

Statement on Coldwater Conservation by the Climate Change Work Group

Passed by a vote of the Work Group on August 18, 2016

Trout Unlimited's (TU) conservation approach of "protect, reconnect, restore and sustain" is ingrained into the fabric and policies of TU and is a unifying force of the organization. This conservation mission, instituted to protect and enhance coldwater habitats and the creatures that live within them, is consistent with an "adaptive" response to climate change. TU's NLC Climate Change Work Group supports this policy. Habitat improvements at the core of TU's mission are the same habitat improvement needed to moderate the negative impacts of a changing climate on coldwater ecosystems. It is almost as if TU's long-standing conservation platform was designed in response to climate change adaptation.

However, there are additional responses to a changing climate that are outside TU's normal adaptive responses; namely to 'mitigate' the forces driving climate change, particularly those forces of human origin that humans can potentially alter. By lessening the negative potential of a changing climate through mitigation, adaptation will have a greater likelihood of maintaining and enhancing the coldwater habitats at the core of TU's mission. TU's Energy Policy support for carbon policies and renewable energy systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a mitigation strategy to hasten the shift to low-carbon energy sources and conservation of resources.

There are multiple policy options to encourage movement to lower-carbon emissions. TU should seek opportunities to encourage the use of the suite of policy options to discourage continued use of high-carbon fossil fuels and other intensive greenhouse gas-producing processes, and to encourage low-carbon, low-greenhouse gas options, including energy conservation. TU is not specifying the design of such a policy, but recognizes the potential benefits of climate change mitigation and encourages consideration of all policy options, including market systems that place a fee or limit on the emissions of greenhouse gases.

The NLC Climate Change Work Group encourages TU, through TU leadership at all levels, to act, whether alone or with other organizations, to encourage implementation of policies for carbon reduction as soon as possible to minimize the coldwater impacts of climate disruption. This action will help achieve the goals of TU's central mission consistent with the existing policy, mitigate climate disruption, and complement the adaptation efforts of the current conservation agenda.

TU members are urged to take personal responsibility for their own fossil fuel energy usage and carbon emissions at their homes and businesses in recognition of the need for all of us to maximize conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewables whenever possible to help mitigate climate change.