

Restore 3 miles of Cunningham Creek, Colorado, for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout

State(s): Colorado

Managing Agency/Organization: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Type of Organization: Federal Government

Project Status: Funds transferred to North Fork of Thompson Creek project

Project type: WNTI Project

Project action(s): Fish passage, Introduced species

Trout species benefitted: Colorado River Cutthroat

Restore cutthroat trout to three miles of habitat currently occupied by brook trout downstream of existing pure Colorado River cutthroat trout (CRCT) population. In addition, replacement of a road culvert that is currently creating a partial barrier to all age classes of CRCT. A core population is restricted to the upper 1/2-mile of Cunningham Creek. This population was determined to be genetically pure in 1999. Additional fin clips collected in 2007 will be analyzed this fall.

This project is currently on Hold. Funds were transferred to the North Fork of Thompson Creek.

A Core Conservation Population of CRCT is currently restricted to the upper 1/2-mile of Cunningham Creek. A culvert which is a partial barrier to fish movement bisects this population, with brook trout present below the existing CRCT population. A barrier has already been constructed at the bottom of the brook trout reach in anticipation of reclamation. Brook trout will be removed with chemicals, allowing the expansion of the existing CRCT population downstream to the constructed barrier. Later, the partial barrier road culvert will be replaced with a stream simulation structure.

The primary concern for this population is the limited amount of habitat available. The population is pinched between the Fry-Ark diversion structure and a robust population of brook trout. A barrier has already been constructed at the bottom of the brook trout reach in anticipation of reclamation. Brook trout and CRCT are currently separated by a steep section, however nothing within this reach appears to be a definitive barrier. Reclamation of this population was the highest priority CRCT project identified in the Roaring Fork River watershed during a local interagency cutthroat meeting.

Objectives:

- The objective of the project is to expand the existing population from 1/2 mile to 3 miles of habitat. This action will remove the existing threats to the population: limited habitat and invasion by brook trout.

Partners:

- U.S. Forest Service
- Colorado Division of Wildlife

Funding Source(s):

- National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Project cost: \$112,000.00

Start Date: 06/02/2008 **Completion Date:** 09/30/2009