

Mill Creek Watershed Restoration

State(s): Utah

Managing Agency/Organization: Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Type of Organization: Federal Government

Project Status: Underway

Project type: WNTI Project

Project action(s): Barrier Removal or Construction, Riparian or Instream Habitat Restoration, Watershed Connectivity, Monitoring, Outreach/Education

Trout species benefitted: Bonneville Cutthroat Trout

Population: Mill Creek

Project summary:

The funding being requested will aid in the removal of the Mill Creek hydroelectric dam and the reshaping of the stream channel adjacent to the dam. This is part of the Mill Creek Watershed Restoration Project (MCWRP). This project is designed to remove ten man-made barriers and restore Bonneville Cutthroat Trout and other native non-game fish to the upper nine miles of Mill Creek and the lower mile of Porter Fork. The project also includes removal of an unneeded bridge and a hydroelectric dam, the redesign of the stream channel and fishing access, the redesign of a small lake to include a spawning channel, the replacement of seven culverts that are partial fish barriers and are undersized and the development of educational materials to inform the public of the importance of aquatic and terrestrial resources including native fish.

Problem the Project Addresses:

The MCWRP addresses most of WNTI's strategic priorities for 2015-2020. Funds being requested will go directly to the contract to remove a 14 foot high hydroelectric dam and to restore the natural stream channel through the impacted reach. This dam currently prevents fish passage through this reach and limits connectivity from the lower part of the canyon with the upper canyon area.

The overall project emphasizes the restoration of native Bonneville Cutthroat Trout by restoring over 10 miles of native fish through the removal of non-native and hybrid fish, removal of 10 full or partial migration barriers including one 14 foot high hydroelectric dam, and the installation of a fish migration barrier to prevent future invasions. This restoration effort significantly increases the number of miles of Bonneville cutthroat trout in the Central Geographic Management Unit as described in the Utah Conservation Agreement for Bonneville Cutthroat Trout.

The project improves degraded and isolated habitats by restoring connectivity, improves channel conditions impacted by in-channel structures including two weirs and a dam and restores riparian conditions through active plantings and education. The project also addresses climate change through expanding Bonneville Cutthroat Trout higher in the drainage through the replacement of undersized culverts that were migration barriers allowing the fish to move into higher, cooler waters.

Objectives:

1. Restore native Bonneville Cutthroat Trout to the upper 9 miles of Mill Creek and the lower 1.2 miles of Porter Fork.
2. Enhance the Mill Creek watershed by removal of an abandoned hydroelectric dam, a bridge, a diversion weir and providing fish passage over a second weir.
3. Seven culverts that are partial barriers to fish migration are being replaced with passable structures and a fish migration barrier is being placed at the bottom of the restored section to prevent invasion of non-native fish.

Partners:

- Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
- Great Salt Lake Council
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Forest Foundation
- PacifiCorp
- Trout Unlimited
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Salt Lake County

Project Monitoring:

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, will be monitoring the success of the fish removal and restocking.

The U.S. Forest Service will conduct the monitoring around the new culverts, the dam and the riparian restoration work.

The U.S. Forest Service working the private home owners will deal with long-term maintenance of the new culverts up Porter Fork.

The U.S. Forest Service will maintain the educational material and their website on the project.

Salt Lake County is responsible for the long-term maintenance of the new culverts on Mill Creek Road. The Great Salt Lake Council will be responsible for monitoring activities on their lands.

Funding Source(s): National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Project cost: \$41,000.00

Start Date: 07/01/2016 **Completion Date:** 9/30/2018

Project Contact: Paul Cowley, Natural Resources and Planning Staff Officer, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, South Jordan, UT 84095. 801-999-2177