

"Get To Know Your Native"

Get to Know Your Native

RIO GRANDE CUTTHROAT TROUT

Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis

HABITAT Rio Grande cutthroat trout prefer to live in clear, cold, well-aerated streams that have an abundance of pools and runs, clean gravel, and aquatic macrophytes.

DIET Rio Grande cutthroat primarily feed on aquatic and terrestrial insects, although at larger sizes they can be piscivorous, consuming fish.

SPAWNING SEASON Rio Grande cutthroat are in the spring spawning runoff when water temperatures approach 50°F. This takes place from March through July across their range.

LIFESPAN Rio Grande cutthroat typically live 5-8 years.

HISTORIC AND CURRENT RANGE This map of the upper Rio Grande River basin shows how the historical range of the trout has evolved over time. Note: some portions of the Rio Grande cutthroat's historic range are not shown to the South.

FISHING & NATIVES Colorado Parks and Wildlife manages over 100 recreational populations of Rio Grande cutthroat in Colorado. Established in the early 1900s, the first stockings were done in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains. These populations are maintained through stocking by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department. A historical account of the trout can be found in "Cutthroat Trout", at [wptv.com](#).

Threats and Current Status

Nonnative trout: Rio Grande cutthroat trout do not compete well with brook and brown trout, and readily hybridize with those trout species. A hybrid trout, called a "cut-brown", is often found in rivers where cutthroat trout have been introduced.

Habitat degradation: Roads, logging, grazing, mining, and urban sprawl all contribute to habitat loss.

Climate change: More severe droughts, more frequent and intense wildfires, warmer water temperatures.

It's a Southwest Treasure!

My Box

Fishing Tips

RIO GRANDE CUTTHROAT

STREAMS — Stealth, stealth, stealth! Take your time to walk along the stream before you cast. Light (2-weight) fly rods are #6-8, long are perfect for tight high country streams. Use a dry fly pattern with a large profile, and pay attention to your shadow.

LAKES — RGCUT in lakes can reach lengths over 20' feet. Practice casting to the surface in bright light. Fly fishing tends to be better in low light conditions. Try fishing nymph patterns and streamers when the fish are rising. Fly patterns like Hare's Ear, D-Mo's, or wet fly rods are a good choice for lakes.

ETIQUETTE — Catch and release in an important way to help ensure the survival of this unique trout for the future. Barbless hooks and rubberized nets will reduce injury to the fish. Keep the fish in the water, and dry your hands wet before touching them.

DRY FLIES — Pheasant tail, Adams, Yellow Sally, Stimulator, Mayfly hatchers with hoppers and hot edges, Griffith's Gnat and other midges.

NYMPHS — Prince Nymph, Copper John, Caddisfly nymph, sulfur nymph, stonefly nymph, hellgrammite nymphs, Chironomid nymph & emerger, Frog Buggers, streamers (minnows, crayfish, frog, salmonid) etc.

Check your state fishing regulations —
[www.cpw.state.co.us](#)
[www.wildlife.state.nm.us](#)

Final Report Grant Number- WNTI-2016-SG-4

Submitted by Kevin Terry, Rio Grande Basin Project Manager, Trout Unlimited

This report is a summary of project activities for the “Get to Know Your Native” project awarded to Trout Unlimited in 2015. This education and outreach based project developed a sign/poster to educate people about the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. The WNTI funds were used almost exclusively for the production of the posters and signs as identified in the project proposal, but we also spent \$150 for 2.5 hours of design work.

The \$3,000 grant ultimately produced 2,500 posters and 12 vinyl on metal signs. This surpassed the proposed production by 1,500 posters and we doubled the amount of signs that we originally expected to create. This ultimately means that we have had over twice the exposure from this project than we expected. The posters were divided between New Mexico and Colorado and distributed by TU, USFS, NMDGF, and CPW. Detailed tracking of the distribution of posters proved to be more difficult than expected. In Colorado posters were distributed at CPW offices, USFS offices in all three districts, and by TU chapter and Staff. Examples of specific groups reached include the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable, Move Mountains (youth Group), the Rocky Mountain Flyathlon, the Rio Grande Watershed Education and Conservation Initiative, Boy Scouts, the Rio Grande Water Leaders Class, The annual Congresso de Acequias, the Del Norte Trails showcase, the annual SLV TU auction and at other events, meetings and speaking opportunities. In New Mexico, the posters were distributed at a few Santa Fe area Schools and also available free to the public at NMDGF offices. There will be additional outreach efforts with other youth groups and schools as poster supplies last. Posters were also distributed at USFS offices and through staff and the New Mexico council of Trout Unlimited

The increase in signs that were produced resulted in terrific range-wide representation at Trailheads in Colorado. We were able to spread them out across the Upper Rio Grande, Conejos, and Sangre De Cristo streams to get a great geographic spread. Project partners have installed 6 signs at trailheads in Colorado including plans to install a sign at Medano Creek in the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. The trails are all relevant to this effort in that they provide public access to streams and lakes that are currently occupied by Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Furthermore, we were able to install signs near streams that are occupied by Rio Grande Cutthroat, but specifically managed for recreation which means that these fish are stocked and maintained for public use, including harvest, which allows the education effort to reach a wider diversity of anglers than usually found in more restrictive management settings. The locations of the Colorado trailheads including pictures are identified in Appendix A. In New Mexico, there have not been any signs installed to date. However, NMDGF has been working with their information Division and other stakeholders including TU to identify locations for installation in 2017. A noteworthy remark for the signs is that cutting them down about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in width, made them fit perfect on the standard USFS kiosks. This allowed us to save significant time and money and the USFS proved a great partner to get us installation clearance.

Financially, this project was very simple to manage. The WNTI funding was used directly for design and production resulting in very few invoices. The funds were spent to the exact dollar after upsizing the order of both posters and signs to maximize the funds. The Master File of the poster and sign can be used in the future for additional printing editions.

This effort has proven to be a catalyst for others looking to increase education and outreach efforts for native trout. The appealing art mixed with valuable information, made for a great package that many people have proudly had framed and installed in their homes and offices. It is something of a collector's piece in some circles, and there are now efforts to produce a similar themed poster for the Apache Trout and the Gila Trout. Possible future additions for other cutthroat and native trout will only add to the suite of native trout Art-Reach materials and help people, "Get to Know Their Native".

Challenges for the project were mostly tracking related. It was difficult to get exact counts when distributing and coordinating with all of the team members distributing the posters proved to be cumbersome and inefficient. In the future, I would recommend either pasting a spreadsheet on each poster box to track specific numbers or by simply identifying the trusted partners and agencies that will be delivering posters in the proposal. The folks working on the Arizona species have ambitious delivery goals, so it will be good to stay informed on their progress in terms of tracking.

All in all, this project proved that there is a need to create outreach vessels that inform people about their native trout and what they need, in a package that is digestible and visually appealing. The posters and signs are a good vessel and since it only took one design to connect to people differently. Whether in an office waiting for an appointment or at a trailhead and realizing for the first time that your favorite little creek is unique, this combo package had a bigger impact.

WNTI and TU have and continue to produce resource driven information about native trout. This project simply helped diversify the content and audience, and it provides a good example and tool for the future.

Appendix A- Signs at Trailheads in Colorado



Trailhead for Middle Creek (Flyathlon Flagship Course) in the Saguache River basin



Lost Creek trailhead in the Upper Rio Grande



Trailhead at the Lake Fork of the Conejos River



Trailhead at Ute Creek in the Upper Rio Grande



Trailhead at South Fork of the Conejos River (one of the most heavily used trails in the Conejos District)



Middle Frisco trailhead near Del Norte, Colorado