

Public Comments Received on DNS 24-019 Stocking Tiger Trout into Lead King Lakes

Comment Period 4/25/2024 – 5/9/2024

Comment from Anonymous in PublicInput:

I am not I support of the stocking of Lead lake because I fear these trout will damage the native species of the lake.

May 9, 2024 1:49 pm 

WDFW Response:

No information is available regarding native species which may have inhabited the Leadking lakes historically or whether the lakes were fish-bearing prior to stocking. The lakes have been stocked with salmonids since 1913, including Brook Trout *Salvelinus fontinalis*, Rainbow Trout *Oncorhynchus mykiss*, and Westslope Cutthroat Trout *O. Clarkii lewisi*. Invasive Northern Pike *Esox lucius*, a prohibited species in Washington State, were illegally introduced in the 2010's, and documented in 2015, along with Pumpkinseed Sunfish *Lepomis gibbosus*. The outlet from Lower Leadking Lake (Everett Creek) was also electrofished in 2015 downstream to a natural fish passage barrier, a cascade/falls which prevents fish from moving into the lakes from Boundary Reservoir (Pend Oreille River), but only Pumpkinseed Sunfish were observed. No native fish species were observed in the lakes or outlet in any sampling or following the October 2015 rotenone treatment of the lakes and surrounding wetland to remove illegally-introduced Northern Pike. Westslope Cutthroat Trout, which are native to the larger Pend Oreille River drainage, are currently stocked into the Leadking lakes, but these fish are of hatchery origin. Based on monitoring since 2015, WDFW staff suspect that the Leadking lakes did not harbor native fish species historically.

Native amphibian species presumably occur in or around the Leadking lakes but were not observed in the 2015 sampling or rotenone treatment, nor in subsequent monitoring. Immediately following the 2015 rotenone treatment, very large numbers (estimated at tens of thousands) of invasive Bullfrog *Rana catesbeiana* tadpoles were observed. The Washington Invasive Species Council notes that:

“Bullfrogs are predators that eat practically anything they can catch. They can swallow tree frogs, other amphibians and reptiles such as the western pond turtle, minnows, small birds, and young snakes. Introduced bullfrogs have been blamed for native species declines in much of North America.”

The apparent paucity of native amphibians in the area could be a direct result of predation/displacement by invasive Bullfrogs. Additionally, both Bullfrog tadpoles and Pumpkinseed Sunfish compete with native amphibians for prey.

Miller (2010) sampled the stomach contents of 572 tiger trout *Salvelinus fontinalis* x *Salmo trutta* from 10 lakes in Eastern Washington. No amphibians were observed in the diet of tiger trout.

Based on available information, it is highly unlikely that tiger trout introduction into the Leadking lakes would negatively impact native fish or wildlife populations, either within the lakes themselves or downstream.

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