



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Northwest Region

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April 10, 2006

Debra Sturdevant
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
811 SW Sixth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204



RE: Resident Trout in the Tualatin River

Dear Debra,

I am writing in response to your inquiry about resident trout species in the Tualatin River basin and how best to address their presence in DEQ's Water Quality Assessment for the basin. I appreciate and share your concern in protecting Oregon's native trout species in addition to threatened salmon and steelhead. I understand that through this assessment, dissolved oxygen standards will be established for rearing and spawning fish. Cutthroat trout are the native trout species of concern in the Tualatin basin. However, it is possible to also find introduced rainbow trout for several reasons.

First, landowners can stock rainbow trout into private ponds, and some may have escaped or been released over the years. Second, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife historically stocked catchable rainbow trout into streams, but no longer do so to protect native fish species. In addition, there could be low numbers of residual steelhead, or those that do not migrate to the ocean as juveniles. These residuals choose to stay in freshwater much like rainbow trout.

Cutthroat trout are widespread in the Tualatin basin. After reviewing the distribution maps provided in the Tualatin River Subbasin TMDL and in your Assessment, it appears that the map of cutthroat distribution is adequate in showing the full extent of spawning and rearing, and the salmon and steelhead spawning distribution map can be used as a guide to the lower extent of cutthroat spawning. However, it is important to note that juvenile fish can also rear in areas designated on the map for spawning. Therefore, rearing juveniles can be found throughout the year in most areas, though likely at low densities. Spawning typically occurs in the upper reaches of the mainstem and most tributaries from January through mid-April, with fry emerging through June. These dates are not definitive, though, and it may be possible to see fish spawning through June with emergence as late as July or August. In general, cutthroat spawning distribution overlaps with steelhead spawning distribution, though cutthroat also reside and spawn above barriers to steelhead passage. Cutthroat spawning typically does not occur any lower in the basin than steelhead spawning, so protection afforded to steelhead and extended upstream to tributary headwaters will also protect most cutthroat.

Thank you again for addressing protection measures for cutthroat trout in the Tualatin River basin. If you have any additional concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at (503) 657-2000 x 231 or todd.alsbury@state.or.us.

Sincerely,

Todd Alsbury
District Fish Biologist
North Willamette Watershed District