

## *Tailwaters Work Group Mission Statement and Strategic Vision*

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Tailwaters Work Group is to help TU volunteers advocate for trout populations in tailwater or tailrace fisheries. These are defined as rivers that flow from and are sustained via releases of water from impounded rivers or lakes. The Work Group will explore the issues, challenges and threats to tailwater fisheries and recommend direction and actions for TU staff and volunteers to take to advocate for trout populations in these waters.

**Strategic Vision:** Our mission will be accomplished through examination of how TU volunteers can participate in complex state and federal regulatory processes with the intent of working collaboratively to resolve disputed issues and mitigate the impact of environmental conditions to protect the quality and quantity of these waters. The Work Group will provide practical informational resources that allow members to determine courses of action for their particular tailwater and to help them as they work through the various steps with strategies, background information, potential partnerships and other guidance to help them be effective coldwater / tailwater fishery advocates. To this end, the Work Group will consolidate guidance based on previous TU advocacy around the country.

**Background:** Riverine sections below dams (tailwaters or tailraces) provide important recreational and economic benefits to local communities and create habitat that support native and nonnative fish, including trout. Throughout the country, many coldwater rivers have been created and are sustained by release of cooler waters from the depths of these reservoirs. These dams and water releases from these impounded bodies of water have created trout fisheries in places where trout could not otherwise exist. And with the threat of climate change, these coldwater refuges may become more important if temperatures increase and droughts lengthen.

The principal purposes for dams include power generation, flood control, agricultural practices, and public water supply. It cannot be overlooked that dams cause negative impacts to rivers, but in some places these dams have enhanced existing fisheries by ensuring coldwater conditions during hot weather and increasingly warmer summers. Trout fisheries that thrive in the waters downstream of these dams are often incidental and come with a set of unique management problems to sustain the new coldwater environments that have been created. The issues surrounding these waters range from minimum flows, timing of water releases, water quality, and water rights. The downstream trout fisheries that exist are often a secondary concern of the management agencies that operate the dams. Therefore, those who benefit from the coldwater fisheries need to advocate for better water management below these dams to develop and sustain trout populations.

*March 2016*