

Rock Creek Greenback Recovery Program – Progress Reporting for WNTI Grant Awarded

08/18/2020

The Rock Creek Greenback Recovery Program was awarded \$25,000 from the Western Native Trout Initiative in 2018 to assist in installing barriers for the project. Recovery efforts in the watershed have been ongoing since 2015. The overall goals of the project are to contribute to recovery efforts of greenback cutthroat trout, a federally-threatened species, and establish a protected conservation population within the species' native range. The project has had multiple contributors and partners, including Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the Forest Service (FS), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Trout Unlimited (TU), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The project consists of multiple phases and associated actions. Three fish passage barriers have been constructed to complete the project with support from FWS, FS, TU, and NRCS. The final permanent barrier (furthest downstream) was finished in August 2019 and was fully funded by the NRCS. The state has contributed in-kind through their expertise and supplying the leadership and equipment for treatments to remove the non-native fish species. In addition to the work to reclaim and restore the watershed to host a native population of greenbacks, the FS closed and rehabilitated the road access leading into and along Rock Creek (See Map 1).

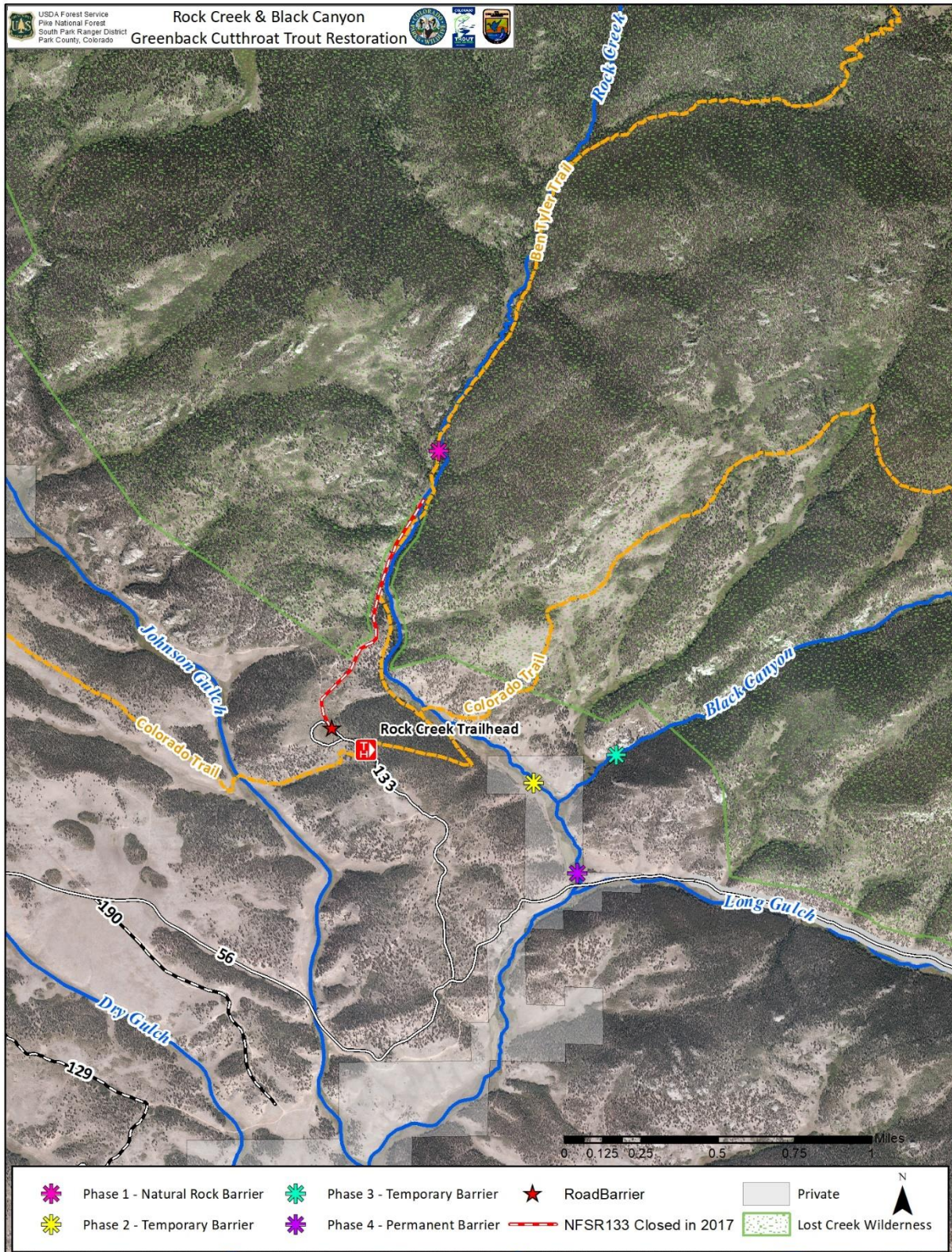
The road adjacent to the creek was contributing to impacts to the stream due to erosion of sediment from the road and dispersed camping activities. As a result, an interdisciplinary team from the Forest Service, including biologists, recreation staff, and engineers, decommissioned and rehabilitated the road. The portion of the road that overlapped with the Ben Tyler hiking trail, was converted to a foot trail only. Additionally, the parking area was improved at the Rock Creek Trailhead to keep Forest visitors from attempting to drive to the creek. The project was funded with FS Legacy Roads and Trails dollars. See photos 1-5 to see the improvements that were completed for this portion of the project.

During the summer of 2019, wooden poles and nails were purchased to build buck and rail fencing to keep people from driving beyond the closed portion of the road and delineate the legal parking area (see Photo 1). The funds that were spent included \$3,155.93 on poles and approximately \$275 for the nails for a total of \$3,430.93. The Forest Service installed the fence, in-kind, with the help of TU volunteers. This project was completed in July, 2019.

The private landowner installed a fish-friendly passage culvert for his road crossing over Rock Creek. He installed the culver himself at an estimated \$10,000 and completed the work September 1, 2020. With the completion of the road closure and the installation of a fish passage culvert, approximately 1.6 miles of stream habitat is improved.

Monitoring and ongoing evaluation of invasive trout eradication as well as future introduction of native Colorado cutthroat trout are funded and ongoing.

Map 1. Rock Creek Greenback Recovery Program barrier locations and road closures and rehabilitation.



Photos

Photo 1. Trailhead Parking – before buck and rail fencing was installed around the parking area.



Photo 2. Completed buck and rail fencing around the parking area.



Photo 3. Before/After road to trail conversion next to Rock Creek.



Photo 4. Before/After road to trail conversion next to Rock Creek.



Photo 5. Decommissioned Road.



Photo 6. Fish passage culvert (Prior to being installed by private landowner).

