



Milk Creek Final Performance Report

To: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Trout Unlimited

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As of today, Trout Unlimited and its partners have restored and reconnected 1.2 miles of Milk Creek.

Comparison of accomplishments with goals and objectives

The primary goal of the Milk Creek project was to foster robust and resilient populations of Colorado River Cutthroat Trout (CRCT) and other native fishes. The objectives of the project were to 1) increase distribution and abundance of CRCT in Milk Creek; 2) increase connectivity of CRCT in Milk Creek; 3) reduce late-summer stream temperatures within, and immediately downstream of, the treated areas; and 4) restore proper channel form and function within, and immediately downstream of, the treated areas.

Because the project was implemented in 2013-2014 and it can take several years for fish populations to respond to restoration, the primary project goal has not yet been attained. Nevertheless, we observed more CRCT within the project area in 2014 than in 2011 (baseline). This short-term difference in density might suggest that CRCT prefer the newly restored habitat to the previously degraded habitat. For similar reasons as noted above, objectives 1-3 have not been met. Restoration actions in 2013-2014 were successful in meeting objective 4—restoring proper channel form and function within the treated area. Attached is a collection of pre- and post-construction photos.

In 2014, we used radio telemetry to examine the spatiotemporal dynamics of the CRCT population in Milk Creek. We also used a network of thermistors to track stream temperature across space and time. Our objectives were to 1) characterize distribution and movement of CRCT, and 2) examine influences of season and stream temperature on distribution and movement of CRCT. We submitted the findings of that study to Transactions of the American Fisheries Society in May of 2015.