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Trout Unlimited supports The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act HR 763

Trout Unlimited believes that it is time for Congress to seriously address the root cause of climate change—carbon emissions. Congress should pass legislation that will use market mechanisms to substantially reduce carbon emissions to save our watersheds, valuable fisheries, and most importantly, our health. **HR 763 is a strong start that Congress should seriously consider**, a bipartisan, market-based approach that will reduce America’s emissions by at least 40% in the first 12 years.

Here is why we need Congressional action now -- climate change has already begun to alter our nation’s lakes and rivers in many of the places we love to fish and recreate. The footprint of these changes can vary across the country, with more extremes being observed in many places. As precipitation patterns change and snow melts earlier, watersheds become drier and wildfires grow in frequency and intensity. Peak stream flows occur earlier in the year, base flows are lower, and aquatic insects and fish change their behaviors. At the same time, some areas like the northeast are experiencing increases in extreme precipitation, accompanied by devastating flooding.

- Air temperatures around the globe have increased significantly in recent years. The U.S. is no exception to these trends. U.S. average temperature has increased by 1.3°F to 1.9°F since record keeping began in 1895; most of this increase has occurred since about 1970. The most recent decade was the nation’s warmest on record.
- For many parts of the western U.S., drought and increasing air temperature are spelling trouble for trout. Many rivers like the Madison in Montana approach stressful temperatures more frequently. Habitat for the Rio Grande cutthroat trout is being hit particularly hard by drought in Colorado and New Mexico.
- Glaciers are disappearing across the West, and with them, the cold melt-water on which native trout such as bull trout and westslope cutthroat depend. At the current melt rate, glaciers will have disappeared from Glacier National Park by 2030, which will directly affect downstream fisheries.
- Since the mid-1980s as forests have dried and tree mortality has increased, there has been a marked increase in the duration and intensity of wildfires in the western U.S. While fire is a natural part of the western ecosystem in which fish have evolved, populations already affected by multiple human-induced stressors (barriers to movement, degraded habitats,

non-native species) are less equipped to handle intense wildfires. In 2012, the Whitewater-Baldy Fire Complex roared through the core of remaining Gila trout habitat in New Mexico and destroyed several populations.

- Impacts are being documented nationwide. Eastern native brook trout are showing evidence of climate impacts, with delayed fall spawn-timing and fewer redds being constructed as temperatures increase. A recent study of pink salmon in Alaska documents that average migration time is almost two weeks earlier than 40 years ago. Cutthroat trout across the West, for example, are expected to lose more than 50% of their remaining habitat by 2080.

Trout Unlimited's response to climate change begins with conducting projects that promote watershed and fisheries resilience in the face of the changing climate. Restoration projects that TU undertakes to restore degraded riparian areas, reconnect fragmented streams, and control invasive species help build resilience. In California for example, TU is restoring high-elevation wet meadows and riparian habitats in an effort to keep rainfall at higher elevation for longer periods and reduce the effects of less snowpack. Collaborative, community-based dam removal in places like the Penobscot River in Maine increase resilience by expanding populations and available habitat. We need more adaptation projects, not only to help our trout and salmon survive rapid climate change but also to buy society time to find more lasting solutions.

Our work to build resilient watersheds and fisheries is not enough. Substantial carbon emissions reduction --getting at the root of the problem--is an essential part of the equation.

TU supports legislation to tackle carbon emissions, and HR 763 would accomplish that goal. This bill proposes to put a fee on fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. The fee starts low, and would grow over time. This will drive down carbon pollution because energy companies, leading industries, and American consumers will move toward cleaner, cheaper options. The fees collected on carbon emissions will be allocated to all Americans to spend any way they choose. The identical bill, S. 3791, was introduced in the Senate in 2018.

This bill would create 2.1 million new jobs, thanks to economic growth in local communities across America. Most importantly, it would yield a 40% reduction in carbon emissions over the next 12 years.

We urge Members of Congress to support HR 763.

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