



Sept. 24, 2012

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Habitat protection vital to native trout

Lone greenback cutthroat stronghold proves importance of intact watersheds

DENVER—News that lineages of Colorado’s native cutthroat trout historically occupied different waters than was previously thought, and that genetically pure native greenback cutthroat trout only persist in one small Arkansas River tributary, highlights the importance of habitat protection when it comes to native trout persistence in the state, according to David Nickum, executive director of Colorado Trout Unlimited.

“After all the past stocking and all the manipulation to Colorado’s trout fisheries over the last century or so, it’s remarkable that we still have truly pure native trout to conserve,” Nickum said. “That said, we have some real challenges in front of us if we are to make sure greenback cutthroat trout—and the chance to fish for them—are part of our long-term future.”

According to a University of Colorado study released Monday, Bear Creek, located southwest of Colorado Springs, is home to the only pure population of greenback cutthroat trout remaining in Colorado. The greenback cutthroat trout is Colorado’s state fish.

Not coincidentally, Trout Unlimited is working with agency partners and motorized and non-motorized bike users to better protect Bear Creek in the face of growing problems with sedimentation. This on-the-ground, collaborative work is now more important than ever—other populations of cutthroat trout previously believed to be greenbacks in the Arkansas and South Platte drainages of the state are now thought to be cutthroats from lineages that were historically found on Colorado’s western slope.

TU is a committed financial sponsor of the study released today by Dr. Jessica Metcalf and her co-authors. The study by Dr. Metcalf has helped unravel the complex history of habitat loss and

stocking that had masked the historical distributions of Colorado's native cutthroat—since the 1880s, a veritable smorgasbord of trout species have been stocked in Colorado's waters. Brown trout, rainbow trout and brook trout—all non-native species—have been a part of the Colorado angling menu for generations, but only cutthroat trout are native to the state.

“Native trout are a priceless part of Colorado's natural heritage, offering unique opportunities to fish for trout that have called the Rockies home for thousands of years and are adapted to Colorado's environment,” Nickum said. “TU remains committed to the restoration of native trout throughout Colorado—and around the country—wherever it's both possible and practical.”

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Trout Unlimited is a non-profit organization with 140,000 members dedicated to conserving, protecting and restoring North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. Follow TU on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).