



NEWS RELEASE

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Endangered Fish Thriving in IDL Timber Management Areas

Editor Note: With the annual observance of Arbor Day on April 29 and the celebration of the role trees play in our lives, the following story is related to the value of trees, forest management and their relationship to fishery and other resources.

(Adams County) – Recent fishery sampling by Idaho Department of Lands biologists indicate that bull trout are abundant and widely distributed in timber management areas throughout the Hornet Creek drainage located in central Idaho about 13 miles west-northwest of Council in Adams County.

The upper reaches of Hornet Creek and its tributaries are designated as critical bull trout habitat. A majority of the land in this drainage is managed by the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) for timber production.

“Arbor Day celebrates the value of trees, and since 2005, IDL Payette Lakes Supervisory Area staff have implemented the harvest of 13.6 million board feet of timber generating \$2.3 million in revenue from the Hornet Creek drainage,” said Payette Lakes Area Forester Scott Howerton. “However, Arbor Day ideals also recognize the integration of all resources and during this time period \$86,000 was spent on watershed improvement projects.”

Completed watershed projects include reducing sediment delivery from roads to surface waters and improving fish passage at stream crossings. Specifically, 1.3 miles of roads were obliterated, 1.4 miles of road were surfaced or resurfaced, drainage was improved on 7.6 miles of road, one mile of road was closed to vehicle traffic, and two stream crossings were replaced to allow unimpeded fish passage.

Bull trout, listed in 1998 by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, were sampled in North and Placer Creeks, headwater tributaries of Hornet Creek.

“IDL foresters plan and administer timber sales on state lands for the purpose of generating revenue for the endowments and maintaining healthy and sustainable forests,” added IDL Fish Biologist Chris Tretter. “These professional land managers assess the protection of public resources, such as water quality and fish habitat, using staff specialists with expertise ranging from fishery resources to insect and disease management.”

IDL’s process for assessing Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE) was first implemented in the Hornet Creek drainage in 1998. A 2010 follow-up assessment indicated the watershed improvement projects were highly successful at reducing sediment delivered to surface waters from the forest road system.

In a separate CWE assessment conducted during the same time period, stream temperatures were slightly cooler after harvest. These results have provided motivation to the agency to refine and apply the methods used to similar areas located throughout the state. Threats to the continued existence of bull trout include actions which increase stream temperatures or otherwise modify critical habitat.

“Arbor Day recognizes the relationship of forests and all the other resources that benefit from trees - and having an abundant population of bull trout in this critical habitat of clear cold water is cause for celebration,” Tretter added.

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Photos (credit to Idaho Department of Lands)



Fishery Biologists Electro- shocking in Hornet Creek



Biologist taking environmental DNA (eDNA) stream samples in Hornet Creek. eDNA samples indicate that bull trout were relatively abundant and widely distributed throughout the Hornet Creek drainage