



Chris Wood
President & CEO

RECEIVED

March 18, 2013

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Superintendent's Office

Daniel N. Wenk, Superintendent
Yellowstone National Park
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190

RE: TU Support for NPS Efforts on Yellowstone Lake

Dear Dan:

I'm writing to let you know that Trout Unlimited—from our national office to our state councils and local chapters in the Yellowstone region—supports the efforts of Yellowstone National Park in attempting to recover the Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) population associated with Yellowstone Lake and the upper Yellowstone River, and thus the efforts to suppress the lake trout population. As you are probably well aware, it is Trout Unlimited's mission to conserve, protect, and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. To succeed in this mission, Trout Unlimited uses the best available science to inform our decision-making.

Since the discovery of Lake Trout in Yellowstone Lake in 1994, the once abundant Yellowstone cutthroat has declined to less than 10% of their historic numbers. Of all the possible factors leading to this decline, scientists and fisheries managers have pointed to one as the main culprit—predation by lake trout.

There are many important reasons that we support the work to control lake trout and restore the Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

When viewed as part of the species portfolio, the cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake provided a critical stronghold population complex. Until numbers plummeted recently, these populations were the largest genetically pure assemblage of YCT anywhere and viewed as the populations most secure from the threats posed by climate change, hybridization by rainbow trout, and habitat loss.

While we have a moral, if not legal, obligation to protect native species, the importance of native species conservation also derives from their important role in the ecosystem. The Yellowstone cutthroat is a keystone forage species in the Yellowstone ecosystem, with more than 40 other species dependent upon it as a food source, including eagles, grizzly bears, ospreys and

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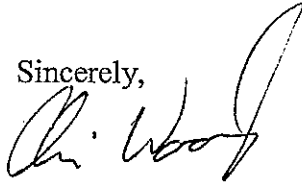


river otters. It has been also been shown that spawning runs of YCT provide a critical function to the ecosystem by moving nutrients from the lake into headwater areas.

In addition to the value provided to the ecosystem, there are important human values to the conservation of Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The YCT population associated with the lake has been a historic draw for Park visitation and an economic driver. For over a hundred years visitors have flocked to Yellowstone to witness the incredible spawning runs of YCT in places such as Fishing Bridge and LeHardy Rapids and to angle for this iconic fish. Before the challenge of lake trout predation, fish from the lake population created a unique backcountry angling experience and economic driver for outfitters in the Thoroughfare region of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The values of native YCT are substantial and include important recreational, economic, cultural, historic, and aesthetic benefits.

Trout Unlimited believes that your work on Yellowstone Lake is of critical importance and we applaud your efforts in this area. To our way of thinking, the work of you and your staff to suppress the invasive Lake Trout and recover the native YCT is one of the finest examples of the Park Service heeding their mission and serving as conservation leaders. Our membership is overwhelmingly supportive of this effort and we're proud to be of assistance. If the conservation of native coldwater fish can't be achieved in the crown jewel of our National Park system, where will it be?

Sincerely,



Chris Wood

Cc: Senator Mike Enzi
Senator John Barrasso
Congresswoman Cynthia Lummis
Governor Matt Mead
Scott Talbott, Director, Wyoming Game and Fish
Robert Gresswell, USGS
Peter Moyer