

**The Pack River  
Watershed  
Council  
Presents...**

# THE RIVER RANGER

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2018

## Featuring:

Know your Bull!

## Inside this issue:

Know your Bull  
continued... 2

Grouse Creek  
Watershed  
Re-assessment 2

AIS Boat Stations 3

Tree Seedlings 3

Spring Calendar 3

**Contact us at:**  
(208) 263-5310

[www.bonnorswcd.org](http://www.bonnorswcd.org)

## Know your Bull!



**Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)**

It has been a long, cold and snowy winter. Now that spring has finally arrived, the urge to go outside and connect with the land is strong. One amazing way to do this is to take a hike along your favorite stream and cast a line, with the hope of catching a fish.

The Pack River and its tributaries are home to many species of fish including mountain whitefish, brook trout, brown trout, kokanee salmon, and rainbow trout. The Pack River also provides important habitat for bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout, both of which are native species and protected by law.

The bull trout was listed as a threatened species in 1998 for the entire region of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Westslope cutthroat trout have been designated a species of special concern in Idaho. Both of these species rely on the Pack River watershed for spawning and rearing habitat.

The Idaho Fish and Game regulations do not allow the harvest of any bull trout in the state of Idaho. Intentionally or accidentally "taking" a bull trout is illegal. In other waterbodies including the Pack River and Grouse Creek, no harvest is allowed of Westslope cutthroat trout.

One very important thing that we can do to help minimize the impact that we have on the bull trout, is to learn to correctly identify them. Correct identification, both in and out of the water, ensures the release of protected fish.

The easiest way to identify a bull trout is to check it's dorsal fin, which has no black markings. "No black on back, put it back" is a popular slogan to help anglers identify bull trout. Adult bull trout have a white leading edge on its pectoral fins, have a slightly forked tail fin, and are usually a drab olive color.

There are several fish species which can appear similar to bull trout, including lake trout and brook trout. These fish generally all have light spots on a dark background. The bull trout, however, lacks black markings on the dorsal fin while the brook trout has black worm-like markings. The lake trout has a deeply forked tail; the bull trout does not.

Another fish, the brown trout, can also be confused with the bull trout. However, the brown trout has dark spots on a lighter background and black markings on its dorsal fin.

*(continued on page 2...)*

**If you would like to receive this publication by e-mail, please contact Amanda Abajian at [Amanda.Abajian@id.nacdn.net](mailto:Amanda.Abajian@id.nacdn.net) or call 208-263-5310 x 100. Archived newsletters are available at [www.bonnorswcd.org](http://www.bonnorswcd.org)**

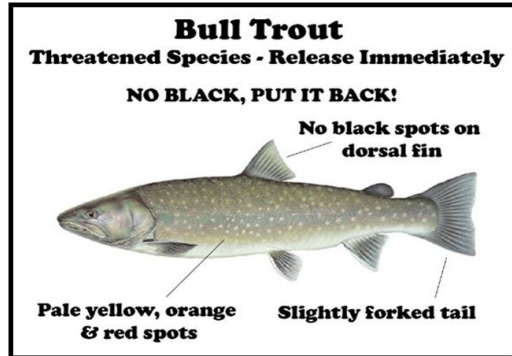
*“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish that they are after.”*

*~ Henry David Thoreau*

## Know your Bull (continued...)

It is very important to know how to handle and release a bull trout, if you happen to catch one. Always wet your hands before touching any fish to avoid damaging its protective “slime” layer.

Keep the fish in the water and avoid squeezing it while removing the hook. If the hook can’t be easily removed, cut the line as close to the mouth as possible. Many fish will survive with the hook left in them.



Once the hook is free, hold the fish upright facing upstream in the water while it regains its equilibrium. If necessary, slowly move it slowly back and forth. Always release the fish in quiet water near where it was caught.

Catch-and-release fishing can provide more than just angler satisfaction. It can also benefit the future of the resource, but only if it is done correctly. As anglers become better informed, the bull trout population will benefit. Know your bull!

## Grouse Creek Watershed Re-assessment

Grouse Creek is a primary tributary to the Pack River and supports important spawning and rearing habitats for native fish species including bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout.

shed Assessment and Restoration Prioitization Plan (2009) identified key restoration projects and prioritized them. Several of these restoration projects have since been completed.



*Upper Grouse Creek, lacking large woody debris*

Grouse Creek is listed as being water quality impaired due to excess temperature and sediment. This is due to historical logging, flooding, and wildfires throughout the watershed, which continue to impact current stream conditions.

In December 2015, a 25-year flood event occurred in the Grouse Creek watershed. The flood impacted the channel morphology and floodplain dynamics. It also affected the completed restoration projects and potentially changed the scope of future projects.

In 2007, as part of an effort to improve aquatic habitat conditions and

In 2017, Avista selected RDG to re-assess Grouse Creek and revisit the 2009 Restoration Prioritization Plan. The goals of the re-assessment are to evaluate the geomorphic response from the 2015 flood and completed restoration efforts; and update the restoration prioritization plan to account for the changes observed throughout the watershed.

water quality, Avista Corporation retained River Design Group, Inc. (RDG) to complete a watershed-scale assessment of the Grouse Creek watershed. The Grouse Creek Water-

The 2017 Grouse Creek Re-assessment and Restoration Prioritization Plan Update highlight several geomorphic trends in the watershed. The upper reaches appear impaired but stable

# Grouse Creek Watershed Re-assessment

largely due to the size of substrate and level of channel confinement. Some of the lower reaches also remained stable and continue to support reference aquatic habitat and geomorphic conditions.

The most significant geomorphic changes since 2007 occurred in several of the middle reaches on Grouse Creek. These reaches experienced channel widening from bank erosion and a reduction in channel depth. This decreased the capacity for these reaches to transport excess bedload and increased the potential for channel braiding.

The 2017 Re-assessment identified several site-specific restoration projects as well as three reach scale restoration strategies. The recommended reach scale strategies are to implement large wood treatment, reach-scale revegetation, and floodplain roughness treatments.

The large wood treatment strategy includes building large wood com-

plexes in specific locations throughout the watershed to facilitate channel stability, riparian succession, and fish habitat complexity.

The recommended revegetation strategy would focus on lower Grouse Creek which is impaired by current land management, reed canarygrass infestations, and channel entrenchment. Revegetation would produce future large wood recruitment, improve floodplain function, and decrease thermal loading.

Floodplain roughness treatment would include building micro-topography, revegetation, and installing large wood accumulation structures. These treatments would help promote channel stability and increased floodplain function.

The Restoration Prioritization Plan Update provides an important foundation to develop future projects to help restore the natural channel form and function as well as improve aquatic habitat for native fish in Grouse Creek.



**Lower Grouse Creek with unstable banks and lacking mature riparian vegetation**

## AIS Boat Stations Open May 4<sup>th</sup>

Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District manages three aquatic invasive species (AIS) inspection stations in Bonner County. Inspection stations are located at Albeni Falls Visitor Center, at the weigh station just south of the Samuels Store on Hwy 95, and along Hwy 200 in Clark Fork.

Inspection stations will open on May 4<sup>th</sup> and close on September 16<sup>th</sup>. They will operate from dawn to dusk (5:30am to 9:00pm).

For more information about invasive species in Idaho, you can visit [invasivespecies.idaho.gov](http://invasivespecies.idaho.gov).

## Tree Seedlings

Each year the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors an annual tree seedling sale. This year the District sold 73,800 seedlings!

There are no more seedlings left for sale this year. The district will begin taking orders for the 2019 sale in June. Contact Amanda Abajian, BSWCD, at 208-263-5310x100. Order forms are also available at [www.bonnerswcd.org](http://www.bonnerswcd.org).



## Spring Calendar

**AIS Boat Inspection Opening Day: May 4<sup>th</sup>** through September 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Waterlife Discovery Field Trips: May 8, 11, & 15<sup>th</sup>** at the Waterlife Discovery Center, Sagle, ID. Contact Molly McCahon 208-263-6400.

**36<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho State Forestry Contest: May 10<sup>th</sup>** 7:30am at the Delay Tree Farm, Careywood, Hwy 95, Mile Marker 455. Contact Amanda at 208-263-5310x100.

**Identifying Idaho's Trees: May 10<sup>th</sup>** 6:00pm at UI Extension, Boundary County 6447 Kootenai (behind the Courthouse) Bonners Ferry, ID 83805.

**2018 Pend Oreille Water Festival: May 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>** An educational event for all 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Bonner County, Riley Creek Campground.

**Thinning and Pruning Field Day: June 2<sup>nd</sup>** 9:00am at UI Extension, Boundary County 6447 Kootenai (behind the Courthouse) Bonners Ferry, ID 83805.

**Forestry Shortcourse: June 13<sup>th</sup>** 9:00am at Bonner County Fairgrounds 4205 N. Boyer Sandpoint, ID 83864. Contact UI Extension Office at 208-263-8511.



# Pack River Watershed Council

## The Pack River Watershed Council

c/o Bonner SWCD  
1224 Washington Ave., Suite 101  
Sandpoint, ID 83864



# Pack River Watershed Council

## The Pack River Watershed Council

c/o Bonner SWCD  
1224 Washington Ave., Suite 101  
Sandpoint, ID 83864  
208-263-5310

## Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District & NRCS

1224 Washington Ave., Suite 101  
Sandpoint, ID 83864  
208-263-5310  
[www.bonnerswcd.org](http://www.bonnerswcd.org)

*"The mission of the Pack River Watershed Council is to improve water quality and riparian habitat in the Pack River watershed for people, fish, and wildlife through education, collaboration, and cooperative projects."*

*Thanks to Avista Watershed Council Funding, we are able to print and distribute this newsletter.*