

Lakes

Historically, bull trout and WCT were abundant in Priest and Upper Priest lakes. However, predation by a rapidly expanding lake trout population has led to significant declines in these native species. Bull trout once provided a trophy fishery in Upper Priest Lake with an annual harvest of 1,800 fish, and 30 fish limits of WCT were common. By the 1980's these native populations had dropped dramatically – in 1983 bull trout harvest was less than 100 fish and WCT harvest was just over 100. By 2005, bull trout redd counts in Upper Priest Lake tributaries were less than 8% of 1985 redd numbers. During the same time period, lake trout were starting to be captured in Upper Priest Lake. These lake trout migrated from Priest Lake, via the Thorofare, where the population is well established. By 1998, the lake trout population in Upper Priest Lake was estimated at 859 fish. Since then, Idaho Department of Fish and Game has annually utilized gill nets in Upper Priest Lake and the Thorofare to reduce lake trout numbers with hopes of reducing threats to native WCT and bull trout. Currently, bull trout are functionally extinct in Priest Lake and severely depressed in Upper Priest Lake. Since 2009, the Kalispel Tribe has provided funding to continue and expand lake trout netting efforts in Upper Priest Lake and the Thorofare with the goal of maintaining current native fish population levels until efforts to reduce lake trout numbers can be intensified.