

United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



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To: Jim Brooks, Project Leader

From: Dustin J. Myers, Fish Biologist

RE: Report of FY 2013 WNTI Project Accomplishments: "Post-Fire Fish and Habitat Assessments of Occupied and Potential Gila Trout Recovery Streams impacted by the Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire in New Mexico."

Following the RFP in September 2012, NMFWCO submitted a proposal through the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) for funding to conduct post-fire assessments of Gila trout streams impacted by the Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire (WWB) of 2012. Assessments of streams within the fire perimeter identified as potential Gila trout recovery streams were also included in the scope of work. NMFWCO's proposal was originally \$101,000 over two years; however, given the current sequestration/budget constraints WNTI allotted \$53,000. The scope of work was scaled in relation to this allotment and was completed in one year (Table 2). NMFWCO has plans to submit a second WNTI proposal for FY 2014 to complete the assessment of impacted streams. This report is a list of the accomplishments under the WNTI grant during FY 2013.



Figure 1. Johnny Zapata (USFS) riding up the Upper WFG River during post-fire assessments.

Post-fire monitoring crews consisted of personnel from U.S. Forest Service-Gila National Forest, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In total, crews monitored 8 occupied and 5 potential Gila trout streams impacted by WWB. Streams assessed that were occupied prior to the WWB include; Upper White Creek, Upper Langstroth Creek, Cub Creek, Whiskey Creek, Upper WFG River, Iron Creek, Mogollon Creek, and Lower White Creek. Potential Gila trout streams impacted by WWB were assessed and evaluated for Gila trout restoration. Potential streams include; Mineral Creek, Turkey Creek, Willow Creek, S. Fork Whitewater, and Whitewater Creek. The table below outlines the results from these assessments (Table 1). Gila trout were evacuated from Iron, Mogollon, and South Diamond to Mora NFH. The McKenna Creek population, which was established as a result of the WWB Fire, was augmented with 102 Gila trout that were evacuated from Whiskey Creek during the fire.

Table 1. Streams assessed during FY 2013 under the WNTI grant and their current status.

Streams	Recovery/Potential	Lineage	Status
Upper White Creek	Recovery	Main Diamond	Fishless -Heavily impacted in headwater reaches.
Lower White Creek	Recovery	Main Diamond	Fishless -Heavily impacted in headwater reaches.
Upper Langstroth	Recovery	Whiskey	Fishless -Heavily impacted in headwater reaches.
Cub Creek	Recovery	South Diamond	Fishless -Heavily impacted in headwater reaches.
Whiskey Creek	Recovery	Relict	Fishless -Heavily impacted throughout drainage.
Upper WFG	Recovery	Mixed	Two Gila trout collected. Stream impacts originating from upstream.
Iron Creek	Recovery	Relict	Evacuated 51 Gila trout in May to Mora NFH. Heavily impacted throughout, likely fishless .
Mogollon Creek	Recovery	South Diamond	Moderate impact from the fire, reduced population size.
Mineral Creek	Potential	n/a	Fishless - Heavily impacted throughout. Flooding and scouring.
Turkey Creek	Potential	n/a	12 hybrid trout collected. Moderate impacts from the fire. Reduced NN salmonid population.
Willow Creek	Potential	n/a	Two brown trout and speckled dace - Heavily impacted in headwater reaches.
Whitewater	Potential	n/a	Fishless - Heavily impacted

Creek			throughout. Flooding and scouring.
S. Fork Whitewater Creek	Potential	n/a	Likely Fishless. Heavily impacted in headwater reaches. Need to survey upper end. (E. Fork WW)

Due to the location and severity of the burn, it is likely that runoff and any significant rainfall events will continue to impact these watersheds and affect habitat suitability for some time. Some streams may require lengthy recovery periods to become suitable for Gila trout re-introduction. Results from these assessments provide insight on the current status of Gila trout and help to identify which potential recovery streams will be suitable for the restoration for Gila trout. This project will help to steer future Gila trout management objectives and activities for many years to come.



Figure 2 and 3. Iron Creek above the barrier (above) and log jam just upstream of barrier (below).



Table 2. Status of Funds for FY 2013 Gila WNTI Project-Post-fire Fish and Habitat Assessments of Occupied and Potential Gila Trout Recovery Streams impacted by the Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire in New Mexico.

(As of November 2013)

Fund	Funded Program	Overall Budget	Total Expenditures	Available Balance
134F1611MD	FXFR133402NM270	\$ 53,000.00	\$ 53,000.00	\$ 0.00