

**PACFISH/INFISH FIELD REVIEW
EASTERN WASHINGTON**

September 30, 2002 to October 3, 2002

IIT Field Review Team members

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General Field Review Objectives

1. Determine if the Biological Opinions have been implemented in accordance with the mechanisms, terms and conditions.
2. Determine if on-the-ground management decisions are consistent with the Biological Opinions, PACFISH and INFISH Goals and Objectives.
3. Determine if PACFISH and INFISH Standards and Guides have been correctly interpreted and implemented on-the-ground.
4. Determine if grazing implementation monitoring activities have been evaluated to eliminate duplication between the PACFISH/INFISH Grazing Implementation Monitoring Module and other grazing implementation monitoring activities.
5. Improve communication and coordination between agencies. Strengthen interagency commitment to watershed management under the management direction of PACFISH/INFISH.

Specific Local Objectives

Local units conducted a Field Review. A description of the site visits is contained in Appendix 1.

FINDINGS

Colville NF

Commendations

Colville NF: We note that the Forest Supervisor, Ranger, and the Staff Officer are supportive of the program as evidenced by their participation in the review. The Forest is managing in a pro-active way to recover bull trout. Specialists and managers have a good understanding of INFISH and the BO's. Unit uses resourcefulness to secure funding in support of habitat enhancement. It appears the Level 1 Team is working well. The permittee is participating in the monitoring and is supportive of the habitat enhancements.

Spokane District BLM

OBSERVATIONS AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Colville NF:

Observation:

Pioneer Park campground. Good measures being implemented to protect and enhance the campground. This site is located adjacent to potential bull trout adult rearing habitat and probably does not pose a threat to the species. The Forest provided copies of monitoring module results on the campgrounds. The requirement to do a Vegetation Management Plan was answered with "no". The Rec program has not yet done this due to lack of funds. The question asked was, "Does a vegetation management plan help bull trout?" Answer: "probably not". The Principle threats in the system appear to be primarily in the tributaries and include: brook trout, historic roading/fine sediment, and migration barriers. Dams are limiting upstream movement, but it is uncertain whether dams are limiting any local population establishment or recovery. Brook trout may have a competitive advantage in headwater systems which are currently high in fines. Relicensing activity is going on presently, and the Forest is working on terms and conditions for the license on the hydro facilities.

Recommendations: The IIT needs to evaluate whether or not there is a need to establish guidelines for what should go into FERC licenses to assure consistency with the Biological Opinions. Also for the IIT: How relevant are some Standards and Guidelines and monitoring requirements when adjacent habitat is not threatened by the activity, i.e. a campground adjacent to large river nodal habitat (note: INFISH Goals and Objectives are not limited to fish but include other riparian-dependant values). Where Veg management plans are not completed but needed, there may be ways to programmatically accomplish the work more cost-effectively.

Observation: LeClerc Creek: There are conservation measures being applied here that are helping to restore a system that was historically degraded. Livestock grazing is not the only adverse effect as road sedimentation was obvious. Thus road treatment measures are also critical. The Forest is not the only landowner in the basin, and habitats may not recover without intervention on the part of the other landowners. There was an assessment of granting access to the timber companies that resulted in a LAA. This resulted in a conservation

agreement (copies provided) containing measures to reduce road densities, monitoring, etc.. There is a BO on this conservation agreement.

Recommendation: Look for additional opportunities to coordinate recovery efforts with other landowners in the basin, particularly timber companies and other federal agencies.

Observation: The Level 1 Teams have not had the need to elevate consultations, thus the Level 2 Team has not met on a regular basis. Level 2 Teams can be valuable to the streamlining process even if the Level 1 Teams are working effectively.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Level 2 Team periodically communicate on issues that are driving agencies' priorities, workload, and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of Level 1 as well as a review of monitoring results and needed management changes. Include BLM occasionally to coordinate streamlining efforts.

Observation: The Forest is doing monitoring at a higher intensity than required by the IIT Module. Apparently this intensity is required by the local BO. The questions are, "Why are these higher intensities in place, and are these levels necessary?" Stubble height was being used as move trigger on brush-dominated systems. There may be a better indicator such as bank alteration/trampling and woody-stem use.

Recommendation: The Level 1 and 2 Teams may want to investigate the monitoring design. Examine the supporting documentation in the current IIT Monitoring Module to help guide selection of indicators and necessary sampling intensities. The Forest may want to invite the National Riparian Service Team on a field review to examine the monitoring design in detail and provide assistance with developing a more cost-effective approach.

Observation: Almost ran into black cows on the highway after dark.

Recommendation: Remove all black cows from the Forest (or at least the highway right of ways) or paint them fluorescent orange.

FEEDBACK FROM THE UNITS TO THE REVIEW TEAM AND THE IIT

Colville NF: The new IIT Implementation Monitoring Module reply due is unclear. Tom is the point person and the directive was sent to the wildlife bio. The memo was sent too late in the season. There is a need to improve the point person communication out of the Regional Office. There is need for better field training and more frequent coordination. The manual is detailed on range, but it is very limited on recreation and minerals. Combine the Effectiveness Monitoring outreach in the spring with Implementation module training at the same time.

Spokane District BLM

COMMENDATIONS: The areas we visited were on the periphery of listed salmonids yet BLM is being proactive implementing PACFISH/INFISH. The Field Units are doing joint planning and facilitation in the Entiat and accomplishing some project implementation. This complies with and implements the WR-2 Standard in PACFISH and INFISH. Joe Kelly's assistance with the tour was very helpful and Jim Fisher's involvement provided much information of value to the review. We were also glad to have the meeting with Joe Buesing in Spokane. Karen Whitehall's participation in the Entiat was also crucial to the review. Participation by Justin and Kerry from the Level 1 Team was also helpful. From what we observed, grazing is being managed to meet PACFISH/INFISH. It should also be recognized that the Spokane District has made significant accomplishments in the land exchange program that is particularly beneficial for positive resource management.

Observation: The Level 1 Team is spread over a very large area. It does not appear that the Level 1 Team has had the need to elevate consultations, thus the Level 2 Team has not met on a regular basis. Level 2 Teams can be valuable to the streamlining process even if the Level 1 Teams are working effectively.

Recommendation: Recommend that the Level 2 Team periodically communicate on issues that are driving agencies' priorities, workload, and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of Level 1 as well as a review of monitoring results and needed management changes.

Observation: Entiat: The BLM and Forest Service have a good working relationship. However, the Forest Service developed a watershed analysis in the Entiat, and BLM's involvement was unclear. BLM has mostly small projects in the watershed, and it is not apparent how those relate to the whole system. The problem of operating under the NW Forest Plan in one part of the basin and PACFISH in another may present a conflict and perhaps confusion for local publics. It is not known if BLM has a monitoring plan on its projects, thus it may lack key monitoring questions that need to be answered.

Recommendations: The Entiat is the first Coordinated Plan under the States Watershed Planning Act, and as such is an important precedent-setting management plan, still, the agencies would benefit by previous experience with development of such plans – i.e. the Upper Salmon Watershed Project, in Idaho which has used a holistic approach. Also, BLM's needs to review the Entiat monitoring plan and make sure the BLM projects are included to form monitoring questions in context with the whole watershed. The Entiat coordinating group also needs to get the Regulatory agencies review and likely their approval of the instreamflow recommendations to address the ESA issues and avoid a train wreck down the road.

Observation: Entiat River Biology – This river supports a variety of salmonid species including Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout, coho, etc. Channelization post-flooding has resulted in habitat simplification in the lower 17 miles of River(i.e. loss of pool structure). About 10 percent of the flow of the river is diverted for irrigation in this reach, and there have been concerns raised over whether there is adequate instream flow given the habitat conditions. The BLM and Forest Service are working with local entities to restore some structure by

installing upstream-“v” weirs, wood debris, and barbs in the channel at strategic locations. A large fire in 1994 burned a large proportion of the watershed upstream of Ardenvoir, and excess fines were observed in the adjacent river reach. The lack of pools in the channelized reaches of this river limit spawning and early rearing of fall Chinook salmon, and may limit holding for other migratory salmonids. This watershed has had a severe fire history since the 1970’s.

Recommendation: Until post-fire sedimentation in the upper reaches has subsided, concentrate pool developments in the lower reaches of the river. Structures in the upper reaches will continue to be ineffective as pool forming structures as long as bedloads are excessive. Relevant indicators/RMO’s might be: pool frequency and quality, substrate fines, water temperature, and summer irrigation season streamflows.

Observation: It appears that stream structures in the Entiat were being installed in some places without considering management changes and/or riparian restoration and management in the vicinity of the structures. There was a recognized need to do something, and the structures were installed to demonstrate short-term actions are being taken. In some cases instream structures appeared inadequately designed to create rearing habitats or address limiting factors (Ardenvoir area). Stream structures need to be accompanied by restoration and management of RHCAs and the watershed. As stated in S&G WR-3: “do not use planned restoration as a substitute for habitat degradation”. In context with excess fines associated with the 1994 fire, the structures in the upper reaches will likely be ineffective, at least in the short term.

Recommendation: The Entiat Plan focus is on the private lands, but it needs to broaden and include up-river watershed restoration as well as the application of instream structures in context with watershed-wide processes. We recommend that watershed and riparian restoration measures be emphasized in the plan as much as the instream structures. The Forest Service will be the major player in such measures given that they manage 80% of the lands in the watershed.

Observation: Yakima: The Yakima is a large system and accomplishments are positive given the magnitude of the watershed. A coordinated plan with the State and other local entities could grow out of watershed analysis in this reach of Yakima River. A prioritization scheme for habitat restoration was unclear. How do each of the sites relate to the big picture? What are the overall goals and objectives of management? Both recreation and grazing management in the Yakima appear reflect positive changes.

Recommendation: This might be a place where recreation, especially dispersed recreation, can be a demonstration for how to do it right. The area could be a showcase for PACFISH/INFISH implementation considering the visibility of these sites to the public. But there needs to be some management context for the actions that are being taken. PACFISH requires watershed analysis for new recreation sites in RHCA’s. A watershed analysis focused on these issues would be beneficial here. The Watershed Analysis would place project priorities in perspective with the whole system and provide the basis for the recreation development plan and examine how these projects fit in the broad picture. Apparently the Yakima will be a focal area for NWPPC subbasin planning in the near term. BLM should be involved in this process to help acquire this “context” for project priorities basin-wide. The

All H priorities (recently requested from the State Office) might be used as a mechanism for funding the needed analysis, planning and coordination, especially given the inherent public visibility here and the obvious emphasis that other agency's are placing on this area. This approach would also help in future land use plan revisions. BLM should continue to include the State DNR and Department of Fish and Wildlife in the watershed assessments and planning. BLM could help make a positive contribution to help achieve the greenway along the Yakima River. Also, BLM should open up the side channel at Roza Recreation Site.

Observation: Yakima River Biology - This river, from Roza Dam to Ellensburg experiences bankfull discharges throughout the irrigation season. These continuous high flows render the system vulnerable to channel scour and destabilization. Though this river would do so over time anyway, channel migration is likely accelerated by the extended period of high flows. This means that at developed sites, bank scour has, and will continue to be a concern. In addition, salmonid rearing, particularly in early life stages, is likely restricted during the critical summer feeding period which coincides with the irrigation discharge period. Still, rainbow trout and whitefish appear to do ok in these waters. This suggests that there is the potential for steelhead and fall Chinook spawning in this reach, which occurs outside of the normal irrigation period. Fry rearing capacity is probably limited to those few side channels that exist mostly in the upper end of the reach. Spring Chinook salmon are currently spawning and rearing about 20 miles upstream of this reach where water temperature conditions are probably more favorable during August. The long-term integrity of streamside forests (cottonwood, ponderosa pine, alder, birch, etc.), is vulnerable to the heavy recreation activity occurring in this reach. These forests are important for securing detritus, maintaining bank stability, and providing for long-term wood debris recruitment. Research has shown that riparian buffers needed to attain these variables are: ½ tree height for detritus, one crown width for root strength to control bank stability, and 1 tree height for wood debris recruitment.

Recommendation: Given that rearing space is the limiting factor for salmonids in this reach, and given that recreation activity has influence on streamside forests, the relevant indicators for monitoring and management are: Long Term: trends in rearing space as estimated from aerial reconnaissance approximately once every 5 years, woody stem regeneration in the recreation sites approximately once every 3 to 5 years, streamside riparian composition once every 5 years (greenline and cross-section methods). Short Term: recreation use along the streambanks.

Observation: Implementation Monitoring Module: It appears that local units have had limited experience with the new module. Field units need to understand how to respond to the "no" answers they provide when filling out the checklists. There are two types of "no's" - those that indicate need for management change, and those that result from lack of resources or irrelevancy. Explanations for "no" answers can be made in the module – in the "non-compliance" spreadsheet. Training needs were evidenced by the fact that field folks have a lot of questions. The module is new and until there is some experience with it, there will be a lot of questions. The implementation module will also focus attention and better understanding on the S&G's and make it possible to extend their application through time as personnel changes occur. We have also observed that people have difficulty understanding which monitoring indicators to use in various situations.

Recommendation: The IM Team needs to continue to find ways to help field units better understand the module. There is a need to pick out key components and help field units understand where to focus their attention. It would be good to summarize or digest information from the grazing support materials for the monitoring module. Training should be done at the field units.

Observation: EM Module: Field offices would like the EM team to interpret the summarized data published each year. Where there are reference sites, this can be done, but many of the sites in this area don't have references.

Recommendation: Perhaps the field units could help develop projected reference conditions where these are lacking – using the consensus method between local agency specialists and a technical team put together by the EM Monitoring Team.

Observation: The Liberty stop indicated the need to pull recreation uses back from the streambanks. Riparian encroachment in this area presents a concern for aquatic habitats. There was discussion at this stop about which are the appropriate RMO's. PACFISH/INFISH allows modifying the interim RMOs to better reflect conditions that are attainable in a specific stream. Generally watershed analysis is needed to modify RMO's, but they may also be modified using stream reach specific data to support the change. RMO modifications require documented rationale supporting the change.

Recommendation: We recognize efforts that have initiated management at this site, but much more is needed. The efforts to manage illegal mining are commendable. The culvert at Liberty Creek appears to be a barrier. Perhaps management at this site should be implemented by one agency representing both the FS and BLM to address the various problems in this area. If this is achieved in conjunction with Forest Service management, more of the stream system might be addressed by positive changes in the RMOs. In the stream, RMO modifications the field unit might consider use of substrate fine sediment, woody regeneration, and pool frequency and quality. These variables directly reflect recreation site impacts and are important to potential salmonid spawning and rearing.

FEEDBACK FROM THE UNITS TO THE REVIEW TEAM AND THE IIT

Spokane District, BLM

Because of the geographic extent of the District, driving and time and site visits were limited. It would have been beneficial to spend more time on projects on the ground. Recent changes in grazing monitoring and vegetation monitoring methods need to be provided to the District. This is part of the above recommendation to digest the grazing monitoring background in the Grazing Module. The module, at the discretion of the field manager, can be applied to streams with non-listed fish. It represents a structured method for highlighting management needs with respect to grazing in riparian areas.