



Technology Aids Idaho Power Bull Trout Research in Hells Canyon

As summer's heat approaches, bull trout deep in Hells Canyon are heading into the mountains.

From the mouth of the Salmon River upstream to Hells Canyon Dam, bull trout spend winters in the Snake River where the water is warmer and food is more plentiful than in the high country. Their primary food source is the salmon and steelhead that return to these waters each year to spawn. Now they are moving into tributaries like the Salmon, Imnaha and Grande Ronde rivers. The clear, cold water in these mountain drainages is critical to their spawning and survival.

Idaho Power biologists study these native fish using old-school methods and cutting-edge technology to track their movements and their life histories in

cooperation with state and federal wildlife management agencies.

The first step is to catch a bull trout. Over the years, biologists have tried nets and traps but found a rod-and-reel works best for these fish.

Working through the winter in some of the most remote lands in America, crews record each fish's weight and length. A scanner reveals whether a fish has been tagged; new captures are injected with a tiny electronic tag.

"It's very innocuous to the fish — they survive really well," said Biologist Rick Wilkison, who oversees the company's bull trout monitoring program.

Underwater antennas give scientists a glimpse at where these fish go and how many survive from year to year.

"Each time a tagged fish swims near the antenna, it activates that chip, and a record is logged. It records any tagged fish, whether it's a sturgeon, a steelhead or a bull trout," Wilkison said. The antennas look (and weigh) more like a triple-sized manhole cover than something on your granddad's television. Fish are drawn to the antennas with bait cans containing an aromatic mixture of hatchery fish food pellets and cured salmon eggs.

Wilkison and his team periodically download the recorded data and replace batteries and bait cans.

Idaho Power wants to know how operations at Hells Canyon Dam influence the fish downstream. That helps the company maintain operational flexibility at one of its key hydroelectric plants, which benefits customers.

The longer-term goal is to trap and move some of these fish above Hells Canyon Dam into other bull trout-occupied tributaries. Downstream migrating bull trout will also be trapped and passed below Hells Canyon Dam in the fall after spawning. This fish passage research project involving Idaho Power, the states of Idaho and Oregon and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is part of the company's relicensing of its three dams in Hells Canyon.

Bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Snake River bull trout have suffered habitat loss caused by human activity.



Idaho Power Building New Sturgeon Hatchery at Niagara Springs



Idaho's newest fish hatchery will begin raising some of the oldest and largest freshwater fish on the planet next year.

Idaho Power is expanding its Niagara Springs steelhead hatchery near Wendell to rear up to 2,500 white sturgeon annually. These native fish will be released into various reaches of the Snake River from Shoshone Falls downstream to Brownlee Reservoir.

“This is a significant milestone for Idaho Power’s white sturgeon program. Construction of the hatchery is the next step in ensuring long-term success for sturgeon conservation in the middle Snake.” ~ Ken Lepla, Resource Scientist Leader

The program is required by licenses that allow Idaho Power to operate hydropower facilities in the middle Snake River and offset lost productivity to sturgeon populations from river development.

Lepla’s team has been working with state fisheries managers to collect sturgeon eggs and larvae from the Snake River that can

then be raised in a hatchery until they are ready for release.

This preserves genetic diversity more than the traditional method of using adults to produce fertilized eggs in a hatchery. It also creates challenges for hatchery managers because eggs and larvae arrive in different stages of development.

“This requires a hatchery setup that can provide care for a range of life stages simultaneously in order to achieve high survival throughout the rearing process,” Lepla said.

Idaho Power will partner with Idaho Fish and Game in the operation of the hatchery, which is scheduled to open in May 2021. The first crop of foot-long juvenile sturgeon will be ready for release in spring 2022.

White sturgeon are ancient fish that live near the river bottom. Idaho Power has captured sturgeon approaching 11 feet long and weighing over 500 pounds. The two largest reproducing populations of white sturgeon in Idaho are below Bliss and Hells Canyon dams.

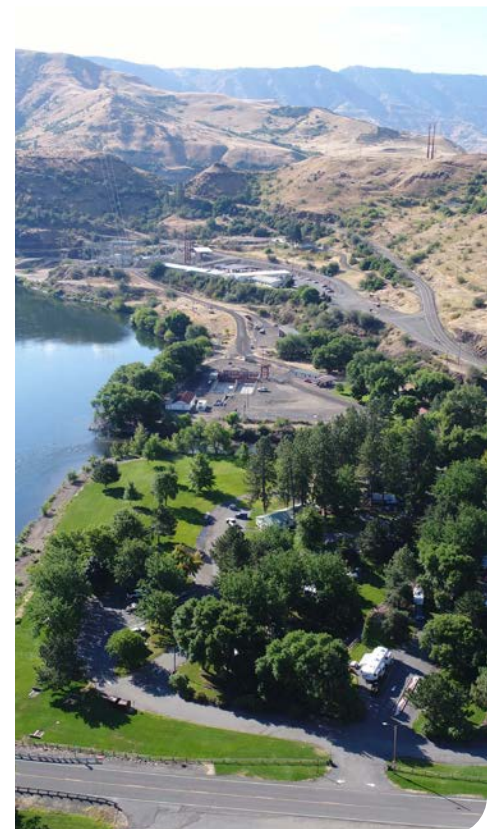
Some Recreation Sites Reopening after COVID-19 Closures

Idaho Power began a phased reopening of its recreational facilities along the Snake River in May after the sites had been closed to help limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

“We have worked to reopen these sites in a way that is safe for the public and our employees,” said Fred Noland, Recreation Supervisor for Idaho Power. “We have taken a cautious approach to ensure we have the proper protocols and training in place.”

The reopening is being implemented using guidance from the governor’s offices in Idaho and Oregon. Proximity to Idaho Power’s hydroelectric plants and the ability to control access were also considered. While Idaho Power is eager to restore full use of its parks and campgrounds, our focus is keeping our communities and employees safe while continuing to provide reliable energy to our customers.

For the latest information on our parks and campgrounds, visit idahopower.com/recreation.



From the Electric Kitchen

June 2020
Beverage

Blushing Peach Smoothie

- 4 large fresh peaches, peeled and sliced
- 2 cups frozen strawberries
- 2 cups plain or vanilla nonfat yogurt
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- ½ tsp vanilla

Combine ingredients in a blender. Mix until smooth and creamy. For a frostier texture, add ice or freeze the peach slices. Makes six one-cup servings.

Recipe selected from Idaho Power’s Centennial Celebration Cookbook.