

Warm Water Working Group Minutes

August 17, 2007 19th meeting of the WWG
ODFW Headquarters Office, Salem, Oregon

Note: WWG minutes are developed to maintain a record of key issues and discussion on major agenda items and other issues brought up during the course of the WWG meeting.

Members present: Ron Buchwald, Dave Dailey, Don Davis, Bill Egan, Bud Hartman, Marcia Hartman, Lonnie Johnson, Bob Judkins, Chuck Lang, Det Mason.

Others Present: Several staff joined the audience during Jim Gores presentation including Peg Boulay and Audrey Hatch from Wildlife Division.

Staff present: Gary Galovich, Jim Gores, Mike Gray, David Haight Jim Muck, Tom Murtagh, Terry Shrader.

Agenda Item 1: Introductions/Agenda Development/Minutes

Attendees introduced themselves. Members were asked for edits to the April 2007 meeting minutes. Marcia Hartman said that she had already forwarded her edits to Rhine Messmer. No other edits were offered.

Gary Galovich asked for any additions or changes to the meeting agenda, but none were offered. He announced that Rhine Messmer would not be able to attend this meeting. Gary noted that members attending the April meeting had requested this meeting include discussion of Devils Lake fish management and the nongame fish netting permit program for the Willamette River. Although it was not listed as an individual agenda item, Gary said he could provide a brief update on Devils Lake. In regards to the nongame permits, he said that Rhine had requested that discussion be deferred to the next meeting he was able to attend. Gary said that Rhine had also requested members bring to the next meeting their thoughts on potential angling regulation proposals for 2009 and encouraged the public to work with staff early in the process to develop those proposals.

Agenda Item 2: Davis Lake Bass Management and Supplemental Stocking; Prineville Reservoir Bass

Terry Shrader began by providing a summary of the spring 2007 mark/recapture effort in Davis Lake. Staff used a boat electrofisher to sample Davis Lake in early May and marked all bass captured greater than 8 inches in length. This was followed by additional electrofishing in mid-May that served to recapture marked fish to develop a population estimate and to collect bass for transplant to other waterbodies. The current abundance of bass in Davis Lake makes it a good source for stocking largemouth in other Oregon waters.

The results of the mark/recapture effort indicate the population of largemouth over 8 inches in length in Davis Lake has increased since the last survey from an estimated 8,000 fish to over 14,000 fish. However, given the relatively small number of recaptures, this is a very rough estimate. Terry also noted that very few tui chub were observed, a prey species that has been a staple of the bass diet. Members Chuck Lang and Lonnie Johnson, staff from ODFW's Upper

Rogue and Umpqua Watershed Management Districts, and the Western Oregon Warmwater Biologist assisted with the effort.

The following table shows the number of largemouth transplanted from Davis Lake this spring to other waters:

<u>Destination Waterbody</u>	<u>Basin</u>	<u># of Bass</u>
Lost Creek Reservoir	Rogue	232
Galesville Reservoir	Umpqua	225
Cavendar Pond (Monument Pond)	John Day	51
Willow Valley Reservoir	Klamath	63
Upper Midway Reservoir	Klamath	75

Bass from Davis Lake were examined by ODFW Fish Health staff prior to the transfers and it was determined there were no disease issues to prevent their stocking in these or other Oregon waters. The fish ranged in length from 8-20 inches and from $\frac{3}{4}$ -6 pounds in weight.

Terry then provided an update on efforts at Prineville Reservoir noting that recent sampling produced a good number of larger largemouth bass. He speculated that many of these fish were likely those that had been transplanted from Davis into Prineville the previous year and had excellent growth. Members asked about the available forage and Terry felt that much of it may be aquatic invertebrates. Other questions followed regarding the reservoir size and depth.

In regards to future management of Davis Lake, Terry noted the Basin Fish Management Plan adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission requires that Davis be managed for a trout fishery. Therefore the current plan would be to at some time remove bass from Davis Lake. A discussion then followed as to how that could potentially be done and under what conditions.

In concluding, Terry also mentioned a recent volunteer effort to capture largemouth from Davis by angling and then transfer the fish to Prineville Reservoir. However, that effort produced only several fish. Gary Galovich had been scheduled to pick-up the stocking trailer loaded with the bass and drive it to Prineville Reservoir where the bass would be released and the trailer then loaded with crappie from Prineville. The crappie were caught by anglers from the Oregon Bass and Panfish Club (OBPC) and were to be transported for release into East Salish Pond as part of an introduction effort. Given the small number, the Davis Lake bass were instead transported along with the 600+ Prineville crappie to East Salish. At East Salish, Don Davis and Gary were joined by Bill Monroe and a photographer from the Oregonian who assisted with the release.

Gary then took this opportunity to note other warmwater fish stocking efforts planned for this year including the transfer of largemouth bass from Davis Lake and Hyatt Lake, and bluegill from Willamette Valley ponds, to Garrison Lake near Port Orford. Garrison had supported a popular bass fishery, but this was impacted in the 1990's by a series of floods and saltwater intrusion events. Recent ODFW sampling has determined that bass persist in Garrison, but the fishery would benefit by stocking additional bass and bluegill for forage.

A question was then asked about any potential bass fishery enhancement efforts in Devils Lake near Lincoln City. Gary said that he would be meeting soon with a representative of the Devils Lake Water Improvement District to discuss warmwater fishery enhancement opportunities, and that he and district staff would be sampling the lake in October.

Agenda Item 3: Invasive Species Issues in Oregon

Jim Gores, ODFW Invasive Species and Wildlife Integrity Coordinator, gave the WWG a presentation on current invasive species issues in Oregon. Jim began by noting that some introduced species of fish and wildlife are valued by Oregonians, citing as an example the recreational opportunities offered by warmwater fish. However, the impacts introductions can have on native ecosystems is sometimes not fully understood and more information is needed to better guide current management and that of any future introductions. Jim then discussed several invasive species that have a long history in Oregon, providing background on the source of the introduction, the animal's life history, their current distribution, the impacts, and any management efforts. Species mentioned included nutria, the red-ear slider turtle, exotic crayfish, goldfish, and the bullfrog. Jim pointed out the illegal wildlife trade is a huge problem and it has become easy for most anyone to obtain even banned or prohibited species via the internet.

Jim emphasized the current concern for several species of invasive shellfish including the New Zealand mudsnail, and the zebra and quagga mussel. These often grow, reproduce, and spread rapidly establishing large colonies that pose significant risk not only to native ecosystems but also humans, their recreational, industrial, and domestic use of water, and their water-based infrastructure. Jim noted that anglers are believed to have unknowingly contributed to the spread of the New Zealand mud snail and the transport of recreational boats is helping to carry zebra and quagga mussels to new waters. He discussed the current and costly efforts to control the quagga mussel in Lake Mead and the potential for the quagga infestation to reach Oregon.

Concern also revolves around other invertebrates such as crayfish. Several species of non-native crayfish that have become established in Oregon have significant impact on native crayfish and aquatic ecosystems. Members discussed whether restrictions on the transport and use of live crayfish as bait could be one approach to help combat this spread. Many felt that most Oregon anglers use only parts of the crayfish or tails as bait rather than the whole live crayfish so such a restriction would not significantly affect anglers. However, there was some concern this could prevent efforts to stock crayfish meant to boost the forage base in some waters. The importance of accurate identification of crayfish was stressed.

In regards to invasive fish species, Jim said that large numbers of silver and big head carp now pose a hazard to boaters in some parts of the country. Also, the expanded interest in pond and aquaria fish has created significant problems as many species are easily obtained and can be subsequently released into open or public waters. These have included some unique species such as the piranha, orfe or ide, and the snakehead which can migrate short distances over land. Other species that can affect fisheries include the mute swan whose diet includes aquatic vegetation, and snapping turtles which have shown up in warmwater habitats such as the lower Tualatin River and ponds in the Portland area and Willamette Valley.

Jim also noted how the invasive species issue and the movement of organisms between waters can include diseases such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) which is currently impacting bass populations in the Great Lakes. He stressed the importance of information, education, and vigilance in combating this growing problem.

Agenda Item 4: Working Lunch - continued discussion of Invasive Species Issues

The discussion of invasive species issues continued during the working lunch. This included a discussion of efforts to combat the spread of exotic shellfish through the use of boat cleaning stations and boater information and education programs, and how these can be better implemented in Oregon.

Agenda Item 5: Fish Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Program Update

Laura Tesler, the R&E Program Coordinator, had been invited to provide a program update but was unable to attend. Gary Galovich presented information that had been forwarded to him regarding the status of R&E funds available for the remainder of the 2007-2009 biennium, and the schedule for remaining grant application and review cycles. Lonnie Johnson, currently an R&E Board member, also talked about the program's status and the grant funding opportunities available for those with warmwater fishery enhancement projects. Gary presented some potential projects that he had been discussing with staff including an effort to treat invasive aquatic vegetation that is restricting angling in many smaller western Oregon public ponds. Gary offered his assistance to WWG members wanting to develop an R&E grant proposal.

Members also received a copy of the Summer 2007 edition of the joint Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) - R&E quarterly newsletter FishWorks in which a two-page insert highlighted warmwater fish management in Oregon.

Agenda Item 6: Tenmile Lakes Update

Mike Gray, District Fish Biologist for the Tenmile, Coos, and Coquille Basins, gave an update on management issues at Tenmile Lakes. A recent concern expressed by the public is that some areas of the lakes are becoming increasingly shallow due to the buildup of sediments and organic matter, and the process of eutrophication. The Department has received letters from the public asking the State to address the problem.

Mike said that district staff will be analyzing annual sampling information to assess the affect the regulation requiring the release of bass 15 inches or over may be having on the fishery. This includes data gathered during spring electrofishing, fall gillnetting, and the sampling of fish caught at the Tenmile Lakes bass tournaments. He noted, however, that spring electrofishing was not conducted in 2007 as had been planned. Mike said that he or his staff would try to present this information at the next or another upcoming meeting. Ron Buchwald noted that Tenmile Bass Club member Dick Schradle has been using a more detailed form to summarize tournament information that could be very useful.

Mike said that one of the challenges his staff currently faces is a vacancy in the position that typically focuses on the district's fish inventory efforts, including those for warmwater fish. They hope to fill this position as soon as possible.

Chuck Lang asked whether information regarding the enforcement of the 15 inch regulation such as the number of tickets issued by Oregon State Police might also be available. Mike said that most citations issued at Tenmile have been for violations such as angling without a license, or illegal gear or bag limits, and that he is not aware of any having been issued for violation of the 15 inch regulation.

Agenda Item 7: Project updates; ODFW Warmwater Fishery management activities, WWG member, club or grip activities, or other activities

Terry Shrader provided an update on the development of the pond at the Bend Pine Nursery site. The pond is located in a City of Bend community park adjacent to ball fields, picnic areas, and other park amenities and will offer warmwater and seasonal trout angling. The project includes habitat and access enhancements. Terry also briefly outlined other ongoing warmwater fishery inventory and creel efforts in Eastern Oregon.

Jim Muck discussed the recent fervor that has arisen over a proposal to remove some trees and vegetation from the banks of Herbert Pond. The small, 10 acre pond located near Canyonville is a popular destination for families and the site of youth angling events. Concern that root growth may be affecting the integrity of the earthen dam has led to a proposal to remove some of the vegetation. However, anglers feel this will detrimentally affect habitat, particular for warmwater fish. During a public meeting to discuss the issue, it was suggested that any tree removal be mitigated with habitat enhancement efforts.

It was noted that the seasonal growth of aquatic vegetation in Herbert Pond can limit fishing access. Because this is a problem in many ponds, it was suggested that an R&E grant proposal be submitted to purchase a supply of sickles and rakes used to cut and remove aquatic vegetation. These could be shared among staff and volunteers, and used at any number of sites.

Bill Egan pointed out they had used these tools to clear vegetation prior to a fishing event at Webster Pond. He said that although the tools work, it takes a great deal of effort to treat a small area. It was then suggested that perhaps a grant could be submitted to fund a seasonal position tasked specifically with treating sites that have aquatic weed problems.

Jim Muck concluded his updates by informing the group he had resigned as the District Fish Biologist for the Umpqua Basin to take the position of the Department's ODOT Coordinator for Southwest Oregon. However, as his schedule allows, he still plans to attend the WWG meetings.

Dave Haight provided a summary of warmwater fish inventories conducted this past spring in the Upper Rogue area. This included surveys of Agate Reservoir, Howard Prairie Lake, Hyatt Reservoir, and Emigrant Lake. Among the findings was the large number of mid-size largemouth bass in Hyatt Reservoir. Dave also said that staff would be working with the Oregon Black Bass Action Committee on a late summer volunteer effort to catch and transfer bass from Hyatt to Lost Creek Reservoir. Some of the Hyatt fish may also be transferred to Garrison Lake to help with that enhancement effort.

Tom Murtagh gave an update on recent warmwater efforts in the North Willamette Watershed District including work being done to improve habitat and angling access at several area ponds.

Tom also briefly discussed the status of the proposal to increase the height of Scoggins Dam and storage at the lake, and the opportunities the project may present for habitat enhancement in the lake and in the river below. Members discussed the type of habitat that would be created with the raising of the water level and the importance of maintaining existing structure in those areas. Tom concluded by saying he had enjoyed a recent fishing trip with Bill Egan and learned a great deal.

Gary Galovich provided several updates on activities in Western Oregon including:

- The position continues to be fairly busy with outreach activities and has responded to several speaking requests, provided newspaper and radio interviews, and has been working on a couple of informational packets and development of the warmwater web page. He noted that several reporters have taken a strong interest in warmwater activities, particularly Henry Miller of the Statesman Journal, Bill Monroe of the Oregonian, and Mark Freeman of the Mail Tribune. He encouraged members to contact these folks if they have projects or activities that may be of interest. Also in regards to outreach, the warmwater program has been requested to provide fish for a warmwater display at the ODFW State Fair site.
- A number of fish transfers stocking bass and crappie in western Oregon waters have recently taken place. These were discussed earlier in the meeting. There have also been discussions about periodically using the Department's St. Paul fish hatchery site as a temporary holding area for future transfers. Although it has not functioned as a fish hatchery for several years, the infrastructure is still in place that would allow one or two of the ponds to be activated. A larger number of fish could then be held for a period of time while portions are distributed to other area locations.
- A fair amount of effort during the summer has gone toward sampling smaller waters in the Willamette Valley. Good bass production has been observed at Woodburn Pond, Wilsonville Pond, and Bond Butte Pond, and St. Louis Ponds has produced some large redear sunfish. Staff has also been investigating fishery enhancement opportunities at Lyons Pond (located in the small community of Lyons), Cheadle Lake (Lebanon), and Delta Ponds in Eugene.
- Staff has been working with volunteers on habitat enhancement projects involving the placement of brush, log, and/or Berkley artificial habitat structures. An R&E grant awarded to ODFW last biennium for warmwater fish habitat activities expired on June 30, 2007 with the remaining funds having been spent on additional Berkley structures, the purchase of plastic stake bed structures, and the purchase of a wood boring auger and rock drill that can be used for anchoring wood and brush placements. The structures and tools are available upon request for use on volunteer projects.
- Staff worked with members of the OBPC to place artificial habitat structures in East Salish Pond and Blue Lake. The structures or "trees" constructed by OBPC members were made of salvaged PVC irrigation pipe embedded vertically in a base of concrete.
- Warmwater staff have been partnering with ODFW Community Fisheries efforts in the North and South Willamette Watershed Districts. The Community Fisheries projects focus on fish and habitat inventory and enhancement, and access improvement at pond sites throughout the Willamette Valley. The program is funded by a combination of R&E and USFWS Sport Fish Restoration grant funds.

Chuck Lang brought up the concern that a number of fish recently caught in the Columbia River near Hood River have had external ulcers. He asked if other members knew of the potential cause, but none of the staff or other WWG members was aware of the issue. Chuck also noted that Oregon State University had sent out a request for anglers to participate in a focus group on invasive species issues. Participants in this group will be asked to provide their recommendations on how to inform, educate, and involve the public to help prevent the spread of invasive species in Oregon.

Members then held a brief discussion of several fishing tournament issues such as concern for parking and launch fees required at some Western Oregon waters.

Agenda Item 8: Status of the ODFW 2006 Angler Survey and Report

Gary Galovich said that he didn't have any new information to present to the group at this time as the survey results and final report have not yet been released to the public. The report is still being reviewed by Fish Division staff and is expected to be released in September.

Agenda Item 9: Future actions and activities of the WWG; Goal Setting

Due to the late hour and lack of remaining time, members chose to defer this agenda item to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Meeting Wrap-Up, Next Meeting Date and Agenda

The next WWG meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 9th at ODFW Salem Headquarters (Commission Room). Potential agenda items suggested include:

- Future actions and activities of the WWG; Goal Setting
- Potential angling regulation proposals for 2009 and the regulation proposal and adoption process
- Nongame fish netting permits
- Update on Devils Lake and Siltcoos Lake
- Warmwater fish management in North Coast lakes

The meeting was then adjourned.