



Oregon Council Trout Unlimited

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Chair Finley, Commissioners and Director Melcher-

As you all know, I am Tom Wolf, the Executive Director for the Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited. Trout Unlimited, as I have shared before, is the nation's largest cold water conservation group with over 150,000 members nationwide and 3000+ in Oregon. Our organization and its volunteers are dedicated to protecting and restoring native wild salmonids and their habitat so that future generations may enjoy healthy watersheds and the joy of angling in them for beautiful trout and salmon.

I am before you today to talk about the recently released report by Trout Unlimited entitled "State of the Trout". This 77 page detailed document is an evaluation by the Trout Unlimited science team of the current state of the native trout in the continental United States. This report found 28 species/sub-species of native trout in the US, of which 3 are extinct or listed as threatened or endangered. Excluding the extinct trout, 52 percent (13 of 25) are found in less than 25 percent of their historical habitat and are at high risk from at least one major threat. All native trout in the US face some level of risk. This report , in broad strokes, looks at the causes of the demise of native trout habitat across the nation, looking at non-native species, water use, energy development and climate change which or new factors in the decline of native trout while not forgetting the old causes of trout demise such as hatcheries, mining, bad forest practices, overharvest, etc.

In this report, the US was divided into ecological regions, coming with 13 district regions. 4 of the ecological regions are found in Oregon, tied with California as the most biologically diverse state for trout in our nation. Within our state we have had 9 species/sub-species of native trout with the Alvord cutthroat being extinct. The other 8 species of native trout, 4 sub-species of rainbow, 3 sub-species of cutthroat and bull trout, are in various aspects of survivability. Some like the coastal cutthroat are doing relatively well while others such as the Humboldt cutthroat are having a tough struggle. All the native trout species/sub-species in Oregon face an unknown future.

Trout Unlimited, in Oregon and across the nation, realizes that the only way they we are going to recover wild native fish is by working with many partners- federal and state agencies, landowners, recreational fishing groups, private interests, and other conservation groups. Right now, for example, Trout Unlimited volunteers are working closely with key partners, including ODFW staff, to recover and protect native trout habitat on rivers such as the Clackamas, Deschutes, Crooked, Necanicum, McKenzie and many others. Trout Unlimited values our partnerships as we work to recover both in Oregon and in other areas of the country. The Oregon Council TU in particular appreciates the close working relationship we have had with ODFW biologists across our state.

People might ask why protecting and restoring wild native trout is so important. First of all, in protecting and restoring the habitat of native trout there are many other objectives reached. Clean drinking water is protected, provides a benefit for wildlife, recreational opportunities, healthy forests and other benefits. Healthy native trout also provide sustainable fishing opportunities that don't require hatchery supplementation. These fishing opportunities, in rivers such as the Deschutes, Crooked, Blitzen, Chewecan, coastal streams for sea-run cutthroats, Williamson and other areas across the state, bring great economic benefit in the rural areas they are found. Finally, for anglers such as Trout Unlimited members, they bring great fishing opportunities for large trout to pursue in catch and release fisheries.

And ultimately, that is a great value of wild native trout, above and beyond their conservation/ecological value—that anglers love to pursue them in a sustainable manner. This brings anglers great pleasure. As the writer Robert Travers (aka John Voelker) so eloquently put it-

"I fish because I love to; because I love the habitat, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which invariably are ugly. Finally, not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important, but because I suspect so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant-and not nearly so much fun."

I hope that all of you will be able to read this document as it contains great information, charts and maps that will future describe the concerns we have for the future of native trout in this country. And at the end of document it shows Trout Unlimited plan for success to restore native trout and our methods we are using to do so- in which ODFW is an important partner. And this "State of the Trout" is only one of reports like this TU is making. In 2017, we will be presenting the "State of the Salmon" report. These reports fit into Trout Unlimited's mission of restoring native salmonid populations and their habitat.

This report shows concern for the present situation of native trout in the United States but it also offers hope- for all of us that love wild native trout this hope gives us comfort and the ability to proceed in our work.

Tom Wolf,

Executive Director

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