

## **The National Conservation Agenda**

The purpose of the National Conservation Agenda (NCA) is to charter the course for all components of TU – national office staff, state councils, chapters and members – to work together on a shared enterprise to implement TU’s mission. Over the past ten years, the National Resource Board (NRB) organized the TU National Conservation Agenda so the issues fell under one of four major categories: 1) improving water quality; 2) securing adequate instream flows; 3) recovering Pacific and Atlantic salmon; and, 4) conserving wild trout and salmon. The National Conservation Agenda outlined the programs under each of the four categories.

In 2003, the New Initiatives Workgroup was charged with evaluating the existing NCA and focusing on how to improve its implementation; specifically, we were asked to consolidate the number of issues to ten or fewer without sacrificing the integrity, or original intent, of any of the issues. While so doing we had to keep in mind the mission of the NLC: to better integrate staff efforts with volunteer works, to enhance the achievement of our conservation goals and to build the conservation capacity of our councils and chapters.

### **NCA ISSUES PRIORITY**

The workgroup found this task quite difficult, that is, to evaluate, categorize, and prioritize the original 26 NCA items and condense them to 10 items, or less, while retaining the underlying principle of the original 26 NCA items. With technical assistance from Steve Moyer and Kim Ryals we went through the process of using the “Revision & Prioritization Matrix” to rank the agenda items. As the process continued, it became obvious that we could simplify the agenda by combining certain agenda items under overarching themes. In fact, it would be impossible to reduce the number of important issues without such a reorganization. In addition, some concerns were mentioned in more than one category resulting in some overlap, and some very specific items were present. At the National Meeting in Denver, we reported the outcome of our deliberations to the NLC, TU Staff and Council Chairs. We reduced the items to ten, but did not prioritize the list.

### **REVISION OF NCA ISSUES**

Since Denver we have 1. reduced the overall major categories from four to three, 2. revised the issue list and 3. used the Prioritization Matrix developed by Staff to group the agenda items into two levels of priority: Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 issues have immediate and final impacts, while Tier 2 issues have less urgency in terms of action, and may have other environmental groups working on them. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 lists are important to TU. Finally, some previous NCA issues have now identified as Tools to accomplish the NCA goals.

# **National Conservation Agenda for 2004**

## **SALMONID CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

- Native Salmonid Projects (Tier 1):  
Salmon, Coaster & Eastern Brook Trout, Apache Trout, etc.
- Atlantic and Pacific Salmon Restoration (Tier 1)
- Watershed Protection on Federal Lands (Tier 1)
- Artificial Propagation (Tier 1)  
hatcheries, aquaculture
- Invasive Species Management (Tier 1)  
Whirling disease
- Wild Salmonid Projects (Tier 1)
- Global Warming (Tier 2)

## **WATER QUALITY ISSUES**

- Polluted run off (Tier 2)
- Acid precipitation/deposition (Tier 2)
- Toxic Mine drainage (Tier 2)

## **INSTREAM FLOW ISSUES**

- Dam Removal Projects (Tier 1)
- Minimum flow issues (Tier 1)

The above list covers issues of concern to the staff of TU and to its chapters and councils as well. To accomplish goals associated with the above issues the following tools can be employed, either separately or together.

### **Tools**

Clean Air Act  
Clean Water Act  
Bring Back the Natives  
Embrace-a-Stream Projects  
Endangered Species Act

Home Rivers Initiatives  
Partnerships with State and Federal Agencies

## **RATIONALE**

The workgroup felt that the organization of the NCA needed to be considered. A simpler agenda would be more practical for the staff and to foundations, as well as to the membership. All of the items on the original NCA were important issues for TU. So which items needed to be removed? We felt it would serve a much more useful purpose to consolidate similar items into common items; often this simply required removal of geographic specifics. The resulting categories identify our overall concerns and values, and subsequently direct us to the next level of activity: individual projects.

### ❖ Native Salmonid Projects

As a grassroots, coldwater conservation organization one of TU's core principles is the recovery of listed native salmonids, and so it stands to reason that this category is given a very high priority. By means of Trout Unlimited's North American Salmonid Policy we designate that all native salmonids are a precious national resource that we can ill afford to lose. This is especially evident as TU Staff, volunteer leadership and grassroots Chapters everywhere are diligently working to conserve, protect and restore our native trout and salmon to their historic ranges.

### ❖ Atlantic and Pacific Salmon Restoration

As the most specific of the ten agenda items, it was deliberately separated out as a unique for one simple reason - the dire urgency and magnitude of the declines of listed salmon today. While we realized that aspects of this issue are addressed in several other categories {i.e., instream flows, clean water, endangered species, aquaculture, etc.} yet we felt it appropriate to list it separately because of how broad the challenges are in protecting and restoring native salmonid populations.

### ❖ Instream Flow Issues

All instream flow issues were grouped into one category. The progress in dam removal and control has been significant in recent years. TU has experts on staff who can identify those dam issues most in need of attention each year. Additionally, TU grassroots volunteers work with TU staff to address excessive river and stream flow extractions {e.g., agricultural, industrial and municipal} that reduce flows, in turn raising water temperatures that are harmful to trout and salmon fisheries. Progress in maintaining minimum flows are crucial for all trout and salmon watersheds wherever dams are present, or flow extractions occur.

### ❖ Polluted run-off

Given the ongoing agricultural, industrial, municipal and subsequent political pressures to diminish Clean Water Act and its affects, it is inconceivable that clean water will ever leave the NCA.

#### ❖ Wild Salmonid Restoration Projects

We have separated native from wild salmonid restoration as the two have very distinct characteristics. While restoring native trout to their historic watersheds is paramount, wild trout populations occur in various parts and are a concern to local TU chapters and worthy of our attention. Frequently, non-native trout have been successfully introduced where native trout never occurred and such restoration projects are important to TU chapters and their members as well as the general angling public in those regions.

#### ❖ Federal Lands Protection

The protection of federal lands is especially critical today, as the current administration is continuously attempting to reduce protection on Federal lands and turn oversight over to local interests. Frequently, the best salmonid watersheds are in wilderness and roadless areas on Federal land, so it is in the interest of TU to make this item a very high priority.

#### ❖ Acid Precipitation/Deposition

Power generation and fossil fuel utilization is increasing and as a result this means more acid deposition, increased airborne contaminants such as mercury, and subsequently more lost or damaged trout waters. This is a significant problem for trout in many significant regions of North America and the world, and should remain a high-priority item.

#### ❖ Endangered Species

Salmonids are endangered species in many areas of the country today and the use of the Endangered Species Act is considered of major importance to TU, as indicated in Trout Unlimited's North American Salmonid Policy. The current administration has made it their priority to weaken several aspects of the Endangered Species Act. If allowed to succeed, this would have severe and detrimental consequences on ongoing TU grassroots native trout and salmon recovery efforts, and would lead to elimination of vital protections for listed trout and salmon.

#### ❖ Artificial Propagation

We combined the hatchery and aquaculture issues under one item, realizing that the problems here are complex. Threats to wild trout from hatchery introductions and pollution by aquaculture activities are two such issues

#### ❖ Global Warming

At the 2003 meeting in Denver we introduced this as a new initiative and the NLC voted to give the issue further study to learn the specific impacts on trout watersheds. In the past year much research has focused on this issue and make the threat to trout even clearer. If the global temperature continues to increase due to greenhouse gases and other thermal pollution, then clearly the range of trout habitat will be influenced. TU may not take a leading role on this issue; however, because of detrimental impacts Global Warming needs to be on the agenda.

## **TOOLS**

### ❖ Home Rivers Initiative

This is really a tool that is very effective and expanding the capability of TU to address larger watershed issues at the local level. We decided that the emphasis on grassroots members would be enhanced if this program were listed on the Agenda.

### ❖ Bring Back the Natives/Embrace-a-Stream

These are two programs used by Chapters and Councils to address their local issues. As such, these are essential tools to the grassroots of TU and should remain a high priority on the Agenda.

***The four tools listed below will remain effective only if we continue to ensure their protection from political pressures to weaken their original purpose and intent.***

- ❖ Clean Air Act
- ❖ Clean Water Act
- ❖ Endangered Species Act
- ❖ Partnerships with State and Federal Agencies