



December 21, 2019

Therese Thompson, Project Coordinator
Western Native Trout Initiative
134 Union Boulevard Suite 665
Lakewood, CO 80228

RE: Final Report for WNTI Small Grant (Greenbacks on Tejon) 2016-SG8

Dear Ms. Thompson;

PPCTU has been working to protect this population of Cutthroats since we discovered their existence and formally adopted them in 2003 when we began to monitor the water quality of this stream through a program known as River Watch. In 2007 we were able to get the water designated as "High Quality" water under the rules of the EPA. When we began to have conflict with some of the other outdoor users of this valley, we joined in forming a body known as the Bear Creek Round Table. The purpose of which was to seek a solution to protect the fish and still allow access to hikers, bikers, horses and single track motor vehicles. Member groups, in addition to ourselves, included US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the City of Colorado Springs, both Utilities and Parks, and the Motorized trail group. We all knew the fish were special but did not know at that time just how special.

The primary problem for these fish is the location in which they live. Bear Creek flows in a valley made up of Pikes Peak Granite, a rock that decomposes into small sharp edged pea size grains that are very mobile that results in filling in any pockets the stream where the trout might get out of the current. In addition, these sharp edged pebbles grind down any plant life that might provide food for stream life. This interrupts the food chain for the trout. The trails and their use is a major source of the sediment that enters the stream.

Through these discussions we began to explore solutions and implement some of them. When the Metcalf 2012 study was released in September 2012 we immediately began an attempt to finalize the NEPA process required to make the additional planned solutions as required on the Federally owned property. The City of Colorado Springs

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had a long standing agreement to act consistent with the US Forest Service on the property, in this watershed, owned by the city.

Once the media discovered that the fish in Bear Creek, just outside Colorado Springs, was the only remaining population of *Oncorhynchus clarkii stomias* other outdoor groups got involved and we expanded the round table. Unfortunately, politicians also got involved and using their anti government animus stirred up their constituency to throw road blocks in the way of any actions to protect the fish. Going through this process and watching misleading information, red herrings and outright lies being used to block plans to protect the trout caused the leadership of PPCTU to realize that we must engage and reach out to the public to a much greater extent.

The NEPA process was begun in 2010 and due to road blocks, we received the "draft proposal in August 2015. At this writing, we are awaiting the final decision at which time unsatisfied groups may file suit. It is our hope that such lawsuits do not arise.

While we here in Colorado Springs are working to protect the Greenback trout in Bear Creek, population representatives are being bred in the Leadville National Fish Hatchery and the Mt Shavano state hatchery with the goal of placing these fish into small streams within the South Platte Drainage to create multiple viable independent populations. Other Colorado Chapters are working to find and prepare streams in their areas to receive these trout.

The population of Greenbacks in Bear Creek are very important to the recovery and restoration efforts for this threatened fish. The Bear Creek population is not in its native range, they were placed in this drainage about 100 years ago and protected against invasive species by several natural barriers. The problem is that the gene pool for these fish is limited to those provided by the individuals stocked in this stream. The gene pool of the 10% taken to the hatchery also limits the diversity. This 10% were taken to the Leadville National Fish Hatchery to begin a brood stock. The breeding and raising of these fish has great difficulty. To improve both the survivability of these eggs and improve the genetic diversity, milt is collected each year for Bear Creek as part of the breeding program. The survival rate of these eggs are:

Hatchery x Bear Creek-5%

Hatchery x Hatchery – 2%

Bear Creek x Bear Creek 70%

If these fish are to survive, Bear Creek must be protected and the political attitude around this stream must be changed to be supportive.

This project consists of four interrelated but distinct parts. Creation and distribution of the Greenback Survival Game. This game has been produced and has been distributed throughout the region, the nation and even internationally. This game has been used



repeatedly in the summer programs for the Bear Creek Nature Center and the Fountain Creek Nature Center.

PPCTU has published a volume of the Youth Newsletter, "Stream Explorer" containing the story of the Greenbacks as well as the Greenback Survival game.

The portion of this project funded by the WNTI small grant program is the "Greenbacks on Tejon" project.

Brenda Houck , Art instructor for the Colorado College agreed to recruit students to create and donate 12 metal Greenback Trout with PPCTU paying only for the materials. Our plan was to have the scavenger hunt portion of the project up and running by the fall of 2017 and we learned that student sculptors do not work on our time line.

Receipt of these sculptures did not take place until the fall of 2018..

The local businesses have been very supportive and we have locations for our sculptures. Twelve business owners were recruited to allow PPCTU to place the sculptures someplace on their property and a series of clues were created . The Pikes Peak Public Library district at their facility in Old Colorado City has agreed to be the starting and ending point for the hunt. They have the set of clues available to participants during their open hours. They will also award the successful hunter with a metallic coin with the Greenback on one side and Pikes Peak Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Western Native Trout Initiative on the other as a memory token.

The City of Colorado Springs has agreed to place a sign in Bancroft Park in the center of Old Colorado City which tells the story of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout and suggests to visitors that they participate in the scavenger hunt. The sign is scheduled to be in place in the Spring of 2020.

We have had a number of newspaper articles published about the Scavenger Hunt for the Greenback Cutthroat Trout as well as one Television story. The Public Library staff report that they have had numerous requests for the set of clues and have distributed coins and a copy of the Stream Explorer to those who return.

It continues to be our plan to hold a press conference at the unveiling of the sign in Bancroft park upon it being completed. The park was in the process of being renovated thus the delay. A second copy of the sign has already been placed by the US Forest Service at the end of the trail closed in the Bear Creek Drainage intended to educate hikers as to the reason for the trail closure.

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