



## Endangered Bull Trout Habitat Protection



*This week, we have an opportunity to contribute to the habitat protection of the bull trout, an Idaho native. Send your comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service by March 15, 2010. Let them know you support the proposed habitat designations!*

In January, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to dramatically increase the designated critical habitat of bull trout. The proposed increase from the previous designation will include almost 10,000 miles of rivers and 200,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs across Idaho. The comment period for this proposal closes soon.

### Critical Habitat for a Threatened Species

Bull trout was classified as a **threatened species** in 1999. According to the Endangered Species Act, a threatened species is "Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range." **Critical habitat** is land that is crucial to a species' recovery, and is thereby given extra protection. Any federal agency must consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service before taking any action on critical habitat.

Endangered Bull trout need protection because they have very specific habitat requirements; they need cold, very clean water in order to spawn. This species is a known indicator for water quality because when they flourish, water quality must be excellent. By supporting this proposal and helping the bull trout, we will also help many other species, such as the native cutthroat, rainbow trout, and steelhead, by improving the water quality throughout the Northwest.

Some bull trout populations spend their entire life in one stream and others migrate from larger lakes to smaller streams to spawn. Some populations even migrate between marine environment and fresh water. Whether they spend their entire life in the same stream or they migrate, bull trout can live up to 12 years and grow to be 20 pounds.

## **Critical Habitat Protection in Idaho**

Bull trout were once found throughout the Columbia River Basin throughout North Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Nevada. Now, however, they currently occupy only 50% of the habitat they once did because of decreased water quality and other threats. The bull trout is nearly extinct from the Clark Fork River of Idaho.

In our North Idaho region, the protected critical habitat will include:

- Coeur d'Alene Lake, Coeur d'Alene River, St. Joe River and more than 50 tributaries.
- Priest Lake, Priest River and 23 tributaries including Granite Creek, Lion Creek, Hughes Fork and Two Mouth Creek, among others.
- Lake Pend Oreille, the Clark Fork River and more than 40 area rivers and streams.
- Kootenai River basin, including northwest Montana, and 29 tributaries, including Fisher River, Trout Creek and Libby Creek.

Some are concerned with the impact this proposal will have on small business entities such as agriculture, development, and mining. For example, the Idaho Water Users Association and other special interests are working against these proposed protections. Your support for bull trout habitat protection is critical.

*The need to act now is great because, while their range covers a large area, the populations are isolated and there have been several local extinctions.*

### **What you can do:**

Send your comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service by **March 15, 2010**. Let them know you support the proposed habitat designations!

• **DO IT ONLINE:** <http://www.regulations.gov>.

• **MAIL A LETTER:**

Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AW88  
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