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Rob Firth, Colorado River Headwaters Project Coordinator
Brian Hodge, Yampa/White River Basin Project Coordinator
Cary Denison, Gunnison River Basin Coordinator
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Matthew Clark, Backcountry Coordinator, Dolores River Basin
Greg Moore, Communications Specialist
Shane Cross, Western Energy Counsel

TU Watershed Restoration Staff
Elizabeth Russell, Mine Restoration Project Manager

Colorado TU Land Protection Staff
Chris Herrman, Colorado Plateau Land Protection Coordinator

Mission & Vision
Colorado Trout Unlimited works to conserve, protect, and restore Colorado’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. Through cooperation, collaboration, grassroots advocacy, and education Trout Unlimited seeks to ensure that robust populations of native and wild coldwater fish once again thrive across Colorado, so that our children can enjoy healthy fisheries in their home waters.

Colorado TU

Year In Review

Colorado TU 2010 Year In Review

But for as long as we have been at it, and as strong and smart as we may be, the job of protecting Colorado’s rivers is bigger than one organization can handle – the threats are too real, the magnitude is too great. That is why the partnership and collaboration that we enjoy, especially within the realm of Trout Unlimited, is so vital to our success.

One could think of Trout Unlimited in Colorado in the same way – we have a strong local grassroots community with 25 chapters and nearly 10,000 members statewide, a vibrant and increasingly active state council, and the most National TU staff working on the ground in any state outside of Washington, D.C. It’s the willingness of these three legs of the organization to join hands and work together that makes Colorado so effective and our reach and respect so broad.

Collaborations like the Gunnison Gorge Anglers (among others) working with the Alpine Triangle Campaign, or the Colorado River Headwaters Chapter working hand-in-hand with Colorado TU and the Colorado Water Project to defend the Fraser and the Upper Colorado Rivers. Or the multi-dimensional efforts revving up in the White and Yampa River Basins, where state, local, and National TU are working together on energy, private land, and river reconnection projects, and has led to a new chapter in the Steamboat Springs area. These are just a few examples of something that seems so basic... working together.

Between the energy and involvement of the chapters, the savvy and experience of the state council, and the expertise and dedication of National TU staff, Colorado TU has had a banner year in terms of the number of accomplishments, the rise in member involvement, and the strategic importance of the successes. As you read this year’s Annual Report, I hope you feel some pride in being a part of this success, because it certainly does not happen without you.

But we are not content. There is much to do and the challenges that we face in 2011 are significant – the Upper Colorado Campaign will come to a head, litigation in defense of the Roan Plateau likely will be decided, the Roadless Rule will probably be completed, and the Over The River project’s fate will be determined. All of these issues are being directed by a strong, smart, and collaborative group of people, in Colorado, working for Colorado. Because at the end of the day, wherever you might be, we are all Colorado TU.

Sinjin Eberle
President
Our Vision is Simple — by the next generation, Colorado TU will ensure that robust populations of native and wild coldwater fish once again thrive throughout Colorado, so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy healthy fisheries in their home waters.

Colorado TU’s Coldwater Conservation Strategy

- **Protect**
  high quality habitat for native and wild coldwater fish and maintain free flowing rivers;

- **Reconnect**
  fragmented fish populations and habitats by restoring flows to dewatered rivers and re-opening fish passage;

- **Restore**
  watersheds by working in collaboration with sportsmen and women, other non-profit and governmental organizations, as well as private landowners, to preserve and improve the quality of habitats that support coldwater fish; and

- **Sustain**
  the efforts of our volunteers and supporters by inspiring a strong conservation ethic in the next generation of river stewards through hands-on, field-based opportunities that foster awareness of the connections between Colorado’s trout, water resources, and the environment.

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Our Vision Colorado TU Chapters

1. Alpine Anglers – Estes Park
2. Boulder Flycasters – Boulder
3. Cherry Creek Anglers – Aurora
4. Cheyenne Mountain – Colorado Springs
5. Collegiate Peaks Anglers – Salida/Buena Vista
6. Colorado River Headwaters – Grand County
7. Cutthroat – Littleton
8. Denver – Denver
9. Eagle Valley – Eagle
10. Evergreen – Evergreen
11. Ferdinand Hayden – Aspen/Glenwood Springs
12. Five Rivers – Durango/Cortez
13. Gore Range – Summit County
14. Grand Valley Anglers – Grand Junction
15. Gunnison Angling Society – Gunnison
16. Gunnison Gorge Anglers – Delta/Montrose
17. Purgatoire River Anglers – Trinidad
18. Rocky Mountain Flycasters – Fort Collins/Greeley
19. San Luis Valley – Alamosa
20. Southern Colorado Greenbacks – Pueblo
21. St. Vrain Anglers – Longmont
22. West Denver – Lakewood
23. Yampa Valley Flyfishers – Steamboat
Keep The Colorado River Headwaters Alive

For the past 5 years, Colorado TU and our grassroots chapters across the state have worked tirelessly to protect the Colorado River Headwaters from two proposed water supply projects – the Moffett and the Windy Gap Firming Projects. These projects collectively threaten to reduce river flows to less than a quarter of their historic levels, leaving in limbo the future health of the fish, wildlife and local West Slope communities that depend on the Upper Colorado River and tributaries like the Fraser River.

Through on-the-ground grassroots leadership provided by Colorado TU’s Colorado River Headwaters Chapter and with technical support provided by Colorado TU staff and partners, hundreds of concerned West Slope and Front Range residents mobilized to express their concerns about the potential effects of both projects on the Fraser and Colorado Rivers.

As the final mitigation plans and permit requirements for each project are reviewed by state and federal agencies, the focus throughout 2011 will be to continue educating and mobilizing concerned citizens in support of measures to strike a balance between meeting water supply needs and protecting the health of the Colorado River.

Colorado TU will also work directly with state and federal agencies, Wildlife Commissioners and water providers, Coloradans across the state demanded adequate protections and mitigation measures to ensure their children and grandchildren can continue enjoying the beauty and recreation opportunities provided by a healthy Colorado River.

As the final mitigation plans and permit requirements for each project are reviewed by state and federal agencies, the focus throughout 2011 will be to continue educating and mobilizing concerned citizens in support of measures to strike a balance between meeting water supply needs and protecting the health of the Colorado River.

Colorado TU released a new video, “Tapped Out: The Upper Colorado on the Brink,” which highlights the damage inflicted on the Fraser and Upper Colorado River system by past diversions and the serious threats posed by expansions of those water systems. See the video and Upper Colorado River campaign page at www.defendthecolorado.org.

Dry Gulch Victory

TU scored a major victory in 2010, negotiating a final settlement in a multi-year controversy over the proposed Dry Gulch Reservoir and Pumping Station project near Pagosa Springs. The reservoir and diversion project threatened San Juan River flows and prized trout habitat, and for many years TU had argued that the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District and the San Juan Water Conservancy District were claiming far more water for the project than any legitimate future need for Archuleta County and the Pagosa Springs community.

TU twice appealed a water court’s decision to award water rights for the project, arguing that the water districts were impropoerly speculating in their predictions of population growth. In both instances, the Colorado Supreme Court sided with TU and denied the water rights for the project.

In December 2010, TU struck a deal with the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District and the San Juan Water Conservancy District. Under the agreement, the Dry Gulch project would be dramatically downsized, and the districts would divert from the San Juan River less than a tenth of the amount of water they originally proposed.

“This is a victory for the San Juan River,” Drew Petrolli, director of TU’s Colorado Water Project, said after the settlement was reached. “The original application could have been devastating to fish habitat and the river ecosystem, but now we have a settlement that balances the districts’ need for water with the health of the San Juan.”

Protecting The Roaring Fork River From Hydroelectric Development

The Ferdinand Hayden Chapter began working with local stakeholders to ensure a newly proposed hydroelectric project is completed responsibly – without dewatering two important tributaries of the Roaring Fork River, Castle and Maroon Creeks. As proposed by the City of Aspen, the project threatens to drastically cut flows creating concerns for trout and other recreational users.

Ensuring Responsible Expansion Of The Halligan-Seaman Reservoirs

Colorado TU staff and volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Flycasters TU Chapter continued to participate in the “Shared Vision Planning” process for the proposed expansions of Halligan and Seaman Reservoirs in the Cache la Poudre watershed. "Shared Vision Planning" is a collaborative approach to water development in which environmental interests are brought in from the beginning, seeking ways in which a project can provide not only water supply but also environmental and recreational benefits.
Youth Conservation Education

Program Overview

The benefits of Colorado TU’s conservation efforts and restoration work can be undone in a single generation if future stewards fail to understand the value of healthy river ecosystems. To ensure healthy rivers and watersheds are sustained for future generations, Trout Unlimited’s Youth Conservation Education Program focuses on cultivating a strong, life-long conservation ethic in Colorado’s young people by providing hands-on, field-based opportunities that foster awareness of the connections between Colorado’s trout, water resources, the environment, and themselves.

Youth Conservation Fly Fishing Camps

- With support from local chapters, students ages 14-18 from across Colorado participated in Colorado TU’s Annual River Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp at Beaver Run Ranch in Aspen, Colorado. From snorkel surveys to water quality sampling, campers were instructed on the principles of ecology and the importance of coldwater conservation while also learning the basics of fly fishing.

- The Rocky Mountain Flycasters TU Chapter held its first annual week-long summer day camp for youth. Chapter volunteers taught campers basic casting and fly tying techniques and local resource managers provided a variety of hands-on conservation lessons through a special field restoration project, electro-fishing, snorkel surveying, and workshops on a variety of topics from entomology to invasive species.

Trout In The Classroom

- Through the Trout in the Classroom program, students attending participating schools raise trout from eggs to fry, engage in water quality and habitat studies, and release their trout into state-approved waters near their school. In its 2nd year, Trout in the Classroom launched four new program sites at Woodland Park High School, Bayfield Middle School, Windsor High School, and Centaurus High School. Students from the existing Trout in the Classroom program at Thompson Valley High School released their first trout during the spring of 2010.

- Colorado TU’s 23 chapters statewide volunteer regularly with youth. They conduct fly fishing workshops, field days and in-school programs to teach students about their home watersheds.

Notes from the Field

Dennis Cook, Rocky Mountain Flycasters Chapter Member and Colorado TU Chapter Development Committee Chairman

“I like helping young people learn to enjoy the outdoors and fly fishing as much as I do, and to see nature as a lifelong interest. Today there are so many distractions that they too rarely experience these pleasures. If we don’t help our youth appreciate and respect the natural outdoors, who will take care of our rivers in the years ahead?”

Balancing Energy Development On The Roan Plateau

Colorado TU and other conservation partners, represented by pro-hono counsel Earthjustice, continued to challenge an ill-conceived plan for oil and gas development atop the Roan Plateau that lacks appropriate measures to protect the Roan’s unique wildlife habitat and native cutthroat trout populations. After extensive efforts to seek settlement, talks ultimately broke down and the case now awaits a final ruling from the Federal District Court. Fortunately, leases on the Roan remain suspended so that drilling cannot begin while the case proceeds. Colorado TU will continue to advocate for a more responsible approach to developing the Roan, in which greater use of directional drilling allows extraction of natural gas without disturbing sensitive watersheds and the unique native Colorado River Cutthroat trout fisheries they support.

Advocating For “Low Impact” Hydropower

Colorado TU has continued to encourage low-impact approaches to developing hydroelectric power. Built and operated appropriately, hydropower can maintain healthy, connected river systems while generating renewable energy – but poorly designed and operated hydropower facilities can devastate rivers and decimate fisheries. Working with the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO), Colorado TU has encouraged programs which take advantage of existing water facilities to generate hydropower -- allowing increased energy production without adding additional impacts to Colorado’s streams. The GEO recently established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (the federal agency which issues hydropower licenses), to help ease the process for permitting small, low-impact hydropower generation on existing water infrastructure such as pipelines and ditches.

Promoting Responsible Oil & Gas Development

- Colorado TU successfully prevented several oil and gas lease sales near critical Colorado River Cutthroat Trout streams including parcels within the roadless backcountry of both the Routt and White River National Forests.

- Colorado TU mobilized its grassroots membership in support of federal legislation like the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources Act (CLEAR Act) that encouraged responsible energy development in Colorado and throughout the nation while protecting our rivers, lakes and waterways from pollution. The CLEAR Act also called for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund which provides financial support to help maintain important national, state and local parks and publicly accessible rivers.

- Colorado TU began building a coalition in the White River Basin to create a Sportsmen’s vision for energy development that safeguards fish and wildlife.

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Energy

Program Overview

Over the past century, traditional oil, gas, and coal extraction has taken a toll on Colorado’s rivers, wildlife, and landscapes. Today, with one of the largest oil shale reserves in the world, Colorado remains a hotbed for oil and gas exploration and development. Even as our state moves toward more renewable sources of energy like wind, solar, hydropower, and geothermal, threats to native trout ecosystems remain. Colorado TU works with energy development companies, state and federal agencies, elected officials, and local stakeholder groups to advocate for balanced energy solutions – those that allow Colorado to meet its energy needs while protecting native fish, irreplaceable river ecosystems and human health.
Using Science To Restore Native Trout

Trouble distinguishing the genetic differences between two of Colorado’s closely related native trout species – Colorado River cutthroat and Greenback cutthroat – and difficulty determining their native ranges have slowed restoration efforts to a standstill. To help solve these mysteries, Colorado TU and the Cheyenne Mountain TU Chapter have contributed to an interagency partnership study that includes the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife conducted through the University of Colorado that is examining historic samples – some over 100 years old – to determine the genetic strains that were found in Colorado before other trout stocking took place. Information from the study will help define what fish are appropriate to use for restoration projects in watersheds on both sides of the Continental Divide.

Raising Awareness For Colorado’s Native Trout

Young Colorado TU members launched a group called “The Greenbacks’” to raise awareness and funding for native trout restoration in Colorado. To date, the group has hosted two successful events – a film festival and photography exhibit – raising nearly $10,000 for native fish conservation and engaging hundreds of young people in Colorado TU’s work.

Restoring Native Trout Habitat In The Poudre River Headwaters

Colorado TU continued its effort to collaborate on a project in the Poudre headwaters with Northern Colorado irrigators (Water Supply and Storage Company – WSSC), state agencies, and local governments. The proposed partnership would work to restore native trout across nearly 40 miles of connected streams in Rocky Mountain National Park and adjacent National Forest lands – the largest such project in Colorado history.

Notes From The Field

Nick Hoover, Co-Founder of The Greenbacks & Cutthroat TU Chapter member

“The Greenbacks were formed to build community through conservation with the goal of promoting native fish restoration and preservation in Colorado. We give younger members the opportunity to engage with Colorado TU in fun and diverse ways. We’re also helping to develop the next round of leadership from within Trout Unlimited and we’re having a good time while we do it.”

Trapper Creek/Parachute Creek Projects On Roan

Combining financial support from energy companies, the national TU Embrace-a-Stream program, and volunteer manpower from the Grand Valley Anglers Chapter - Colorado TU helped plant hundreds of new willows along Trapper Creek on the Roan Plateau. Trapper Creek supports a rare population of pure Colorado River cutthroat trout; recent fencing along the stream protects it from grazing livestock and allows for restoration of a healthier riparian environment.

Mobilize Citizen Support For Roadless Protection

Roadless areas provide some of the best places to hunt and fish throughout the west. To protect these important places, Colorado TU works with diverse groups of recreationists, sportmen, private industry, local communities, and government agencies to identify places where development and vehicle use is appropriate, and places where such activity can harm fish and wildlife.

Colorado TU worked in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to help implement the Legacy Roads Trail Program, which is intended to reduce road and trail impacts to watersheds and aquatic ecosystems by decommissioning unneeded roads, removing fish passage barriers, and addressing critical repair and maintenance needs.

Colorado TU continues to mobilize citizens and work with resource managers and elected representatives to help secure major improvements in the management of Colorado’s roadless areas through the state’s Roadless Rule.

Protecting The Headwaters Of Gold Medal Fisheries

Situated at the headwaters of three trophy trout rivers – the Animas, Lake Fork of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre – the 186,000 acre Alpine Triangle is one of Colorado’s most important economic, historic and recreational resources. As a founding member of the Alpine Triangle Coalition, Colorado TU is working side-by-side with sportmen and women, local communities, federal agencies, local business owners, and other recreation users on a collaborative effort to protect the heart of the San Juan Mountains for the benefit of future generations.

The Alpine Triangle Coalition is comprised of nearly 2,000 members and is supported by approximately 40 local and regional businesses.

To raise awareness for the importance of continued protections for the Alpine Triangle, Colorado TU staff worked with Field and Stream magazine to produce a feature article included in the publication’s “Best Wild Places” series.

A new website www.alpinetriangletx.com and facebook group “Friends of the Alpine Triangle” were launched to serve as a clearinghouse for information related to the Alpine Triangle Coalition.

Building Collaborative Coalitions In The Dolores River Basin

Boasting views of southwest Colorado’s San Juan Mountains that rise to lofty heights of over 14,000 feet, a multitude of working ranches and farms, excellent cutthroat trout, elk and deer habitat, and vibrant communities, the Dolores Basin is truly a one-of-a-kind place. This largely intact western landscape is home to incredible hunting and fishing, as well as infinite recreational opportunities ranging from rafting and kayaking to hiking, cycling, OHV riding and even sailing and water skiing on McPhie Reservoir. Additionally, it’s an area vital to local agricultural and ranching interests, and is an essential feed downstream water supply and water quality. From the top of the drainage to the bottom, the Dolores Basin is a paradise that deserves to be kept the way it is.

To help protect this landscape for a variety of recreation uses long into the future, Colorado TU initiated a community-wide discussion about how to protect the sporting, economic, and recreational values in the upper watershed. These conversations helped build a new coalition, ‘Sportmen for the Dolores’ (www.upperdolores.com), that will continue an open dialogue about protecting the values and resources of our public lands and promote a wise land use plan that values traditional multiple backcountry uses.

Newly hired Backcountry Coordinator Matt Clark and other Colorado TU staff worked in conjunction with the local Dolores River Anglers TU Sub-chapter to identify and initiate stream restoration projects on small tributaries of the Dolores River that contain native Colorado cutthroat populations.

Working closely with the U.S. Forest Service, other conservation organizations, local citizens, and OMV groups, Colorado TU worked to create balanced and responsible travel management plans in the San Juan National Forest that preserve this special place for future generations while continuing to allow diverse recreational activities.
Water Quality

Monitoring Water Quality Through RiverWatch

Through RiverWatch, a collaborative effort between Colorado TU, the Colorado Watershed Assembly, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, volunteers from 6 Trout Unlimited chapters helped collect baseline data on streams and rivers across the state. RiverWatch is designed to provide policy-makers and agencies with high quality water ecosystem data to guide informed decisions.

- The Cutthroat Chapter, Cheyenne Mountain Chapter, Colorado River Headwaters Chapter, West Denver Trout Unlimited, Five Rivers Chapter, and Collegiate Peaks Chapter conducted monitoring on Clear Creek, Bear Creek, Severy Creek, South Platte River, Arkansas River and the Fraser River among others, logging hundreds of volunteer hours monitoring their home waters.

Keeping Colorado’s Rivers Clean

Beyond monitoring, protection of water quality requires effective advocacy before the Water Quality Control Commission to ensure that Colorado’s rivers are protected by strong, science-based standards. In 2010, Colorado TU and its partners worked with the Commission in its “Basic Standards” review — setting baseline standards that protect water quality statewide. Among the major issues addressed in this revision of the standards:

- Dissolved oxygen standards were proposed that didn’t consider the needs of fish species that occur at greater depths than two meters — such as trout and especially lake trout. Colorado TU helped secure language recognizing the need to look at oxygen levels at greater depths where fish rely on those deeper-water habitats.
- Colorado TU helped limit proposed measures that provide loopholes and exemptions for polluters.
- The Commission adopted more protective zinc standards to help protect sculpin (and in the process strengthened protection for trout as well).
- Mining interests proposed a number of measures to weaken metal standards; in each case, Colorado TU either achieved an acceptable compromise or defeated the proposal altogether.

Notes From The Field

Bill Honeyfield, Cutthroat TU Chapter

‘fish need cold, clean water to survive. I participate in the River Watch program to help Colorado agencies monitor and maintain the health of our rivers. As an added bonus, it’s fun!’

Legislative Advocacy

Water Quality

Colorado TU is the only sportsmen’s conservation organization that maintains a full-time legislative advocate at the State Capitol during the General Assembly. Combined with the power of our grassroots membership — activists who contact their legislators on critical issues – Colorado TU provides a respected and effective voice for river and watershed protection at the legislature.

2010 was a good year for smart water bills under the Capitol dome. A package of bills to promote a variety of water conservation strategies was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Ritter. Additionally, Colorado TU secured legislation encouraging low-impact hydropower and defeated a bill to weaken the ability of the Division of Wildlife to acquire lands for habitat and hunting and fishing access. Colorado TU and our allies scored important victories on our top legislative priorities, making 2010 a highly successful session for river and watershed conservation. Together, we:

- Promoted Wise Water Use. Colorado TU and its conservation partners secured passage of three important bills to encourage greater conservation of water, helping keep more water in Colorado’s streams. Combined, these measures represent a significant step forward in promoting wise water use. HB 1051 requires water providers to present annual information on the amount of water being saved through their water conservation plans, and outline strategies that must be considered under their plans. SB 25 extends the state water efficiency grant program to support water efficiency and conservation programs. HB 1358 requires new home builders to offer water-smart options such as installation of water-efficient fixtures and xeriscaping.
- Advocated For Reasonable Hydropower. SB 19 was intended to change how hydropower plants are valued for property tax purposes. Colorado TU worked with bill sponsors to apply this change to lower-impact hydropower projects only — those that take advantage of water already moved for other purposes and do not take more water from Colorado’s streams. It represents the first low-impact hydropower standard in Colorado law, encouraging renewable energy in a way that also protects streams.
- Protected Funding For Trout Habitat & Access. Working with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado TU helped defeat HB 1361, a bill that would have created significant new obstacles to acquiring lands with habitat stamp funds. Land purchases made by Colorado DOW using habitat stamp funds contributed by hunters and anglers are very valuable in protecting habitat and in providing hunting and fishing access.

Securing Funding For Local River & Public Lands Conservation

Since the 1970’s, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, funded through oil and gas royalties that are collected for permission to drill/develop on public lands, has provided resources to establish and maintain healthy rivers and access to public lands through offshore oil and gas leasing revenues, it has rarely received full funding. During 2010, Colorado TU mobilized its grassroots members in support of various attempts by Congress to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund including the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act.

Congress and the state legislature are critical forums where laws are made that affect our rivers. A single bad law can counter the benefits of dozens of on-the-ground efforts, while a good law can open valuable opportunities for river conservation. To maximize our ability to conserve, protect and restore watersheds throughout our state, Colorado TU works with decision-makers at the state capital and in Washington D.C. promoting balanced, common sense policies that ensure Colorado’s rivers and public lands remain healthy for future generations.
2010 Financials

Revenues $337,837.03
Investment/Other 34%
Membership 7%
Events 17%
Grants 39%
"Colorado TU wishes to express our deepest appreciation to our supporters, who through their continued generosity allow us to conserve, protect, and restore Colorado’s rivers and watersheds.

Thank You!"
Dedication
In Honor Of Joy Hilliard
(1923-2010)

We would like to honor and acknowledge the support of Joy Hilliard, a committed Colorado TU member, dedicated volunteer, and life-long supporter of coldwater fisheries conservation. Her generosity and engagement have helped make the accomplishments described in this report possible. Through generous support provided by her estate, Colorado TU will continue her legacy and love of the outdoors through conservation and education for years to come.

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