wells Project. Additionally, the BTMP is intended to continue implementation activities aimed at protecting bull trout in a manner consistent with measures specified in the original Wells Bull Trout Monitoring and Management Plan (WBTMMP) (Douglas 2004).

To ensure active stakeholder participation and support, Douglas PUD developed all of the resource management plans found in the Aquatic Settlement Agreement in close coordination with agency and tribal natural resource managers (Aquatic Settlement Work Group or Aquatic SWG). Entities invited to participate in the Aquatic SWG include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), and Douglas PUD.

In addition to the requirements found within the BTMP, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 7 Consultation and the Biological Opinion (BO) for the relicensing of the Wells Project, the Clean Water Act section 401 Water Quality Certification, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license including the Federal Power Act section 18 Fishway Prescription identify several additional bull trout related requirements associated with the continued operation of the Wells Project.

Since measures required by the BO are largely consistent with the measures found in the BTMP and because the reporting requirements for the BTMP, BO, Clean Water Act section 401 Water Quality Certification, and the FERC license are largely consistent, this 2015 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report will be used to demonstrate compliance with all of Douglas PUD's bull trout obligations for the Wells Project.

## 2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this report is to present summary information related to BTMP activities conducted in 2015 and after Wells Dam Operating license was issued in November 2012. The goal of the BTMP is to identify, monitor and address impacts, if any, on bull trout resulting from the Project in a manner consistent with the USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the terms of the Section 7 Incidental Take Statement (ITS) (See Section 4.7). The Protection, Mitigation and Enhancement measures (PMEs) presented within the BTMP are designed to meet the following objectives:

Objective 1: Operate the upstream fishways and downstream bypass systems in a manner consistent with the Hatchery Conservation Plan (HCP);

Objective 2: Identify any adverse Project-related impacts on adult and sub-adult bull trout passage;

Objective 3: Implement reasonable and appropriate options to modify upstream fishway, downstream bypass, or operations if adverse impacts on bull trout are identified and evaluate effectiveness of these measures;

Objective 4: Periodically monitor for bull trout entrapment or stranding during low Wells Reservoir elevations (similar to the WBTMMP);

Objective 5: Participate in the development and implementation of the USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan, including information exchange and genetic analysis. Should bull trout be delisted, the Aquatic SWG will re-evaluate the needs and objectives of the BTMP;

Objective 6: Identify any adverse impacts of Project-related hatchery operations on adult and sub-adult bull trout.

In addition to the reporting BTMP activities, this report also addresses additional terms and conditions for bull trout as identified in the USFWS 2012 Biological Opinion for the Operation of the Wells Project and related facilities. As such, listed below are these terms and conditions that are largely consistent with BTMP measures.

To implement Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPM) 1: FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to provide adequate year-round passage conditions for bull trout at all Project facilities.

1. Upstream and Downstream Passage for Adult and Sub-Adult Bull Trout (BTMP Section 4.1.1): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to provide upstream passage for bull trout through the existing upstream fishways and downstream passage for bull trout through the existing downstream bypass system consistent with the HCP and Aquatic Settlement Agreement. Both upstream fishway facilities (located on the west and east shores) shall be operational year round with maintenance occurring on each fish way at different times during the winter to ensure that one upstream fishway is always operational. Operation of the downstream passage facilities for bull trout shall be consistent with bypass operations for Plan Species identified in the Wells HCP.
2. Bull Trout Passage Performance Standard (BTMP Section 4.3): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to implement the upstream and downstream measures contained in the Wells Hydroelectric Project BTMP to provide safe, timely, and effective upstream and downstream passage for adult and sub-adult bull trout at the Wells Hydroelectric Project. "Safe, timely and effective" passage shall be achieved when Douglas PUD has demonstrated that the survival and passage success rates for adult marked fish are greater than 95% and greater than or equal to 90%, respectively, and when passage studies demonstrate that the fishway facilities at Wells Dam do not impede the passage of bull trout. To ensure that safe, timely and effective passage at Wells Dam is maintained during the term of the new license, Douglas PUD

shall implement the bull trout upstream and downstream measures consistent with the BTMP.

3. Upstream Fishway Operations Criteria (BTMP Section 4.1.3): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to operate the upstream fishway at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the Wells HCP.
4. Bypass Operations Criteria (BTMP Section 4.1.4): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to operate the bypass system at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the Wells HCP.
5. Implement Reasonable and Appropriate Measures to Modify the Upstream Fishway and Downstream Bypass if Adverse Impacts on Bull Trout are Identified (BTMP Section 4.3): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to identify, design, implement, and evaluate reasonable and feasible measures to modify the upstream fishway, downstream bypass, or operations to reduce the identified incidental take of bull trout if monitoring (Term and Condition #10) identifies upstream or downstream passage problems for bull trout, in consultation with the Service, WCC and the Aquatic SWG. Study protocols and radio-telemetry assessment methodologies prescribed above in Term and Condition #10 and #11<sup>1</sup>, shall be used to evaluate the effectiveness of any additional measures implemented to reduce the incidental take of bull trout. Upon completion of the evaluation, the Service and the NMFS, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, and the WCC, will determine whether the proposed measure should be made permanent, removed, or modified.

To implement RPM 2: FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to minimize the effects of hydrographic variation to all life stages of bull trout at all Project facilities.

6. Investigate Entrapment or Stranding of Bull Trout during Periods of Low Reservoir Elevation (BTMP Section 4.4): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to continue to investigate potential entrapment or stranding areas for bull trout through periodic monitoring when periods of low reservoir elevation expose identified sites. During the first five years of the new license, Douglas will implement up to five bull trout entrapment/stranding assessments during periods of low reservoir elevation (below 773' msl). If no incidences of bull trout stranding are observed during the first five years of study, additional assessment will take place every fifth year during the remainder of the license term, unless waived by the Aquatic SWG. If bull trout entrapment and stranding result in take in exceedance of the authorized incidental take level, then reasonable and appropriate measures will be implemented by Douglas, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the impact.

To implement RPM 3: FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to minimize the effects of the Hatchery Supplementation Program to all life stages of bull trout.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the USFWS 2012 reference in the literature cited page for reference.

7. Bull Trout Monitoring During Hatchery Activities (BTMP 4.6.1): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to monitor hatchery actions (e.g., salmon trapping, sturgeon brood stocking and capture activities) that may encounter adult and sub-adult bull trout resulting from incidental capture and take. Actions to be monitored shall be associated with the Wells Hatchery, the Methow Hatchery, and any future facilities directly funded by Douglas PUD. If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to Douglas PUD's hatchery actions then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

To implement RPM 4: FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to minimize the effects of implementing the Aquatic Resource Management Plans (white sturgeon, Pacific lamprey, resident fish, aquatic nuisance species, and water quality) and the Predator Control Program to all life stages of bull trout.

8. Monitoring Other Aquatic Resource Management Plan Activities and Predator Control Program for Incidental Capture and Take of Bull Trout (BTMP Section 4.5.1): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to monitor activities associated with the implementation of other Aquatic Resource Management Plans for white sturgeon, Pacific lamprey, resident fish, aquatic nuisance species, and water quality and Predator Control Program that may result in the incidental capture and take of bull trout. If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to the implementation of other Aquatic Resource Management Plan activities, then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take. If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to the implementation of the Predator Control Program, then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the HCP Coordinating Committee and the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

To implement RPM 5: FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to design and implement a bull trout monitoring program that will adequately detect and quantify Wells Hydroelectric Project impacts, including those associated with the Wells Dam, Twisp Weir trapping facilities, and hatchery facilities. This information will allow the Service to determine whether authorized take levels are exceeded.

9. Upstream Fishway Counts (BTMP Section 4.1.2): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to conduct video monitoring in the Wells Dam fishways from May 1st through November 15th to count and provide information on the population size of upstream moving bull trout.
10. Adult Bull Trout Upstream and Downstream Passage Evaluation (BTMP Section 4.2.1): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to periodically monitor incidental take of bull trout through Wells Dam and in the Wells Reservoir through the implementation of a radio-telemetry study. Specifically, in years 5 and 10 of

the new license, and continuing every ten years thereafter during the new license term, Douglas PUD shall conduct a 1 year monitoring study to verify continued compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2). These monitoring studies shall employ the same study protocols and radio-telemetry assessment methodologies used at Wells Dam in 2006 and 2007. If the monitoring results demonstrate continued compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2), then no additional actions are needed. If the monitoring results demonstrate that Douglas PUD is no longer in compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2), then the monitoring study will be replicated to confirm the results. If the results after two years of monitoring demonstrate that Douglas PUD is no longer in compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2), then Douglas PUD shall, pursuant to Term and Condition #5, develop and implement additional measures to improve bull trout passage until compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2) is achieved. If the bull trout counts at Wells Dam increase more than twice the existing 5-year average or if there is a significant change in the operation of the fish ladders, bypass, or hydrocombine, then Douglas PUD shall, in consultation with the Service, the Aquatic SWG, and the Wells HCP Coordinating Committee, shall conduct a 1 year, follow-up monitoring study to verify continued compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2). Although the BTMP specifies Douglas PUD to utilize radio-telemetry as the recommended monitoring method, the Service concludes that future monitoring technologies may be utilized in the implementation of this term and condition.

11. Adult Bull Trout Passage Evaluation at Off-Project Collection Facilities (BTMP Section 4.2.2): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, beginning in year one of the new license, to conduct a one-year radio-telemetry evaluation to assess incidental take of adult bull trout at the adult salmon and steelhead broodstock collection facilities associated with the Wells HCP, including but not limited to, the Twisp Weir adult collection facility. Douglas PUD shall capture and tag up to 10 adult, migratory bull trout (>400 mm) per assessment per year and use fixed receiver stations upstream and downstream of the collection facilities. Assessments shall employ the same study protocols and radio-telemetry assessment methodologies used at Wells Dam in 2006 and 2007. If the evaluation demonstrates that Douglas PUD is not in compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2), then the evaluation will be replicated to confirm the results. If the results after two years of evaluation demonstrate that Douglas PUD is not in compliance with the bull trout passage performance standard (Term and Condition #2), then Douglas PUD shall develop, implement, and evaluate additional measures, in consultation with the Service, Wells HCP Coordinating Committee and the Aquatic SWG, until the Service determines that the bull trout passage performance standard has been achieved. At such time as the Service determines the bull trout passage performance standard has been achieved, the implementation of this measure shall be integrated into the 1 year telemetry monitoring program that is to be conducted every ten years (beginning in year 10 of the new license) at Wells Dam as identified in Term and Condition #10 above. Although the BTMP specifies Douglas PUD to utilize radio-telemetry as the recommended monitoring

method, the Service concludes that future monitoring technologies may be utilized in the implementation of this term and condition.

12. Sub-Adult Bull Trout Monitoring (BTMP Section 4.2.3): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, if at any time during the new license term, sub-adult bull trout are observed passing Wells Dam in significant numbers (>10 per calendar year), in consultation with the Service, and the Aquatic SWG, implement reasonable and appropriate methods for monitoring sub-adult bull trout. Although the BTMP states that >10 sub-adults per calendar year as the threshold, new information leads the Service to conclude that 31 sub-adults per calendar year is a more appropriate threshold. Specifically, Douglas PUD may modify counting activities, and shall continue to provide PIT tags and equipment, and facilitate training to enable fish sampling entities to PIT tag sub-adult bull trout when these fish are collected incidentally during certain fish sampling operations. This activity shall occur the following year of first observation of sub-adult bull trout (>10 per calendar year), in consultation with the Service and the Aquatic SWG.
13. Funding Collection of Tissue Samples and Genetic Analysis (BTMP Section 4.5.2): FERC shall require Douglas PUD, in coordination with the Service, to collect up to 10 adult bull trout tissue samples in the Wells Dam fish way facilities over a period of one year and fund their genetic analysis. Genetic tissue collection will take place concurrent with the implementation of the bull trout radio-telemetry monitoring study. Any sub-adult bull trout collected during these activities will also be incorporated into the bull trout genetic analysis. Beginning in year 1 of the new license, Douglas will collect up to 10 adult bull trout tissue samples from the Twisp River broodstock collection facility over a period of one year and will fund their genetic analysis. Genetic tissue collection will take place concurrent with the implementation of the off-Project bull trout radio-telemetry monitoring study. This term and condition is consistent with other section 10(a)(1)(a) permits that involve handling of bull trout. The analysis will provide valuable information on the conservation status and genetic relationships between bull trout populations in the Columbia basin. This information will be used to determine the local populations impacted by Project operations, and when used in conjunction with other data such as movement data and redd counts, the resiliency of local populations impacted by the proposed action may be determined. Samples will be submitted to the Service (Central Washington Field Office in Wenatchee, Washington).

## **Reporting Requirements**

In order to monitor the impacts of incidental take, Douglas PUD shall prepare an annual report describing the progress of implementation and its impact on the bull trout. The report, which shall be submitted to the Service (Central Washington Field Office) annually on or before April 15th, shall list and describe the work that was completed and the number of bull trout, if any, observed and/or incidentally taken (i.e., injured or killed) during the course of implementation.

Upon locating a dead, injured, or sick endangered or threatened species specimen, initial notification must be immediately made to the nearest Service Law Enforcement Office (Redmond, Washington; telephone 425-883-8122) and reported to the Service's Central

Washington Field Office (509-665-3508). Care should be taken in handling sick or injured specimens to ensure effective treatment and care and in handling dead specimens to preserve biological material in the best possible state for later analysis of cause of death. In conjunction with the care of sick or injured endangered species and preservation of biological materials from a dead animal, the finder has the responsibility to carry out instructions provided by Service Law Enforcement to ensure that evidence intrinsic to the specimen is not unnecessarily disturbed. The RPMs, with their implementing terms and conditions, are designed to minimize the impact of incidental take that might otherwise result from the proposed action. If, during the course of the action, the level of incidental take described above is exceeded, such additional take represents new information requiring reinitiating consultation (assuming the Commission retains discretion or control over the action) and review of the RPMs provided. Douglas PUD must immediately provide an explanation of the causes of the taking and review with the Service the need for possible modification of the RPMs.

### **3.0 PROTECTION, MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES**

Consistent with the BTMP and USFWS Biological Opinion Terms and Conditions, Douglas PUD, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, has initiated the implementation of the following measures.

#### **3.1 Operate the Upstream Fishways and Downstream Bypass Systems in a Manner Consistent with the HCP (Objective 1)**

##### **3.1.1 Provide Upstream and Downstream Passage for Adult and Sub-adult Bull Trout**

Douglas PUD will continue to provide upstream passage for adult bull trout through the existing upstream fishways and downstream passage of adult and sub-adult bull trout through the existing downstream bypass system. Both upstream fishway facilities (located on the west and east shores) are operational year around with maintenance occurring on each fishway at different times during the winter to ensure that one upstream fishway is always operational. Maintenance activities on Wells fishways occur during the winter when bull trout have not been observed passing Wells Dam. Operation of the downstream passage facilities for bull trout will be consistent with bypass operations for Plan Species identified in the Wells HCP. Currently, the bypass system is operated from April 12 through August 26 of each year. This operating period is consistent with the period of high bull trout and anadromous fish presence at the Project.

###### **3.1.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 1 in 2015 - Provide Upstream and Downstream Passage for Adult and Sub-adult Bull Trout**

Consistent with the requirements of the FERC license for the Wells Project and the Wells HCP, Douglas PUD maintained safe, efficient and timely passage through the downstream juvenile fish bypass system and upstream adult fishway passage structures for bull trout. Winter maintenance occurred in the adult fishway structures in January 2015 and December 2015. At least one of the adult fishways was in operation at all times during the winter maintenance period

(December – February) and both adult fishways were in operation for the remainder of the year (March – November). During ladder maintenance outages no bull trout were observed.

Juvenile fish bypass operations were implemented consistent with the 2015 Bypass Operations Plan. Dates of operation included initiation on April 9 at midnight with the bypass system operated continuously through August 19. The 2015 dates of operation for the juvenile fish bypass system are the result of species run-timing estimates developed by the University of Washington and Columbia Basin Research. Operational dates were reviewed, approved and adopted by the Wells HCP Coordinating Committee and implemented by Douglas PUD prior to the beginning of the 2015 bypass season.

### **3.1.2 Upstream Fishway Counts**

Douglas PUD shall continue to conduct video monitoring in the Wells Dam fishways from May 1<sup>st</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup> to count and provide information on the population size of upstream moving bull trout.

#### **3.1.2.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 1 in 2015 - Upstream Fishway Counts**

Total upstream counts at Wells Dam fish ladder viewing windows was 90 bull trout in 2015. Counts in 2015 exceeded the five-year average from 2010-2014 by 9 fish. More than 90 percent of the passage occurred during the months of May through July, which is consistent with historic adult bull trout peak passage timing at Wells Dam. This passage is often associated with upstream movement towards natal streams in the Methow River basin where spawning occurs in the fall.

### **3.1.3 Upstream Fishway Operations Criteria**

Douglas PUD shall continue to operate the upstream fishway at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the Wells HCP.

#### **3.1.3.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 1 in 2015 - Upstream Fishway Operations Criteria**

Consistent with the license and the Wells HCP, Douglas PUD continued to operate the two upstream fishways at Wells Dam in accordance with upstream fishway criteria found in the Wells HCP and as approved by the Wells HCP Coordinating Committee.

### **3.1.4 Bypass Operations Criteria**

Douglas PUD shall continue to operate the bypass system at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the Wells HCP.

#### 3.1.4.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 1 in 2015 - Bypass Operations Criteria

Consistent with the license and the Wells HCP, Douglas PUD continued to operate the juvenile fish bypass system at Wells Dam in accordance with criteria outlined in the Wells HCP and as approved by the HCP Coordinating Committee.

### **3.2 Identify Any Adverse Project-related Impacts on Adult and Sub-adult Bull Trout Passage (Objective 2)**

#### **3.2.1 Adult Bull Trout Upstream and Downstream Passage Evaluation**

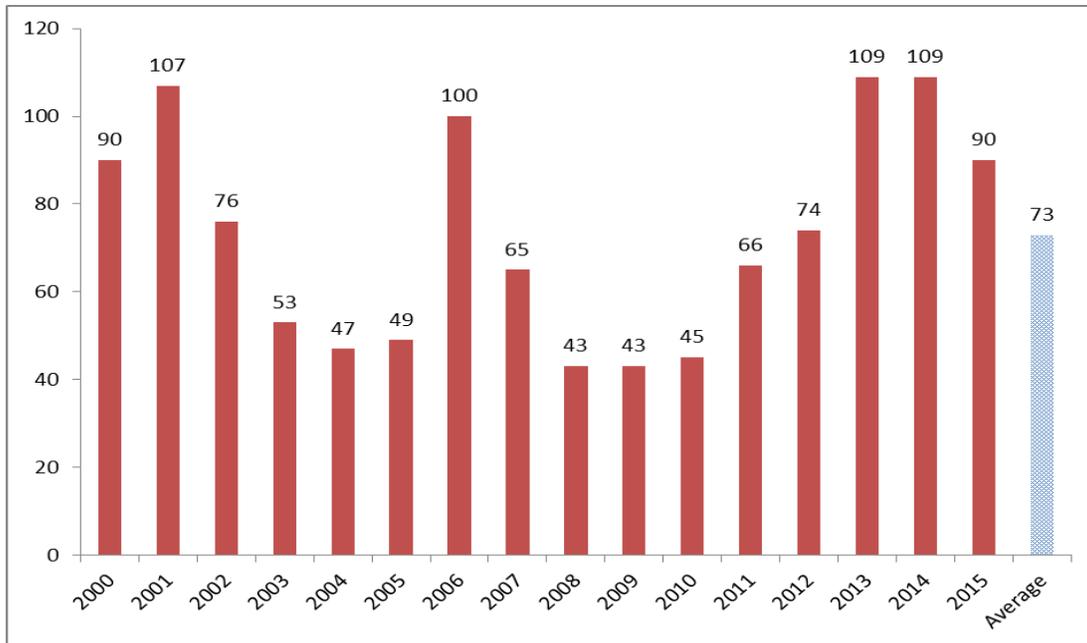
Douglas PUD shall continue to monitor upstream and downstream passage and incidental take of adult bull trout through Wells Dam and in the Wells Reservoir through the implementation of a radio-telemetry study. Specifically, in years 5 and 10 of the new license, and continuing every ten years thereafter during the new license term, Douglas PUD will conduct a one-year monitoring program to determine whether Douglas PUD remains in compliance with the ITS. The same study protocols used during past radio-telemetry assessments at Wells Dam (LGL and Douglas PUD 2007) will be employed for these monitoring studies.

If the adult bull trout counts at Wells Dam increases more than two times the existing 5-year average or if there is a significant change in the operation of the fish ladders or hydrocombine, then the Aquatic SWG will determine whether additional years of take monitoring are needed beyond those identified in this section of the BTMP. If the authorized incidental take level is exceeded during any one-year period, Douglas PUD will conduct another monitoring study in the succeeding year. If the authorized incidental take level is exceeded in this second year, Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

##### 3.2.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 2 in 2015 - Adult Bull Trout Upstream and Downstream Passage Evaluation

Douglas PUD will implement a Passage Evaluation Study in 2016-2017. In late 2015 Douglas PUD worked with the Aquatic SWG and the USFWS to develop a Wells Dam and Twisp Weir Passage and Survival study plan draft towards implementing an Adult Bull Trout Upstream and Downstream Passage Evaluation. At the time that the Aquatic Settlement Agreement was signed the five year average count of bull trout at Wells Dam 2005 was 60 fish. In 2015 the five-year average increased to 81 fish per year, representing a 35 percent increase. Total bull trout counts since 2000 are provided in Figure 1, including the 16 year average of 73.

No significant changes in the operation of the fish ladders or hydrocombine have been implemented or are proposed that would trigger the early implementation of a bull trout passage evaluation.



**Figure 1. Douglas PUD 2015 bull trout encounters.**

### **3.2.2 Adult Bull Trout Passage Evaluation at Off-Project Collection Facilities**

Douglas PUD shall assess upstream and downstream passage and incidental take of adult, migratory bull trout at off-Project (outside of the Project boundary) adult salmon and steelhead broodstock collection facilities associated with the Wells HCP. Specifically, beginning in year one of the new license, Douglas PUD will conduct a one-year radio-telemetry study to assess passage and incidental take at off-Project adult collection facilities (i.e., Twisp Weir). Douglas PUD will capture and tag up to 10 adult, migratory bull trout (>400 mm) at adult collection facilities and use fixed receiver stations upstream and downstream of collection facilities to examine upstream and downstream passage characteristics and incidental take. Study protocols that have been used during past radio-telemetry assessments at Wells Dam (LGL and Douglas PUD 2008) will be employed for this assessment.

If negative impacts to passage associated with off-Project collection facilities are observed or the authorized incidental take level is exceeded during any one-year period, Douglas PUD will conduct another monitoring study in the succeeding year. If negative impacts to passage continue to be observed or the authorized incidental take level is exceeded in this second year, Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to passage impacts or the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

After year one of the new license, the implementation of this sub-objective will be integrated into the one-year telemetry monitoring program that is to be conducted every ten years (beginning in year 10 of the new license) at Wells Dam as identified in Section 4.2.1. In year 10 of the new license and every 10 years thereafter, bull trout will be captured and tagged only at Wells Dam (Section 4.2.1) since data show that bull trout passing Wells Dam are migrating back into the Methow River watershed (LGL and Douglas PUD 2008). Through the continued deployment of

fixed station monitoring at off-Project adult salmon and steelhead broodstock collection facilities, these tagged bull trout will continue to provide passage and take information in support of this sub-objective throughout the term of the new license.

### 3.2.2.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 2 in 2015 - Adult Bull Trout Passage Evaluation at Off-Project Collection Facilities

During 2012, Douglas PUD, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG developed a study plan to assess incidental take of bull trout at the Twisp River Weir broodstock collection facility. All parties including the USFWS, agreed that Douglas PUD should postpone the Off-Project Passage Evaluation until year five of the new license when the Bull Trout Passage and Enumeration Study is scheduled to take place at Wells Dam. Combining the studies would provide a more comprehensive study and potentially require less study fish than two independent studies, thereby limiting the overall impact or take of bull trout.

During 2013, Douglas PUD, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG filed a letter with the FERC proposing to postpone the Off-Project Passage Evaluation until year five of the new license when the Bull Trout Passage and Enumeration Study is scheduled to take place at Wells Dam. FERC approved the deferral on October 15, 2013. Planning for the comprehensive study began in 2015 with the development of a draft study plan in coordination with the USFWS and the Aquatic SWG.

In 2015, there were no encounters of adult bull trout at the Twisp River Weir; well below the take limits of 118 as identified in Table 14 of the Bull Trout BO for Wells Dam (USFWS 2012). The Twisp Weir is normally operated for steelhead and spring Chinook collection March through August. However, Spring Chinook collection at Wells Dam and genetic assignment allowed Twisp Weir operators to discontinue operations by June 1<sup>st</sup>, leading to complete avoidance of incidental take of bull trout at the Twisp Weir.

### 3.2.3 Sub-adult Bull Trout Monitoring

While an objective of the BTMP is to identify potential Project impacts on upstream and downstream passage of sub-adult bull trout, Aquatic SWG members (including the USFWS) agreed that it was not feasible to assess sub-adult passage because sub-adult bull trout have not been observed at Wells Dam. During the previous six years of bull trout data collection at Wells Dam (BioAnalyst Inc. 2004; LGL and Douglas PUD 2008), sub-adult bull trout have not been documented passing Wells Dam (based upon fishway video counts and bull trout trapping for radio-telemetry). However, it is expected that through the increased monitoring associated with the implementation of the BTMP that there may be additional encounters with sub-adult bull trout. If at any time during the new license term sub-adult bull trout are observed passing Wells Dam in significant numbers (i.e., >10 per calendar year), the Aquatic SWG will recommend reasonable and appropriate methods for monitoring sub-adult bull trout. Specifically, Douglas PUD may modify counting activities, continue to provide PIT tags and equipment, and facilitate training to enable fish sampling entities to PIT tag sub-adult bull trout when these fish are collected incidentally during certain fish sampling operations. This activity would occur the following year after significant numbers of sub-adult bull trout (>10 per calendar year) were observed.

#### 3.2.3.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 2 in 2015 - Sub-adult Bull Trout Monitoring

Douglas PUD biologists reviewed video recordings of questionable sized bull trout in December 2015. Using the 400 mm fork length cut off and window rule estimate, no sub-adult bull trout were observed at Wells Dam count windows in 2015. Results and video images were forwarded to the USFWS on December 11, 2015 as verification.

### **3.3 Implement Reasonable and Appropriate Measures to Modify the Upstream Fishway and Downstream Bypass if Adverse Impacts on Bull Trout are Identified (Objective 3)**

Douglas PUD shall continue to operate the upstream fishway and downstream bypass at Wells Dam in accordance with the Wells HCP. However, if upstream or downstream passage problems for bull trout are identified (as agreed to by the USFWS and Douglas PUD), Douglas PUD will identify and implement, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG and Wells HCP Coordinating Committee, reasonable and appropriate options to modify the upstream fishway, downstream bypass, or operations to reduce the identified impacts to bull trout passage.

#### **3.3.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 3 in 2015 - Implement Reasonable and Appropriate Measures to Modify the Upstream Fishway and Downstream Bypass if Adverse Impacts on Bull trout are Identified**

No new adverse impacts to bull trout were identified in 2015. As a result, Douglas PUD is not proposing to implement any new upstream fishway or downstream bypass measures.

### **3.4 Investigate Entrapment or Stranding of Bull Trout during Periods of Low Reservoir Elevation (Objective 4)**

During the implementation of the WBTMMP from 2004-2008, Douglas PUD, through the use of high resolution bathymetric information, hydraulic and elevation data, and backwater curves, identified potential bull trout entrapment and stranding areas in the Wells Reservoir. Although no stranded bull trout were observed in these areas during the implementation of the WBTMMP, Douglas PUD will continue to investigate potential entrapment or stranding areas for bull trout through periodic monitoring when periods of low reservoir elevation expose identified sites. During the first five years of the new license, Douglas PUD will implement up to five bull trout entrapment/stranding assessments during periods of low reservoir elevation (below 773' msl). If no incidences of bull trout stranding are observed during the first five years of study, additional assessment will take place every fifth year during the remainder of the license term, unless waived by the Aquatic SWG. If bull trout entrapment and stranding result in take in exceedance of the authorized incidental take level, then reasonable and appropriate measures will be implemented by Douglas PUD, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the impact.

#### **3.4.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 4 in 2015 - Investigate Entrapment or Stranding of Bull Trout during Periods of Low Reservoir Elevation**

Pursuant to Article 402 of the Wells Project license, Douglas PUD developed a Bull Trout Stranding, Entrapment, And Take Study Plan (Plan). This document was developed collaboratively with the USFWS and the Aquatic SWG. The Plan was filed with the FERC on September 24, 2013 and approved on October 29, 2013.

The Plan requires Douglas PUD to conduct 5 reservoir surveys when Wells Dam (Project) operations reduce the forebay elevation to 773 feet above sea level (msl) within the first five years of the new operating license for the Project. These surveys are to be conducted opportunistically when reservoir elevations may be at or below 773' msl for an extended period of time. This sampling regime is also consistent with the USFWS 2013 Section 10 Biological Opinion, Section 18 Fishway Prescriptions for the Wells Project license, and Douglas PUD's BTMP.

In 2015, Douglas PUD lowered the reservoir as required to facilitate a construction project at the mouth of the Methow River. On September 2, 2015 the Wells Reservoir was lowered to 772' msl. On September 3, 2015 Douglas PUD biologists conducted a bull trout stranding survey consistent with the Plan. This was the second bull trout stranding survey conducted since the issuance of a new operating license for the Wells Hydroelectric Project. Results of the 2015 stranding survey were summarized and provided to the USFWS (See Appendix 1). No bull trout were observed during either the 2013 or 2015 surveys. In summary, although all identified stranding locations were examined no bull trout were observed. Douglas PUD will continue to opportunistically survey stranding locations within the Wells Project.

### **3.5 Participate in the Development and Implementation of the USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan (Objective 5)**

#### **3.5.1 Monitoring Other Aquatic Resource Management Plan Activities and Predator Control Program for Incidental Capture and Take of Bull Trout**

Douglas PUD will monitor activities associated with the implementation of other Aquatic Resource Management Plans (white sturgeon, Pacific lamprey, resident fish, aquatic nuisance species, and water quality) and the Predator Control Program that may result in the incidental capture and take of bull trout. If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to the implementation of other Aquatic Resource Management Plan activities, then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take. If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to the implementation of the Predator Control Program, then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Wells HCP Coordinating Committee and the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

##### **3.5.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 5 in 2015 - Monitoring Other Aquatic Resource Management Plan Activities and Predator Control Program for Incidental Capture and Take of Bull Trout**

Two activities conducted under other Aquatic Resource Management Plan actions had the potential to encounter bull trout in 2015:

1. Pikeminnow removal associated with the Predator Control Program
  - The Wells HCP required Predator Control Program, principally Douglas PUD's pikeminnow control program, did not encounter any bull trout in 2015. The pikeminnow control program used setlines to capture pikeminnow in deep water areas of the Wells Project. Over the program's existence (more than fifteen years) no bull trout have been encountered.
2. The 2015 Wells Project White Sturgeon Monitoring and Evaluation Program
  - Over the spring and summer of 2015, Douglas PUD and its contractors conducted a White Sturgeon Monitoring and Evaluation Program consistent with license requirements found within the White Sturgeon Management Plan. To accomplish this task setlines were used to estimate survival, growth, habitat use and condition of white sturgeon within the Project. No bull trout were encountered during these sampling efforts.

### **3.5.2 Funding Collection of Tissue Samples and Genetic Analysis**

Beginning in year 10 of the new license, and continuing every 10 years thereafter for the term of the new license, Douglas PUD will, if recommended by the Aquatic SWG, collect up to 10 adult bull trout tissue samples in the Wells Dam fishway facilities over a period of one year and fund their genetic analysis. Genetic tissue collection will take place concurrent with the implementation of the bull trout radio-telemetry monitoring study. Samples will be submitted to the USFWS Central Washington Field Office in Wenatchee, Washington. Any sub-adult bull trout collected during these activities will also be incorporated into the bull trout genetic analysis.

Beginning in year one of the new license, Douglas PUD will collect up to 10 adult bull trout tissue samples from the Twisp River broodstock collection facility over a period of one year and will fund their genetic analysis. Genetic tissue collection will take place concurrent with the implementation of the off-Project bull trout radio-telemetry monitoring study.

#### **3.5.2.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 5 in 2015 - Funding Collection of Tissue Samples and Genetic Analysis**

At the request of the USFWS to reduce handling and take of bull trout, no genetic samples were collected in 2015. However, during the 2016-2017 Twisp Weir and Wells Dam Survival and Passage Study genetic samples will be taken from up to 60 fish. Fish will be assigned back to natal locations. In addition, previously genetic samples collected in prior study years will be analyzed, as required under previous agreement(s).

### **3.5.3 Information Exchange and Regional Monitoring Efforts**

Douglas PUD will continue to participate in information exchanges with other entities conducting bull trout research and regional efforts to explore availability of new monitoring

methods and coordination of radio-tag frequencies for bull trout monitoring studies in the Project.

Douglas PUD will make available an informational and educational display at the Wells Dam Overlook to promote the conservation and recovery of bull trout in the Upper Columbia River and associated tributary streams.

#### 3.5.3.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 5 in 2015 - Information Exchange and Regional Monitoring Efforts

In 2015, Douglas PUD participated in various regional meetings to assist in the development of the Recovery Unit Implementation Plan and support the development of a final Bull Trout Recovery Plan. Specifically, Douglas PUD participated in the March 31, 2015 meeting organized by the USFWS in Wenatchee, WA. On June 2, 2015 the USFWS released the culmination of these meetings in the form of draft Recovery Unit Implementation Plans. In addition in November Douglas PUD, the USFWS biologists and Chelan PUD shared data on bull trout PIT tagging in the Wenatchee, Entiat and Methow basins for the purposes of developing future tagging plans and in an effort to facilitate the development of Douglas PUD's 2016 radio telemetry study. Douglas PUD will continue to participate in these regional information exchanges in 2016.

### **3.6 Identify Any Adverse Impacts of Project-related Hatchery Operations on Adult and Sub-adult Bull Trout (Objective 6)**

#### **3.6.1 Bull Trout Monitoring During Hatchery Activities**

During the term of the new license, Douglas PUD shall monitor hatchery actions (e.g., salmon trapping, sturgeon brood stocking and capture activities) that may encounter adult and sub-adult bull trout for incidental capture and take. Actions to be monitored shall be associated with the Wells Hatchery, the Methow Hatchery, and any future facilities directly funded by Douglas PUD.

If the incidental take of bull trout is exceeded due to Douglas PUD's hatchery actions then Douglas PUD will develop a plan, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG, to address the identified factors contributing to the exceedance of the allowable level of incidental take.

#### 3.6.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 6 in 2015 - Bull Trout Monitoring During Hatchery Activities

Hatchery actions in 2016 were similar to other years where broodstock was collected at Wells Dam but did not need to occur at the Twisp Weir in 2015. Screw traps used during HCP related smolt monitoring and evaluation activities in the Methow River basin often encounter juvenile bull trout. Other M&E and hatchery activities that have the potential to encounter bull trout is

adult handling at Methow Hatchery, Wells Dam Volunteer Channel. All of these trapping and hatchery activities are conducted by WDFW, Douglas PUD's lead hatchery contractor.

In addition to hatchery actions, during September 2015, Douglas PUD and WDFW piloted a second year of a juvenile Chinook and steelhead Mark Recapture Study in the Twisp River in order to estimate the carrying capacity of steelhead in the basin. To accomplish this task, 100 meter stream sections were randomly selected as mark and recapture locations. A team of 5-6 biologists sampled the Twisp River using backpack electrofishing and encountered 33 adult/sub-adult bull trout. Given the location of capture, several of the 33 fish sampled were assumed to be resident adults however accurate differentiation without sampling for reproductive readiness is impossible. It should be noted that none of the 33 bull trout encountered during this study were assessed for reproductive readiness.

Unlike sampling efforts in 2014, none of these bull trout were PIT tagged per USFWS recommendation. The BO has a take limit of 31 sub-adult and 76 adult bull trout during hatchery activities, which includes electrofishing. The study purposefully examined only the first 60 km of the Twisp River Basin in order to avoid the higher reaches of the Twisp River where adfluvial and fluvial bull trout are known to spawn.

2015 Douglas PUD Project Actions collectively were well below take estimates (limits) as described in the March 2012 issued Section 7 Biological Opinion from the USFWS. A summary of all bull trout encounters in 2015 and respective take limits are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Summary of 2015 Bull Trout Incidental Encounters Under Douglas PUD License Actions and Related Project Encounter Limits Under the 2012 Issued Section 7 Biological Opinion.**

Project Element		2012 ISSUED BIOLOGICAL OPINION (Table 14)				2015 Incidental Take Totals			
		Lethal Take		Non-lethal Take		Lethal Take		Non-lethal Take	
		Adult	Sub-adult	Adult	Sub-adult	Adult	Sub-adult	Adult	Sub-adult
Operations	Turbine Operation (A-1)	4	1	31	30				
	Spillway Operation (A-2)	2	1	76	31				
	Reservoir Operation (A-3)	1	2	8	3				
HCP	Passage Survival Plan								
	Wells Dam Juvenile Passage Plan								
	-Fish Bypass Operation (A-1)	1	1	4	6				
	-Juvenile Survival Study (A-2)	2	2	4	6				
	Wells Dam Adult Passage Plan	1	3	76	31			5	
	Tributary Conservation Plan and Committee	-	-	-	-				
	Hatchery Management Plans								
	-Hatchery Management (A-1)	2	5	76	31			3	
	-Operation of the Twisp Weir (A-2)	1	1	118	50*				
	-HGMP Implementation (A-3)	2	2	76	31			3	33~+6
	-Juvenile Salmonid Release (A-4)	-	-	629	132*				
	Predator Control Program	2	1	76	31				
ASA	Water Quality Management Plan	1	2	76	31				
	Bull Trout Management Plan	2	-	76	31				
	Pacific Lamprey Management Plan	1	1	2	5				
	White Sturgeon Management Plan	1	1	2	5				
	Resident Fish Management Plan	1	2	76	31				
	Aquatic Nuisance Management Plan	1	1	76	31				
TERRESTRIAL	Wildlife and Botanical Management Plan	-	-	-	-				
	Line Avian Protection Plan	on effect	on effect	on effect	on effect				
	Recreation Resources Management Plan	-	-	-	-				
	Historic Properties Management Plan	-	-	-	-				
	Land Use Policy	on effect	on effect	on effect	on effect				

\*These totals include 19 Juveniles.

~ Since 33 of these fish were encountered in higher tributary areas and were not assessed for reproductive maturity it is suspected that some may have been resident adults rather than sub-adults

### 3.7 USFWS Section 7 Consultation

The PME's contained within the BTMP were specifically developed, in consultation with the USFWS, to address potential RPMs for the Project relicensing and associated Section 7 consultation. All of the USFWS's potential RPMs for the Wells Project can be found in Section 2.0 above. Each of these RPMs has been cross referenced with the specific supporting objective and PME (Sections 4.1 - 4.6) found within the BTMP. The purpose of these RPMs are to provide consistency with Douglas PUD's Aquatic Settlement Agreement and the USFWS' subsequent Section 7 consultation on the relicensing of the Wells Project.

#### 3.7.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Objective 5 in 2015 - USFWS Section 7 Consultation

On March 16, 2012, the USFWS issued a Bull Trout BO related for the relicensing of the Wells Project. The BO contained various RPMs and the terms and conditions (T&Cs). These RPMs and T&Cs can be found within Appendix E of the FERC license for the Wells Project and they

are consistent with the measures identified in the BTMP and within this report. Since license issuance Douglas PUD has implemented the PME's from the BTMP and RPM's from the Biological Opinion consistent with requirements.

No formal Section 7 consultation was required in 2015.

### **3.8 Reporting**

Douglas PUD will provide a draft annual report to the Aquatic SWG summarizing the previous year's activities undertaken in accordance with the BTMP. The report will document all bull trout activities conducted for the Wells Project and describe activities proposed for the following year. Furthermore, any decisions, statements of agreement, evaluations, or changes made pursuant to this BTMP will be included in the annual report. If significant activity was not conducted in a given year, Douglas PUD will prepare a memorandum providing an explanation of the circumstances in lieu of the annual report.

#### **3.8.1.1 Progress Towards Meeting Annual Reporting Requirements**

This 2015 report fulfills the reporting requirements identified in the BTMP and Article 406 of the Wells Project FERC operating license. In addition, this report fulfills requirements of the Bull Trout BO to submit an annual take report to the Central Washington Field Office of the USFWS on or before April 15 each year.

Because the measures required by the BO are entirely consistent with the measures found in the Aquatic Settlement Agreement's BTMP and because the reporting requirements for the BTMP, bull trout BO and Article 406 are consistent, the 2015 BTMP Annual Report will be used to satisfy all three of the bull trout annual reporting requirements.

## 4.0 REFERENCES

BioAnalysts, Inc. 2004. Movement of Bull Trout within the Mid-Columbia River and Tributaries, 2001-2004. Prepared by BioAnalysts, Inc., Eagle Rock, Idaho for Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County, Wenatchee, WA, Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County, East Wenatchee, WA, and Public Utility District No. 1 of Grant County, Ephrata, WA.

Douglas (Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County). 2004. Wells Hydroelectric Project Bull Trout Monitoring and Management Plan, 2004-2008. Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County, East Wenatchee, WA.

LGL and Douglas PUD. 2007. Wells bull trout monitoring and management plan, 2006 Annual Report. Wells Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2149.

LGL and Douglas PUD. 2008. Bull trout monitoring and management plan, 2005-2008 final report. Wells Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 21.49. Prepared for Public Utilities District No. 1 of Douglas County. East Wenatchee, Washington.

Appendix 1



# Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County

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Stephen Lewis  
Hydropower and Energy Coordinator  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Central Washington Field Office  
215 Melody Lane, Suite 103  
Wenatchee, WA 98801-8122

October 5, 2015

**Subject: Wells Hydroelectric Project No. 2149  
Low Pool Elevation Bull Trout Survey – License Article 402**

Mr. Lewis:

Pursuant to Article 402 of the license for the Wells Hydroelectric Project (Wells Project), the Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County (Douglas PUD) developed a Bull Trout Stranding, Entrapment, And Take Study Plan (Plan). This document was developed collaboratively with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Aquatic Settlement Work Group (ASWG). The Plan was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on September 24, 2013 and approved by the FERC on October 29, 2013.

The Plan requires Douglas PUD to conduct 5 reservoir surveys when Wells Dam (Project) operations reduce the forebay elevation to 773 feet above sea level (msl) within the first five years of the new operating license for the Project. These surveys are to be conducted opportunistically when reservoir elevations may be at or below 773' msl for an extended period of time. This sampling regime is also consistent with the Service's 2013 Section 10 Biological Opinion, Section 18 Fishway Prescriptions for the Project, and Douglas PUD's Bull Trout Management Plan.

Since license issuance one bull trout stranding survey was conducted on February 24, 2013. During the first survey, since license issuance, no bull trout were observed and in particular no bull trout were observed in stranding pools. Results from this effort were summarized in a technical memo dated March 10<sup>th</sup> and submitted to the USFWS and the Aquatic Settlement Work Group. These results were also filed with the FERC as part of 2013 annual Bull Trout Management Plan report.

More recently, Douglas PUD lowered the reservoir as required to facilitate a construction project at the mouth of the Methow River. On September 2, 2015 the Wells Reservoir was lowered to 772' msl. On September 3, 2015 Douglas PUD biologists conducted a bull trout stranding survey consistent with the Plan. This was the second bull trout stranding survey conducted since the issuance of a new operating license for the Wells Hydroelectric Project.

Results of the survey are as follows:

- Methow River mouth - pool noted at the bottom of the Methow River boat launch. No fish occupied the pool. One partially decomposed Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*) carcass and one decomposed sockeye salmon (*O. Nerka*) carcass were noted along the shoreline adjacent to the pool. These fish presumably died prior to the reservoir being lowered for construction activities.
- Okanogan River mouth - no pools or fish found.
- Kirk Islands - three pools found containing an estimated 100-200 *Cyprinidae* fry. See Figure 1.
- El Rio Road bed (across from Okanogan River mouth) - visual inspection showed no fish in shallow part of a single pool. The pool was estimated to be over 9 feet deep and seining was determined to be ineffective due to obstructions within the pool. See Figure 2.
- Schluneger Flats - no pools or fish found. See Figure 3.
- Bridgeport Bar Islands - 4 pools, 3 of which contained stickleback, juvenile suckers, 100-200 *Cyprinidae* fry, and one deceased burbot (*Iota Iota*) subadult. Biologists estimated 100-200 of each species were present.



**Figure 1. Kirk Island stranding pool.**



**Figure 2. El Rio Road bed (across from the Okanogan River mouth).**



**Figure 3. Schluneger Flats (Starr boat launch).**

No bull trout or adult fish of any species were observed. In the event of future low reservoir events where forebay elevations drop to or below 773' msl, Douglas PUD will implement the Bull Trout Stranding, Entrapment, and Take Study Plan accordingly.

If you have any questions or require further information regarding the above sampling, please feel free to contact Andrew Gingerich at (509) 881-2323, [andrewg@dcpud.org](mailto:andrewg@dcpud.org).

Sincerely,

Andrew Gingerich  
Sr. Aquatic Resource Biologist

Cc: Wells Aquatic Settlement Work Group  
Mr. Shane Bickford – Douglas PUD  
Mr. Chas Kyger – Douglas PUD