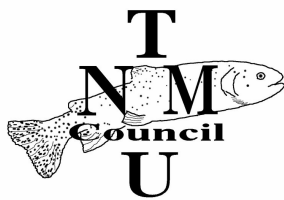


New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited



Fish Wrap

Volume 3, Issue 1

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New Mexico Council Of Trout Unlimited

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New Mexico Happenings

By Bill Schudlich

I have to apologize once again for not getting more newsletters out, but I have been besieged by personal problems, and frankly, the council doesn't have much money. We need to get more chapters started in the state in order to financially support a state council and we've made a start on that. There have been several big happenings in the state since the last newsletter, and TU continues to play a large role in defending our state's resources.

First, Trout Unlimited has hired a staff person here in New Mexico. Greg McReynolds is the new Public Lands Initiative Director for New Mexico and will be based in Albuquerque. Greg's primary responsibilities will center around the current travel management planning process that the US Forest Service is going through. Look for an article on that process elsewhere in this newsletter. Greg will also be pitching in on our native fish work, other resource issues, and in helping the state council in general. We are holding an open house for our new office space in Albuquerque on October 19th. If you are in the area please stop by. We'd like to discuss the possibility of getting the chapter in Albuquerque active again.

Second, I'd like to introduce the newly formed Enchanted Circle Chapter of Trout

Unlimited, based in Cimarron. Doug Palmer is the president of this new chapter that was chartered at the recent TU national meeting in Boise. Greg McReynolds and I were joined by John Ross, the State Council Chairman from Virginia and Author of Trout Unlimited's 100 Best Trout Streams for a trip to Philmont in August to help Doug get the chapter organized. The organizational meeting was well attended with about 35 in attendance. This chapter will be working closely with the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch which is a very exciting development for all of Trout Unlimited. 22,000 Boy Scouts from all over the nation visit Philmont each summer and now they will have an opportunity to learn about stream restoration, trout fishing, and Trout Unlimited, and they will be able to take that information back to their home communities.

Third, congratulations to the Truchas Chapter for their work on Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal to benefit Rio Grande cutthroat. Last year, the chapter acquired a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to install a fish passage barrier on the creek to protect the native cutts. The barrier was successfully installed in June of this year. In August, the NM Dept. of Game and Fish, the Us Forest Service and the US Fish and Wild

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Fishing in the Santa Fe River?

If you happened to be in Santa Fe at some point this past spring, you may have noticed that the river was flowing for a couple months. In fact it flowed so much that at one point it actually made it all the way to the wastewater treatment plant south of town. Unfortunately, in June the flows were once again shut off and all we had left was a dry ditch once more.

There aren't many people that remember, but at one time there was a decent trout fishery running through the capital. The reservoirs above town, which are closed and have been since the 1930's, still hold trout. Just recently, the New Mex-

ico Department of Game and Fish has worked out an agreement with the city to use the reservoirs as brood stock lakes for Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Brood fish will be tagged and stocked into the lakes where they can grow. In the spring, department personnel will shock the fish back out of the lakes to collect eggs for restoration projects in streams across the state.

What if we could figure out a way to get those flows to continue year round? What if we could actually have a trout fishery in Santa Fe? Trout Unlimited has been working with the

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Off Road Vehicles Threaten Habitat

By Greg McReynolds

Standing on a hill near La Puebla, the only vegetation you can see is in small triangles surrounded by a spider web of ATV trails. A few hundred yards north, you can see the BLM barrier and non-motorized sign. They have been torn from the ground and a pile of trash is accumulating around them. A little further along, the Santa Cruz River runs brown with the silt kicked up by illegal off-road use.

Motorized recreation is the fastest growing use of the national forest system and that spells bad news for sportsmen who use public lands. All-terrain vehicles are more prevalent in the national forest than ever before and they are taking the noise, exhaust and rutted trails into the last few quiet and undisturbed places in New Mexico.

There are currently almost 10 million all-terrain vehicles in the U.S. and the industry is selling more than 1 million new machines annually. Only a small percentage of these machines are going to privately-owned land. Most are on public land and many of them are headed right here to New Mexico. The good news is, the ongoing travel management process in New Mexico's five national forests will designate a system of trails and eliminate cross-country travel.

Unfortunately, the voices of hunter and anglers have been mostly absent in the debate. In their stead, off-road groups like the Blue Ribbon Coalition are fighting to open more trails, talking about access and citing concerns about hunting and angling. Unfortunately,

what they want is not access, but unlimited access to further fragment habitat with a crisscrossed network of user-created trails.

Some sportsmen use motorized vehicles while hunting, but at the end of the day they care about the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem. True conservation groups have always risen above their own interests. When game populations were suffering in the 1930's, it was hunters who pushed for game laws and eventually passed the Pittman Robertson Act.

Fishermen cultivated catch and release and groups like Trout Unlimited have worked to restore habitat and protect native species. Waterfowl hunters formed Ducks Unlimited and have saved millions of acres of wetlands.

If off-road groups like Blue Ribbon Coalition are so concerned about the rights of hunters and anglers, where are their efforts at protection of habitat? Mostly, they protect the right of a few unruly users to pillage and destroy our public lands. If you don't want your favorite places to hunt and fish to become an ATV playground, then it is time to get involved. It is time to stop letting the motorized recreation community lead us by the nose and to start putting conservation first. Unchecked illegal and reckless off-road riding results in fragmented habitat and a damaged landscape. That means less hunting opportunities in New Mexico. This is not a debate about access. It is instead a debate about rational and reasonable use. If motorized recreation continues to run

unchecked in the National forest, hunters and anglers will suffer the consequences

While it has flown under the radar since its inception last year, New Mexico has a specific board dedicated to the issues surrounding off highway vehicles in the state. The NM OHV Safety Advisory Board is a large board housed in the Department of Tourism. The board members serve terms of varying length and represent different interests, including conservation, public health, the tourism industry and the off-road community.

The Board is responsible for publishing a safety rule governing driving and operating rules and administering training now required for all-terrain-vehicle operators. The Board is also responsible for creating, monitoring and certifying off-road safety training instructors. The Board gives the tourism department recommendations on how to allocate money from OHV registration stickers and user fees for promoting safety, including enforcement.

In the future, this board is expected to administer at least a \$1 million budget. It is vital that this money go towards enforcement to reign in reckless and habitat damaging riding. Some of this money should also be used to restore damaged areas. Most importantly, it is imperative that this money not be used to build new trails for motorized use.

This fund contains some of the only money available to police motorized users on public lands and it could go a long way toward implementing the travel management plans currently under consideration by the forest service.

Please attend a meeting or write to the board and ask them to advocate for responsible use.

The New Mexico Council Needs Your Help!

We are looking for people interested in protecting the coldwater resources in New Mexico. We are specifically looking for people to help start chapters in the Albuquerque, Taos, and Las Cruces/Silver City areas. If you can help in any of the following areas, please contact: **Bill Schudlich at 505-470-4878.**

I'm interested in:

- ⇒ **Starting a Chapter in my area**
- ⇒ **Helping with the NM State Council**
- ⇒ **A specific watershed project**

Send an e-mail to
highmesa@gmail.com
and I will add you to an action list
which will distribute information on
issues of pressing concern.

Santa Fe River (continued)

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Santa Fe Watershed Association to make that become a reality.

There are quite a few hurdles to cross before we can make it happen, but we are finally coming together as a community to seriously discuss the possibility. In September, Melinda Kassen, the head of TU's Western Water Project was down from Bolder to give a discussion on projects that TU has done with other communities around the west, and what some of the options are for making it happen here.

Obviously, the first thing we need is water, and not just for part of the year, but all year long. Water law in New Mexico can make this difficult, but there is certainly more political will in this state now to provide environmental flows in our rivers than there has been in the past. TU will be assisting the Watershed Association with a feasibility study

over the next several months to figure out how much water we need and where we can get that water.

Of course to get fish into the river, there will need to be a period of time with sustained flows to build up the food base. This also gives us an opportunity to do some in stream improvements to make it more habitable for fish. We would like, if possible, to see the state return our state fish, the native Rio Grande cutthroat to this stream.

It won't be easy, but now is as good a time as any to try. If you think this is a good idea, you should make an effort to let our elected representative now that you want to see water in the river. Also, Santa Fe now has a check off program on your water bill, where you can donate into a fund to purchase water rights for the purpose of leaving them in the river.

Open House!

Come help us open our Albuquerque office.

**Friday October 19th
6 p.m.**

**3610 San Mateo NE
Suite A
Just north of Menaul on the
east side of San Mateo.**

**Refreshments and door
prizes!**

www.newmexicotu.org

Announcing the new website of the New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited.

I have tried to put up some information about the projects and issues that the council is involved in. I will probably have a difficult time keeping the site updated too often, but I will entertain any offers of help.

Up on the site right now:

- ⇒ Meet the volunteers and staff that work for your council.
- ⇒ Conservation Issues the council and chapters are involved with
- ⇒ A sample letter to send about OHV use on our public lands

Happenings (continued)

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life Service completed the treatment of the stream above that barrier to clear non-native fish. Before treating, the agencies electro-shock the stream, pulled out any cutthroat, tagged those fish, took a DNA sample and then placed them in a lake on Vermjo Park for holding. When the genetic tests come back, the genetically pure fish will be taken back out of the lake and be put back in Comanche Creek. During shocking, they removed and tagged 700-800 cutthroat, and also removed 14,000 to 18,000 non-native white suckers. Just removing those suckers should make Comanche a much better trout .

Also, the Truchas Chapter continues to work with the Valles Caldera National Preserve and hopefully soon will have some news with regard to working on the streams up there. This summer, a group from New Mexico State University headed by Mike Anderson have been tagging and tracking brown trout to better understand the population dynamics up there. This work was partially funded through an Embrace-A-Stream grant from TU.

Finally, I hope some of you had the opportunity to get out there and catch a Gila trout this summer. The fish are available for recreational fishing for the first time in 40 years. If you haven't gotten out there yet, fishing for Gilas requires a special permit (which is free) which can be acquired from the NM Dept. of Game and Fish.



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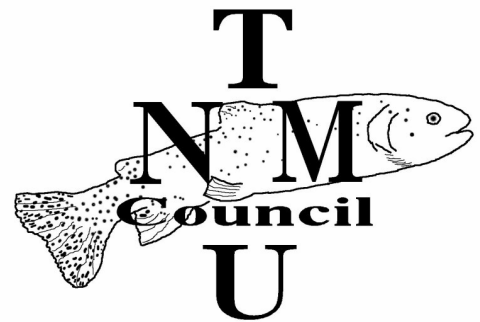
Help the New Mexico Council Address Pressing Issues in New Mexico!

Because we are such a young state council, we are operating on a shoestring budget right now. Your contributions, no matter how small, can help us address some of the pressing issues in New Mexico in a more effective manner.

Dear New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited,

Please use my tax deductible contribution of \$_____ to work on these important issues in New Mexico.

- Restoring a living river in Santa Fe**
- Re-introduction of our native Rio Grande cutthroat trout**
- Gila trout recovery**



Mail contributions to: New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 32952, Santa Fe, NM 87594