



## OREGON WATER RESOURCES CONGRESS

March 28, 2003

Supervisor  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Snake River Fish and Wildlife Service Office  
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368  
Boise, Idaho 83709

**Via Electronic Mail (FW1SRBOComments@fws.gov), Facsimile (208-378-5262), and U.S. Mail**

**Re: Comments on Draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan**

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is a non-profit trade association founded in 1912 to protect water rights and encourage conservation and water management throughout Oregon. OWRC has over 100 members, including irrigation districts, water control districts, improvement districts, ditch companies, irrigation cooperatives, and other governmental and quasi-governmental entities responsible for water conveyance and water delivery activities across the state. OWRC represents its members before all state and federal regulatory agencies, and provides assistance to its members to help them comply with state and federal laws.

OWRC has several concerns regarding the Draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan: (1) the Draft Recovery Plan appears to establish inconsistent recovery goals and target populations from one recovery unit to the next; (2) the Draft Recovery Plan does not adequately account for recovery costs; and (3) the Draft Recovery Plan cannot justify designation of critical habitat.

1. The Draft Recovery Plan Establishes Inconsistent Recovery Goals and Target Populations from One Recovery Unit to the Next.

The goal of recovery planning is to conserve listed species. Conservation is “the point at which the measures provided pursuant to [the ESA] are no longer necessary.” 16 USC § 1532(3). To achieve recovery of listed Columbia River bull trout, for example, the Draft Recovery Plan identifies recovery objectives for a vast area of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The Plan covers twenty-two different Columbia River Basin recovery units. Each Draft Recovery Plan chapter identifies “core populations” of bull trout whose conservation is allegedly necessary to the recovery of bull trout in that recovery unit, and recovery of each unit is then allegedly necessary for recovery of the Columbia River distinct population segment of bull trout. The Plan identifies general recovery criteria for population segments and recovery units