



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lake Tahoe Basin Management
Unit

35 College Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
(530) 543-2600

File Code: 1950

Date: July 17, 2008

Dear Scoping Respondents and other Individuals, Organizations and Agencies:

The USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) is seeking comments for the Upper Truckee River Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project. The project area occurs within the Upper Truckee River from the bottom of the current Meiss Meadows Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) population (reclamation reach) to the natural barrier structure in section 19 and associated perennial tributaries and small lakes (see enclosed project area map).

LCT were listed as an endangered species in 1970 and was further reclassified in 1975 under the Endangered Species Act as threatened, to facilitate management and to allow for regulated angling. The species was re-introduced to the headwaters of the Upper Truckee River in Meiss Meadows in the late 1980's and early 1990's through a cooperative effort between the California Department of Fish and Game, US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Non-native brook trout were initially removed from the Upper Truckee River prior to the LCT introduction by means of rotenone application in the late 1980's. It is suspected that brook trout were illegally introduced back into the Meiss Meadow area post-chemical treatment from downstream adjacent source populations. Since that time brook trout removal has occurred by utilizing manual electrofishing methods. Recent removal efforts in 2007 discovered brook trout were no longer in the headwaters. The Meiss Meadow population is one of the only high-elevation meadow populations of LCT in the Sierra-Nevada Mountain Range.

The Forest Service has worked closely with California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) to both collaborate on project design and implementation and meet applicable regulations. There are no required permits needed from LRWQCB or TRPA to conduct manual fish removal, however necessary state sampling permits will be required from CDFG.

How to Comment and Timeframe

The project is in the initial (scoping) stage of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and the second year of survey efforts. We are asking for your comments on this Proposed Action. This scoping notice is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this project with an opportunity to make their concerns known. If you have information the Forest Service may not be aware of, and/or you have resource concerns or issues regarding of the Proposed Action, please send your comments to Richard Vacirca, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Dr., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning the Upper Truckee River Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project will be most helpful if they are submitted by



August 15, 2008. The office business hours for those providing hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone (530) 543-2768 or in person to the team leader Richard Vacirca. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-ltbmu@fs.fed.us using subject: Upper Truckee River Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project.

Project Description

Fish habitat below Meiss Meadows in the Upper Truckee River is currently occupied by brook trout, which are currently competing with native LCT. Brook trout compete with LCT for food and cover and cause mortality through predation. The project area is above the upper extent of current rainbow trout distribution.

The Upper Truckee River LCT Restoration Project proposes to remove introduced brook trout in the Upper Truckee River from the bottom of the Meiss Meadows to the natural fall structure that occurs approximately 3,000 feet above South Upper Truckee Road crossing. Due to the remoteness of the project location, LTBMU fish crews will walk into the project site and carry all electrofishing and gill netting gear. Although brook trout will be removed from aquatic environments, streams and lakes within the project area will continue to provide the public with a recreational LCT fishery opportunity.

The following is a list of specific proposed actions (each action is marked on the attached map):

1. Utilize electrofishing methodology to remove introduced fish species from the Upper Truckee River and associated perennial tributaries.
2. Install gill nets into Showers, Round, Dardanelles and Four Lakes to remove introduced brook trout. A total of 10-15 gill nets per lake will be installed.
3. Implementation within the project area is planned to be partitioned into three treatment phases where activities will occur yearly from August - October extending over the next 6 years (2008 - 2013).
4. Maintenance to ensure brook trout are removed from the expansion area is expected to occur from 2014 – 2018.

The total estimated project costs for implementation are \$500,000. The majority of the project is anticipated to be accomplished by Round 7, 8 and 9 SNPLMA funding under project title "Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Restoration in the Upper Truckee River". It is estimated that all 3 phases of implementation will be initially accomplished with SNPLMA funding. In the event of a funding decrease, any partial accomplishment will need to be planned accordingly and ensure that long-term benefits to LCT are realized.

Please refer to the attached map, which outlines project location and treatment phases. The Proposed Action and project map can also be viewed on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/lbmu/projects>. For further information regarding this Proposed Action, contact Richard Vacirca at (530) 543-2768, email rvacirca@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



TERRI MARCERON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures
Project Map

UPPER TRUCKEE RIVER LCT RESTORATION

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

