

# WESTERN NATIVE TROUT INITIATIVE



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

## DEAR FRIENDS,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Visit [bit.ly/3rWExK6](https://bit.ly/3rWExK6).

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

Sincerely,

**JULIE MEKA CARTER**  
Chair, WNTI Steering Committee

**THERESE THOMPSON**  
Coordinator



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# Projects

Additional information for all 2021 National Fish Habitat Partnership WNTI-funded projects can be viewed at: [westernnativetrout.org/2021-funded-projects](https://westernnativetrout.org/2021-funded-projects)

## PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH NATIONAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP FUNDS IN 2021

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

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

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



Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, Utah. Photo courtesy Daniel Ritz.

## ONGOING PROJECTS FUNDED IN THE WARNER BASIN (BENEFITTING WARNER BASIN REDBAND TROUT)

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

## PROJECT FUNDED BY NOAA

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

# Outreach Activity Highlights



## WESTERN NATIVE TROUT CHALLENGE

In 2019, the Western Native Trout Initiative launched a major new program called the Western Native Trout Challenge. [westernnativetroutchallenge.org](https://westernnativetroutchallenge.org)

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

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Arctic Grayling, Alaska. Photo courtesy Daniel Ritz.

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

Learn more and register at [WesternNativeTroutChallenge.org](https://WesternNativeTroutChallenge.org)

Follow the action on:



@WNativeTrout



@WesternNativeTrout



/westernnativetroutchallenge

# Outreach Activity Highlights *Continued*



Evanston Historic Dam. Photo courtesy Therese Thompson.

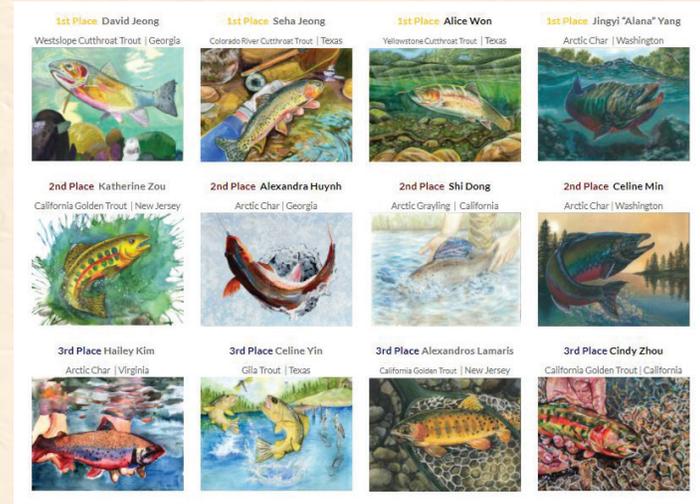
## ONGOING PARTNERSHIP IN THE BEAR RIVER WATERSHED

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

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

## WILDLIFE FOREVER STATE-FISH ART CONTEST

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



Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest Award Winners



Upslope Brewing Co and RepYourWater

## UPSLOPE BREWING COMPANY AND REPYOURWATER COLLABORATIVE NATIVE TROUT CANS



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

## Social Media

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

 /westernnativetrou

 @westernnativetrou

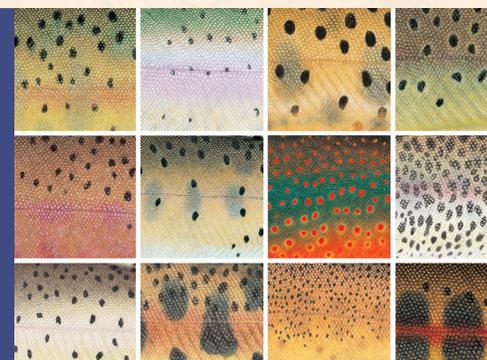




Photo courtesy Erika Bates

# About WNTI

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

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

## Establish Joint Priorities for Native Trout Conservation

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

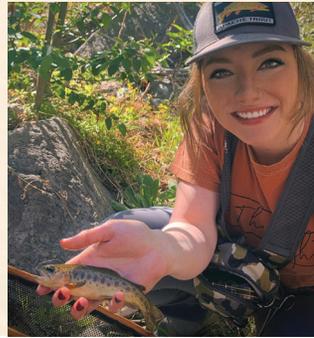
## Coordinate Investment and Collaborative Action

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

## Education, Outreach and Stewardship

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

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



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

## STEERING COMMITTEE

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

Julie Meka Carter, Chair  
Arizona Game and Fish Department

Paul Dey, Vice Chair  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Gillian O'Doherty  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Roger Bloom  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Matt Nicholl  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Martin Koenig  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Trevor Watson  
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks

Jon Sjöberg and Chris Crookshanks  
Nevada Department of Wildlife

Kirk Patten  
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Thomas Stahl  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Drew Cushing  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Steve Caromile  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Warren Colyer  
Trout Unlimited

Melissa Dickard  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Yvette Paroz  
U.S. Forest Service

Robert Clarke  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chris Cantrell  
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

## STAFF

Therese Thompson  
Coordinator

## THANK YOU 2021 PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Alaska Dept of Fish and Game  
Americanfishes.com  
American Sportfishing Association  
Fish America Foundation  
Arizona Game and Fish Dept  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Basin+Bend  
California Dept of Fish and Wildlife  
California Fly Fishers Unlimited  
Coastal Cutthroat Coalition  
Coastal Cutthroat Trout  
Interagency Committee  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Copper River Watershed Project  
Federation of Fly Fishers – Southwest Council  
Fredericksburg Fly Fishers  
Fish Focus Photography  
Friends of the Teton River  
gaiacreative  
Guadalupe River Chapter of Trout Unlimited  
Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group  
Idaho Dept of Fish and Game  
Intermountain West Joint Venture

Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council  
Living Waters Fly Fishing  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
National Fish Habitat Partnership  
Montana Fly Company  
Native Trout Addicts  
Nevada Dept of Wildlife  
New Mexico Council Trout Unlimited  
New Mexico Dept of Game and Fish  
NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation  
North Fork John Day Watershed Council  
Okanogan Land Trust  
Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife  
Orvis  
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Pheasants Forever  
RepYourWater  
Resources Legacy Fund (Open Rivers Fund)  
Rocky Mountain Flyathlon (Running Rivers)  
Santa Clara Pueblo – Forestry Division  
Trout Unlimited  
Trout Unlimited Native Trout Work Group

Turner Endangered Species Fund, LLC  
Upslope Brewing Co.  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Geological Survey  
U.S. National Park Service  
Utah Cutthroat Slam  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife  
West Hills Community College District  
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Wyoming Game and Fish Dept  
Yellowstone Forever Foundation

And all the individual donors who contribute to WNTI!

# Thank you!