SUMMARY OF THE RANGEWIDE BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT CONSERVATION TEAM MEETING

Fall Meeting To Report on 2001 Conservation Actions

November 14, 2001
Room 2000, UDWR Salt Lake City Office
1 – 5 PM

Thomas D. Pettengill
Team Chair

Attached are the Agenda, Attendance List, and handouts from the various states and agencies that gave presentations of their 2001 conservation activities with Bonneville cutthroat trout.

A total of 36 people from Nevada, Idaho and Utah attended this meeting. Fisheries personnel from the three state agencies attended and Wyoming sent reports of their work but were not able to attend. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service were represented. Members and employees of Trout Unlimited also attended.

Yvette Converse, (USFWS) who had the lead from the Utah Field Office in drafting the USFWS Status Review For Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, discussed their finding. The USFWS found that listing was not warranted for Bonneville cutthroat trout. Some groups have requested all the information the Service used in making their finding. Trout Unlimited has some concerns regarding the finding and future conservation efforts. A copy of the TU letter is enclosed. There continues to be concerns of genetic analysis and Yvette would like this discussed in more detail at the Spring 2002 meeting. TU supports the Position Paper (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Publication Number 00-26) developed by seven western states.

Some groups feel that with the Service's finding of "not warranted" that state and federal agencies will scale back on their conservation efforts to protect and expand Bonneville cutthroat trout populations. It is very important that the level of work that led to the Service's finding be continued by all agencies.

The Utah Conservation Agreement And Strategy For Bonneville Cutthroat Trout is five years old and progress needs to be reviewed and the document renewed or revised by the signatories. The initial effort will be to write a review of the last five years progress and them ask signatories to decide whether to renew the existing document or to revise it. Committees are being formed to both write the document covering progress over the last 5 years and to look at language to strength land management activities in the renewed or revised document. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources personnel will take the lead in setting up GMU committees to draft the five year review document. Our goal is to have

the five-year review report and a new or renewed Conservation Agreement for the next five years completed by fall of 2002.

Reports of 2001 Field Activities:

Idaho:

Idaho Department of Fish & Game (Dick Scully): Dick reported that their major efforts were through contracting with Utah State University to do a study of St. Charles Creek and natural reproduction by Bear Lake Bonneville cutthroat trout. Paul Burnett, the USU graduate student doing the study, gave a report of their activities and findings to date. The question facing the Idaho Department of Fish & Game is whether it is okay to manage completely with hatchery fish or is a wild component of the fishery important? IDFG feels that it is important to have a wild component in the fishery. UDWR and IDFG have changed the regulations on Bear Lake to protect wild fish. All unmarked (not fin clipped) cutthroat trout must be immediately released by anglers. Paul studied the spawning run by Bear Lake Bonneville cutthroat trout up St. Charles Creek. He monitored spawning activity, spawning location, spawning success, stream habitat and water quality. Below the canyon mouth, St. Charles Creek splits into the Big Arm and the Little Arm. The Big Arm doesn't go directly back into Bear Lake. Cutthroat trout migrating down the Big Arm can end up in the Bear River below Bear Lake. Both arms have water diverted for irrigation. This greatly affects the possibilities for getting spawners and naturally produced cutthroat trout back into Bear Lake. The lower portion of the Little Arm where the majority of the adult cutthroat trout spawned is dewatered before the eggs can hatch and young can migrate back to the lake. Water use will have to be changed if any significant change in natural recruitment to the Bear Lake fishery is going to come from St. Charles Creek.

Caribou-Targhee National Forest: (Jim Capurso) Approximately 50 miles of streams were surveyed in 2000 and another 50 miles in 2001. This completes surveys of all streams that with trout habitat. Of the 39 streams surveyed, ten contained only Bonneville cutthroat trout.

The Forest Service is looking at doing some riparian fencing, reseeding, barriers, and hardened stream crossings. The number one priority for the whole Forest is water quality monitoring and improving water quality for fish. A big report or document has been written and a copy can be obtained by contacting Jim.

Many grazing allotments that include waters with Bonneville cutthroat trout are or will be up for renewal in the near future. Range-cons will be working with permittees to improve conditions.

Bureau of Land Management: BLM is on the lower end of streams where the USFS has found Bonneville cutthroat trout. The only Bonneville cutthroat

population found on BLM land in Idaho is in an unnamed stream in a beaver pond complex. Beaver provide important habitat on these very small streams. The streams are so small that they haven't been stocked with salmonids to provide a fishery. Guidelines will probably be developed for the RMP.

USFWS (Deb Mignogno) talked about the re-licensing of Pacific Corp 4 dams on the Bear River. Pacific Corp wants the USFWS to guarantee they won't ask for water for fish passage for 30 years. In exchange for the agreement, Pacific Corp would give $50,000/yr for Bonneville cutthroat trout conservation and $35,000/yr for wetlands work. They would also make a one-time payment of $35,000 to develop a plan for the use of the money. Developing fish passage in the Bear River drainage would cost millions of dollars. An interagency group has met and discussed Pacific Corp's proposal and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest would like to take their offer and work on habitat improvements for the next 30 years.

Nevada:

Chris Crookshanks (Nevada Division of Wildlife) that they will complete a Conservation Strategy and Agreement for Bonneville Cutthroat Trout in the State of Nevada in the winter of 2001-2002. The agreement is about 80% completed at this time. Nevada Division of Wildlife is working with the USFS, BLM and National Park Service (NPS) 9 streams for Bonneville cutthroat trout. Trout Unlimited and private landowners are also cooperating on projects. Five waters have populations and 4 additional streams will be stocked. Big Wash Creek on a private ranch will provide 5 miles of new habitat for Bonneville cutthroat trout. It appears that a good population of Bonneville cutthroat trout was severely impacted by flash floods during the summer of 2001. Goshute Creek had 1200 Bonneville cutthroat trout per mile before the flash floods. Since the floods only 2 cutthroat trout have been found. See Nevada's handout for full details of their work.

Great Basin National Park has hired Gretchen Schenk specifically to work on Bonneville cutthroat trout recovery within the park. Gretchen said the park has 11 streams covering 30 miles and they plan to have Bonneville cutthroat trout in 18 miles of stream. They have found one pure population. The NPS is treating the areas of the streams where they want to re-introduce cutthroats. When macro-invertebrate populations recover to 75% of the pretreatment numbers and taxa they will begin stocking Bonneville cutthroat trout.

The Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation have Bonneville cutthroat trout conservation projects underway on over 30 miles of streams. They have acquired some sizable grants from Trout Unlimited and the National Wildlife Foundation for their projects. The Tribe has projects in Nevada and Utah (see handout). A cattle guard has been installed on the reservation and the Tribal Council is removing grazing from a large area that will benefit tribal Bonneville

cutthroat trout work and populations. The Tribe is stocking a pond with rainbow trout to replace lost fishing opportunities while they re-establish Bonneville cutthroat populations.

Utah:

Bear River GMU: Paul Thompson, Northern Region; Bonneville cutthroat trout work was a lower priority this year. The region spent most of their cutthroat time surveying the Raft River and Goose Creek drainages for Yellowstone cutthroats and preparing and treating Utah's portion of Gilbert Creek to remove non-native salmonids to re-introduce Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Approximately 300,000 Bear Lake Bonneville cutthroat trout eggs were taken at the Swan Creek trap and approximately 200,000 fish were stocked into Bear Lake. From the spawning run on Swan Creek, 68% of the spawners were hatchery fish and 32% were presumably wild fish (they didn't have any fin clips). Anglers are catching few wild fish. We think the numbers of wild are increasing. Sixty redds were built by spawners that were passed over the trap during the 2001 spawning run. Wild rainbow trout also live in Swan Creek but it appears that the rainbows are spawning at a different time from the Bonneville cutthroat trout. Hatchery fish are also being stocked into Big Spring Creek on the South end of Bear Lake in an attempt to establish a wild population.

Woodruff Creek Reservoir was drawn way down for repairs on the dam in 2000 but it appears that good numbers of Bonneville cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish survived the summer draw down.

Northern Bonneville GMU: Electro-fishing surveys were completed at 3 locations on the Blacksmith Fork River. Very few cutthroat trout were found. Sampling on Curtis Creek, a tributary to the Blacksmith Fork still showed mainly brown trout but a higher percentage of cutthroats than in the Blacksmith Fork. Genetics work done in the past has shown the cutthroat trout in Curtis Creek to be Bonneville cutthroat trout.

No Bonneville cutthroat trout were observed in sampling of the Logan River in Logan City.

Although 105 miles of stream in the Chalk Creek drainage is occupied by Bonneville cutthroat trout, the lower reaches of Chalk Creek have very poor habitat. The USFWS has a project with four private landowners to improve habitat for cutthroat trout.

Wasatch-Cache National Forest (Paul Cowley): USFS personnel on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest completed six population-monitoring

surveys on five different streams. Brook trout were found all the way up the Hayden Fork of the Bear River. Soap Stone Creek in the Provo River drainage dried up by early summer this year (2nd year of drought). Approximately 10 – 20 miles of roads have been decommissioned in the Woodruff Creek drainage. This will help reduce sediment loading of the streams in this drainage. The Forest Plan has been revised to show the significance of native cutthroat trout on the Forest.

UDWR Central Region (Charlie Thompson): Disease sampling to maintain the disease certification on Red Butte Creek was not performed in 2001. A total of 1500 Northern Bonneville cutthroat trout fingerlings were stocked into Red Butte Reservoir. About 200 June suckers were captured and relocated.

Salt Lake County Flood Control straightened a portion of Emigration Creek and blew up several beaver dams. This created a lot of concern. Good numbers of Bonneville cutthroat trout were found above a barrier. Numbers of cutthroat trout decreased moving upstream to the headwaters. Ten Bonneville cutthroat trout were transferred to Hogle Zoo for display. This is a cooperative project with the Zoo and Trout Unlimited.

Highway construction near the mouth of Parleys Canyon was adding concrete fines to Parleys Creek. The construction company had to remove the sediment. This was the same stretch of stream where a chlorine spill killed Bonneville cutthroat trout in 2000. Bonneville cutthroat trout from upstream were transplanted down into the poisoned section later in 2000.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Wildlife Board closed Mt. Dell Reservoir and a portion of Mt. Dell Creek to fishing to protect water Bonneville cutthroat trout.

Each spring 18 – 20 inch Bonneville cutthroat trout spawners run upstream out of Little Dell Reservoir to spawn. The third year of disease sampled was completed in 2001. This allowed us to move eggs into a hatchery. Some beaver dams were removed to allow spawning access to more of the stream. Trammel netting in the reservoir resulted in the catch of 17 brook trout but only 1 Bonneville cutthroat trout.

A good population of pure Bonneville cutthroat trout exists in the stream above Mill Hollow Reservoir.

Brown trout have moved from Diamond Fork up into Hall's Fork where we used to have just cutthroat trout.

Charlie Thompson reported that individual fish aren't looking good in Sixth Water and he needs to keep an eye on that population.

Residents along the Wasatch Front are very concerned about the native cutthroat trout populations in local streams and we need to work more closely with local governments to prevent the loss of fish and habitat.

West Desert GMU: Tom's Creek still has very limited numbers of Bonneville cutthroat trout. The transplanted fish are still pretty much where they were released but some young from those fish are expanding into other areas.

Basin Creek and Indian Farms Creek still have hybrid populations. No treatments have been done on those waters yet.

Fingerling Bonneville cutthroat trout produced in a spawning channel and pond on the Deep Creek Mountains Ranch were stocked into Granite Creek. Bonneville cutthroat trout were transplanted from Birch Creek into Red Cedar Creek. The USFS (Don Duff) arranged for the use of their helitak chopper to transplant 132 Bonneville cutthroat trout from the Deep Creek Mountains Ranch pond to the headwaters of Red Cedar Creek. TU/USFS Partnership funds were used to pay for the helicopter time.

Southern Bonneville GMU: Dale Hepworth said they are still trying to locate new populations and expand the range of Bonneville cutthroat trout in the Southern Region of Utah. Every 5 – 7 years the region goes back through their existing populations to monitor their status.

The region and USFS biologists are working on 3 restoration projects (see handout, first 1.25 pages are Bonneville cutthroat populations). On one project a second treatment was completed and the stream has been re-stocked.

Riparian fencing was completed on Ranch Creek.

2001 was the 10th spring that eggs have been taken from Bonneville cutthroat trout spawners a Manning Meadow Reservoir. A total of 330,000 eggs were taken. We ended up with approximately 107,000 extra Bonneville cutthroat trout from that egg take. Extra fish were put into several waters in the Southern Region including plants into some sport fishery waters. I never thought I'd see the day we'd have over 100,000 extra Bonneville cutthroat trout to stock. We kept these fish within the Southern Utah GMU and did not want to move them to other areas.

Arn Berglund also announced in this meeting that the BLM is going to be placing a lot more emphasis on fisheries issues than they have in the past.

The spring meeting of the Bonneville Technical Management Team will be all day from 9 AM – 5 PM on Wednesday, March 27, 2002.

Arn is going to work with employees of other Federal agencies to see if they can adopt some stronger criteria for land management agency guidance for the new or revised five year CA for Bonneville cutthroat trout in Utah.