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Abstract

Goat River bull trout (Salvelinus confluentus) biotelemetry and spawning assessments 2002?3

Ray Pillipow, Cory Williamson

In 2002, the British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection radio-tagged and tracked 16 sexually mature bull trout in the Goat River to determine the river担 status as a bull trout spawning system, to identify and rank important spawning areas for habitat protection considerations, and to develop index sites to monitor population trends.

Five tagged bull trout spawned in the Upper Goat River, eight spawned in Macleod Creek, one remained near Northstar Creek, and two moved downstream after tagging. Goat River bull trout travelled up to 500 km to and from spawning areas, highlighting the importance of the Goat River as a bull trout spawning stream. Ground-based redd (gravel nest) surveys undertaken in 2003 resulted in 73 (4.3 redds per kilometre) and 90 (9.0 redds per kilometre) redds for Upper Goat River and Macleod Creek, respectively. In 2003, the Goat River bull trout spawning population was estimated at approximately 326. The high-quality spawning habitat, water quality, and bull trout detection qualities of the Upper Goat River watershed provide ideal index sites for monitoring population trends in the upper Fraser River drainage. Proposed measures aimed at protecting important spawning habitat include “wildlife habitat area” (WHA) designations and adaptive resource management strategies involving stakeholder participation. Effective April 1, 2004, seasonal angling closures at spawning areas will serve to protect spawning bull trout. Future management direction will involve site monitoring and meta-population analysis.

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