

**Pioneering.**  
**Local.**  
**Collaborative.**



**Pragmatic.**  
**Innovative.**  
**Impactful.**  
**Experienced.**  
**Trusted.**

Western Water  
and Habitat Program

20TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT





*“As a rancher and someone who is intertwined with government and natural resource policy I have found that the people of Trout Unlimited make extraordinary efforts to show real interest and concern for ranchers and their futures. It’s the people that make the difference. At TU I feel that our values align when it comes to the future of western values and livelihood on working landscapes.”*

**FREDDIE BOTUR, OWNER  
COTTONWOOD RANCHES  
DANIEL, WYOMING**







TU's Scott Yates fishes a creek flowing through Cottonwood Ranches. TU has partnered with rancher Freddie Botur for over a decade on a variety of water and habitat restoration issues in Wyoming's Upper Green River Basin.

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*In the flow:*

## **Where we've been, where we're going**

*By Scott Yates, Warren Colyer, Brian Johnson, and Chrysten Lambert*

### **Twenty years ago**

Twenty years ago, Trout Unlimited looked across the landscape of the West at water use and saw huge, complicated, unaddressed problems that were sucking the life out of our best trout rivers and streams.

Twenty years ago, thousands of miles of trout and salmon habitat were fragmented by makeshift dams, obsolete irrigation practices, and development. Countless fish died in diversion ditches. Hundreds of streams and rivers dried up in late summer.

Twenty years ago, environmental groups had an antagonistic attitude toward farm and ranch country, and the two sides viewed each other with open hostility and suspicion.

TU saw an opportunity to make a crucial difference. We decided to work with ranchers and farmers to address water and habitat problems in a way no other conservation organization had done before. Together, we created water projects and restoration programs that later merged into the **Western Water and Habitat Program**.

### **Twenty years later**

The road has been long and sometimes rocky. But we've learned a thing or two about how to do conservation work in the West. The soul of our organization took shape out in the field, in communities, on ranches, and on farms while getting our hands dirty working alongside trusted agriculture partners.

The results have been remarkable. Despite increasingly partisan politics over the last two decades, TU has managed to build partnerships, launch groundbreaking conservation projects, and advance innovative water policy in some of the most conservative places in the West.

### **Our approach**

This was no accident. It was the result of vision, hard work, and persistence.

We knew that promoting cooperation with ranchers and farmers would be a game changer for water management and fish habitat in the West.

We drove western back roads, talked to ranchers, and listened to their problems while drinking coffee at





their kitchen tables. We helped them find federal funds for new headgates, for more efficient irrigation systems, and for infrastructure improvements. We helped them use water more efficiently and brokered water leasing deals to monetize their water rights in new ways. We helped replace aging dams with more fish-friendly structures.

Over time, we built trust for collaborative conservation projects that had been considered impossible in one of the most conservative regions of the country.

From humble water projects in Bozeman and Boulder to habitat restoration on the Jefferson River, South Fork Snake River, and small, native trout headwater streams in Nevada, we now work in fishing communities across the West: the Klamath, Yakima, Green, Snake, Yellowstone, Weber, Clark Fork, and North Platte river basins—to name just a few.

Since 1998, TU has doggedly built its Western Water and Habitat Program to address the streamflow and habitat problems facing trout, salmon, and steelhead across every state in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies, Intermountain region, parts of the Southwest, and California. There is no larger or more effective conservation program in the West that deals with water and habitat.

## Celebrating accomplishments

In putting this 20-year review together, we aim to highlight the values and character of our program and of our dedicated staff—more than 70 biologists, engineers, attorneys, and conservation specialists who work every day in rural communities and state capitals to push the limits on conservation innovation. This report highlights the values and attributes we try to live by—and that many of our partners have come to recognize and appreciate in our model of conservation. It celebrates the heart of our work and our people.

In addition to documenting our past achievements, we're also charting the path forward. Although the TU methods have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams, we'll keep innovating. We'll keep developing new ways to find common ground with rural communities.

TU's Western Water and Habitat Program is excited about what's around the next river bend.




## THE TU WAY

TU's Western Water and Habitat Program has pioneered a different approach to conservation that has delivered real results in the rural West. This model is based on some foundational principles and values:

- **Real results**—TU delivers concrete results for our partners. Our results help us build strong alliances to secure federal and state funding and to advance policy goals.
- **Rural roots**—TU hires field staff who have strong connections to the rural communities in which we work across the West. Our connection helps us build trust; understand the full range of issues that can influence water policy locally, statewide, and regionally; and work efficiently by sharing strategies across states.
- **Trusted pros**—TU is frequently asked to participate in state water policy advisory committees and to testify before state and federal legislative committees, where we're recognized for bringing our field-tested expertise and collaborative skills to find solutions.
- **Lean and mean**—TU provides an extraordinary value proposition for our funders by combining a lean staffing profile with a demonstrated ability to deliver millions of dollars in state and federal grant money to our partners.







*“TU’s western water and habitat work is a high-return investment. Remarkably so. First, private funding leverages public resources at a significant scale. The resulting projects show clear habitat and wildlife results, measurable and impactful. And the work opens the door to new allies, new partnerships, and a broader base of support for land and water stewardship across the West.”*

— SAM TUCKER, DIRECTOR  
COLORADO RIVER SUSTAINABILITY CAMPAIGN

# Pioneering

Being a pioneer means being out front. Trying new things. Mapping uncharted territory. It means having the persistence and grit to push onward, doing what it takes to reach a goal.

In the past 20 years, Trout Unlimited’s Western Water and Habitat Program staff has blazed new trails in the rural West, with conservation goals and practices that have become standard operating procedure today.”

Brianna Randall paddles the  
Flathead River in western Montana.

PHOTO: ROB ROBERTS



## New tools, new insights

On Milk Creek, in western Colorado, TU's Brian Hodge worked with biologists to implant **tiny radio transmitters** into the bellies of native cutthroat trout. For the next few months, the transmitters allowed him to chart the upstream and downstream movement of fish.

"We can learn a lot from telemetry," says Brian. "By tracking fish across time and space, we gain insights into their habitat preferences or requirements, and into how they respond to their environment."

Over the years, TU biologists and agency partners have helped mainstream the use of radio telemetry and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags to track fish movements and their life histories and to identify critical aquatic habitats. These powerful new tools inform our planning and evaluation of restoration work.

Along Milk Creek, the telemetry study revealed that some habitats the cutthroat trout use only seasonally may be nonetheless critical to the population.



**Radio telemetry tag:**  
a small but powerful tool for tracking fish.

"We weren't necessarily surprised by the observation of fish movement, but rather by how many of the fish moved," says Brian. "We found cutthroat

occupying stream stretches in early spring, that later in summer, were intolerably warm, if not lethal, for the species. By late spring, 95 percent of the fish had migrated a mile or more upstream, and the majority spawned in small, otherwise unremarkable tributaries."

The Milk Creek findings, which Brian and his co-authors published in a scientific journal, illustrated the dynamic nature of fishes and their habitats and underscored the importance of stream connectivity.

TU uses telemetry to home in on the most useful data for restoring and recovering trout habitat. And when it comes to restoring such habitat, TU has pioneered new strategies, as well.



Native cutthroat trout are anesthetized for surgery, a radio tag is inserted (above), and then the fish are released and tracked by antenna (right).





Much of the damage that has been done to rivers over the past century and half resulted from years of intense human activities and extensive modifications of stream channels and floodplains. In many cases, the same heavy machinery that dismantled these river systems have been required to put them back together.

More recently, TU has been employing a different approach in certain landscapes.

It turns out **beavers** restore some damaged streams and floodplains just as effectively—and much more cheaply—than machines can. Using a combination of man-made beaver dam structures called beaver dam analogs, or BDAs, and reintroducing the animals themselves, we have cheaply and effectively increased streamflows, reconnected floodplains and re-established streamside vegetation. Once re-established, these natural processes build and maintain the habitat and water quality that sustain trout and salmon populations.

TU's Washington-based staff duo Cody Gillin and Crystal Elliot-Perez spearheaded this new approach. Their beaver-reintroduction work has improved habitat in the Wenatchee River, Kettle River, and Methow River watersheds.

Cody explains that “beavers naturally do what we, as restoration project managers, require engineering, equipment operators, and big budgets to accomplish. While beavers may not be compatible with every landscape, where we can put them to use, it’s really a win-win proposition.”

Crystal further notes that “historically, beavers created resiliency on the landscape because their dam complexes provided habitat, late-season streamflows, and robust streamside vegetation corridors that resisted wildfires. By restoring these processes—or, better yet, by allowing the beavers to do it—we are increasing the likelihood that fish populations will be able to persist as climate conditions change.”



It turns out beavers restore some damaged streams and floodplains just as effectively—and much more cheaply—than machines can.



TU volunteers build a beaver dam analog in Utah. The technique is working well across the West.

PHOTO: PAUL BURNETT



## Water leasing: A little water works miracles

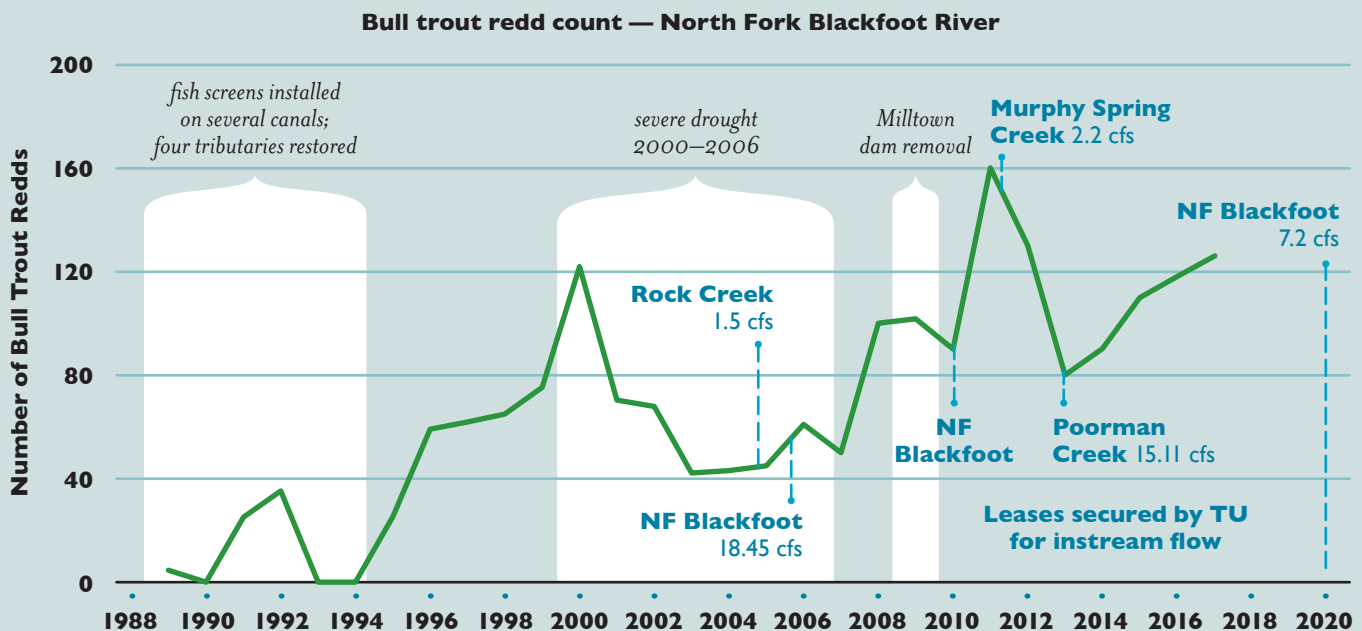
Being able to keep a little extra water in the stream can work miracles in protecting trout habitat, especially in sustaining small tributaries that are quite literally the spawning and rearing factories for wild trout in the West.

However, in pre-1990 Montana, leasing water rights to leave water instream for fish hardly helped fisheries, especially in times of drought, because other water users, such as farmers, had higher priority access to it. Most of the water rights available for fisheries had a low priority date, which meant they were too far down the line of water users to keep the little water they needed.

TU saw an opportunity to try something new. Over the course of a few legislative sessions, Montana TU staff and grassroots leaders successfully lobbied lawmakers to allow the lease of senior consumptive-use water rights for instream flows. The senior “first in time and first in right” water rights, many established in the late 1800s, could now be temporarily used to help trout. It was an historic achievement—the first functional water leasing law in the Rocky Mountains.

But passage of the law was just the first step; the new law had yet to be tested on the ground.

In 1998, TU hired Laura Ziemer, followed by long-time Montana attorney and angler Stan Bradshaw, to prove to lawmakers that this new tool (voluntary and compensated water leasing) could benefit both agricultural and fisheries interests over time. The clock was ticking—the law would expire in 2005 without further legislative action. Laura and her team drove hundreds of miles of back roads to talk to skeptical ranchers and landowners pitching benefits for fisheries and agriculture. She eventually persuaded many of them to give the leasing program a try.





On tiny **Wasson Creek**, for example, a water lease with TU for just under one cubic foot per second gave the Mannix Brothers Ranch the flexibility to restore streamflows while maintaining an economically viable agricultural operation.

The instream results were immediate. **In the fall after the first season of the water lease, westslope cutthroat trout turned up in adjoining Spring Creek for the first time in decades.** TU and the Mannix Brothers Ranch entered a 10-year water lease to maintain flows in Wasson Creek, which helped bring back the native fish.

The Mannix Ranch was just one of many successes. By the time the legislature convened in 2005, 20 leases—six of which TU had completed—were on the books. The 2005 Montana legislature, by overwhelming majority and with strong support from both the agricultural and conservation communities, made the instream leasing statute permanent.

The pace hasn't slowed since 2005. Today, Montana TU has eight staff in the Clark Fork Basin and near important streams in southwest Montana who work together on habitat and water transactions. Often the habitat work builds the trust necessary for water deals, and sometimes vice versa. We've since finalized more than 20 instream leases throughout central and western Montana, and others are in the works. These added flows have provided critical cold-water refuge for trout during times of drought.

More important, thanks to water leasing, TU has forged strong coalitions with agricultural interests across a wide spectrum of habitat and restoration initiatives. The Montana example has proven the concept that water deals can benefit fisheries and ranching.



*“As ranchers who believe in stewardship, the challenge for us is to protect these stream resources while still maintaining an economically viable agricultural operation. This lease gives us a chance to find part of that balance and to also demonstrate that agricultural interests and fisheries interests could work together to each other’s benefit.”*

— MONTANA RANCHER RANDY MANNIX





Engaging the community  
on the Ogden River, UT  
PHOTO: PAUL BURNETT

*“If we just focused on Washington, D.C., or the national picture, progress on environmental issues can seem stalled. **TU’s water and habitat work provide a bright ray of optimism, and a lesson in what environmental progress looks like.** Working from the ground up, TU has improved stream flows, water quality, and fish habitat for numerous watersheds throughout the West. TU’s projects have also brought communities together around the important work of conservation, helping to build support for future work.”*

— LEON SZEPTYCKI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WATER IN THE WEST  
PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE, STANFORD WOODS  
INSTITUTE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT





# Local

All too often, conservation groups helicopter in with big schemes and ideas but without real knowledge about how the local community works or how their projects affect local families and landowners. Before long, the conservationists depart without a personal stake in what they leave behind. Meanwhile, locals see a high rate of turnover in governmental resource agency staffers whose work affects their lives.

Little wonder that outsiders with big ideas are not especially welcomed. The Western politics of change is inherently local. That's why, from the start, Trout Unlimited put an emphasis on placing staff in local

communities across the West and on hiring people who grew up where they're working on projects. Our people know the territory, and the players, and how to get things done.

Another TU advantage is our local grassroots chapters and members, who often help on local projects.

By sinking our roots locally, we've been able to find resources and push forward water solutions despite agency budget cuts and legislative inertia.

We're local and here to stay—that's why our solutions stand the test of time.



## Roots in the Gunnison



**Cary Denison** was raised in the North Fork of Colorado's Gunnison Valley on a small farm, where he gained an appreciation and understanding of water at the end of a shovel. Cary's water education continued by working alongside his father, a water commissioner and irrigation company superintendent, and by fishing and playing in the rivers and streams of western Colorado. Growing up,

Cary worked for local ranches in the summers and cleaned and repaired ditches and canals during the spring and fall.

After getting his education at Western State College and Colorado State University, Cary was a Colorado state water commissioner in the San Miguel and Upper Gunnison basins for five years. Later, he owned and

operated a consulting firm that focused on agricultural water management and habitat improvement. Cary served on the Gunnison Basin Roundtable since 2007 as either the Ouray County or environmental representative.

As a TU project manager the last seven years, Cary works with water users throughout the Gunnison Basin on water conservation projects to address irrigators' water demands while improving cold water fisheries.

His TU colleague, **Jesse Kruthaupt**, also has a deep history in the area. Jesse was raised on his family's cattle ranch in the upper Gunnison Valley, where he still helps out.



Jesse has more than 20 years of education and work experience within two, often opposing, industries that rely on healthy rivers and streams in the Gunnison Valley: recreation and agriculture. He brings a local's knowledge about water use on Gunnison River tributaries. His relationship with agricultural water users and understanding of irrigation management in the valley provides a foundation for developing innovative irrigation infrastructure, habitat, and water conservation solutions that benefit water users and their watersheds.

In his six years with TU, Jesse has gained a reputation as a well-informed, practical, and trustworthy advocate for cold water fisheries.



**Flow restoration on Jesse's home water, Tomichi Creek**

**Before:** Flows through the Tomichi Creek State Wildlife Area often reach low levels late-summer.

**After:** In 2018, TU's Jesse Kruthaupt worked with local irrigators to leave water in the stream and remove aging diversion structures, boosting stream flows and improving habitat.







Steelhead whisperer Tim Frahm swings a fly on the Trinity River, CA.  
PHOTO: SAM DAVIDSON

## Growing up farming and fishing on the California central coast

**Tim Frahm** is a third-generation central coast Californian. He caught his first coastal wild steelhead 45 years ago while learning to ply estuaries and the lower ends of small streams between Carmel and Half Moon Bay.

Tim is a graduate of the Cal Poly SLO School of Agriculture. He spent a large part of his career working for the San Mateo County Farm Bureau and joined TU a decade ago to build partnerships to protect and restore wild steelhead and coho in the very southern part of their range. It's no easy task. There are multi-pronged factors in the decline of these populations, including diminished water quality and quantity and development pressure on rivers and streams running into the ocean south of the San Francisco Bay Area.



With a lifetime of experience with local stakeholders and his professional background in agriculture, Tim has been the right man to meet with landowner after landowner in the region to drive TU's projects. Tim holds a long-term leadership role in Central Coast Water Quality Preservation Inc., an agricultural non-profit dedicated to surface water quality monitoring with over 400,000 enrolled acres. He knows how to talk and strategize with farmers and is dedicated to solutions that balance producers' needs, sustainable working landscapes, and fisheries restoration. Being known as "a hell of a fisherman" gives Tim a lot of credibility as he rallies TU grassroots leaders and staff around difficult and complex water and habitat projects that protect working family farms.



## Local hero

At age 19, in the 1950s, **Kirk Klancke** left his native Minnesota and settled in Colorado with his wife, Marianne, in the beautiful Fraser River Valley. His life since has been a testament to how one person's love of place can make a difference.



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Kirk exemplifies TU's unique strength—local grassroots leaders who are deeply committed to their home waters.

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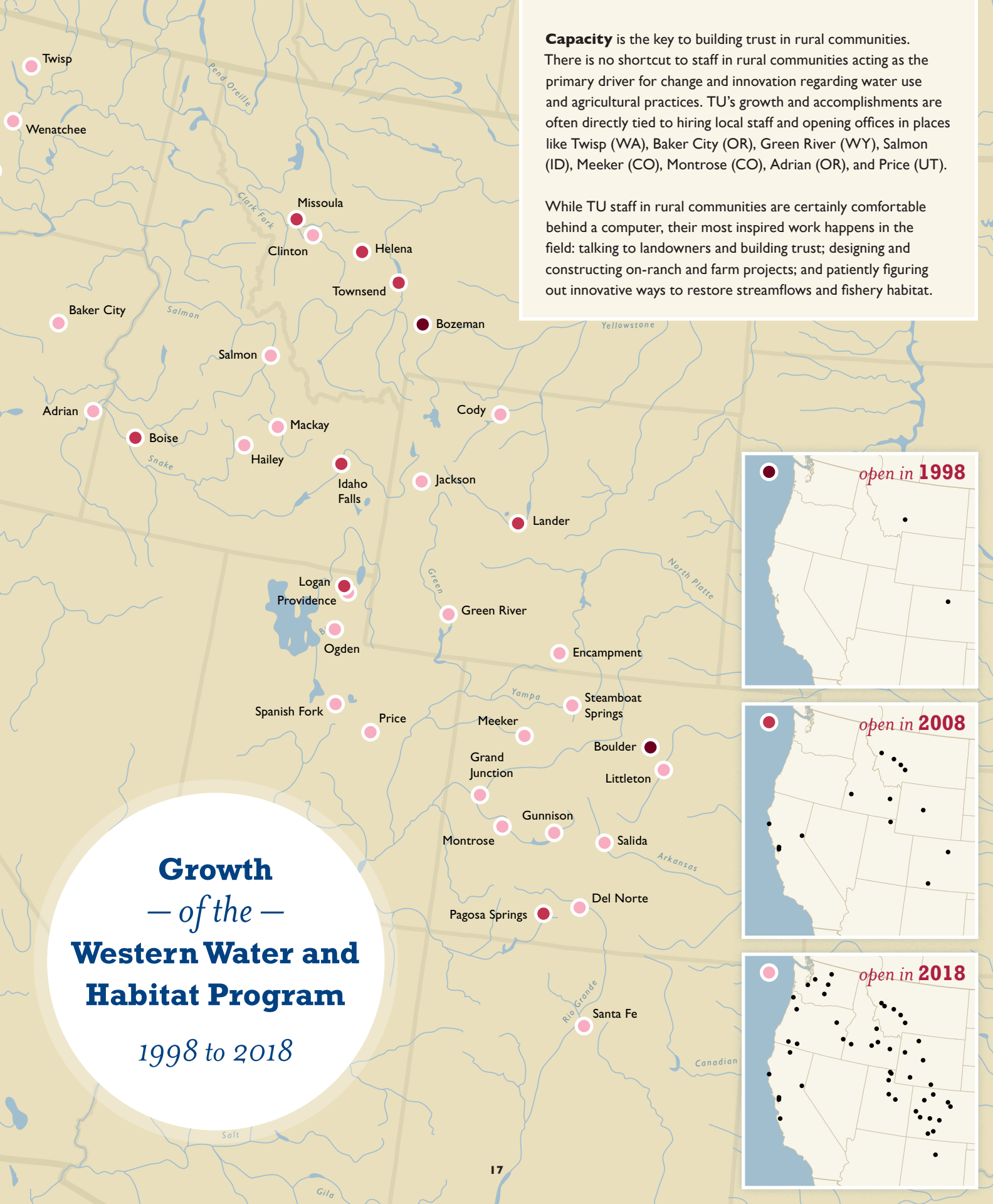
For decades, Kirk was a stonemason who built cabins and houses in the valley. When he learned his beloved Fraser River was being degraded by municipal water diversions to the Front Range, he got involved in his local watershed group and quickly learned about the importance of water flows.

He became president of the local TU chapter and began a personal campaign to make a difference. Over the years, he attended countless meetings, organized a Fraser River festival, and became a highly effective spokesperson for saving the river. He was instrumental in coordinating local support and educating the community about TU's Fraser campaign. Kirk's teamwork with Western Water and Habitat Program staff and TU Colorado Council leaders led to remarkable success in a settlement with Denver Water that ensures ongoing, long-term monitoring and protection of the Fraser and Upper Colorado.

For his dedication to the region, he received a Field and Stream "Heroes of Conservation" award in 2011. Now nominally retired, Kirk continues to work on Fraser River improvements.



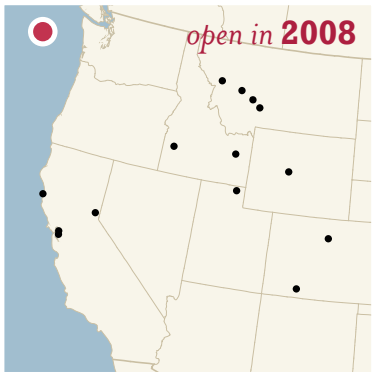
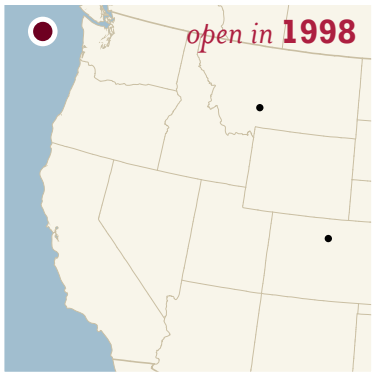




**Capacity** is the key to building trust in rural communities. There is no shortcut to staff in rural communities acting as the primary driver for change and innovation regarding water use and agricultural practices. TU's growth and accomplishments are often directly tied to hiring local staff and opening offices in places like Twisp (WA), Baker City (OR), Green River (WY), Salmon (ID), Meeker (CO), Montrose (CO), Adrian (OR), and Price (UT).

While TU staff in rural communities are certainly comfortable behind a computer, their most inspired work happens in the field: talking to landowners and building trust; designing and constructing on-ranch and farm projects; and patiently figuring out innovative ways to restore streamflows and fishery habitat.

**Growth**  
— of the —  
**Western Water and  
Habitat Program**  
*1998 to 2018*





# Collaborative



*“Partnerships are the key to conservation effectiveness and trust is the glue that holds them together. Our strong partnership with Trout Unlimited has allowed us to significantly further conservation for Utah aquatic species and I can’t think of a partner that we trust more.”*

— PAUL THOMPSON, DEPUTY  
DIRECTOR RECOVERY PROGRAMS  
OFFICE, UTAH DEPARTMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES

None of Trout Unlimited’s water and habitat restoration work in the West happens without collaboration. Partnering with stakeholders is a major feature of TU’s conservation model that the Water and Habitat Program has helped pioneer—and it’s a major reason for our success in getting things done on the ground.

What do these partnerships look like?

For TU staff, they are long drives down dusty roads to remote ranches, and even more remote head gates. We spend many hours





in low-ceilinged, fluorescent-lit rooms on folding chairs talking about weeds and watershed plans, high-school basketball scores, and cattle prices. Then there are the after-meeting discussions held leaning on pickups in parking lots in the snow, and the after-after-meetings in the local bar.

In other words, TU's partnerships are real, boots-on-the ground collaborations, forged face-to-face.

We partner with a who's who of movers and shakers:

**Ranchers • Farmers • Tribal Governments  
• Watershed Groups • Irrigation Districts  
• Timber Companies • Canal Companies  
• Corporations • Municipalities • Land  
Trusts • Teachers • State Agencies • Federal  
Agencies • Local Government Entities**

In these partnerships across the West, TU staff plan and execute projects that:

**improve flows • restore stream habitat •  
improve water quality • enhance drought  
and flood resilience**



## Choosing win-win

As they migrate up the coastal streams lacing California's fabled **North Coast**, coho salmon find their journey blocked by old check-dams and decrepit culverts. Their spawning grounds are smothered with sediment washed down from old forest roads and railroad causeways—many of which are on private timber lands.

That's why TU approached the Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) in 1998 about partnering to restore habitat and fish passage for coho on their lands. At the time, it was an unusual and bold move: there was considerable tension between timber interests and conservation groups across the Pacific Northwest. But TU and MRC recognized they had a common interest in improving habitat quality in vital coho streams—so they ignored stereotypes and launched what has become a highly productive partnership, starting with a project in the South Fork of the Garcia River (prime coho habitat and a legendary steelhead fishery).



As part of the effort, TU launched the North Coast Coho Project (NCCP) to help coho—now one of the rarest native fishes in California—and steelhead trout overcome in-stream challenges. Besides sediment control, the NCCP's holistic approach includes removing fish passage barriers, enhancing riparian corridors, creating off-channel habitat, and improving in-stream structure.

TU typically applies for and administers restoration grants, while MRC and other timber partners contribute in-kind funding, equipment, and employee time to support the project. Today, MRC's investment in the partnership exceeds \$3.4 million, not counting some \$200,000 the company spends annually on water quality and habitat monitoring as part of its business operations.

This restored off-channel pool on Lawrence Creek provides critical habitat for juvenile coho salmon and steelhead.

PHOTO: ANNA HALLIGAN







The North Coast Coho Project has raised and leveraged nearly \$25 million for 85 individual habitat restoration projects.

The results are promising and growing in scale. The NCCP, in partnership with multiple timber companies, private landowners, resource agencies, local contractors, and other conservation groups, has raised and leveraged nearly \$25 million for 85 individual habitat restoration projects. Collaborative



projects have improved or eliminated more than 500 miles of forest roads and removed 15 major fish migration barriers. Coho are returning in greater numbers in targeted streams such as the Noyo and Big Rivers.

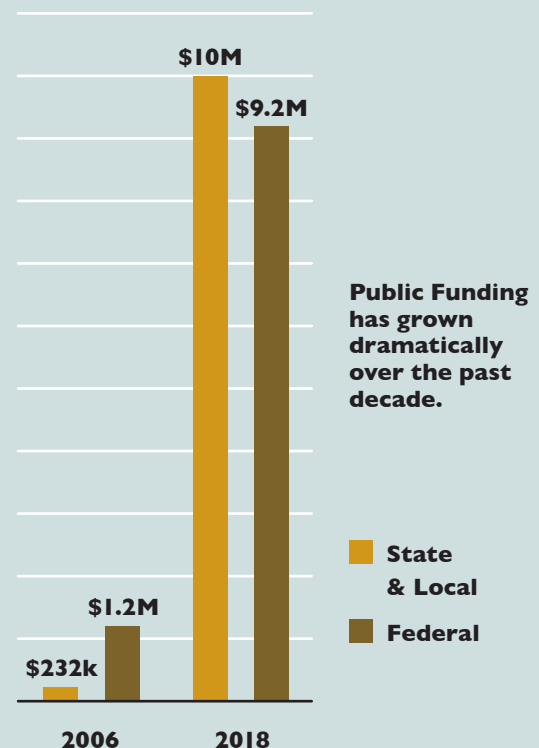
It's all because two supposed enemies rejected an us-versus-them mentality and found a way to work together.

## PUBLIC PARTNERS FUELING GROWTH

Some of TU's most important collaborations are with the federal, state, and local agencies that support our program and projects. Over the past decade, we have experienced dramatic growth in government funding across the program.

In 2006, we used \$1.2 million from federal funding programs and \$232,000 from state and local funding to implement restoration projects. By 2018, those numbers had increased to \$9.15 million and \$9.99 million, respectively. **Today, more than 80 percent of TU's project work is supported with public funding sources.**

From federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service providing critical program and project funding across the West; to state agencies and programs like the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust, Montana's Future Fisheries Program, and Great Outdoors Colorado paying for on-the-ground restoration projects in specific states; to tribal partners like the Umatilla, Yakima, Nez Perce, Colville, Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua, Eastern Shoshone, Lower Elwha Klallam, Yurok, Karuk, and Klamath tribes supporting TU's work in specific river basins—collaborative partnerships make our work possible.





## Collaboration in the Clark Fork River Basin

Collaborative conservation is more than a catchphrase for TU.

In the Clark Fork River Basin—where decades of dredge mining ravaged the watershed and presented daunting restoration challenges—collaboration is a necessity. No organization alone could tackle the enormous technical and financial challenges posed by a river restoration of this scale.

For more than two decades, in countless meetings and field work days and planning sessions, TU staff and volunteers worked with ranchers, irrigators, local communities, agency partners, and other conservation groups to build capacity and pool resources and expertise to restore the Clark Fork River and its many celebrated tributaries in western Montana, including the Blackfoot, Bitterroot, and Rock Creek.

Over time, working together, the successes added up, and we began to see real momentum:

- In **Ninemile Creek**, our 15-year partnership with the Lolo National Forest, Missoula County, and local landowners resulted in nearly \$5 million invested on the ground to reclaim 11 abandoned mines, reconnect eight spawning streams, and restore two-plus miles of Ninemile Creek that was torn apart during historic dredge mining.
- The Big Blackfoot Chapter of TU led community-driven efforts to restore the legendary **Blackfoot River**

and its fishery, which had been severely polluted by lumber mills, mining, and other activities. In fact, the river made famous by Norman Maclean had become so degraded that it was snubbed in the filming of “A River Runs Through It.” But in the last 30 years, TU, working in partnership with agencies, non-profits, and private landowners, completed 178 projects on 64 streams resulting in a nearly 800 percent increase in the native trout numbers in the middle Blackfoot River. Ryen Neudecker, restoration coordinator for TU’s Big Blackfoot chapter, says these “remarkable increases” in native trout are the fruits of 30 years of restoration projects on the Blackfoot’s tributaries. “You look at the cumulative effects of those projects, and what that means to the overall river system, it’s pretty encouraging,” she says.

- In the **Upper Clark Fork**, TU staff are working closely with private landowners, the state of Montana, three national forests staff, and numerous other partners to revive the upper 120 miles of river from the impacts of historical mining and smelting. The upper river currently flows through the middle of the largest complex of Superfund sites in the country. This historic effort combines metals remediation and watershed restoration.

Even though TU and our partners have a long way to go and projects continue to line up, the Clark Fork River Basin is already one of the great restoration success stories of our time—a story of vision, persistence, and the power of collaboration.



### Effort + Time = Results

Mattie V Creek is a tributary to Ninemile Creek that was buried under thousands of cubic yards of placer mining waste rock 75 years ago. In 2010 (left panel) we uncovered and rebuilt it. By 2011 (middle panel) the stream was flowing again, and by 2017 (right panel) the stream was fully recovered.





**Before:** Intensive placer mining during the last century turned the Ninemile Valley upside-down and Ninemile Creek into a straightened “ditch”.

PHOTO: GOOGLE EARTH

The Clark Fork River Basin is already one of the great restoration success stories of our time—a story of vision, persistence, and the power of collaboration.



**After:** Together with partners, TU has removed tens of thousands of cubic yards of waste rock, restored almost 3 miles of floodplain, and rebuilt much of the stream.



## Finding common ground

In 2012, TU and the Family Farm Alliance led the formation of the **Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition**, based on the idea that conservation groups and the agricultural community could find common ground on an array of resource issues.

TU's Scott Yates, who helped form the group, emphasizes that it was a natural progression for TU and many of the groups to join forces. "Our business plan emphasizes constant communication with agricultural partners. There are some issues we're not going to agree on, but that shouldn't stop us from being a recognizable and unified force on issues

like the Farm Bill Conservation Title and federal appropriations that benefit western ranch and farm operations and fisheries alike," says Scott.

Together, members of the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition work to support Farm Bill programs that provide incentives for ranchers and farmers to conserve habitat and, in appropriate instances, more efficiently use water. The group was a high-profile advocate for Farm Bill reauthorization and educated lawmakers and legislative staff in Washington D.C. about the value of the Conservation Title to western agriculture and natural resources.

### "PLUM-TICKLED" WITH PARTNER



Mark Anderson and his brothers are third-generation ranchers in southwest Wyoming. When TU's Nick and Hillary Walrath, based out of Green River, first approached Mark about helping him improve his diversions, he was unconvinced that his operations would benefit. But he wanted to see what TU could do, and he agreed to the project. For the next two years, Mark and his brothers worked alongside TU to upgrade their largest irrigation diversion to a more reliable, water-efficient and fish-friendly system. When the new system was finally running, Mark said he was "plum-tickled" with how it turned out. He immediately asked if TU would be interested in improving his other diversions.

The Walraths mentioned that TU was looking for more partners for landscape-scale projects and asked whether Mark knew of any neighbors who might be interested. A few weeks later, they showed up at his barn during one of the biggest blizzards in memory and found 15 ranchers from the area waiting to hear how TU could help with their diversions. Mark spoke eloquently about how TU had helped out on his ranch.

Now, thanks to Mark's testimony, the Walraths are loaded throughout summer and fall with projects that make the watershed friendlier for trout.

Rancher Mark Anderson looks over a new fish-friendly diversion on the Henry's Fork of the Green River.

PHOTO: HILLARY WALRATH



Founding members of the coalition's steering committee include:

**Trout Unlimited**  
**Family Farm Alliance**  
**The Nature Conservancy**  
**California Farm Bureau**  
**Environmental Defense Fund**  
**Public Lands Council**  
**Arizona Cattle Growers Association**  
**Wyoming Stock Growers Association**  
**Irrigation Association**

*"Trout Unlimited has been a partner in the truest sense to the Family Farm Alliance and our members. They work with our ranchers to implement on-the-ground solutions that benefit the environment and agriculture, and they are effective and trustworthy policy partners in Washington, D.C."*

—**DAN KEPPEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE**



## **FOLLOW-THROUGH IS EVERYTHING**

In 2005, TU built support for the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT)—a permanent fund to protect and enhance the state's rich legacy of wildlife habitat and natural resources. After helping pass the enabling legislation, TU then harnessed the WWNRT like no other group over the next decade to get conservation done—to the tune of more than \$20 million on the ground for more than 110 conservation projects. TU has won the WWNRT "Partner of the Year" award twice for outstanding project work.

*"From the beginning of the Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust program, we have had an outstanding relationship with the TU Wyoming Water and Habitat Program. They have been named as our 'Partner of the Year' twice and have emerged as one of the key partners throughout the entire state. The scale of influence on aquatic habitats is unparalleled, with work ranging from complete restoration of spawning habitats to massive reconstruction of major rivers. Perhaps more important, **TU has emerged as a 'go to' resource for landowners, conservation districts, and other agencies when it comes to river and wetland resources.** The WWNRT has dedicated \$22 million to projects led by Trout Unlimited, and river restoration has become the most prevalent type of work we do in the state."*

—**BOB BUDD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**WYOMING WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCE TRUST**





*“We have been proud to support Trout Unlimited’s Western Water and Habitat Program continuously since 2002. Modernizing western water law and policies while building working relationships with the agricultural producers —*

**TU’s audacious proposition** *— is what drives this smart, creative, and pragmatic staff. With its unique positioning, TU brings together its network of sportsmen and women, conservationists, visionary ranchers and farmers and committed funders — all who care about our rivers and habitat. TU leverages this network to craft groundbreaking policy and pragmatic solutions to what appear to others, intractable problems. From these conversations and friendships, sustainable conservation is made a reality.”*

**— PATSY ISHIYAMA, BOARD MEMBER, ISHIYAMA FOUNDATION**





# Pragmatic

Making a high-profile, public stand of opposition against a proposed dam, diversion, or other threat to habitat is a frequently deployed tactic in conservation work, and often rewarded with media attention.

Holding a principled stance is often necessary and praiseworthy, especially when it involves irreplaceable habitat or resources that cannot be compromised. However, rallying tactics alone are typically ineffective. Usually, there is no villain in the picture; just competing community needs and complex demands on resources that call for a more nuanced approach.

What's needed is clear-eyed assessment of each situation, a balancing of competing benefits and interests, and the willingness to push for finding pragmatic, common ground.

That's Trout Unlimited's sweet spot—working behind the scenes to find mutually beneficial ways to bring people together, break any impasse, and get things done in a pragmatic, effective manner.



## Ending the Upper Colorado water wars

For years, municipal water diversions had been sucking the life out of the Fraser River, a key tributary of the Colorado River. TU and local Grand County officials were locked in a bitter fight with Denver Water over its plan to pipe additional water to the Front Range. The impasse looked hopeless.

In 2014, Mely Whiting, TU's chief negotiator, persisted in helping TU broker a settlement that, among other things, pledged the parties to work together to protect and restore the watershed of the Upper Colorado River.

The agreement was widely hailed as a masterpiece of pragmatic conservation—one that found a middle ground to meet the needs of both Front Range municipalities and the river.

As part of the settlement, the parties launched Learning by Doing, a cooperative group dedicated to monitoring water conditions and completing river health projects. The inaugural project was at Fraser Flats, where TU, Denver Water, and others restored a degraded stretch of the Fraser by planting willows and providing better refuge pools and shade. The previously private stretch, about three-quarters of a mile long, is now open to the public.

**The results have been nothing short of spectacular.** Colorado Parks and Wildlife conducted a fish survey in October 2017, shortly after completion of the Fraser Flats project, and found a dramatic increase in the number and size of brown and rainbow trout in the stretch compared to previous surveys.

In May 2018, TU, Denver Water, and scores of other volunteers gathered at Fraser Flats to formally dedicate this restored stretch. Speeches were made, laughter rippled across the water, and ribbons were cut.

Then people went fishing.

This scene of cooperation between the giant water utility and local conservationists and stakeholders would have been inconceivable just a few years earlier.

The agreement also included an ambitious project to construct a new river channel around Windy Gap Reservoir, an on-channel reservoir that has degraded the Upper Colorado River's Gold Medal trout fishery. In 2016, TU received \$8 million from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help fund the Windy Gap bypass along with other projects downstream of the reservoir that will restore some 30 miles of the Upper Colorado.

These are legacy wins—the kind that secure a river's health far into the future.



TU volunteers brave the cold to plant willows along the Fraser River. ▶

PHOTO: TU





Temporary push-up diversion structures are ubiquitous on western streams and often unnecessarily block fish passage. TU works with ranchers and farmers on fish-friendly alternatives.  
PHOTO: SCOTT YATES

TU's Jeff Streeter: Finding a way to get to "yes" ▶



## Finding a way on the North Platte

In 2006, TU charged into Wyoming's Upper North Platte Valley, eager to convince ranchers that water leasing tools could benefit their operations while providing healthier flows for local rivers like the North Platte, a world-class wild trout fishery that's often dewatered late in the irrigation season.

Staff quickly learned, however, that one-size-fits-all solutions don't fit the state's varied geography and agricultural community. In some drainages, leasing tools and other water conservation measures, such as sprinklers, must be used carefully and aren't always a good operational or ecological fit. TU spent long hours working with Republican lawmakers and gaining support in some parts of the state to introduce water leasing legislation, but over multiple years and legislative sessions, the North Platte ranching community vociferously opposed the bill.

So, TU staff took a step back and reassessed. Where could we get a "yes" and begin building trust?

True to its homegrown business model, TU hired Jeff Streeter, a local outfitter trusted in both the fishing and ranching communities, to help bridge the gap between the two sides. He learned that aside from water leasing, agricultural producers were willing to work with us on other, low-hanging fishery needs, such

as removing barriers to fish passage; installing fencing to improve riparian management and health; and most important, restoring river channels.

Fast-forward a few years: TU's Wyoming channel restoration work has turned into one of the largest conservation efforts in the West. By partnering with local landowners, we helped design, fund, and construct approximately 16,000 linear feet of new Encampment River channel to overcome historical damage from logging and other practices. Furthermore, we've eliminated eight of the nine mainstem barriers to fish migration on the Encampment, with the last one slated for fish passage construction in fall 2019.

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We listened to livestock producers and found pragmatic ways to make progress by restoring and reconnecting myriad stream miles.

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The most striking part of our accomplishment is the overwhelming support we engendered from local conservation districts and agricultural partners.

We are still making the case for flexible water leasing tools. But instead of getting bogged down on that issue, we know that trust and timing is irreplaceable in conservation work. We listened to livestock producers and found pragmatic ways to make progress by restoring and reconnecting myriad stream miles, and we gained proven, practical community connections for continuing our work.

Finding a way to get to "yes" on conservation goals—that's the TU way.







## Putting the salmon back in the Salmon River

Salmon and steelhead in Idaho's **Salmon River** undertake some of the longest inland spawning migrations in the world—traveling 800 miles from the ocean and climbing 7,000 feet into the mountain streams where they spawn. It's a perilous migration, requiring fish to navigate eight mainstem dams and the associated predator-infested reservoirs and other man-made obstacles along the way. Adding insult to injury, many fish find degraded habitat and impaired hydrological conditions at the end of their epic journey.

TU is working in several upper Salmon River tributaries to reverse the last century of habitat degradation that resulted from logging, mining, and agricultural practices, to restore spawning and rearing streams and increase wild fish production potential in the basin.

One of those tributaries is the **Yankee Fork**, which was home to the largest dredge mining operation in the state of Idaho. Historically, it produced thousands

of salmon and steelhead. Today, there are far fewer fish, and the stream is confined by the massive dredge piles that line it and effectively lock it in place. As a result, high flows wash gravel and wood out of the river ecosystem, a problem that is exacerbated by a lack of riparian vegetation that would otherwise slow surface run-off and attenuate floods. These changes eliminated the side channel and backwater habitats that juvenile fish depend on for rearing and reduced pool habitat and spawning gravels that limit spawning success of adult fish.

For the past 10 years, TU has been rebuilding habitat in the Yankee Fork by reconstructing side channels, reconnecting floodplains, and installing log jams and pools to create cover for juvenile fish and spawning habitat for migrating adults. The results are impressive. Chinook salmon and steelhead trout have shown up to spawn in the restored stream sections almost immediately.

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TU is working to reverse the last century of habitat degradation, restore spawning and rearing streams, and increase wild fish populations in the Salmon River basin.

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The Yankee Fork of the Salmon River is a TU restoration priority.

PHOTO: JIM GREGORY



Upstream from Yankee Fork in tributaries like the **Lemhi River** and **Pahsimeroi River**, agricultural practices led to habitat problems such as irrigation withdrawals and stream channel and floodplain disturbances. TU worked with ranchers and farmers to make irrigation systems more efficient, to remove fish passage barriers, and to limit livestock impacts in streamside areas. So far, we have restored over five miles of stream channel and 55 acres of floodplain in these two watersheds, while reconnecting 11 miles of tributary streams.

All our restoration work in the upper Salmon River Basin is aimed at the same goal: to put the tributary “fish factories” that used to produce hundreds of thousands of smolts back online. Those fish still have hard work to do to get to the ocean and back (we also are working on that), but our projects ensure that at least their journeys begin and end in healthy streams.



A group of TU volunteers gathers after riparian restoration work on a Lemhi River tributary.

PHOTO: JERRY MYERS





# Innovative

▲  
Snorkeling rivers and streams can help TU biologists identify fish presence and numbers and habitat conditions both before and after restoration projects.

PHOTO: STAN BRADSHAW

Trout Unlimited's nonprofit culture has long encouraged the kind of informed risk-taking and experimentation that foster answers to complicated problems. Sometimes, an innovation or campaign doesn't work as planned, so we come up with another new idea. Without innovation, we are at the mercy of change, using yesterday's solutions to address tomorrow's environmental problems.

TU's Western Water and Habitat Program began with a charge to try new approaches. Because if we're not innovating, we're not doing our jobs.



## New ways to use water rights

In the Colorado River Basin, TU has brought together years of relationship-building with ranchers, water policy innovation, and deft project implementation to help build—from scratch—a basin-wide and landscape-scale drought response program: the **System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP)**.

The program was a pilot to gauge agricultural producer interest in building long-term voluntary and compensated approaches to reducing water demands. This conserved water would then be used to maintain reservoir levels and maintain critical system reliability.

Leveraging years of building trust in rural communities, **TU worked with ranchers and farmers to design flexible approaches for using less water;** facilitated innovative funding partnerships between federal agencies and municipal water users; and built political support for multiyear program authorization.

From 2015 to 2018, TU took the lead in enrolling ranchers from Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah in the program. Most of the projects conserved water through temporary, split- or late-season fallowing; that is, ranchers and farmers received compensation for irrigating during only a part of the potential irrigation and production season.

In Utah, six members of the Carbon Canal Company agreed to SCPP projects that conserved nearly 2,000 acre-feet of water and helped ensure healthier flows in the Price River. “Farming in the high desert in Eastern Utah means we need to be smart with how we use our water,” says Kevin Cotner, president of Carbon Canal and a TU partner. **“The program gave producers a tool to add flexibility in our water management.”**

The program benefits to producers and local native trout fisheries in the Upper Green River in Wyoming were especially remarkable because 28 ranches (about 15,000 acres of ranchland) and almost 14,000 acre-feet of water were enrolled in the program in 2018.

Multigenerational Wyoming rancher Chad Espenscheid says, “I look at my ranch operation every year, and demand management options in the Upper Colorado River Basin provide some much-needed flexibility for my water and cattle operations.”

The pilot effort has been paying off, and TU is preparing to buckle up. We are working to make the demand management concepts embodied in the SCPP central features of the multi-year Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan in the Upper and Lower Basins. As the river faces a potentially drier future, with the prospect of further declining levels in Lake Powell, this program underscores the enormous potential of innovative, market-driven solutions to water challenges.

TU is working to ensure that the Colorado River continues to meet the needs of diverse water users. Our near-term goal is to demonstrate the potential to reduce water demand and ensure flows can be shepherded across state lines, upstream to downstream, and to address river basin-scale water scarcity while improving streamflows for important trout fisheries.

*“In designing and installing a bevy of fish-passable irrigation diversion projects with TU in the Upper Green River Basin in Wyoming, we have accomplished win-win solutions for both the environment and the irrigator. TU’s passionate, expert personnel have been instrumental in seeing these projects through design, funding, and construction to ensure success.”*

— CHAD ESPENSCHIED, BUDD-ESPENSCHIED RANCHES AND P.E., ARROW LAND & WATER, LLC.





## Tackling a toxic legacy

Abandoned hard rock mines with their contaminated waste piles and leaking tunnels pose one of the most widespread, complicated—and least addressed—threats to rivers and watersheds in the West. Roughly 500,000 orphan hard rock mines pollute 40 percent of headwater streams with toxic metals such as zinc, cadmium, copper, and lead.

**TU's Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) program** works to address the technical, liability, and financial challenges to cleaning up legacy mine sites that leach poison into valuable watersheds and fisheries.

In collaboration with our federal partners, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, TU has completed successful reclamation projects in key watersheds. The Doctor Mine, Santiago Mine, and Lion Creek restoration projects in Colorado's Clear Creek watershed, for example, have removed

tailings and waste rock from waterways and restored downstream drinking water quality for communities and aquatic ecosystems. The technical expertise and funding provided by our partners, including industry leaders Freeport-McMoRan, Newmont Mining, and Tiffany & Co. Foundation, and our private donors are key to the success of these projects.

Cleaning up legacy mines can be complicated and expensive, but an equally daunting obstacle for many projects is the liability risk. TU continues to work with agency partners, such as the Division of Mining Reclamation and Safety in Colorado, to address liability concerns related to cleaning up abandoned hard rock mines. Together, we are working to advance Good Samaritan liability relief that will enable our organization, and others, to increase the pace and scale of abandoned mine clean-ups to restore additional western rivers and watersheds.



Mine runoff flows into the Animas River.  
PHOTO: JOSH DUPLICHIAN

Roughly 500,000 orphan hard rock mines pollute 40 percent of western headwater streams with toxic metals such as zinc, cadmium, copper, and lead.





Participating vineyard in  
TU water and wine efforts.  
PHOTO: JOSH DUPLICHIAN

## Water and Wine

One factor contributing to the decline of native coho and steelhead along California's Central and North Coast regions is dewatering of smaller streams during the dry season (late summer and early fall), a problem caused in part by relatively small diversions by farms, vineyards, small communities, and individual residences. The collective impact of these diversions is highest precisely when streamflow is lowest.

TU is meeting this challenge through an innovative approach: the **California Water Project**. This effort, which was launched as *Water and Wine*, has advanced salmon and steelhead recovery in the Russian River watershed and elsewhere for more than a decade. We partner with vineyards and other agricultural operators to develop innovative water supply solutions (such as off-channel storage ponds coupled with diversion

forbearance agreements) that secure water for growing crops while leaving more water instream for fish during the dry season. Other solutions include upgrading to more efficient diversion and irrigation infrastructure and removing fish passage barriers.

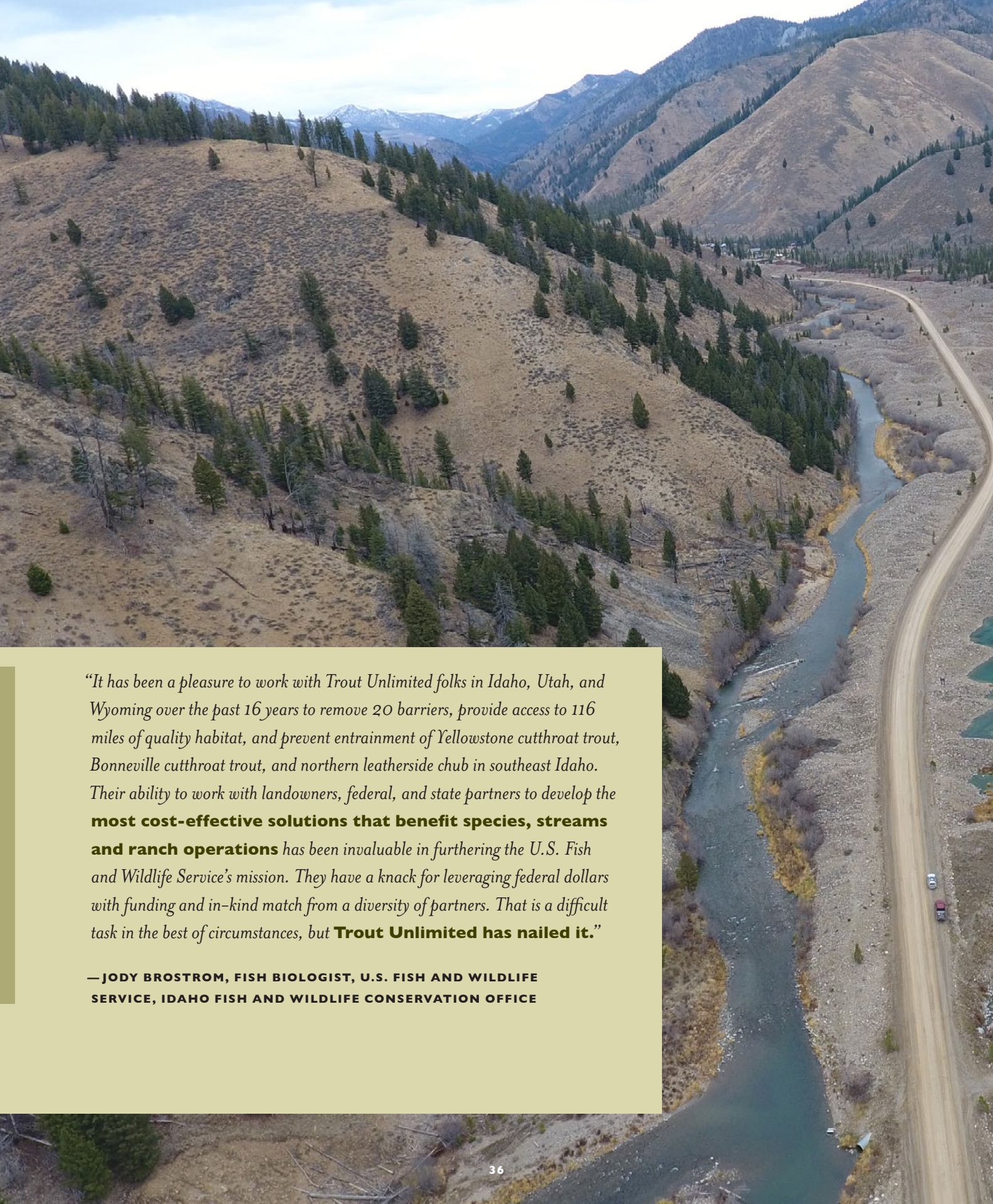
The initiative is bolstering streamflows and improving fish passage in anchor watersheds for coho and steelhead along the California coast, from the Eel River to Morro Bay, and inland to Deer Creek, a vital salmon spawning and rearing tributary to the Sacramento River. While the strategies and tactics we employ are not proprietary to TU, we were the first conservation entity in California to scale these approaches across multiple watersheds with a broad variety of landowners and land uses in key habitat.



Juvenile coho and steelhead in a California  
wine country spawning and rearing stream.

PHOTO: JOSH DUPLICHIAN



An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape. A river flows through a valley, bordered by steep, dry hillsides covered in sparse vegetation and scattered evergreen trees. A wide, light-colored dirt road runs parallel to the river on the right side of the frame. In the background, more mountains are visible under a cloudy sky.

*“It has been a pleasure to work with Trout Unlimited folks in Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming over the past 16 years to remove 20 barriers, provide access to 116 miles of quality habitat, and prevent entrainment of Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Bonneville cutthroat trout, and northern leatherside chub in southeast Idaho. Their ability to work with landowners, federal, and state partners to develop the **most cost-effective solutions that benefit species, streams and ranch operations** has been invaluable in furthering the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s mission. They have a knack for leveraging federal dollars with funding and in-kind match from a diversity of partners. That is a difficult task in the best of circumstances, but **Trout Unlimited has nailed it.**”*

**— JODY BROSTROM, FISH BIOLOGIST, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, IDAHO FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION OFFICE**



# Impactful

Measuring success in conservation work means proving a lasting, beneficial impact. Trout Unlimited members and supporters expect us to make a real difference. That means we protect and restore coldwater trout, salmon, and steelhead habitat in the West. It means we improve trout numbers by restoring habitat and streamflows.

TU staff have the satisfaction of knowing their work effects positive change. Our completed projects help further our mission of enhancing and protecting the West's best trout streams and rivers.

Thanks to our success these past 20 years, we are increasingly working on a larger landscape- and watershed-scale that guarantees the long-term impact and sustainability of our efforts.



## Going big in the Upper Columbia

In 2007, the Washington Rivers Conservancy merged with TU. Led by long-time director and past Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Lisa Pelly, the conservancy brought a history of collaborative project work in the Columbia River Basin and the determination to grow an already impressive water restoration portfolio.

With eight staff working in Wenatchee, Ellensburg, and Twisp, Lisa and her team have negotiated dozens of water leases and spearheaded some of the largest irrigation efficiency projects in the West.

Washington's **Yakima River basin** is home to a nationally recognized example of a landscape-scale, multi-stakeholder, watershed-based effort to restore flows and imperiled species while maintaining a thriving agricultural economy. TU and project partner Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) are the drivers behind the innovation and conservation project scale in the Yakima. In a single spring day in 2018, for example, 70 cement trucks arrived at the KRD's North Branch Canal lining project, one of TU's longstanding partnership projects, to begin lining 9,600 feet of the canal. It took another 280 truckloads to complete the project.

Other large TU successes, such as the \$12 million Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) project, set the bar for sizable undertakings like the North Branch Canal lining and the massive Barkley Project, which is set to break ground in the Methow Valley in 2019. The conservation impact of MVID yielded a 60 percent increase in late-season flows in the **Twisp River**; removal of a headgate and dam to improve salmon passage and habitat; and 84 new groundwater wells plus thousands of feet of pressurized pipe.

TU's partner in the Yakima River Basin, the Kittitas Reclamation District, releases water into a local tributary to maintain healthy flows during drought conditions.

PHOTO: GUENTHER CREATIVE



The Kittitas Reclamation District is lining miles of their conveyance system. This water conservation effort will result in more water left instream for salmon and steelhead.

PHOTO: JUSTIN BEZOLD





*The old way of dealing with difficult western water issues was for seasoned adversaries to fight out differences through long hard-fought battles. That's no longer the case in central Washington's Yakima River Basin.*

**Collaboration and innovation are now driving positive change** embodied by the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, and Trout Unlimited has been right in the middle of that movement. The Kittitas Reclamation District has a strong partnership with TU helping create a national model for restoring streams by using some existing infrastructure and modernizing other water delivery system parts to maximize efficiency and increase flows to key salmon and steelhead tributaries. Farms and fisheries are both a huge part of the Yakima future — thanks to TU for all the innovative work!

**URBAN EBERHART**  
**GENERAL MANAGER, KITTITAS**  
**RECLAMATION DISTRICT**



On **Big Creek**, an important Upper Yakima tributary, TU, with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, helped farmer Dave Lund get a water lease in place that enhanced flows in Big Creek. The next year, Lund and five other farmers in the Big Creek Water Users Association entered into a 60-month lease agreement for Big Creek late season flow enhancement.

In the **Wenatchee Basin**, TU staff put together an impressive array of partners and a \$3.6 million budget to restore flows on 200 miles of degraded rivers and streams. One project boosted flows by 15 cubic feet per second in the lower 7.5 miles of the Wenatchee River—an increase of 5 percent during low-flow periods—and improved 15 miles of riparian vegetation.

The list of big projects goes on. These are but a few examples of TU's Upper Columbia River impact.



## Dam removal

Over the past decade, dam removal has moved closer to mainstream acceptance as a legitimate ecological and economic alternative to rebuilding or replacing aging western irrigation and hydroelectric infrastructure. Hundreds of aging, obsolete dams across the West loom as huge obstacles for trout trying to reach critical spawning and rearing habitat or escape wildfire or other pressures.

TU has replaced many small irrigation dams and diversion structures over the last two decades. We have the design, fundraising, and construction expertise and a business model primed to take on large-scale dam removal projects. Such projects require a local presence and the ability to juggle multiple stakeholder needs and to build consensus. Momentum for western dam removal projects also requires new long-term funding and commitments. Funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Resources Legacy Fund “Open Rivers Fund” has fueled TU’s design of regional dam removal strategies, and we expect to complete large dam removal restoration projects in the next five years. Some of the upcoming projects involve multi-phase and multi-structure efforts, including the Klamath River (OR), Rattlesnake Creek (MT), and the Weber River (UT).



TU is not opposed to all dams; they often provide multiple benefits. Obsolete dams, however, offer few benefits and inflict serious, long-term environmental damage. The **Spread Creek Dam** was an obsolete, crumbling irrigation diversion dam near Jackson, Wyoming. In 2010, TU led a partnership that included Grand Teton National Park to remove the 90-foot long, 15-foot high dam and made channel improvements. Now, 50 miles of spawning and rearing habitat upstream of the dam site has been once again reconnected for migrating Snake River fine-spotted cutthroat trout.

Removal of the Spread Creek Dam near Moran, WY in 2010. PHOTOS: SCOTT YATES



**BEFORE** looking upstream



**AFTER** looking downstream



## Resurrecting the Klamath: restoring a legendary salmon and steelhead fishery



The coastal steelhead is a Pacific Northwest icon.

TU was a lead negotiator and signatory to the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement under which Klamath River Renewal Corporation will be removing four obsolete dams currently owned by PacifiCorp on the Klamath River. The dams cut off salmon and steelhead access to more than 400 miles of upstream rivers, including spring-fed climate refugia in the shadow of Crater Lake. They also have a severe impact on water quality, contributing to annual closures of the river below the dams to avoid human contact with toxic algae.

The project is scheduled to start in 2021, and will be the largest and most important dam removal effort in the country. Keeping it on track is one of TU's highest national priorities. But TU's commitment is not just about dam removal. **We are investing on both sides of the California and Oregon border to improve water quality and streamflow for the species and people already there.** This will prepare the basin for the return of salmon and steelhead.

For example, our restoration work in the Upper Klamath Basin has invested more than \$20 million in the last decade to restore critical tributaries, and much of this money has been invested in the local economy as on-farm infrastructure improvements and the hiring of local contractors. TU has permanently dedicated more than 30 cubic feet per second of senior water rights to instream flow; reconnected over 150 miles of stream habitat; removed myriad dams and undersized culverts; screened major irrigation diversions to protect juvenile fish; and completed almost all the restoration actions called for in the recovery plan for endangered bull trout. This work also supports a world-class redband trout fishery.

TU will continue working with tribal, industry, agricultural, and conservation partners to accomplish our vision.

*"[TU's] vision is for the Klamath to be a model for other western river-based communities, a place where people have come together, in mutual respect, and built a bright future together. The Klamath is a remote place with some of the most unique natural resources in the world ... it's a place where we still have opportunity to realize a truly integrated model of living sustainably in a watershed with limited water resources, while recovering our fisheries and local economies."*

—TU CALIFORNIA PROGRAM DIRECTOR BRIAN JOHNSON  
(From interview in *Water Deeply*)





## Water policy powerhouse

Over the last 20 years, TU's water policy team has exerted an outsized influence on western water law. By being a strong and grounded voice for river flows, TU has become a highly respected participant in state legislation. Our expertise has shaped state water plans, influenced legislative bodies, and made water right transfers an integral component of 21st-century water management.

10 years. TU then moved forward with agricultural partners to put the law to use in ways that not only protect native trout fisheries, but also add flexibility for agricultural producers. In winter 2019, the Utah legislature, with unanimous support from the House and Senate, approved a bill that made water leasing for native trout benefits a permanent tool.

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We have made water right transfers an integral component of 21st-century water management.

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In **Montana**, TU earned four favorable, landmark Supreme Court rulings by building a powerful agricultural-conservation coalition to defend shared interests. TU and the coalition worked to close entire basins to new appropriations, to create new streamflow protection laws, to transform statewide groundwater management, and to open infrastructure funding for river restoration.

In 2008, TU drafted and led efforts to pass a Water Leasing Bill in **Utah** that was approved as a pilot for

In some cases, TU has had to take a stand and litigate to protect water and streamflows. In **Colorado**, long-time TU staffer Drew Peternell led efforts to protect flows in the legendary stretch of the Gunnison River that flows through Black Canyon. With Drew's guiding hand and litigation expertise, TU challenged a 2003 federal agreement with the State of Colorado directing the Department of Interior to abandon federal rights for seasonal streamflows to benefit the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

PHOTO: PAUL BURNETT





A federal judge sided with TU and our conservation partners in 2006, and a multi-party, long-term settlement agreement to protect the canyon flows forever was signed two years later. Meanwhile, local TU member Marshall Pendergrass and staff helped the National Park Service and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation implement the agreement to bring about a multitude of river-health benefits. The New York Times editorial board said without the efforts of TU and partners, the Black Canyon would have been left with nothing but “dramatic cliffs with a dying river between.”

Although western water law is distinctly state-based, TU also changed federal law to benefit both agriculture and rivers. For the Farm Bill, TU promoted investments in irrigation infrastructure upgrades to combat water scarcity, which brings more Farm Bill dollars to western producers by supporting basin-scale projects and pro-conservation outcomes.

*“What sets TU apart from other groups working in the policy sphere is that TU leverages our place-based work and strong relationships into political muscle. This political muscle arises from the authentic, aligned interests of agriculture and conservation that TU’s project work highlights and promotes.”*

— LAURA ZIEMER, TU WWHP SENIOR COUNSEL AND WATER POLICY ADVISER

Within the federal Bureau of Reclamation, TU promoted investment in watershed restoration and in drought resilience. The result was passage of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act that prioritized infrastructure projects that carry watershed health benefits. Another federal law TU helped pass is the Water Resources and Development Act, which boosted investment in Army Corps of Engineers projects to restore natural riverine processes and riparian habitat.

TU’s stature and engagement in the federal appropriations process has helped bring millions of federal dollars to leverage private donations—many times over—to restore streams, improve flows, and protect habitat.



## ◀ A SUCCESSFUL PILOT

TU began the Weber River Program nearly a decade ago and helped pass Utah’s first water leasing bill in 2008. Even so, acquiring water from willing landowners remained difficult. So TU continued its efforts and after working with a large irrigation district to retrofit an existing mainstem dam with fish passage, our well-earned trust allowed us to negotiate a 10-year agreement in 2016 to complete our first water lease. We’ve continued a litany of habitat restoration efforts and are now in discussions about the nearby Ogden River, Weber River tributaries like Chalk Creek, and Fish Creek in the Price River Basin to enter into water leasing agreements. Soon, we expect to expand the water transaction program to other parts of the state.

TU’s Laura Ziemer measuring flow  
on a Madison River tributary.

PHOTO: TU



## Going cutthroat wild at Bear Lake

In 2010, native Bonneville cutthroat trout swam up Fish Haven Creek in mass to spawn for the first time in 60 years. This was an historic moment in the remarkable recovery of Bear Lake's wild trout fishery—and TU was a key player.

Irrigation diversions and other fish-passage barriers had prevented most wild cutthroats from reaching traditional spawning beds in tributaries of the massive lake straddling Utah and Idaho. Wild fish made up roughly 10 percent of cutthroat trout caught in annual lake netting surveys in the early 2000s. TU and our partners began an ambitious effort to improve passage and survival for native and wild cutthroat trout in Bear Lake's tributary streams.



Over several years, the Bear Lake team installed 15 fish screens in irrigation canals, replaced five culverts, built three fish ladders, and completed two habitat restoration projects on lake tributaries. Since TU replaced an impassable culvert at the mouth of the Fish Haven Creek with a fish-friendly structure, the creek has averaged more than 78 cutthroat trout spawning beds per year.

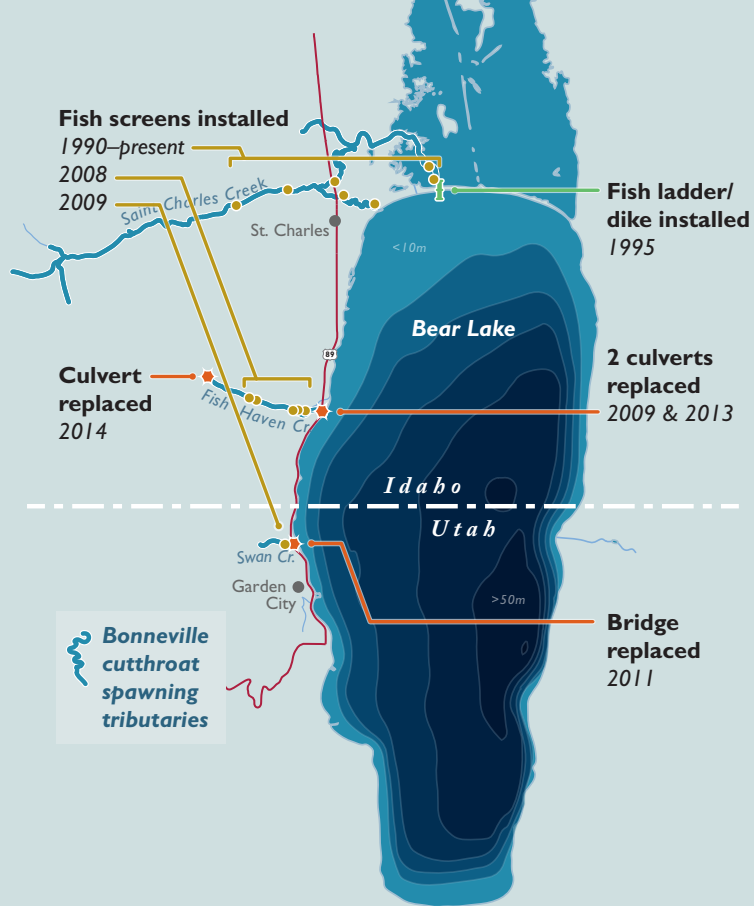
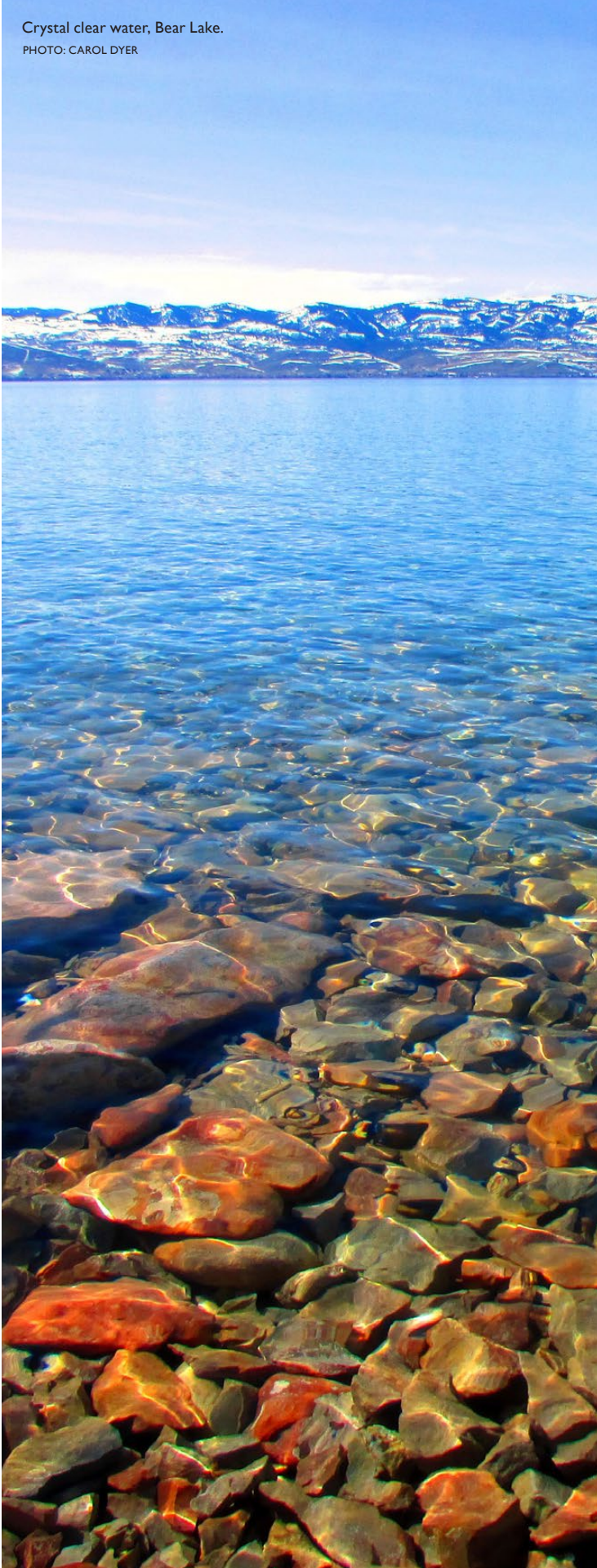
By 2014 through 2017, nearly 70 percent of all netted fish were wild while overall net catch rates have remained the same or increased. These days, anglers report about eight out of 10 cutthroat trout caught in the lake are wild (distinguished by having no fin clip).

For the first time in decades, Bear Lake's tributaries are fulfilling their role in the trout life cycle. TU continues to look for ways to further increase wild trout populations at Bear Lake by improving streams flows and fish survival in the tributaries.





Crystal clear water, Bear Lake.  
PHOTO: CAROL DYER



**Bear Lake Netting Results**







*“My work for TU started where my multiple careers converged at my local river. As an Air Force engineer, I managed environmental cleanup projects at bases across the country. I put that life on hold when Montana waters beckoned, and I built a small outfitting business focused on wild trout in the Clark Fork Basin around Missoula. Now I’m lucky enough to employ my skill sets while restoring the river I call home.”*

— CASEY HACKATHORN





# Experienced

There's no substitute for experience. The Western Water and Habitat Program's talented staff of biologists, project managers, and water and legislative policy experts represent decades of experience in the field and in the halls of power. That depth of knowledge means we know how to get things done. Our success comes from years of veteran staffers cultivating a deep network of relationships in private and public spheres. Here are just a few of their stories.



**Steve Moyer**, TU's vice president of government affairs, has been instrumental in improving fish habitat—and fishing—all over America. For more than 25 years, he's developed a reputation as one of the calmest and coolest voices for supporting trout, salmon, and clean water. His impressive list of accomplishments ranges from protecting large western landscapes to removing dams that have blocked salmon migration for generations, to the incorporation of strong conservation language in important legislation, such as the Farm Bill. As TU's reliance on federal funding grows for myriad water and habitat projects across the West, having someone with Steve's experience to navigate layers of federal bureaucracy is critical. It's no wonder Steve was elected to the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame's 2014 class for career achievement.



What do you get when you hire two engineers—one an Air Force graduate with a history of managing military base environmental clean-ups (**Casey Hackathorn**);

the other, a Montana native (**Paul Parson**) who grew up on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Reservation—and then add **Rob Roberts**, a Peace Corps volunteer and psychology major with a propensity for paragliding and river and lake scuba diving? The answer:

a three-headed restoration giant based out of TU's Missoula office. Together, Casey, Paul, and Rob are a conservation powerhouse that has produced a lot of river restoration along the Clark Fork River in western Montana. They've generated newfound hope to recover one of the great western trout rivers. Whether their work involves troubleshooting with a Deer Lodge rancher or getting results on abandoned mine reclamation on Ninemile Creek, for over a decade these guys have been right in the middle of the conversation.



Steve Moyer (left) taking TU staff and Wyoming and Utah ranchers and farmers around the Hill in Washington D.C. to talk about western water and habitat issues.



Southern Oregon native **Chrysten Lambert** brings an incredible mix of local, state, regional, national, and global experience to directing TU's Oregon Program, which is home to diverse water and restoration staff and activities. She graduated from the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment, and helped manage her family's global fruit processing business where she worked with farmers in the United States, Argentina, and China to develop organic supply chains. Chrysten also founded the Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust (KBRT) and was presidentially appointed chair of the Klamath River Compact Commission in 2015. After helping merge the KBRT with TU in 2014, Chrysten helped lead our high-profile and vital collaborative work with tribal, ranch, water user, and resource agency partners to remove four large mainstem Klamath River dams and develop long-term and sustainable water solutions for this critical salmon and steelhead watershed. She is driven by innovation, and her family history in cattle and sheep ranching in the upper Klamath inspires her efforts to bring benefits to fisheries and agricultural producers alike.



TU's programmatic emphasis on partnerships and approach to positive dialogue in western communities attracts a wellspring of conservation talent. One of the best examples is **Kira Finkler**, who oversees our Idaho water efforts. She spent the bulk of her career in Washington D.C., working for TU and in senior federal government positions. As U.S. Senate Committee Counsel, she drafted legislation that created the Cooperative Watershed Management Program, a tool and funding source that she helped TU access in the Idaho field through multiple successful grant applications. Her stint as Deputy Commissioner at the Bureau of Reclamation gave her invaluable experience tracking federal



budget issues and basin-wide collaborative approaches to water supply challenges—skills that resonate with TU priorities in large and complex river basins, such as the Boise and Snake.

When TU launched the South Fork Snake Home Rivers Initiative in 2001, we needed to find a superstar to run it. Our Idaho Water Project was a new program, and the South Fork Snake project would be just our third watershed restoration project in the country—and the first one in the West. We needed someone who could talk and understand farming, but who also had a deep appreciation for the river and its fish. Most important, we wanted someone with solid connections in the local community. Within minutes of meeting him, we knew **Matt Woodard** was our guy. Matt was a former Upper Snake River Cutthroats Chapter President, he owned and operated a family farm on the South Fork Bench, and he worked as an equipment mechanic for a local John Deere dealer. Rumor had it, he was a sniper fishing out of a drift boat (which turned out to be true). It didn't take long for Matt to build the South Fork Snake project into a great success. In 2011, after he had reconnected and restored close to 100 miles of South Fork tributaries for native cutthroat, we transitioned Matt to the nearby Blackfoot Watershed to replicate the feat.





**Paul Burnett** grew up in southwest Idaho and understands the West. He was a long-serving fisheries biologist for the State of Utah who worked in the field and in scientific conference rooms with some of the region's top fisheries restoration experts. Paul was the perfect person to take over TU's Weber River Program—a classic example of a mixed urban-rural western landscape replete with restoration potential. Since 2010, Paul has brought a combination of systematic assessment-based priority setting and strategic opportunism to the Weber program, one of Utah's largest trout restoration efforts. He blends TU staff resources, policy, and his grassroots chops when collaborating with ranches and municipal, state, and federal resource agency partners. A great example is when he worked with the South Weber Irrigation District to install fish passage on a large mainstem dam and then deftly transitioned that project into a water leasing deal, one of the first of its kind in Utah. Paul now oversees TU expansion into additional Utah waters and increasingly finds himself leading water policy discussions at the legislature.



water use efficiency projects in the West. With an expected completion date of 2020, his projects (which include the Pioneer Pump Exchange Project on the Wenatchee River and three system designs on the Methow River and tributaries such as the Chewuch) will have totaled more than \$30 million of infrastructure investment, modernized and automated irrigation systems for ranchers and farmers, and significant water flows permanently restored for chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. In 2019, Aaron will transition from Washington to Lewiston, Idaho, to help TU build a long-term Lower Snake River Program and develop a restoration vision for legendary steelhead rivers like the Clearwater and Grand Ronde.

The San Francisco Bay Area is **MaryAnn King's** backyard.

Unlike many of her Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain colleagues who grew up or worked around pristine high country, MaryAnn instead hopped fences to play in a creek within a trapezoidal flood control channel. But her proximity to both altered watersheds and stunning coastline provided an uncommon intersection of natural resource issues and opportunity, which profoundly influenced MaryAnn's drive to find solutions that meet fishery and coastal community needs. She combined water trust and instream flow policy research with field-crew data collection experience at UC Berkeley, which provided a foundation for her TU efforts to identify, prioritize, and implement some of northern California's highest profile streamflow restoration projects.



**Aaron Penrose** grew up trying to land wild rainbow and brown trout in the small streams and the big river in south central Colorado's Arkansas River Basin. Now he spends his free time chasing an iconic Pacific Northwest ghost—steelhead. For TU, Aaron dedicates his time to restoring habitat for pacific salmon, steelhead, and bull trout—all listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. As TU's Senior Project Manager in the Upper Columbia, Aaron's determination has him working on some of the largest







Several local experts, such as **Patrick Byorth** from Montana, have transitioned from venerable state fisheries jobs to join TU as staff.

Pat spent nearly 17 years as a fisheries biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, where he worked on southwest Montana's fabled trout streams including the Madison, Big Hole, Gallatin, and Yellowstone Rivers and their tributaries. After earning a mid-life law degree, Pat came to TU's Western Water and Habitat Program, where he mixes his knowledge of fish biology with water law to restore instream flows, reform outdated policies, and improve habitat for healthier trout fisheries. Pat grew up exploring waters such as the Stillwater River near Billings where his family owned a cabin and riverfront property. He brings a perfect combination of local perspective and professional history that gives TU an experienced and trusted voice in Montana.

**Cory Toye's** father, Pete, had moved from Philadelphia to the West looking for opportunity in the mid-1970s and landed in Meeteetse, Wyoming. He cut his western teeth as a local ranch hand, married, and raised his son in Laramie, where Cory ended up attending the University of Wyoming to earn his undergraduate and law degrees. One of Cory's first jobs for TU took him full circle, back near where he was born, to build out a multi-year restoration program on the Greybull River near Meeteetse. Cory oversaw construction on a culvert removal and bridge installation to restore over 40 miles of spawning habitat access for native Yellowstone cutthroat trout on the Francs Fork of the Greybull—one of the last low-elevation ranchland native cutthroat trout fisheries in the West. A decade later, Cory has added tenfold to the Greybull conservation project portfolio and overseen TU growth in each major trout drainage in the state with locally based staff working in the North Platte, Upper Snake, Green, and Bighorn river basins.





**Lisa Pelly** is a 5th-generation Washington native and has been a trailblazer on water issues in the Pacific Northwest for over two decades. A long-time member and chair of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission in the 1990s, she is a recognized expert on complex water resource issues. She built the Washington Rivers Conservancy, including negotiating the state's first permanent water acquisition in the Walla Walla River Basin, before merging with Trout Unlimited in 2007. Over the past decade, she and her TU Washington Water Program Team have raised over \$70 million dollars to acquire water and design, fund, and construct some of the large infrastructure modernization and water efficiency projects in the



West. This work benefits some of the region's most at risk ESA-listed salmon, steelhead and Bull Trout in the Yakima, Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan sub-basins. True to TU's model, she's helped spearhead high-profile and non-traditional partnerships with members of the agricultural community like Kittitas Reclamation District to benefit farms and fish.

The conservation community can be a tight-knit group, and a few of the partners with whom we work have uber-effective staffers just like we do. Sometimes, we are lucky enough to entice one of those conservation heroes to join *our* team. Such was the case with **Jim DeRito**, who spent several years as Research and Restoration Director at the Henry's Fork Foundation, one of our most trusted



Western Water and Habitat Program  
meeting, Portland, OR, 2018.

PHOTO: BRETT PRETTYMAN



partners in southeast Idaho. When he and his family decided to relocate in 2012, we jumped at the opportunity for him to run our Bear River Restoration Program. Jim holds a Masters of Science degree in Fisheries Management, which he earned thanks to his pioneering research into Yellowstone cutthroat trout and rainbow trout hybridization in the Yellowstone River. Jim brings a blend of several virtues highlighted in this report: pragmatism, innovation, and experience. We also appreciate that he's levelheaded, unflappable, and quick-witted.

**Laura Ziemer** is a western water policy powerhouse with unmatched zeal for hard-earned and practical solutions to complex natural resource issues. She built her policy chops over a professional career that evolved from building a state water program in Montana to leading an increasingly bigger, stronger legal and policy wing for our western water and habitat



work. Laura was the first programmatic Western Water Project hire based out of Bozeman in 1998. She led transformational work such as solidifying and making Montana's pioneering water leasing statute permanent. She developed partnerships with large irrigation districts on the Sun River that reinvented dam and water storage modeling and management and restored critical winter and late-summer flows. Her work has helped set TU's water policy priorities and agenda. In 2014, Laura transitioned to Senior Legal Counsel and Water Policy Advisor for the Western Water and Habitat Program. She has led TU's participation in the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition and designed innovative strategies on key federal legislation, such as the Farm Bill and Water Resources Development Act. Agricultural industry leaders, legislators, and natural resource agency staff see her as their go-to partner, which is the prime reason TU is often asked to testify on key western water and habitat issues.







In the rural West, trust is a precious commodity. To build lasting trust, you stand by your words and follow through on obligations—especially when challenges arise. You listen more and talk less. You show up, again and again.

TU hires staff who live and work in the rural communities where we're doing projects. That helps us earn the trust of local farmers and ranchers—we're not outsiders. In many rural areas, our local grassroots chapters have been doing conservation projects for decades. TU is known and trusted—and that makes us effective partners.

Because we've earned the trust of local ranch partners, we have become effective advocates for our projects and programs in critical power centers, from D.C. to state legislatures, and with industry organizations. We have attracted the support of major foundations because they know we back up our vision and ideas with on-the-ground success.

Here's what some of our friends and partners say about trusting TU to make a difference.

*"In my experience, TU has proven to be a trusted partner that grounds its Western Water and Habitat Program in sound science and strong grass-root collaborations. With projects based on these fundamental building blocks, TU continues to demonstrate there are plenty of opportunities to protect and restore important fisheries habitat while improving how we manage water for a sustainable future."*

— MIKE CONNOR  
PARTNER AT WILMERHALE,  
FORMER COMMISSIONER, U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION



“I have had the privilege of working with TU’s Western Water and Habitat Program for over 10 years. It is the most effective program in the West to protect and restore critical native and sport fisheries in the region. TU is absolutely masterful at bringing every source of funding possible to its projects. That’s great news for funders who get terrific leverage for their investments and the knowledge that river systems across the West get better. TU has made friends and supporters of ranchers, farmers, and states, all critical allies for its work. In these contentious days, TU’s work stands out as a model of how to get things right. That’s good politics and good conservation.”

—Michael Scott, Senior Advisor, Resources Legacy Fund

“This was kind of a handshake [deal]...and Trout Unlimited stuck to their word. I’ve enjoyed working with TU and can appreciate what they are trying to do... to help save the fish, and also save the farms.”

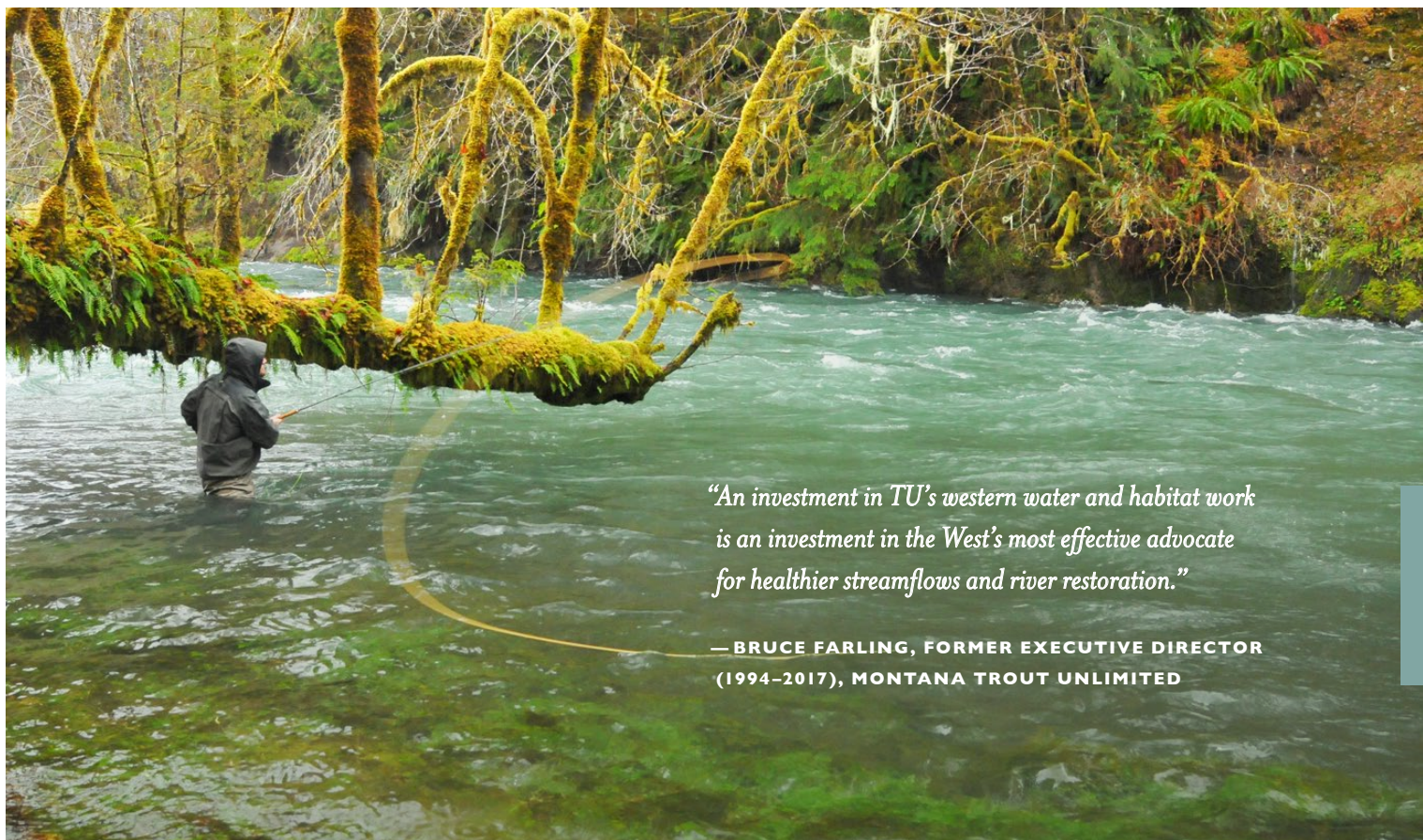
—B.J. Burns, Bianchi Flowers Farm, California

“TU’s Clark Fork Program has been a cornerstone partner for Forest Service Northern Region efforts to restore habitat, protect water, and conserve fish. They always follow the solution path and have helped drive innovation on myriad projects, including abandoned mine site reclamation, road inventories, decommissioning, design and relocation, fish passage, fish screens, grazing improvements, and flow restoration. Forest Service staffing and funding for aquatic conservation has been reduced in recent years, and TU’s presence, expertise, and partnership proclivities have all helped the Forest Service in Montana remain one of the national leaders in conservation outcomes. We are grateful for TU contributions and look forward to what our collaborative efforts will produce over the next 20 years.”

—Scott Spaulding, Northern Region (RI) Fisheries Program Manager, U.S. Forest Service

An angler spey casts on the Wynoochee River, WA.

PHOTO: LUKE KELLY



*“An investment in TU’s western water and habitat work is an investment in the West’s most effective advocate for healthier streamflows and river restoration.”*

— BRUCE FARLING, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
(1994–2017), MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED



“We were looking for their ulterior motive, to be quite honest. We were like, ‘What is it that you really want from us?’ And really, their honor came [through], is what we found out. We’re all in this watershed together. And I think that’s the important lesson.”

—Meicka Meissner, Anders Ranch, Almont, CO

“Trout Unlimited works collaboratively with rural communities; farmers and ranchers; tribes; business leaders; policy-makers; and sportsmen and women to advance innovative conservation solutions that conserve fish and wildlife habitat and sustain the Western way of life. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation is proud to support their work.”

—Andrea Keller Helsel, Western Conservation Program Officer, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

“Not all conservation groups work well with tribes. But TU does—and they’re one of our most trusted partners. Here in the Klamath Basin, TU knows how to find common ground toward basin-wide solutions that will bring salmon back. They drive on-the-ground projects and policy in a way that’s improving water quality, restoring habitat, and improving river flows at a meaningful scale. TU’s approach really works.”

—Amy Cordalis, General Counsel, Yurok Tribe



Kids from the farming and ranching community sample invertebrates in the San Luis Valley.

PHOTO: KEVIN TERRY

*“When TU started working in the Rio Grande and Conejos Rivers, some farmers, ranchers and water users were nervous. In time, it became clear that TU intended to work with us. TU’s program in the San Luis Valley benefits farmers and ranchers while also improving streams flows to benefit fish populations. We are glad to have TU as a partner.”*

—NATHAN COOMBS, MANAGER, CONEJOS WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT



# Thank You

Trout Unlimited greatly appreciates the incredible funding from our supporters. While the entire list would be too long for this report, the funders listed below have provided multi-year support and helped TU build western program capacity, develop a broad vision for water and habitat restoration, and complete a diverse array of on-the-ground projects.

There are countless other great partners throughout the West. Ranch and farm landowners have been generous with in-kind support including time and equipment to help leverage private and resource agency dollars. Individual tribal, federal, state, and university biologists have patiently worked with TU staff to identify, prioritize, design, fund, and construct myriad restoration projects. Local conservation districts have helped convene landowner groups in priority watersheds. School districts have helped TU tag and track fish and monitor habitat while ensuring kids experience the outdoors. This remarkable combination of local, state, regional, and national support is making western trout fisheries more adaptive and resilient.

## FOUNDATIONS

William and Flora  
Hewlett Foundation  
Ishiyama Foundation  
Walton Family  
Foundation  
David and Lucille  
Packard Foundation  
George B. Storer  
Foundation  
S.D. Bechtel, Jr.  
Foundation  
The Water Foundation  
Gates Family Foundation  
Turner Foundation  
LOR Foundation  
National Fish and  
Wildlife Foundation  
Resources Legacy Fund  
The Campbell  
Foundation  
Murdock Charitable  
Trust  
Meyer Memorial Trust  
Brainerd Foundation  
Bullitt Foundation  
The Page Foundation

Lawrence T. and Janet  
T. Dee Foundation  
Eccles Foundation  
Tiffany & Co.  
Foundation  
Bonneville  
Environmental  
Foundation  
Wiegiers Family  
Foundation  
Harrington Family  
Foundation

## FEDERAL AGENCIES

U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Bureau of  
Reclamation  
U.S. Bureau of Land  
Management  
U.S. Fish &  
Wildlife Service  
National Oceanic  
and Atmospheric  
Administration  
National Park Service  
Nature Resources  
Conservation Service  
Bonneville Power  
Administration

## TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Confederated Tribes  
and Bands of the  
Yakama Nation  
Confederated Tribes of  
the Colville Reservation  
Confederated Tribes  
of the Umatilla  
Indian Reservation  
Nez Perce Tribe  
The Shoshone-Bannock  
Tribes of Fort Hall  
The Klamath Tribes

## STATE AGENCIES

Wyoming Wildlife and  
Natural Resources Trust  
Wyoming Game and  
Fish Department  
Washington Department  
of Ecology  
Washington Recreation  
and Conservation Office  
Washington Salmon  
Recovery Board  
Oregon Department  
of Fish and Wildlife  
Oregon Watershed  
Enhancement Board

California Department  
of Fish and Wildlife  
California Wildlife  
Conservation Board  
California State  
Coastal Conservancy  
California State Water  
Resources Control Board  
Utah Division of  
Water Quality  
Utah Division of  
Wildlife Resources  
Montana Natural  
Resource Damage  
Program  
Montana Department  
of Natural Resources  
and Conservation  
Montana Future  
Fisheries Program

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Priest Rapids Habitat  
Coordinating Committee,  
Public Utility District  
No. 2 of Grant County

Habitat Conservation  
Tributary Fund, Douglas  
and Chelan Public  
Utility Districts

## INDIVIDUALS

Jim Finley  
Gordon and Dona  
Crawford  
Ken Olivier and  
Angela Nomellini  
Larry and Pamela  
Garlick  
Trout Unlimited  
Coldwater Conservation  
Fund Board  
Pitch and Cathie Johnson  
David and Alena Goeddel  
James and Valerie Root  
Tom Shriber

## CORPORATIONS

Freeport-McMoRan  
Newmont Goldcorp  
Kinross Gold  
Simplot  
Bayer



## Continuing our legacy

The Klamath, Yakima, and Colorado river basins exemplify where TU is working with a range of water use and supply alternatives, including expensive options such as dam removal; expanded or new storage; water market creation and development; and demand management.

But the large-scale nature of the water and habitat problems and potential solutions still facing the Western region requires much greater involvement from a broader group of stakeholders.

Historical practices will need to change and adapt to long-term drought, and the entire West is feeling pinched by its effects, especially with politics that constantly change and confound the issue. Fortunately, TU is well positioned to lead the necessary changes so that the West's fisheries are not left high and dry.

Complexities remain, but TU's program efforts are designed to navigate difficult waters.

TU's unique approach to conservation commits to place and then relies on patience, local capacity, and flexible solutions.

Our conservation victories aren't pyrrhic. Rather, our conservation signature is durable, community-supported change that's worth the effort. We continue learning by doing and emphasize the time-honored approach of patience, persistence, and the integrity of follow-through on commitments.

As the West gets hotter and its droughts longer, innovation and constant adaptation will be critical. TU is beginning to convene with key players across multiple, basin-scale geographies. With our years of experience and depth of relationships, we meet stakeholders where they are and jointly move forward with solutions that meet local needs and benefit broader policy. No other conservation group has a business plan better positioned to help navigate the dizzying mix of climate, water, and ecological politics associated with western water issues.

TU's resolve to plan, grow, and be ready for the challenges ahead has never been greater.

**TU Adopt-A-Trout Day** in Dubois, WY: schoolkids help track fish movements and learn about bugs and stream habitat.  
PHOTO: RUSS SCHNITZER







PHOTO: WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

**WESTERN WATER AND HABITAT PROJECT STAFF**

**CALIFORNIA**

**Carmel Valley**

Sam Davidson  
Tim Frahm

**Emeryville**

Ben Cook  
Brian Johnson  
Caitlin Boise  
Krysia Skorko  
Mary Ann King  
Matt Clifford  
Mia van Docto  
Natalie Stauffer-Olsen

**Fort Bragg**

Anna Halligan  
Elizabeth Mackey

**Mt. Shasta City**

Rene Henery

**Truckee**

Jessica Strickland  
Krysia Skorko  
Sam Sedillo  
Tiffanee Hutton

**COLORADO**

**Boulder**

David Stilwell

**Grand Junction**

Richard Van Gytenbeek

**Gunnison**

Jesse Kruthaupt

**Littleton**

Lauren Duncan

**Meeker**

Aaron True

**Montrose**

Cary Denison

**Pagosa Springs**

Mely Whiting

**Salida**

Drew Peternell  
Jason Willis

**Steamboat Springs**

Brian Hodge  
Kaitlyn Vaux

**IDAHO**

**Boise**

Kira Finkler  
Peter Anderson

**Hailey**

Cathy Tyson  
Keri York

**Idaho Falls**

Matthew Woodard

**Mackay**

Cassie Wood

**Salmon**

Matt Green

**MONTANA**

**Bozeman**

Jeffrey Dunn  
Laura Ziemer  
Meg Casey  
Pat Byorth  
Scott Yates

**Clinton**

Casey Hackathorn

**Helena**

Stan Bradshaw

**Missoula**

Catherine Redfern  
Christine Brissette  
Paul Parson  
Rob Roberts  
Teresa Scanlon  
Warren Colyer

**NEW MEXICO**

**Santa Fe**

Toner Mitchell

**OREGON**

**Adrian**

Nicole Sullivan

**Ashland**

Chrysten Lambert

**Baker City**

Levi Old

**Grants Pass**

Dawn Elzy

**Klamath Falls**

Charlie Erdman  
Nell Scott  
Tony LaGraca

**Medford**

Jay Doino

**Nehalem**

Sarah Zwiessler

**Salem**

Chandra Ferrari

**UTAH**

**Ogden**

Paul Burnett

**Price**

Jordan Nielson

**Providence**

Jim DeRito

**WASHINGTON**

**Ellensburg**

Erin Eaton  
Justin Bezold

**Maple Valley**

David Kyle

**Seattle**

Luke Kelly

**Twisp**

Crystal Elliot  
Jacquelyn Wallace

**Wenatchee**

Aaron Penvose  
Cody Gillin  
Dan Jaspers  
Lisa Pelly  
Theo Burgoon

**WYOMING**

**Encampment**

Jeffrey Streeter

**Green River**

Hillary Walrath  
Nick Walrath

**Jackson**

Leslie Steen

**Lander**

Cory Toye  
Katie Becker





PHOTO: LUKE KELLY

*“Water is liquid gold. It’s a scarce resource we cannot live without, and we overcame our disagreements to protect it.”*

— **RICH BOYLE**  
**MANAGER, FORT SHAW IRRIGATION DISTRICT, MT**



**WWW.TU.ORG**

*For more information,  
please reach out to Scott Yates ([syates@tu.org](mailto:syates@tu.org))  
or Warren Colyer ([wcolyer@tu.org](mailto:wcolyer@tu.org)).*