

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WESTERN NATIVE TROUT INITIATIVE

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westernnativetrout.org



DEAR FRIENDS,

Thank you for being a part of the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI). In 2023 WNTI and our partners funded five native fish habitat restoration projects including \$269,056 in National Fish Habitat Partnership funds. These projects address a variety of individual challenges facing native fish in four western states, including the restoration and connection of over 83 miles of streams and rivers.

In Alaska's Copper River Basin, removing a fish barrier will open 3.2 miles of river access and 12 acres of lake access for Coastal Cutthroat Trout and a new barrier will encourage easy fish access into this new system. Removing non-native Brook Trout from Silver Creek in California's Upper Walker Basin will restore over 11 miles of stream for Lahontan Trout, a historic native fish to the area and a Federally listed species. A WNTI grant will benefit Colorado Cutthroat Trout in Clear Fork of Muddy Creek near Gunnison, Colorado, including the installation of a fish barrier to protect 11 miles of river from invasive trout species.

In addition, three projects will benefit Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT). In Idaho, removal of a fish barrier and the installation of a new irrigation system in the Snake River's Canyon Creek drainage will conserve water and restore over 11 miles of fish habitat. On Wyoming's Hoback River a habitat improvement project will improve three miles of YCT habitat. Lastly, restoration work on Flat Creek, near Jackson Hole, will modify a diversion and restore the channel to improve YCT habitat.

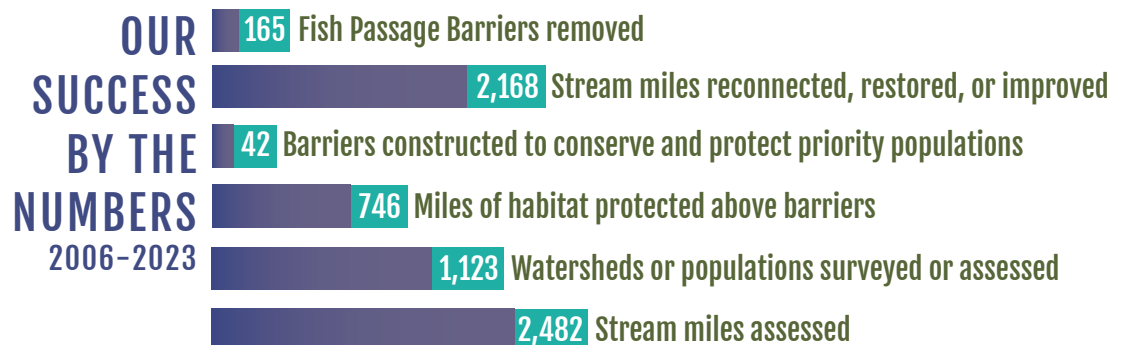
WNTI's 2023 Small Grants program awarded a grant for interpretative signage in the Road Beaver Creek drainage for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout restoration. This award supported design and construction of a sign overlooking Road Beaver Creek to increase public awareness of the interagency restoration project benefitting local native cutthroat trout and to educate land users about the natural life history of Colorado River Cutthroat Trout. Since its inception in 2011, the Small Grants program has granted over \$177,000 for outreach and education projects.

In 2019, WNTI launched the Western Native Trout Challenge which invites anglers to celebrate our western native trout legacy by catching these fish in their native ranges in each of the 12 western states. This program was launched in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and Trout Unlimited. To date, almost 1,500 anglers have registered for the program and this past year the 200th person completed the Challenge.

Again, thank you for your support of western native trout in 2023. The past year's accomplishments could not happen without your strong commitment and partnership to protect and enhance native trout.

STEVE CAROMILE
Chair, WNTI Steering Committee

JD DAVIS
WNTI Coordinator



Projects

PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP FUNDS IN 2023

- WNTI operational support
- Restoring the Northern Extent of Coastal Cutthroat Trout Habitat in the Copper River Watershed, *Alaska*
- Implementing Actions to Recover Native Lahontan Cutthroat Trout in the Upper Walker Basin, *California*
- Clear Fork of Muddy Creek Cutthroat Restoration Barrier Project (Colorado River Cutthroat Trout), *Colorado*
- Reconnecting Canyon Creek (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), *Idaho*
- River Bend Ranch Restoration and Passage Project (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), *Wyoming*
- South Flat Creek Channel Restoration Phase 2 (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout), *Wyoming*

PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH GRANTS FROM OTHER FUNDERS IN 2023

- Deep Creek Givan's Diversion (Interior Redband Trout), *Oregon*
- Honey Creek Four Lower Diversions (Interior Redband Trout), *Oregon*
- Stauffer Creek Fish Passage Construction Phase 3 (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), *Idaho*
- Stauffer Creek Oxborrow Diversion Removal (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), *Idaho*
- North Eden Creek (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), *Utah*
- Dry Fork Smiths' Fork Culvert Removal (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), *Wyoming*
- Beaver Creek/Wuda Ogwa (Bonneville Cutthroat Trout), *Utah*

WNTI SMALL GRANT PROJECTS FUNDED IN 2023

- Road Beaver Creek Interpretive Signage (Colorado River Cutthroat Trout), *Colorado*

New Fishmaps for Western Native Trout Challenge

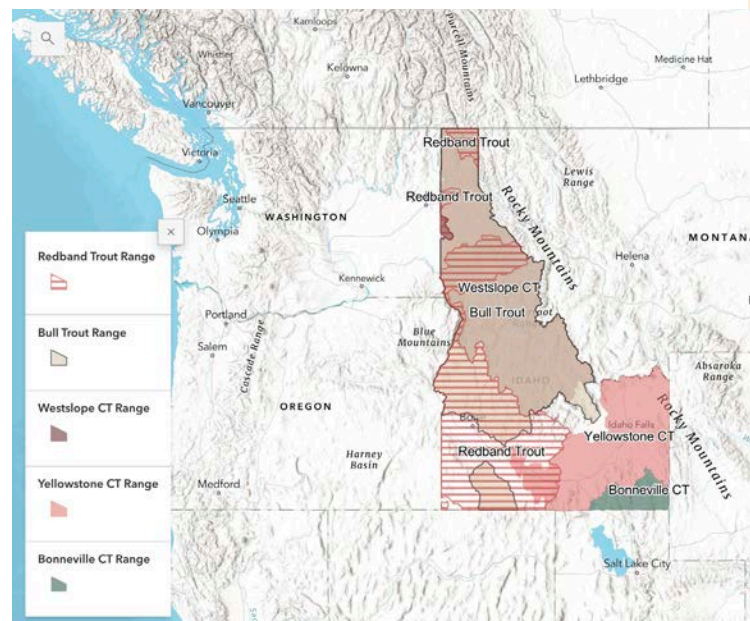
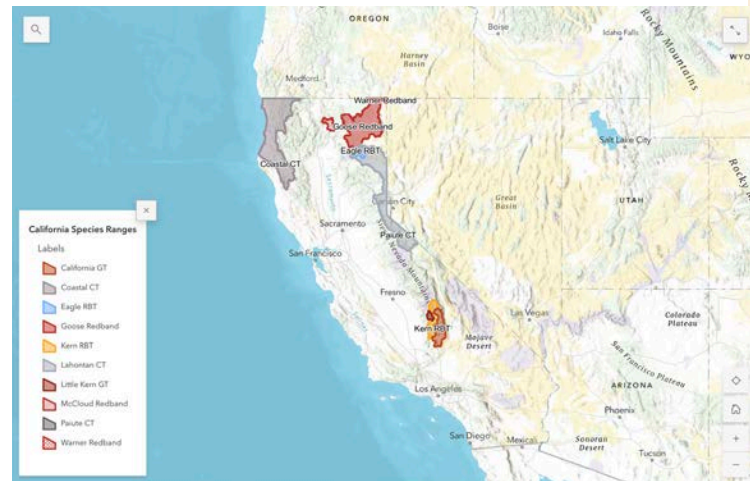


The Western Native Trout Initiative, our 12 partner state fish and wildlife agencies, and the federal Bureau of Land Management are excited to announce major updates and improvements in 2023 to the Western Native Trout Challenge Fishmaps. These new resources will make trip planning and angling adventures easier.

OUR NEW FISHMAPS...

- Will allow easy uploads to cell phones including showing your location within the maps.
- Created a new tab for Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service and National Park lands for each of the 12 WNTI represented states.
- Will allow the BLM to layer their maps with WNTI maps that are specific to the Western Native Trout Challenge.

The new Fishmaps are available on the WNTI website at westernnativetroutchallenge.org.



WNTI Highlights and Outreach Activity



WNTI COORDINATOR CHANGES

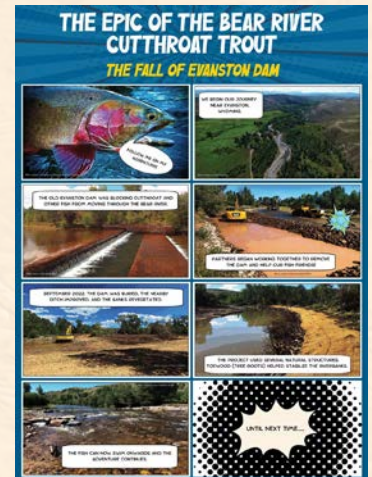
Therese Thompson stepped down from her role as Coordinator in December 2023, after almost ten years with the Western Native Trout Initiative. At the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' summer conference, current and former WNTI Steering Committee members presented Therese with a beautiful charcuterie board in thanks and recognition for her service to WNTI.

In January 2024, WNTI welcomed JD Davis as our new Coordinator. JD has over 30 years of experience in the non-profit sector, including 15 years working for conservation organizations. He recently retired as Yellowstone Forever's Chief Development Officer after 10 years in the position. In his role, he oversaw fundraising programs and staff that supported wildlife and native fish projects, including over \$9 million in recovery projects for Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in Yellowstone Lake and the Park's northern range. JD is based in Bozeman, Montana, and is most excited to immerse himself in WNTI's mission and projects because they align with his passion for fly fishing throughout Montana and the west. Please welcome JD at jddavis@westernnativetrout.org

THE EPIC TALE OF THE BEAR RIVER CUTTHROAT TROUT

Thank you to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for partnering with WNTI to share the "o-fish-ial" adventure story of the Bear River Cutthroat Trout. This is the story of the Bear River and the native fish that call it home. Through the collaboration of many partners, the removal of multiple fish barriers is providing passage for this iconic species. Some of the barriers to fish passage in this watershed were over 100 years old! Two installments were produced in this series in 2023.

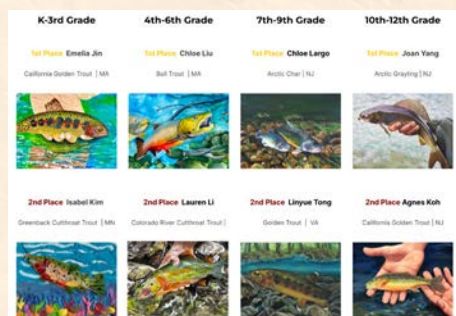
fws.gov/story/2023-02/epic-bear-river-cutthroat-trout-fall-evanston-dam



NEW REPYOURWATER WESTERN NATIVE TROUT HATS

RepYourWater continued its partnership in 2023 with the Spring 2023 launch of a new Western Native Trout hat. New this year, WNTI will receive 1% of RepYourWater sales of the hat. WNTI is one of 15 other conservation organizations who have partnered with RepYourWater and this program to create individual hats to highlight each of the species being supported.

repyourwater.com/products/wnti5123-st



WILDLIFE FOREVER STATE-FISH ART CONTEST

The Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest partnered with WNTI again in 2023 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/home/fish-art/winners2023/western-native-trout-award-winners-2023

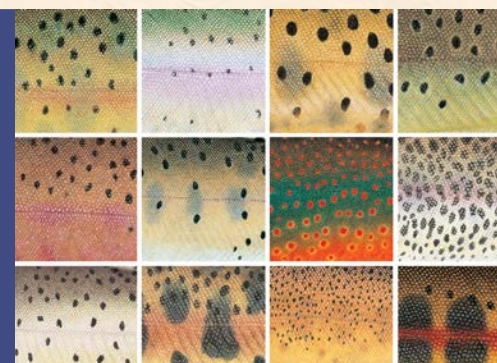
Social Media

To share accomplishments achieved in conserving western native trout across the West, WNTI posted 367 media stories on the partnership's Facebook page, which generated more than 100,000 "likes". WNTI maintains an active presence on other social media channels with over 16K followers on Instagram and almost 4K followers on Facebook.

/westernnativetrout

@westernnativetrout

@WNativeTrout





@richshelly1

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.

Photos left to right: @cameroncush | Spawning trout, Lamar Valley by Jay Fleming | @natromo



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.

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.

Chair: Steve Caromile, Inland Fish Program Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Vice Chair: Paul Dey, Program Manager Aquatic Habitat Section, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Kevin Keith, Research Coordinator, Fish Habitat Research and Restoration, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Zach Beard, Statewide Aquatics Program Manager, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Sarah Mussulman, Inland Fisheries Program Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jenn Logan, Native Aquatic Species Coordinator, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Martin Koenig, Sportfishing Program Coordinator, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Kristen Cook, Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries Division, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks

Chris Crookshanks, Fisheries Division Chief, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Kirk Patten, Chief of Fisheries, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Tom Stahl, Conservation and Recovery Program Manager, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Trina Hedrick, Coldwater Sportfish Coordinator, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Warren Colyer, Western Water and Habitat Program Director, Trout Unlimited

Melissa Dickard, Senior Riparian Specialist, Bureau of Land Management National Operations Center

Yvette Paroz, Regional Fisheries Program Leader, U.S. Forest Service

George Jordan, Acting Regional Habitat Coordinator Fish and Aquatic Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Julie Carter, Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies representative on National Fish Habitat Partnership Board

STAFF

JD Davis, WNTI Coordinator

THANK YOU 2023 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Americanfishes.com
American Fisheries Society, Idaho Chapter
Native Fishes Committee
American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
Angling Trade Magazine
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
AZ Fly Shop
Basin+Bend
Bass Pro Shops
Bitter Root Water Forum
Bureau of Land Management
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Trout
Clark Fork Coalition
California Fly Fishers Unlimited
Coastal Cutthroat Coalition
Coastal Cutthroat Trout Interagency Committee
Coeur D'Alene Tribe
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Copper River Watershed Project
Coquille Watershed Association
El Paso County, Colorado
Federation of Fly Fishers – Southwest Council
Fish America Foundation
Fishpond USA
Fish Focus Photography
Fredericksburg Fly Fishers
Friends of El Paso County (CO)
Nature Centers
Friends of the Teton River
Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited
Henry's Fork Foundation

Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Intermountain West Joint Venture
KeepEmWet Fishing
Kenai Watershed Forum
Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust
Klamath Lake Land Trust
Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council
Living Waters Fly Fishing
Long Tom Watershed Council
Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group
McKenzie Watershed Alliance
Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
Middle Colorado Watershed Council
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Fish Habitat Partnership
National Forest Foundation
National Park Service
Native Fish Society
Native Trout Addicts
Nevada Department of Wildlife
New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation
Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Assoc.
North Fork John Day Watershed Council
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Orofino (ID) High School
Orvis
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Pheasants Forever
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Rep Your Water
Resources Legacy Fund
Rocky Mountain Flyathlon
Sage Lion Media

Santa Clara Pueblo – Forestry
Sierra Pacific FlyFishers
Simms Fishing Products
Smith River Watershed Council
Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Southwest Council of the IFFF
Spokane Riverkeeper
Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum
Tenkara Rod Co.
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tight Loops Fly Trout Unlimited
Turner Endangered Species Fund
Upper Deschutes Watershed Council
Upslope Brewing Co.
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Geological Survey
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
West Hills Community College District
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Western Landowners Alliance
Wild Fish Conservancy
Wild Fly Productions
Wilderness Lite Float Tubes
Wildlife Forever (State-Fish Art Contest)
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Yaak Valley Forest Council
Yellowstone Forever Foundation
And all the individual donors who contribute to WNTI!

Thank you!