

A COLORADO TREASURE



A Southwest Treasure

The Rio Grande cutthroat is the native trout of the Rio Grande and its tributaries in Colorado and New Mexico. It's a beautiful, unique cutthroat trout sub-species and exciting game fish.

It belongs here, because it has adapted to our region for eons. Rio Grande cutthroat are part of our culture and angling heritage.

Take the Survey

Information from anglers is vital to protecting the Rio Grande cutthroat.



Please take a few minutes for a brief survey about Rio Grande cutthroat trout at www.tu.org/rgct

Your survey response is extremely important. It will help Trout Unlimited protect, reconnect, and restore populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout in Colorado.

Thank you!

"CORONADO SETS OUT TO THE NORTH"
— OIL PAINTING BY FREDERIC REMINGTON.

A Species in Time

The Rio Grande cutthroat was the first trout to be encountered by Europeans in the West. In 1541, Francisco de Coronado's expedition to find the mythical cities of gold came across the Rio Grande cutthroat in the upper Pecos River near what is now Santa Fe, New Mexico.

All 14 cutthroat trout subspecies (two of them now extinct) share a common ancestor that branched off from the rainbow trout at the end of the Pliocene epoch around 2 million years ago. The Rio Grande cutthroat branched off from the Colorado River cutthroat into the previously unoccupied Rio Grande basin following the last glacial period around 70,000 years ago.

In 1878, *Forest and Stream* magazine reported an account of Colorado Governor Hunt taking a general from Pennsylvania fishing on Trinchera Creek near Fort Garland. The story follows that the governor heard a commotion and saw a big fish flying through the air. He found the general hoisting a three-pound Rio Grande cutthroat over his shoulder and exclaiming, "oh, I have a leg of mutton on my hook."

To this day, Trinchera Creek is a stronghold for RGCT, thanks to a partnership between Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Louis Bacon's Trinchera Blanca Foundation.



"If the philosophical, theoretical, and practical values associated with cutthroat trout were better understood, insensitivity and opposition to their restoration and protection would greatly diminish."

—Robert J. Behnke, aka "Dr. Trout"

How You Can Help

Contribute

Your tax-deductible contributions to Trout Unlimited will help directly fund projects for Rio Grande cutthroat in Colorado, including habitat restoration, streamflow improvements, and other work that makes fishing better. We invite you to be an important partner in this great cause.

To donate directly, send a check payable to *Trout Unlimited Rio Grande Basin*. Write "Rio Grande cutthroat trout" in the memo line, and include a return address to receive a receipt.

Mail to: Kevin Terry
Rio Grande Basin Project Manager
Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 281
Del Norte, CO 81132



PHOTO: FRANK WEISSBARTH

Connect

There are many other ways for you to help your native cutthroat trout. Please contact Kevin Terry at kterry@tu.org to sign up to be an on-the-ground advocate and volunteer for Rio Grande cutthroat work.

Become a member of TU! Go to tu.org

Threats and Current Status

Today, because of a host of pressures, the Rio Grande cutthroat occupies only 10–12 percent of its historic range.

The primary threats to Rio Grande cutthroat include:

- **Nonnative trout.** Rainbow trout, an introduced species, as well as other cutthroat subspecies have the ability to hybridize with the Rio Grande cutthroat and therefore jeopardize genetic integrity at the population level. Other non-native trout, including brown trout and brook trout, threaten the Rio Grande cutthroat through competition for habitat and prey. To address the threats from non-natives, populations of Rio Grande cutthroat often require a physical separation in the form of a man-made or natural barrier. While these barriers are necessary, they can isolate populations and therefore make them more vulnerable to natural disturbances like wildfire and drought.
- **Mining and irrigation development** can have negative impacts if improperly managed. With climate change predictions and an ongoing drought in the Southwest, the challenge is to reduce these negative impacts while sustaining agriculture and the local economies.

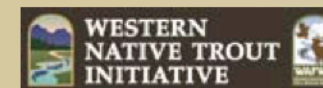
• Roads, logging, and grazing.

Cutthroat trout are sensitive to changes in water quality. Increased sedimentation created by roads, logging, and grazing can degrade spawning habitat. Decreases in concentrations of dissolved oxygen caused by higher stream temperatures and excessive nutrient inputs further restrict Rio Grande cutthroat distribution and reproductive success. Collaborative planning and management of these activities that account for healthy stream and riparian function is crucial to sustaining both RGCT populations and traditional resource use activities.

The Rio Grande cutthroat trout is currently a candidate for listing protection under the **Endangered Species Act** of 1973. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will make a decision on whether or not to list the Rio Grande cutthroat sub-species in 2014. Trout Unlimited supports the efforts of the Range Wide Conservation team that has been working to protect, conserve, and restore populations of RGCT for over a decade.

Partners

We want to offer a special thanks to all of the great partners that have joined forces to get this important information out to anglers like you. The future of the Rio Grande cutthroat depends on collective awareness.



FLY SHOP PARTNERS

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OTHER PARTNERS

San Luis Valley Chapter Trout Unlimited

RGCT Range-Wide Conservation Team
Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
National Park Service • Bureau of Land Management
United States Forest Service • United States Fish and Wildlife Service • Taos Pueblo • Mescalero Apache Tribe • Jicarilla Apache Nation

This brochure was funded by the small grants program of the Western Native Trout Initiative. To learn more, or to find out how to help the cause, please visit www.westernnativetroutrout.org