

Project ID: 32009

Squaw Creek Cooperative Fisheries Restoration Project

Sponsor: RC&D

Province: Middle Snake

Subbasin: Payette

FY03 Request: \$43,750

5YR Estimate: \$790,250

Short Description: Assess and ameliorate the significant factors that have resulted in a severely depressed bull trout metapopulation within the major streams of the Squaw Creek drainage.

Response Needed? Yes

ISRP Preliminary Recommendation and Comments:

Response needed. The proposal would work to bolster bull trout in one of the five key watersheds in the Payette drainage as identified in the Idaho Governor's bull trout recovery. Basic building blocks appear to be in place for a watershed level program, but it seems to be in the initial planning stage.

Please clarify the level of support from the Idaho Department of Fish & Game for the project. From the proposal, there is uncertainty regarding whether there would be adequate participation of qualified fish biologist personnel. Please provide additional information. Also, the M&E for habitat response and long-term population response needs to be more thoroughly described in the response and made consistent with IDFG methods and projects. The proponents are referred to the programmatic section of this report on Monitoring, and the specific comments on Aquatic Monitoring and Evaluation.

Responses to comments:

Please clarify the level of support from the Idaho Department of Fish & Game for the project.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) supports the Squaw Creek Cooperative Fisheries Restoration Project (SCCFRP) in a variety of aspects. Directly, IDFG has committed in-kind consultation support in the form of a commitment to review sampling methodologies, design evaluation of passage and screening structures, and assistance in stream alteration and collection permitting. Cooperatively, IDFG provided considerable assistance in the development of the Squaw Creek Bull Trout Problem Assessment in identifying the limiting factors within Squaw Creek and the recommendations that have been adopted for the BPA proposal. IDFG further supports the restoration work proposed within the Squaw Creek drainage as cooperative members on the Southwest Bull Trout Assessment Team and Southwest Basin Native Fish Watershed Advisory Group. In addition, the projects implements six of the objectives stated within the IDFG 2001-2006

Fisheries Management Plan (pg. 186) for the Payette River Drainage and management direction identified for the Squaw Creek watershed (pg. 188). The SCCFRP also implements five recommendations within the Payette River Basin that was identified within the Sub-Basin Summary and prepared by IDFG (pg. 127-128). Finally, the data collected from this project will be incorporated into the Payette River Fisheries Database developed by IDFG and funded by BPA (BPA 98002).

From the proposal, there is uncertainty regarding whether there would be adequate participation of qualified fish biologist personnel. Please provide additional information.

The Squaw Creek Cooperative Fisheries Restoration Project (SCCFRP) has included the consultation and permitting time of IDFG. IDFG has committed in-kind consultation support in the form of review of sampling methodologies, design evaluation of passage and screening structures, and stream alteration and collection permitting. The project includes funding for a professional fisheries biologist. The Rocky Mountain Research Station (Boise Aquatic Sciences Lab) has been utilized by Key Personnel (Douglas Bradley) in sample design and analysis. It is expected that the Boise Aquatic Science Lab will be also be consulted throughout the design and implementation process of the SCCFRP. The Technical Advisory Team (comprised of State and Federal professional biologists) of the Southwest Basin Native Fish Watershed Advisory Group will also be consulted to provide advice and guidance during all aspects of the project.

Two for the four Key Personnel are trained fisheries biologist and will play a significant role through each step of the SCCFRP.

The Senior Consultant (Delbert Skeesick) has a long and extensive fisheries background and will provide a primary supporting role in the SCCFRP (see Key Personnel).

Supporting personnel (Douglas Bradley) has worked as a USDA Forest Service fisheries biologist for several years. His major duties include the hiring and training of field crews as well as design, coordination, and implementation of fish and habitat surveys throughout the Forest. He has worked on several stream restoration and passageway development/implementation projects. He consults with the Rocky Mountain Research Station (Boise Lab) and utilizes methods developed Peterson et. al. (2001) in sampling bull trout. As a Boise National Forest (BNF) fisheries biologist, he further has access to additional fisheries personnel support from the BNF supervisors and regional offices in the form of additional experienced fisheries personnel to concur with planning and design, to be used as needed. He has further developed a working relationship with Squaw Creek landowners, grazing permittees, and water-users to support the implementation of the project.

Finally, the combined experiences of the Key Personnel biologists, the cooperative commitments of IDFG, and advisory support of other biologists should provide a sound foundation for the incorporation of fisheries methods that are accepted by regional fisheries biologist.

Also, the M&E for habitat response and long-term population response needs to be more thoroughly described in the response and made consistent with IDFG methods and projects.

This project is built upon the existing information from the Squaw Creek drainage and the analysis of the factors impacting bull trout and other salmonids. This information has set the stage for the SCCFRP to have the highest potential for improving aquatic productivity in both short and long terms.

The monitoring and evaluation plan for the SCCFRP includes both implementation and trend monitoring (Tier 1). Detailed monitoring plans will be cooperatively formulated by supporting agencies following the analysis of the collected fish and habitat data, and from the development of specific project activities (i.e. types of passage and screening structures and determined distribution and effectiveness of brook trout eradication). Bull trout monitoring will follow protocol developed by the Rocky Mountain Research Station (Boise Aquatic Sciences Lab). Biomass monitoring (of salmonids) will be conducted pre and post treatment to document trends. Monitoring of adfluvial behavior will occur through the use of a video camera at the lowermost ladder in the spring for redband trout and fall for bull trout.

The monitoring data collected from the SCCFRP will be summarized annually, disseminated to State and Federal agencies and presented at professional meeting to disclose the effectiveness of recovery efforts from this project.