

# Martha Lake Meeting Summary

Representatives from Fidalgo, Evergreen and Olympic Fly Fishers met with Justin Spinelli, WDFW, on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to discuss the current state of trout fishing at Martha Lake. Two years ago, Martha Lake received a rules change that required the use of selective gear and allowed the harvest of two fish over 14". Assessments in 2018 showed the lake to be performing poorly after the rules change. Catch rates are very low, and fish are not very big. Below is a summary of our discussion and future plans.

## Discussion Items –

**Water quality** probably not a source of fish mortality, but does contribute to slow growth of the trout. From the Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program Report- "Based on the long-term monitoring data, Lake Martha may be classified as mesotrophic, with high water clarity, low phosphorus levels in the epilimnion, higher phosphorus in the hypolimnion, low to moderate algae concentrations, and moderate oxygen depletion." There is nothing we can reasonably do to improve lake productivity.

**Poaching/Illegal fishing** is not thought to be a significant factor. However, "Powerbait" jars have been seen abandoned at the access point this winter. WDFW Enforcement has no records of nefarious activity, and none have been reported to the Area Biologist (Justin). There was no public announcement of the rules changes, though, and the lake has been lightly fished by the various fishing clubs. Inadvertent (legal) angler induced mortality is thought to be low.

**Cormorant activity** immediately after stocking will be monitored loosely by Curt this spring to see if the birds are possibly excessively impacting the fish population. Martha is close to Puget Sound, where cormorants spend most of their time. WDFW will look to delay this year's planting a bit if possible as cormorants leave the area in late spring to nesting areas. Timing of future fish plants would be adjusted in the future if needed.

**Changing stocking densities.** WDFW has a current goal of stocking RB at 50 catchables per surface acre. It is possible that, because the lake was inadvertently stocked at 25 per acre in 2017, low stocking contributed significantly to lack of carryover fish found in our sampling and low catch rates. However, this alone would not count for the extremely poor fishing as catch rates were about 20% of what we should have experienced. Fish were stocked at 50/acre in 2018. WDFW will add some additional RB catchables in 2019 if available. WDFW is also looking at possibly splitting the annual planting of RB into a spring and fall planting.

For now, stocking of 10,000 cutthroat fry and 5,000 Brown fingerlings will continue.

**Adding triploids** is not an option (to boost size of fish caught). First, they are not available this year, and even if they were, most felt that there would **not** be long term benefit due to low survival in western WA. Cost is high.

**Creel Surveys** have been proposed for April, May, and June of this year. Justin will develop the protocols and the fly clubs will seek volunteers to conduct the surveys. We are looking at 4 weekends and 4 weekdays (random) each month. By the end of February the clubs should know if they have enough volunteers to conduct the surveys (not the most popular way to spend a spring day).

**Fin Clipping** of RB will take place in February at the hatchery. Approximately 10 volunteers will be needed. These fish will help with an age, growth, and survival study that will take place in October by WDFW. Fish will be recaptured using WDFW gill nets for this study.

A two- week long **Rod and Reel Catch and Measure** study will also take place in October, where we will measure fishing success improvements (In fall of 2018 catch rate was 0.3 fish per hour). Goal will be to catch and measure up to 150 fish, recording length of fish caught and time spent fishing. Fidalgo, Evergreen, and Olympic Fly Fishers will participate.

On a final note, Justin told us that he is now the only biologist in Region 4 assigned to manage lakes as his partner was transferred to Eastern WA.

**Meeting Participants -**

Name	E-mail	Phone	ORG
Jake Jacobson* Sandy Atkinson Curt Kraemer Dave McCutchen Milt Thompson			Evergreen FF Club Evergreen FF Club Evergreen FF Club Evergreen FF Club Evergreen FF Club
Robin LaRue Bruce Freet			Fidalgo FF Club Fidalgo FF Club
Bill MacDonald Mike Truax			Olympic FF Edmonds Olympic FF Edmonds
Justin Spinelli			WDFW

\*Meeting organizer