



PUBLIC SCOPING for a proposal to Conduct Lake Trout Removal on Logging Lake and Continue Lake Trout Suppression on Quartz Lake Environmental Assessment

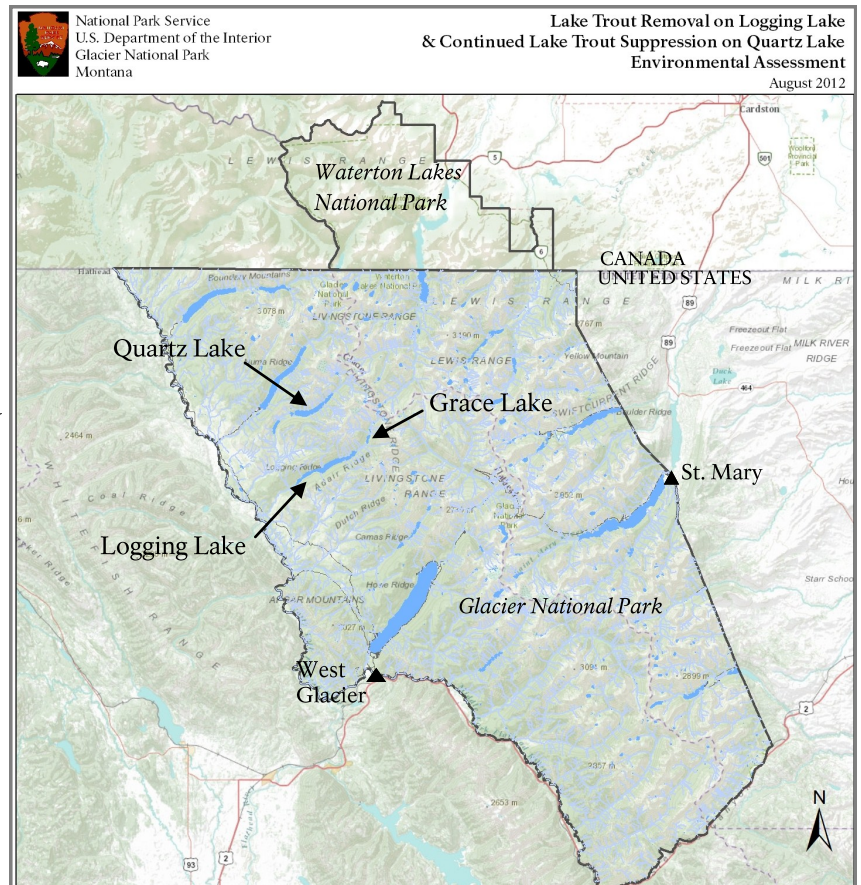
Background—Glacier National Park contains approximately one-third of the bull trout populations inhabiting natural (un-dammed) lakes in the United States. Bull trout are listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and the park's bull trout populations are increasingly at risk due to invasive non-native lake trout. Lake trout have invaded nine of twelve lakes on the west side of the park to which they have access and are known to have severe negative effects on native fish populations. Park data show that in the majority of lakes where monitoring data exists, lake trout have replaced bull trout as the top level aquatic predator in just a few decades. Climate change could compound these issues; changes in stream flow combined with warmer water temperatures could stress bull trout populations and favor invasive non-native species.

In 2005, lake trout were detected in Quartz Lake, threatening an important stronghold for bull trout and other native fish. In 2009, Glacier National Park and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) began an experimental project on Quartz Lake to reduce or eliminate lake trout. Individual lake trout are caught, radio-tagged, and tracked to spawning areas. Gill nets are then deployed over the spawning areas to capture and remove lake trout. Results from the project thus far are promising; data indicate that a high percentage of spawning adult lake trout are being removed, which is expected to eventually reduce the size of the population in the lake. The project is currently approved through 2012.

Logging Lake follows Quartz Lake as a high priority for bull trout conservation. Once considered the most productive bull trout fishery in the park, Logging Lake is now at imminent risk of losing bull trout as a functional part of the aquatic ecosystem due to invasive non-native lake trout. Based on park netting data, without action, the Logging Lake bull trout population faces functional extinction in the near term, meaning that although there may remain a few individual bull trout in the lake, their numbers would be few enough that they would no longer play a significant role as a top-level predator nor maintain themselves as a self-sustaining population.

Therefore, the park is proposing to conduct lake trout removal in Logging Lake using methods developed on Quartz Lake. Capture and removal techniques would be refined, and the results would be transferrable to other park waters and other systems across the western U.S. Additionally, as a conservation measure to protect the lake's few remaining bull trout, bull trout would be translocated within the Logging drainage (from Logging Lake to Grace Lake, for example), and bull trout and/or eggs from Logging Lake would be collected and raised in a conservation rearing facility for release back into Logging Lake to boost the population during and/or after lake trout suppression.

The park is also proposing to continue the current lake trout removal effort in Quartz Lake beyond 2012 because it is necessary to remove juvenile lake trout that have not yet grown large enough to be caught by the sampling gear and to keep lake trout numbers low. Under continuation of the program, removal efforts on Quartz Lake would occur every year with periodic re-evaluation. Logging and Quartz Lakes are within recommended wilderness.



Locations of Quartz Lake and Logging Lake.



Logging Lake, NPS photo by B. R. McClelland.

Objectives

- Protect the park's imperiled bull trout populations from invasive non-native lake trout and potential added stress from climate change.
- Continue the development of lake trout suppression techniques that could be used in other locations within and outside the park.
- Conserve and maintain the natural condition of the park's recommended wilderness by protecting native fish populations and the ecological integrity of the backcountry lakes they inhabit.

Alternatives Identified to Date

- **Alternative A** — conduct experimental lake trout removal and restore a viable bull trout population at Logging Lake using multiple approaches, such as translocating bull trout and releasing conservation facility-reared bull trout within the drainage.
- **Alternative B**—continue lake trout suppression on Quartz Lake.
- **Alternative C (proposed)**—both Alternatives A and B.
- **Alternative D (no action)**— 1) do not conduct lake trout removal on Logging Lake, nor translocate bull trout or release conservation facility-reared bull trout within the Logging drainage, and 2) do not continue lake trout suppression on Quartz Lake.

Environmental Assessment Process

- Public Scoping
- Preparation of Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Public Review of Plan/EA
- Analysis of Public Comments
- Decision Document

Issues and Resources to Consider

- The long-term persistence and protection of functional bull trout populations in the park, the Flathead watershed, and throughout the western United States.
- Recommended wilderness
- Natural soundscapes
- Wildlife
- The backcountry visitor experience

Public Comments During Scoping

Your comments will help identify issues, concerns, and other alternatives to evaluate in the EA. There will be another opportunity for you to comment when the plan/EA is completed. Please post your scoping comments online at:

www.parkplanning.nps.gov/LoggingQuartz

Or send comments to:

***Superintendent, Glacier National Park
Attn: Logging/Quartz EA
PO Box 128
West Glacier, MT 59936
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Please provide comments by

September 10, 2012