DEAR FRIENDS,

Thank you for being a part of the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) in 2021. As the unprecedented pandemic extended well into 2021, WNTI was able to continue our work with only minimal delays due to COVID related restrictions. We could not accomplish all that we do without the continued support and dedication of our partners and donors.

In 2021, WNTI and our partners funded 15 habitat projects benefitting WNTI focal species with a total of $258,333 National Fish Habitat Partnership funds and $502,000 in other grants, leveraged with $3,630,265 in partner contributions for a total projects value of $4,390,598.

An ongoing partnership with the Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) through their Open Rivers Fund, continued to support our ongoing work on seven projects in the Upper Bear River in Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming to benefit Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, recreational fishing, and local communities and ranchers who divert water for irrigation. RLF also continued to support WNTI’s portfolio of projects in the Warner Lakes Basin in southeast Oregon to benefit Warner Lakes Redband Trout (State Sensitive and Federal Species of Concern), Warner sucker (listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act), recreational fishing, ranchers, and landowners.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Habitat Conservation and the Recreational Fisheries Initiative funding of $52,156 supported a four phased project benefitting Coastal Cutthroat Trout in Prince William Sound in Alaska, the western and northernmost distribution of the species. The project involves professional fish biologists, recreational anglers, licensed guides and citizen scientists to model potential Coastal Cutthroat Trout streams, host fishing forums and outreach presentations to local fishing organizations, conduct field sampling and sharing project results through presentations, an informational brochure, social media, and a video. Data collected will help fill gaps in the range-wide Coastal Cutthroat Trout Assessment, co-funded by WNTI and completed in 2016, and generate nominations to the Alaska Anadromous Waters Catalog.

Collectively, the 15 projects funded in 2021 will remove or bypass 13 barriers to restore access to 301 miles of stream for fish passage, restore 9.5 miles of riparian habitat, complete 67 habitat assessments, and assess 356 fish populations and 1,048 stream miles.

Work continued in 2021 by the National Fish Habitat Partnership program (NFHP) Board of Directors and the 20 nationally recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships, including WNTI, to transition the NFHP program to meet the requirements of the 2020 America’s Conservation Enhancement (ACE Act). The ACE Act reauthorized the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and codified NFHP, two of the most successful voluntary conservation efforts in the nation. Visit bit.ly/3rWExK6.

Thank you for making 2021 another successful year for WNTI. We are looking forward to continued success in 2022!

Sincerely,

JULIE MEKA CARTER
Chair, WNTI Steering Committee

THERESE THOMPSON
Coordinator

138 Fish Passage Barriers removed
1,741 Stream miles reconnected, restored, or improved
41 Barriers constructed to conserve and protect priority populations
685 Miles of habitat protected above barriers
1,123 Watersheds or populations surveyed or assessed
PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP FUNDS IN 2021

- Selway Creek Watershed Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration (Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Arctic Grayling), Montana
- Spread Creek Fish Passage Project Phase 2 (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- Wood River Passage Project WY (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- A Range-wide YCT Genetic Assessment to Direct Management and Conservation Strategies to Enhance Population and Species Persistence (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming

ONGOING PROJECTS FUNDED IN THE BEAR RIVER (BENEFITTING BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT)

- Bear River Restoration Phase 2 Almy Ditch (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- Evanston Town Historic Dam (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- Lewis and Homer Diversions (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- Stauffer Creek Fish Passage Construction Phase 1 (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Idaho
- East Fork Hilliard Canal (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Utah
- Sims Creek Slough (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Wyoming
- Steve’s Creek (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), Idaho

OUTREACH ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

WESTERN NATIVE TROUT CHALLENGE

In 2019, the Western Native Trout Initiative launched a major new program called the Western Native Trout Challenge. The program celebrates the native trout and char species of the West and invites anglers to catch each species in its native or historic range and is a lifetime challenge for each individual who registers. Participants catch native trout and char in each of 12 western states. WNTI provides education, resources, inspiration, and prizes. The purpose of the Challenge is to strengthen angler awareness of these unique native species, help anglers understand native trout conservation, and grow the community of trout fishing aficionados. As of December 2021, 1,074 anglers have registered for the Western Native Trout Challenge, Residents of California lead the states, followed by Utah, Colorado and Arizona. A total of 179 individuals have completed one or more levels of the Challenge. A number of individuals have completed several of the levels more than once!

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PROJECT FUNDED BY NOAA

- Using angler engagement to guide documentation of Coastal Cutthroat Trout distribution at the northern and western portion of their range, Alaska

Ongoing projects funded in the Warner Basin (Benefitting Warner Basin Redband Trout)

- Deep Creek Middle Diversion (Interior Redband Trout), Oregon
- Honey Creek JJ Diversion (Interior Redband Trout), Oregon
- Honey Creek Four Lower Diversions (Interior Redband Trout), Oregon

Learn more and register at WesternNativeTroutChallenge.org
Follow the action on:
@WNativeTrout
@WesternNativeTrout
/westernnativetroutchallenge

Journalist Daniel Ritz, WNTI, Trout Unlimited, Orvis, and the Montana Fly Company collaborated on an outreach campaign in 2021, sharing the adventures of Ritz, a digital marketer, and fly fisherman, who fished across the Western United States in 2020 to complete all three levels of the Western Native Trout Challenge in 10 months and landed each of the 20 native trout species in their historical ranges of the 12 states in the West. You can read all 22 of Ritz’s articles at westernnativetroutchallenge.org/media

Arctic Grayling, Alaska. Photo courtesy Daniel Ritz.

Bonneville Cutthroat Trout. Utah. Photo courtesy Daniel Ritz.

ONGOING PARTNERSHIP IN THE BEAR RIVER WATERSHED

Resources Legacy Fund program officer, Shara Sparks, and WNTI coordinator, Therese Thompson, co-authored an Op-Ed in the Salt Lake City Tribune titled Western Resilience Seen Along the Bear River about the ongoing partnership in the Bear River watershed in Idaho, Utah and Wyoming benefitting Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, recreational fishing, rural economies, and ranchers who divert water for irrigation. This multi-year effort consists of 19 projects that will remove a total of 24 push up dams and diversion structures, perched culverts, and a concrete dam to restore approximately 144.25 stream miles. sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2021/10/07/shara-sparks-therese/

Trout Unlimited also released an article about the Bear River watershed partnership tu.org/magazine/american-places-2/five-hundred-miles-of-river-memories-in-three-states

WILDLIFE FOREVER STATE-FISH ART CONTEST

The Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest partnered with WNTI in 2021 to highlight the diversity of native trout in the western United States. This partnership connects youth to the assortment of native trout utilizing the Art of Conservation®. In honor of this collaboration, the Fish Art Contest created a new Western Native Trout Award. Winners were selected in four grade categories, Kindergarten-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, 7th-9th grade, and 10th-12th grade and awarded a prize package from the Western Native Trout Initiative. wildlifeforever.org/western-native-trout-award-winners

Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest Award Winners

UPSOLE BREWING COMPANY AND REPYOURWATER COLLABORATIVE NATIVE TROUT CANS

WNTI partnered with RepYourWater and Upslope Brewing in 2021 to release collaborative Limited Edition native trout cans that featured artwork representing trout in six Rocky Mountain states. upslopebrewing.com/trout-cans

Social Media

To share accomplishments achieved in conserving western native trout across the West, WNTI posted 229 media stories on the partnership’s Facebook page, which generated more than 119,290 “likes”. WNTI maintains an active presence on other social media channels with 15,000 followers on Instagram and almost 1,000 followers on Twitter.
About WNTI

The WESTERN NATIVE TROUT INITIATIVE is a public-private Fish Habitat Partnership that works collaboratively across 12 western states to conserve (protect, restore and recover) 21 native trout and char species.

To achieve this mission, WNTI works together with its on-the-ground partners to:

Establish Joint Priorities for Native Trout Conservation
Covering over 1.75 million square miles of public and privately managed lands, WNTI and our partners combine science-based assessments along with expert and local knowledge to establish joint priorities for native trout conservation at a landscape scale.

Coordinate Investment and Collaborative Action
WNTI provides a forum for partners to coordinate and invest their collective assets and capacity toward completing the highest-priority, native trout conservation efforts across the West. Proposed and led by local communities and resource agencies, these projects are funded and supported through WNTI’s grant programs and in-kind contributions by our partners.

Education, Outreach and Stewardship
WNTI seeks to support and sustain the ongoing efforts of our on-the-ground partners by raising awareness for the importance of healthy native trout watersheds and facilitating greater public support for native trout conservation within local communities. Through our Campaign for Western Native Trout, WNTI helps encourage private investment and involvement in native trout projects and regional native trout conservation initiatives.

The future of native trout conservation depends on the generosity of individuals like you who care about sustaining healthy western watersheds. When you give to WNTI, 100% of your donation is leveraged to support on-the-ground, locally led projects.

STAFF
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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
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U.S. Forest Service
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Chris Cantrell
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

THANK YOU 2021 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Alaska Dept of Fish and Game
American Anadromous Fish Council
American Sportfishing Association
Fish America Foundation
Arizona Game and Fish Dept
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Basin-Bend
California Dept of Fish and Wildlife
California Flyfishers Unlimited
Coastal Cutthroat Coalition
Coastal Cutthroat Trout
Interagency Committee
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Copper River Watershed Project
Federation of Fly Fishers – Southwest Council
Frederiksborg Fly Fishers
Fish Focus Photography
Friends of the Teton River
Gaia Creative
Guadalupe River Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
Idaho Dept of Fish and Game
Intermountain West Joint Venture
Lake County Umbrella
Living Waters Fly Fishing
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
National Fish Habitat Partnership
Montana Fly Company
Native Trout Addicts
Nevada Dept of Wildlife
New Mexico Council Trout Unlimited
New Mexico Dept of Game and Fish
NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation
North Fork John Day Watershed Council
Okanogan Land Trust
Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife
Orvis
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Pheasants Forever
RepYourWater
Resources Legacy Fund
(Open Rivers Fund)
Rocky Mountain Flyathlon
Running Rivers
Santa Clara Pueblo – Forestry Division
Trout Unlimited
Trout Unlimited Native Trout Work Group
Turner Endangered Species Fund, LLC
Upslope Brewing Co.
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. National Park Service
Utah Cutthroat Slam
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife
West Hills Community College District
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Wyoming Game and Fish Dept
Yellowstone Forever Foundation

Thank you!

STEERING COMMITTEE
Operating under the guidance of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Western Native Trout Initiative is governed by a Steering Committee that represents 12 western states, 3 federal resource management agencies, tribes, and nonprofit fisheries conservation organizations.

Julie Meka Carter, Chair
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Paul Dey, Vice Chair
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Gillian O’Doherty
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Roger Bloom
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Matt Nicholl
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Martin Koenig
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Trevor Watson
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
Jon Sjöberg and Chris Crookshanks
Nevada Department of Wildlife

Photos left to right courtesy Hannah Finley, Carson Jeffres, Seth Davis

Photo courtesy Erika Bates