

2016 Coldwater Conservation Fund

Summary of Funded Projects

Eastern Conservation

Securing Protections for Pennsylvania’s Native and Wild Trout Streams: \$20,000. Streams in Pennsylvania designated as “Wild Trout” streams are significantly better protected by the state than streams that are not. There are many wild trout streams in Pennsylvania that are not recognized as such, however, because the process of identifying and listing these waters moves very slowly. TU staff, however, can efficiently conduct stream surveys to identify qualifying waters while working with grassroots volunteers to keep pressure on the state, thus streamlining a process that, left unattended, sometimes stalls for months at a time. TU’s Eastern Conservation staff will use the CCF grant to target 150 new Wild Trout designations in the coming year. This is the second year of this grant, and last year’s effort (which also had a goal of 150 listings) resulted in 297 new Wild Trout stream designations.

Angler Advocates for the Great Lakes: \$18,500. The coldwater fisheries resources of the Great Lakes face many challenges, from net-pen aquaculture to invasive species. Trout Unlimited has made a significant, and expanding, investment of staff and project resources in the Great Lakes region (complementing a strong regional grassroots presence), of which the Great Lakes Angler Advocates program is a central element. This effort is aimed at using a variety of communications tools and strategies better to mobilize the vast potential of our grassroots volunteers (as well as the broader angling public) in the Great Lakes region in support of coldwater conservation efforts and advocacy. TU’s Eastern Communications Director will lead this undertaking, and the CCF grant will match an additional grant from another source to the Angler Advocates program.

Using “Angler Science” to Inform Conservation Strategies: \$20,000. TU has a huge mid-Atlantic states membership that collectively maintain a constant and widespread presence on and around the trout resources of the region, and thus have enormous potential as information and data collectors. The data that these angler scientists gather will help to inform the larger resource management decision-making of both state and federal agencies, as well as providing information to the public. These angler scientists increase the cost-effectiveness of data collection, but qualified staff are still needed to develop monitoring protocols, identify and foster key partnerships with agencies, conduct outreach and volunteer training, provide quality assurance and control of data, supply volunteers with a resource for technical assistance, and facilitate data feedback to volunteers. The CCF grant will enable this support of the grassroots to take place, and is matched by other grants.

Western Conservation

Building Fundraising and Communications Capacity for the Wild Steelhead Initiative: \$35,000. TU’s Wild Steelhead Initiative – a “strategic opportunity” in the current TU strategic plan – moves from success to success, with recent examples including the ending of wild steelhead harvest on legendary Olympic Peninsula rivers like the Hoh and Sol Duc, and the hiring of strategically-placed field staff (including an Olympic Peninsula restoration expert funded in part by last year’s CCF). Over 5,000 conservation-minded anglers have joined TU’s new group Wild Steelheaders United, and the initiative’s national award-winning website, www.wildsteelheaders.org, is by far the best of its kind, and an incredible source of information

and engine for positive change. This CCF grant will be used to make possible fundraising for difficult-to-find dollars for the initiative's advocacy work, and to establish a dedicated source of funding for communications and outreach.

Grasping a New Opportunity to Recover Snake River Steelhead and Salmon: \$20,000. TU has dedicated a huge amount of time and effort over many years to restoring salmon and steelhead habitat in the Snake River watershed, and has been a leader in the long effort to figure out what to do about the dams that prevent the vast majority of the migratory fish in the river from ever reaching and taking advantage of that habitat. In May of 2016, a federal court ordered the dam management agencies to conduct an analysis of the dam removal option, which offers the best prospect for recovering the river's wild salmon and steelhead. Thanks to TU's longstanding connections to the state and federal resource agencies involved in this process, our reputation in the region as a non-litigious collaborative partner, and our unmatched record of on-the-ground restoration of fish habitat, we are uniquely qualified to play a leading role in this next, and highly-promising, phase of the Snake River dams battle. The CCF grant will support this work.

Desert Trout: Conserving Native Redbands in Owyhee Country: \$15,000. TU is the project leader of a new, multi-partner effort to conserve and restore redband rainbow trout and their habitat in the spectacular Owyhee River basin. This remote, high-desert landscape in northern Nevada, and adjacent areas of Idaho and Oregon, is one of the most remarkable native trout habitats in the United States, and a restoration fund in excess of \$1 million is available to TU and its partners to protect and reconnect coldwater resources and to restore riparian habitat and hydrologic function. The available funding cannot be used, however, for critical staff support needs such as travel, education, and outreach expenses. The CCF grant provides "hardest to raise" project support, without which TU staff from both the Watersheds Restoration and Science programs cannot function.

Science Program

Environmental DNA Monitoring for Native Trout Restoration, Phase II: \$17,000. Environmental DNA monitoring is a means of determining the presence or absence of different species in a body of water, based on the analysis of DNA signatures in water samples. This is a highly efficient and accurate technique compared to traditional sampling methods (most obviously electrofishing). Last year the CCF Board made a startup grant to the Science Program to buy three kits and develop a pilot environmental DNA sampling and educational program, and this year's grant will enable the Science team to expand that work, both in the field and as a tool for engaging grassroots "angler science" support in the collection of samples.

Eastern Brook Trout Atlas: A New Resource for Discovering Conservation Projects and Fishing Opportunities in the East: \$16,500. Brook trout are the great native trout species of the East, and TU seeks not only to work to conserve and restore brook trout habitat, but also to generate interest in the species through education and outreach. The Atlas will follow the model pioneered by TU's Wild Steelhead Initiative (<http://www.wildsteelheaders.org/conservation-atlas/>), and will allow users to select and display data layers on a map, pan and zoom to an area of interest, click on layers for more information, and change reference basemaps. The Eastern Brook Trout Atlas will be a tool for anyone interested in learning more about brook trout and conditions in local watersheds, as well as for exploring that information across larger geographies in order to identify potential protection and restoration activities. The CCF grant will support the development of this tool.

Developing Decision Support Tools to Improve At-risk Trout Population Management: \$18,000. TU's Science team has worked for four years with a host of collaborators to build a new, data-driven modeling approach to estimating extinction risk in trout populations. Recently, TU staff have worked with resource management agencies to develop models for several at-risk western trout, but they need further support to create tools to evaluate the effects of management actions. The CCF grant will cover staff costs associated with the team's work to develop these systems, and to incorporate decision making tools into population viability models for Lahontan cutthroat, Bonneville cutthroat trout, and redband rainbow trout.

Promoting Chapter-based Stream Temperature Monitoring Activities: \$10,000. This effort by TU's Science team encompasses several ongoing stream temperature monitoring projects, as well as the development new monitoring projects in both the Southeast and Southwest. CCF funding will specifically be used to build a Southeast stream temperature monitoring project with TU chapters, to enhance the existing Southwest stream temperature monitoring effort in support of TU's Southwest Native Trout work (one of the "strategic opportunities" identified in TU's current strategic plan), and to continue stream temperature monitoring to enhance our ability to manage redband rainbow trout in the Intermountain Region.

Volunteer Operations

Veterans' Service Project: \$10,000. TU's Veterans' Service Project mobilizes the organization's huge grassroots potential in the service of disabled military veterans through fly fishing and tying instruction, time on the stream, and conservation. Over the next four years, the program hopes to add 100 TU chapters to the existing VSP chapter network, and to improve the efficiency and long-term effectiveness of the activities offered to veterans. CCF funding will assist TU Volunteer Operations staff in providing improved, national-level resources to prevent the "reinvention of the wheel" as new chapters start VSP projects, allow staff leaders to elevate and promote "best-practices" used by some chapters but not by others, and encourage chapters to bring in outside resources to provide additional services to veterans and their families.

Volunteer Operations Trainings: \$10,000. TU's Volunteer Operations staff consists of three employees who work with hundreds of TU chapters and thousands of TU members to ensure that the grassroots foundation at the heart of TU – individual volunteers, local chapters, state councils, regional meetings, and national leadership board (including representatives on the Board of Trustees) – remains vital, effective, and well-led. This is a constant challenge, and the need is acute for efficiency tools to spread the staff's expertise as widely as possible. This CCF grant will enable the Volunteer Operations staff to develop a series of online trainings aimed at developing volunteer leaders, and in doing so enable a tiny staff to reach a huge audience spread across a broad landscape.