Conserving, protecting and restoring Colorado's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds

Trout Unlimited in Colorado
Our Mission

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.

Our Mission From the President

Conservation success doesn’t happen overnight – it takes thoughtful planning, effective execution, and perseverance in the face of challenges. In 2014, Colorado TU enjoyed some remarkable successes that were the culmination of years of effort. From the Roan Plateau to the Fraser River, we saw campaigns that started a decade or more ago reach major milestones.

I attribute this success to the dedication of our skilled professional staff and the impressive work of grassroots volunteers across our 24 local chapters. Together, we’ve upheld a culture in which it is natural to leverage modest resources into formidable impact and to forge strong partnerships with agency colleagues, other conservationists, and non-traditional allies such as oil and gas companies and water providers.

While our progress on our conservation and education mission is the heart of what you’ll read in this report, we’ve also achieved several goals from our strategic plan that strengthen Colorado TU’s sustainability as a non-profit organization. We have:

• Enhanced volunteer training programs for our chapter leaders to promote their success in communities across the state.
• Extended our Leo Gomolchak Conservation Mini-Grant Program to give local chapters seed capital that they can leverage for local projects.
• Grown our staff capacity for chapter engagement and support and youth education.
• Expanded fundraising initiatives for donors both large and small, from the Coldwater Conservation Fund to the Protect Our Rivers license plate.

• Invested time and effort in building enhanced partnerships to better leverage our efforts through cooperation with agencies, businesses, schools, and other groups with whom we can find common interest.

We’re far from finished. In the Colorado headwaters, we are turning a corner from focused advocacy on specific water development projects toward new collaborations for river management and restoration. We are stepping up our efforts for native trout restoration, including the ‘re-discovered’ greenback cutthroat trout. We are moving forward to expand successful youth education programs piloted in the north Denver area into new communities around the state. And we continue to work toward making TU a sustainable organization that can advance these efforts for many years to come.

Your support as a member and donor provide the foundation from which we can build these efforts. Thank you for helping TU make a difference for Colorado, today and tomorrow.

Rick Matsumoto
President, Colorado TU
Looking Ahead: CAMP for Dolores River Native Trout

Dolores River Anglers and national TU staff are teaming up on a multi-year project to develop an overarching “hands on,” chapter-level decision tool to assist in identifying viable long-term native trout strongholds within the Dolores watershed in the face of climate change, and to identify strategies to strengthen those strongholds. The “Coldwater-fisheries Adaptive Management Plan” (CAMP) builds on science about local watersheds/streams, connecting them with relevant Best Management Practices and assessing them in light of the risks from long term climate change. Through the CAMP, the chapter will focus efforts on the most promising and important habitats for the future of native and wild trout in the Dolores basin.

1 Clear Creek River Cleanup

Every year the West Denver Trout Unlimited chapter out of Golden gathers its trash bags, gloves, safety vests, and boots and heads up Clear Creek canyon to clean up the river. The chapter has adopted a stretch of Clear Creek to protect, clean, and restore. In 2014, students from Achieve Academy in Thornton were bussed to the clean up to take part in the fun. Other community groups, including the Colorado Women Fly Fishers, also partnered in the cleanup. Students and adults found chairs, bones, large signs and a lot of trash! This is one of many cleanups that happen around the state organized by Trout Unlimited chapters where we leverage the sweat equity of hundreds of volunteers – removing tons of trash from our waterways, and having a lot of fun.

2 TIC – Presidential Award

Trout in the Classroom Teacher Wins National Recognition

Thanks to his conservation efforts and environmental teaching with the Trout in the Classroom program, local Summit High School teacher and Gore Range Chapter member Jamie Lambrecht received the 2014 Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE). The award is presented by the US Environmental Protection Agency, “to nationally honor, support and encourage educators who incorporate environmental education in their classrooms & teaching methods.” Lambrecht has been involved with the Trout in the Classroom program for the last three years. The program reaches about 150-200 kids between the ages of 14 and 18 in Summit County. His curriculum involves more than growing fish in tanks; it helps students learn all about the aquatic ecosystem. Students learn about the insects in the water, the effects of pH and nitrate on water quality, and other ways to help improve the river habitat. The kids also learn how these different traits affect fishing. According to Lambrecht, the award shows that “people are starting to realize the efforts that go into watersheds and conservation.”

CTU 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
9 Dolores River Anglers – Cortez
10 Eagle Valley – Eagle
11 Evergreen
12 Ferdinand Hayden – Aspen/Glenwood Springs
13 Five Rivers – Durango/Cortez
14 Gore Range – Summit County
15 Grand Valley Anglers – Grand Junction
16 Gunnison Angling Society – Gunnison
17 Gunnison Gorge Anglers – Delta/Montrose
18 Purgatoire River Anglers – Trinidad
19 Rocky Mountain Flycasters – Fort Collins/Greeley
20 San Luis Valley – Alamosa
21 Southern Colorado Greenbacks – Pueblo
22 St. Vrain Anglers – Longmont
23 West Denver – Lakewood
24 Yampa Valley Flyfishers – Steamboat Springs

Project Locations

A. South Boulder Creek (page 4)
B. Yampa River (page 5)
C. Purgatoire River (page 5)
D. Fraser River (page 6)
E. No Chico Brush (page 7)
F. Roan Plateau (page 10)
G. Hermosa Creek (page 11)
**Restoring Our Rivers**

### Abandoned Mine Cleanup

Many of Colorado’s headwater streams are polluted by heavy metals stemming from abandoned hardrock mines, which in 2006 inspired TU to start a Colorado Abandoned Mine Restoration Program. In 2014, with help from our most important funder and partner, Freeport-McMoRan Inc., we expanded the program into three new watersheds and solidified a great partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

In 2014, TU secured funding for projects on Evans Gulch in the Upper Arkansas watershed and Illinois Gulch in the Upper Blue watershed. Both are contaminated with metals such as zinc and cadmium due to historic hardrock mining. Project plans include sampling to identify the most problematic site within each watershed, followed by restoration design and implementation.

Two years ago, TU partnered with the USFS on the Doctor Mine cleanup on the West Fork of Clear Creek. The success of that project led to a much stronger partnership with the agency, and in 2014 TU received USFS funding to clean up a large area of dispersed mine tailings that contribute high levels of copper into Leavenworth Creek. The creek provides drinking water for Georgetown and supports a brook trout fishery. This remote and idyllic watershed has a rich mining history, but some of the remnants must be cleaned up in order to ensure a healthy headwater ecosystem. TU is excited to begin this project in 2015.

TU leveraged $100,000 in corporate contributions to raise more than $700,000 total for abandoned mine restoration projects.

### Partnerships for Flood Recovery

After the devastating 2013 floods in the South Platte Basin, the US Forest Service (USFS) found itself with a huge backlog of damaged watersheds where they lacked even basic information on post-flood conditions. Members from our northern Front Range chapters have stepped up to help assess the damage, using a protocol developed by the USFS hydrologist and fisheries biologist specifically for TU volunteers. As of now we have trained over 50 TU volunteers, who will collect data that will be used to develop prescriptions for restoring the watersheds back to a more natural and resilient state. This partnership will grow in the coming years as we move from assessment into restoration work.
Yampa River Project: A Tailwater Turns the Corner

In 2010, the Yampa River tailwater fishery below Stagecoach Dam – one of Colorado’s most productive – was becoming a victim of its own popularity. With upwards of 40,000 visitors a year, and a wild rainbow population hit hard by whirling disease, the tailwater showed troubling signs of decline, including a wide, shallow streambed, loss of riparian vegetation, and a trout fishery that struggled to sustain itself.

In 2013, TU biologist Brian Hodge, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and other partners launched a restoration project to bring the Yampa tailwater back to health. After securing funding and partners, the group restored a 1,200-foot section of the river, constructing spawning beds, building deep pools and reworking juvenile rearing channels. The group also built a user access trail along the river. In fall 2014, 29 volunteers from TU’s Yampa Valley Fly Fishers chapter and local families put the finishing touches on the project, planting nearly 1000 trees (alders, willows, choke cherries) along the bank. Native plants for the project were drawn from a unique riparian nursery that the chapter had previously established in partnership with CPW on state property just outside of Steamboat Springs, where vegetation can be raised to maturity for use in restoration projects throughout the Yampa Valley.

TU’s Hodge said the reworked channels and habitat should favor multiple life history and size classes of fish. “The fishery can replenish itself through onsite spawning and rearing,” said Hodge. “This stretch will also produce larger fish than it has in recent years because of increased food production and availability of choice feeding positions.”

Teamwork was essential in coordinating efforts and leveraging resources. Besides CPW, partners included Yampa Valley Land Trust, Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District, Rob Bringuel, and Riverkeeper Bill Chace. Thanks to TU and the power of partnerships, this is a tailwater on the rebound.

Creating Home Waters in Trinidad

The Purgatoire River Anglers Chapter has continued its successful partnership efforts in the Trinidad area to restore habitat on the Purgatoire River through town. In 2014, work was completed on Reach 3 with installation of rock vanes and boulder clusters to create improved habitat and a deeper, narrower channel through nearly 0.4 miles of river corridor. The chapter partnered with the Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District, City of Trinidad, Pioneer Natural Resources, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Trinidad Community Foundation to leverage the resources needed for the third phase of this ambitious multi-year restoration project. Volunteers also contributed their sweat equity to help stabilize and revegetate the area following construction. The result: a healthier Purgatoire River as an increasingly important centerpiece for the Trinidad community.

Partner Spotlight

Vail Resorts

“Our organizations, Trout Unlimited and Vail Resorts, share a commitment to healthy watersheds and sustainable use of our natural resources. We simply will not solve today’s most challenging environmental problems, such as landscape scale watershed restoration, by going it alone. Vail Resorts believes that working in partnership with well-respected organizations such as Trout Unlimited is our best chance for success. We are proud to partner with TU!”

- Rick Cables, VP, Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Partnerships

Breakthrough for the Fraser River

Saving the Fraser

The Moffat mitigation agreement includes:

- $4.5 million for aquatic habitat restoration projects in the watershed
- $2 million for habitat improvement on the Colorado River
- 1000 acre-feet of water each year to help at low flow times
- $2 million for water quality projects
- Use of Moffat project operating flexibility to provide flushing flows
- Monitoring and adaptive management through “Learning by Doing”

Profile in Conservation: Kirk Klancke

For more than a decade, Kirk Klancke has been the face, voice, and driving spirit behind the Save the Fraser campaign. From speaking out at public meetings, to organizing the community Riverstock festival, to leading on-the-ground tours for reporters and decision-makers, Kirk has been at the heart of efforts to conserve the Fraser watershed. “We owe this effort to generations that haven’t been born yet,” he says. “The quality of the environment they inherit depends on the quality of our rivers. TU is the perfect partner for this type of long term commitment.”

Thanks to TU, the Fraser River won a new lease on life in 2014.

In February – after almost a decade of dogged advocacy, countless meetings and mind-crunching negotiations – Trout Unlimited, Denver Water and Grand County reached agreement on a package of river protections designed to keep the Fraser River and its trout populations healthy. The Mitigation and Enhancement Coordination Plan brought to a close years of discussions over the proposed Moffat Collection System Project and its potential impacts on the Fraser watershed. All sides hailed the agreement as a breakthrough that balances municipal needs and environmental health.

The accord includes water for streamflow needs and millions of dollars for habitat restoration and water quality (see sidebar). But the centerpiece of the agreement is “Learning by Doing,” a unique and groundbreaking effort to manage an aquatic environment on a permanent, cooperative basis. The Learning by Doing program will provide an oversight team of stakeholders, including TU, to identify issues of ecological concern and find solutions – partnering to leverage the mitigation and enhancement resources provided by Denver Water to maximize benefits for the river.

“Trout Unlimited realized that protecting this river was going to require a new way of doing business, a collaboration among those who influence and rely upon the Fraser so that everyone has a shared stake in conserving the river for the long term,” said David Nickum, executive director of Colorado Trout Unlimited. “That is the idea behind the Learning by Doing program.”

“This package of protections and enhancements, if adopted in the final permit, gives us the best opportunity to keep the Fraser River and its trout fishery healthy far into the future,” said Mely Whiting, counsel for TU’s Colorado Water Project, who was instrumental in negotiating the agreement. “This pragmatic agreement underscores the value of a collaborative approach to water planning — one that recognizes the importance of healthy rivers.”

Flowcast

During the summer of 2014, TU’s Kevin Terry worked with the San Luis Valley Irrigation District and the Colorado Division of Water Resources to provide real-time flow information to local outfitters and boaters on a daily basis. This program, called the Rio Grande Flowcast, opened a new line of communication among diverse river stakeholders, including outfitters, anglers, local landowners and agencies. At Terry’s urging, DWR allowed SLVID to use compact water from the reservoir to slowly reduce flows, rather than shutting them off drastically — a management change that has great benefit to the river and the fishery, as well as to the anglers trying to fish the river.
Looking Ahead: Reconnecting the Colorado River

As part of a multi-party agreement for the Windy Gap Firming Project, TU is working with Grand County, local landowners, the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (“Northern”), and other partners to develop a plan for reconnecting the Colorado River at or around the Windy Gap dam to allow fish passage, downstream movement of gravels needed to maintain a healthy river and spawning beds, and to improve water quality and habitat. $4 million has already been pledged to the effort by Northern and the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and in the coming year we hope to join our partners in identifying the best design approach and securing the additional funds that will be needed for construction.

Our Colorado River: Healthy Rivers Key to CO Water Plan

Against a backdrop of punishing drought and dwindling river flows, Colorado officials in 2014 undertook an ambitious new effort to chart a roadmap – a “Colorado Water Plan” – for sustainable future water use, and Trout Unlimited was there to speak out for healthy rivers and fisheries. TU members, from national staff to chapter volunteers, were active in the citizen-led basin roundtables around the state that hashed out fine points of the draft plan – many served as conservation representatives on the roundtables, submitting detailed comments and identifying priority projects.

TU’s message for the Colorado Water Plan, delivered on several fronts: collaboration, conservation and efficiency can help the state meet diverse water needs, from farms and industry to communities and fisheries. Through the “Our Colorado River” program, TU has worked to bring West Slope residents and leaders together around these common values on water use. For 14 months, TU’s Our Colorado River coordinator Richard Van Gytenbeek travelled the West Slope, making presentations and garnering support for a collaborative approach to water planning that included healthy rivers as a key goal.

In response, more than 635 individuals, businesses, irrigation districts and city and county governments – representing tens of thousands of Coloradans – signed the Our Colorado River Core Values statement. The statement endorses cooperation rather than conflict, protection of our Colorado open spaces and outdoor quality of life, modernization of our irrigation infrastructure, innovative water management, and keeping our rivers at home rather than pursuing large transbasin diversions to the Front Range.

Trout Unlimited pointed to collaborative projects between ranchers and TU across Colorado (including No Chico Brush – see profile this page) as an example of the kind of efficiency projects that could secure water for agriculture while enhancing river flows and habitat.

“That’s what the future of Colorado water use should look like,” said Drew Peternell, director of TU’s Colorado Water Project. “Instead of a zero sum game, with winners and losers, we should collaborate and build partnerships. Working together, we can find pragmatic, win-win solutions that satisfy all of our diverse water needs, including the need for healthy fisheries and river habitat.”

‘No Chico Brush’ - NRCS Funding will Benefit Farms, Fisheries

Over the past decade, aided by hard-working chapter volunteers, TU staff have worked with ranchers and farmers throughout the upper Colorado River Basin to develop projects that deliver benefits for both farms and fish. That important work received a huge boost in early 2015 when the NRCS, through its new Regional Conservation Partnership Program, awarded TU and partners $8 million for the Lower Gunnison Project, which will upgrade aging infrastructure, modernize irrigation systems, and address water quality concerns in four irrigation water districts in the Montrose and Delta areas.

Among the project partners is No Chico Brush, an informal collaborative of farmers whose goal is to make the best use of water for the benefit of all users. TU has worked closely with the group to identify irrigation improvements that can promote water security for farmers while boosting the health of fisheries and stream habitat.

“The ultimate objective is simple: provide win-win solutions that safeguard water resources for fish and irrigators,” said Cary Denison, Gunnison River Basin project coordinator for Trout Unlimited.
Engaging the Next Generation

Stream of Engagement

Trout Unlimited is working to connect with youth through a "Stream of Engagement," the path for youth to follow across multiple years and multiple programs with a consistent message from TU. Beginning in the headwaters at an early age, a child's first time fishing is the first step into the Stream of Engagement. River Explorers is a major tributary, offering a multiyear, multidiscipline watershed science and fly fishing curriculum to middle and high school classrooms. Colorado TU then works to transition its reach from younger kids to teens in the form of the Youth Camp and the Nationwide TU initiative called TU Teens. From there the young adults in the 5 Rivers College Chapters have connections to local chapters but also to professional development for students through internship programs and networking events. Ultimately, we hope this Stream of Engagement translates to new TU members, advocates for healthy watersheds and fisheries, and lifelong conservationists.

Outdoor Mentors

Bringing traditionally underserved youth in touch with traditional sporting activities, Colorado TU partners with mentoring organizations to get kids excited about the outdoors. Collaborating with organizations like Big Brothers-Big Sisters, leveraging the effort of TU volunteers in Denver-area chapters, and offering cross-cutting events in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Outdoor Mentors helps TU reach hundreds of kids in the Denver Metro area each year.

Youth Camp

For youth who want to fully wade into the Stream of Engagement, the Colorado Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp provides an outlet for budding and first time anglers alike to experience the fishing lifestyle and hone their skills. The camp provides not only a chance to sharpen fly fishing proficiency, but also the fundamentals of conservation science and watershed stewardship. The 2014 camp was hosted by the Purgatoire River Anglers chapter with generous sponsorship from Phil Long Toyota. 2015 will be the 10th annual summer camp. Many camp alumni have leapt into even greater involvement – returning as counselors, becoming TU Teen leaders, and starting up 5 River College Chapters.
Colorado TU has developed a program to give youth several intensive experiences focused on watershed science and fishing. River Explorers provides multiple vertically and horizontally connected programs that engage students throughout their schooling experience. Each experience builds upon previous programs to increase students’ interest and skills in science and fishing. Partnering with the Mapleton and Adams 12 school districts in the north Denver metro area, Colorado TU has established River Explorers as a successful model for engaging youth in the future of conservation stewardship. River Explorers is made up of these individual programs:

**Stream Explorers:** This introductory program provides opportunities for young people to have several hands on, science oriented experiences with living aquatic organisms as well as developing basic fishing skills. From in-class experiments to field visits to observe aquatic habitats, the program facilitates student-driven learning rather than simply presenting information. Through these deeply personal experiences, with expert assistance, we hope students will develop a rudimentary understanding of the beauty, complexity, and dynamics of aquatic ecosystems and the fish they support.

**RiverWatch:** This experience in citizen science builds upon students’ previous experiences by allowing them to do water quality monitoring on a reach of their local waterway. The students also learn that their efforts create results – RiverWatch sites produce publicly available data which is used in official state water quality rulemaking processes.

**Trout in the Classroom:** With teacher trainings and hands-on support from Colorado Trout Unlimited, schools can participate in the Trout in the Classroom Program where students raise Rainbow Trout from eggs to fry through the course of the school year – along the way learning about fish biology and water chemistry. At the conclusion of the year, students release their trout into state-approved waters.

**National Fishing in Schools Program:** Using curriculum and equipment from this nationwide program, teachers are trained and certified to teach fly casting in their gym via a unique target system that is proven to engage students, facilitate sound fly casting skills, and reinforce aquatic ecology concepts. At the conclusion of the program, students go on a fishing trip at a local stocked water with the support of local Trout Unlimited volunteers.

In addition to the two districts where the full River Explorers curriculum is being used, we have also implemented stand-alone pieces from the package in other schools, from Summit County to Loveland to Grand Junction.

In universities across the state, Trout Unlimited recognizes fly fishing clubs as charter “5 Rivers” college chapters. Colorado has a growing number of clubs, seven officially, with the potential for a huge hub of young adults to participate in TU’s conservation efforts. The clubs provide an outlet for College students to connect with other anglers, engage in conservation, and make potentially rewarding connections for their futures.

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As part of engaging college students in our efforts, Colorado TU launched a successful internship program in summer 2014. The interns gain valuable real world experience in their field of study while helping advance key efforts for TU. Colorado TU hired four interns in Denver in 2014, with fields of study in Communications, Environmental Science, Journalism and Biology. In 2015, the program will expand into smaller communities including Cortez and Gunnison. Along the way, we are building partnerships with colleges and universities across the state and awareness of TU and our mission.

“As trusted stewards of valuable natural resources, we believe we have an opportunity and a responsibility to build better futures for the communities where we operate. One way we achieve this is by supporting innovative programs that teach our youth how to solve problems using unconventional thinking, such as CTU’s South Platte River Explorer Program. In providing Denver-area students with intensive experiences focusing on watershed science and fishing, CTU is cultivating a future workforce that can think critically, realistically and creatively in addressing conservation and energy issues.”

- Shelley Powell, Vice President Refining U.S., Suncor
A New Lease on Life for the Roan Plateau

Following litigation that stretched back more than six years — and advocacy and conservation efforts for more than a decade before that — Colorado TU and its partners reached a settlement of the legal battle over energy development on the Roan Plateau. In November, an agreement was announced that lays a “win-win” path forward to protect the Roan’s most valued fish and wildlife habitats while also allowing for responsible energy development.

The Roan Plateau supports remarkable natural values including habitat for rare native Colorado River cutthroat trout, scenic canyons and waterfalls, and outstanding big game habitat and hunting opportunities. TU’s Grand Valley Anglers chapter has for more than two decades worked on projects to benefit Trapper Creek and the unique native cutthroats it supports — Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists found they are adapted to withstand warmer water temperatures than most cutthroats.

The Roan could also be a model for balance on energy development. Oil and gas leaseholders engaged with conservationists in honest and constructive dialogue about a path for responsible energy development that includes strong protection for the Roan’s unique fish and wildlife resources. The settlement keeps disturbance out of the most important and sensitive habitats, while enabling responsible development to proceed on other portions of the Roan.

Key provisions of the settlement include:

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) canceled leases covering 90% of the acreage atop the Roan, including all of the native trout watersheds.

Sportsmen for Browns Canyon

Browns Canyon on the Arkansas River is one of Colorado’s best wild places, with outstanding backcountry lands and at its heart a gold medal trout fishery and one of the nation’s most popular rafting rivers. TU has worked to protect Browns — with partners from hunters and anglers to local businesses — through the “Sportsmen for Browns Canyon” campaign.

Sportsmen have long advocated for Browns Canyon to be designated as a National Monument to protect its values in perpetuity. TU helped organize local hunters and anglers to voice their support in meetings and letters, and its members attended numerous local meetings and public forums, including one in Salida that brought out an overflow crowd of supporters.

“Browns Canyon is one of those special places that draws rafters, hunters and anglers from all over the world,” said Jim Impara, Vice President of the Collegiate Peaks Anglers chapter of TU. “A National Monument will ensure that Browns’ wildness and rare beauty will be there for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.”

A Roan Timeline

1992 — GVA (Grand Valley Anglers) begin fencing and habitat projects on Trapper Creek
2000 — BLM launches its planning process for oil and gas development on the Roan
2008 — BLM issues its final plan and sells leases throughout the Roan planning area; Colorado TU and partners challenge the BLM in federal district court
2010 — GVA and other TU volunteers begin new riparian plantings along Trapper and Northwater Creeks
2012 — Colorado TU and partners prevail in district court, but leaseholders appeal the decision
2013 — Colorado TU completes installation of a fish barrier to assist with native trout reintroduction on the East Fork of Parachute Creek
2014 — Leaseholders, conservationists, and BLM announce settlement agreement
Hermosa Creek gets Permanent Protection

For months, it looked like the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act would be yet another victim of a dysfunctional, hyperpartisan Congress—despite its strong local and bipartisan support in Colorado. But TU and its partners kept pushing and never gave up, and in late 2014, the Senate passed a historic public lands bill that gave permanent protection to the Hermosa Creek watershed, a wild backcountry area just north of Durango prized for its outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and diverse recreation uses. Thanks to TU’s leadership, native cutthroat trout in southwest Colorado now have a protected home in America’s newest wilderness area.

The passage of the Hermosa bill represents eight years of hard work by TU field staff in Colorado, DC-based government affairs staff, and volunteers from the Five Rivers Chapter in Durango. The effort was truly a “One TU” success. TU anglers were joined by sportsmen from the region, and across the country, in a coalition aptly named the “Sportsmen for Hermosa.” From local fly shops to rod manufacturers, from sportsmen’s conservation groups to outfitters, sportsmen stood up unified in support of permanent protections for Hermosa Creek.

The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Michael Bennet and Rep. Scott Tipton and based on a package negotiated among local stakeholders, will protect the Hermosa Creek watershed through designation of a 70,000-acre Special Management Area and a 37,000-acre wilderness area in the San Juan National Forest. The Act preserves prime native trout habitat in Hermosa Creek as well as an array of recreational opportunities in and around the areas designated for protection. At the heart of the Hermosa watershed is the 18-mile Hermosa Creek Trail, a popular and heavily used recreation corridor that will remain open to existing uses, from anglers and hikers to motorized and mechanized uses such as ATVs, dirt bikes and mountain bikes.

“To pass a public land protection bill, with a wilderness component, is an astronomical feat in today’s tough and highly partisan political climate,” said Ty Churchwell, TU’s backcountry coordinator for Colorado. “But sportsmen stood strong, made their voices heard, and were persistent and patient—and now 107,000 acres of public land will remain unspoiled and productive for the next generation of America’s sportsmen, women and children.”

Thompson Divide Protection Advances

The U.S. Forest Service announced that it was removing the Thompson Divide area in western Colorado from consideration for future energy leasing—a move praised by TU and a broad coalition of Thompson supporters who had been working for years to protect the pristine backcountry area from proposed oil and gas development.

The Forest Service decision was included in a Final Environmental Impact Statement for the White River National Forest, which provides guidelines for energy development on the forest’s 2.2 million acres over the next 20 years. While the BLM still needs to incorporate the EIS into its management plan, the Thompson Divide ruling was a huge step toward protection, said TU staff working on the campaign.

“This is a special place, and the Forest Service decision will help to preserve the outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and sporting opportunities in the Thompson Divide for future generations,” said Aaron Kindle, Thompson Divide campaign coordinator for Trout Unlimited.

Earlier in the year, TU secured strong water quality protections for native cutthroat streams in the Thompson Divide. Working with local partners in the Thompson Divide coalition, TU brought on-the-ground water quality data to Colorado’s Water Quality Control Commission and successfully made the case for Thompson Creek to be designated as an “outstanding water.” With the designation, the stream is now protected by strict anti-degradation water quality standards.
The Bureau of Land Management has announced plans to create one of the nation’s first Master Leasing Plans (MLP) to guide future energy development in South Park basin, one of Colorado’s “last best places” and the headwaters of the South Platte. This public process is an exciting opportunity for Colorado stakeholders to help determine the where, when and how of energy development for these pristine lands.

TU staff and volunteers plan to be fully engaged in this MLP process to ensure it’s done responsibly and protects South Park’s natural treasures, including world-class fishing destinations like the “Dream Stream.”

“MLPs are the smart way to manage leasing on public lands,” said Aaron Kindle, TU’s South Park campaign coordinator. “It’s about finding a balance that allows energy development in less sensitive areas but protects the highest-value habitat and streams. We’ll be following this closely — South Park is a sportsmen’s paradise that TU is committed to protecting.”

Volunteers with the Cheyenne Mountain Chapter adopted the unique greenback cutthroats in Bear Creek and began work as advocates for the stream and in securing grant funds to help conduct projects to improve habitat conditions. Young TU members with The Greenbacks conducted a crowd-sourcing fundraiser and leveraged dollars with grants to help support projects to reintroduce the greenbacks into new habitats.

In summer 2014, when Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists prepared to reintroduce greenbacks into a second location, TU volunteers were there to pitch in. 1200 of the Colorado natives were released at Zimmerman Lake in August – a first key step forward in restoring the “true” greenback cutthroat trout.

Volunteers also educate anglers and other park visitors on native trout recovery programs and on the special protections afforded cutthroat trout by fishing regulations. The chapter develops and prints fish ID cards to help anglers correctly identify native trout and has distributed – through the Park and local fly shops – almost 15,000 ID cards over the past 10 years.

In Jim Creek, in 2014, TU partnered with Conejos County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and other stakeholders on a fencing project that will exclude cattle from the riparian area on two and a half miles of Jim Creek, home to an important population of native Rio Grande cutthroat trout. One mile of fencing went up in 2014, and with the help of TU’s San Luis Valley chapter volunteers, the remainder of the fence will be built in 2015. Once fencing is complete, the Colorado State Forest Service will lead TU members in an effort to reestablish native riparian vegetation.

Trout Unlimited plays a key role in the recovery and protection of native cutthroat trout in Rocky Mountain National Park. The Alpine Anglers chapter recruits and coordinates volunteer effort in support of the park’s fisheries program. In 2014, more than 1200 hours of volunteer effort helped biologists perform population surveys and assess the health of cutthroat populations.

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In 2014, Colorado Trout Unlimited continued to represent a great “bang for your buck” investment in fisheries conservation, with a demonstrated 8 to 1 return on individual and corporate contributions, and with nearly 90 percent of funding going directly to our mission of conservation, education and river restoration projects. We compound your support by attracting and managing grant funds, and with skilled professional staff and experienced volunteer leaders in the field, we make sure the job of restoring and preserving our rivers is done right!

In fiscal year 2014, Trout Unlimited in Colorado invested more than $3.1 million toward its conservation and education programs, on-the-ground projects, and chapter support. These funds included the work of:

1. The Colorado Council and its chapters – from legislative advocacy at the General Assembly to an annual youth camp to post-flood restoration projects;
2. The Colorado Water Project working on river protection, agriculture partnerships, and habitat improvement;
3. The Sportsmen’s Conservation Project, leading campaigns to protect key public land areas like Hermosa Creek and the Thompson Divide; and
4. The Western Restoration Program, with staff working on partnerships for watershed restoration in areas affected by abandoned mines.

These direct funds were leveraged through an additional $1.2 million in “sweat equity” – the value of more than 46,000 volunteer hours contributed through our grassroots volunteers.

Of these funds, approximately $450,000 came from individual and corporate contributions, and another $200,000 from other sources such as special events. Another $2.5 million was leveraged through foundation and government grants for conservation projects and programs. These grants, when coupled with the value of TU’s volunteer contributions, amount to $8 of leveraged resources for each $1 of individual and corporate contributions invested through TU in Colorado.

The bulk of funds were invested directly back into conservation and education programs and on-the-ground projects; in total 89% of funds were directly invested in TU’s conservation mission, while 6.5% went toward administration and 4.5% toward fundraising and development.

### Leveraging Your Investment in Colorado

| $1.2 million | 4 million |
| $1.2 million - in-kind volunteer service |
| $2.7 million - dollars leveraged |

More than 8:1 Return on your commitment!

### 2014 Financials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual &amp; corporate donations</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events &amp; other leveraged funds</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant funding</td>
<td>$2,510,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Income</td>
<td>$3,160,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program expenditures</td>
<td>$2,790,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$210,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$3,140,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You
Protect Our Rivers Sponsors

River-minded businesses can help Colorado’s rivers through their generous contributions under Colorado TU’s “Protect Our Rivers” corporate donor program. The program offers businesses recognition in Colorado TU’s outreach to more than 10,000 members, the ability to integrate the program into their own marketing and let customers know that they care about rivers, and of course, makes a difference for the rivers that benefit all Coloradoans and our economy.

“It is paramount for small companies like ours to be able to do whatever they can, even if it is just 1% of their sales, to support what they believe in. Customers relate to and appreciate the fact that we are supporting Colorado TU and together we are helping to protect the water that we fish and help to assure it is here for the generations to come.”

-Garrison & Corinne Doctor
Owners, Rep Your Water

Thank you!

Upslope Brewing Company, an award-winning Colorado brewery, knows that healthy rivers brew the best beer. Upslope contributes 1% of the sales of its craft lager to Colorado TU through the Protect Our Rivers program.

www.upslopebrewing.com

Freestone Outfitters is a premier Orvis-endorsed outfitter operating out of Littleton and offering outstanding walk/wade and float fishing trips on both public and private waters. Through a “round up for rivers” program, Freestone offers its customers the chance to add a $25 donation in support of TU to their trips – and matches those contributions as part of its commitment to conservation.

www.flyfishfreestone.com

Rep Your Water offers creatively-designed gear that allows you to show your love for your home waters. They not only celebrate those waters, they give back to them - 1% of sales of Colorado merchandise is contributed to Colorado TU.

www.repyourwater.com

H2O Car Wash in Highlands Ranch takes water efficiency to a new level, with a high-tech water recycling system that works for the environment, your car, and YOU! H2O partners with Colorado TU on special water conservation events with proceeds from car washes donated to help river conservation.

www.h2o-carwash.com

Fox Coffee Roasters was born from a passion for great coffee and a love for the outdoors. Working with brokers to source coffee directly from the farmers, and contributing 1% of all sales to river conservation through Colorado TU, Fox Coffee Roasters is your source for “coffee with a conscience.”

www.foxcoffeeroasters.com

Trouts Fly Fishing in Denver is a premier fly fishing outfitter and retailer with a 3,000+ square foot store boasting two floors of retail goods, as well as a fly fishing education center and outfitting office. Trouts has hosted multiple events featuring raffles and other fundraisers to support the TU and the Defend the Colorado campaign, bringing resources and awareness to the plight of our state’s namesake river.

www.troutsflyfishing.com

Suncor is a globally competitive integrated energy company with a balanced portfolio of assets including oil and gas as well as renewable energy. Suncor is a generous supporter of the South Platte River Explorers program connecting Denver-area students with watershed science and fishing.

www.suncor.com

Phil Long Toyota of Trinidad is a full service dealership offering new and used vehicles, parts, and service. They are also committed to giving back to their community, and are the sponsor for Colorado TU’s Youth Fly Fishing and Conservation Camp, held in the Purgatoire watershed.

www.phillongtoyota.com
Trout Unlimited Succeeds Because of Your Support!

Trout Unlimited thanks the generous individuals, businesses, and foundations whose support – along with yours – makes our successes possible.

Coldwater Conservation Fund/River Stewardship Council Donors

Bruce Albright
Chris Striebich and Tanya Argo
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Anonymous
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Bureau of Land Management
Chevron Humankind
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Colorado Nonpoint Source Program
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Community First Foundation
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U.S. Forest Service
Vail Resorts
Walton Family Foundation
Wells Fargo
Western Conservation Foundation
Wyss Foundation

Conservation Steward

“I support TU through their Coldwater Conservation Fund because they work to protect and restore my home waters on the upper Colorado and the other rivers around the state that I fish.”

Randy Keogh
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Stephanie Scott, Outreach Coordinator
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Garrett Hanks, Youth Education Coordinator

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Cary Denison, Gunnison River Basin Project Manager
Mely Whiting, Legal Counsel
David Stillwell, Office and Internal Communications Manager
Randy Scholfield, Communications Director
Jesse Kruthaupt, Upper Gunnison River Project Specialist
Richard Van Gytenbeek, Colorado River Basin Organizer
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Aaron Kindle, Colorado Field Coordinator
Ty Churchwell, Backcountry Coordinator, Alpine Triangle
Matthew Clark, Backcountry Coordinator, Dolores River Basin
Shane Cross, Western Energy Counsel
Joshua Duplechian, Communications Specialist

TU WESTERN RESTORATION STAFF

Elizabeth Russell, Mine Restoration Project Manager
Jason Willis, Mine Restoration Project Manager

COLDWATER CONSERVATION FUND

Chris Herrman, Colorado Director, CCF