

New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 32952
Santa Fe, NM 87594-2952

July 14, 2008

Governor Bill Richardson
State Capitol
Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

RE: Our State Fish

Dear Governor Richardson:

Trout Unlimited is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of coldwater fisheries. In New Mexico, our three chapters and over 1,000 members have worked tirelessly to protect our riparian resources and our native trout.

With the recent decision by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) finding that our state fish, the Rio Grande Cutthroat trout warrants listing under the Endangered Species Act, we ask that the state provide the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish with a budget increase of at least \$250,000 annually that would be dedicated to the protection and restoration of Rio Grande cutthroat trout and its habitat in New Mexico.

Over the last decade, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's fisheries budget has remained flat and Federal agencies' budgets, specifically those of the USFWS and U.S. Forest Service, have been in decline.

In order to fill in the budgetary gaps required to protect our native fish, Trout Unlimited has often funded recovery efforts, such as the \$100,000 barrier on Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal. Currently, the Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited is working to raise over \$80,000 to pay for a barrier that would protect a pure population of Rio Grande Cutthroat trout on Alamitos Creek, a tributary of the Rio Pueblo. In addition, the Truchas Chapter has also started a Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Restoration Fund for future protection efforts.

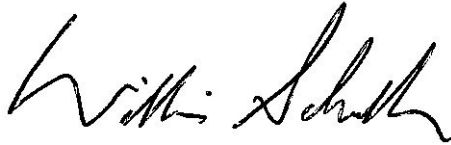
To our great disappointment, our efforts to protect and increase the population of our state fish have not been sufficient, and the fish has continued to decline to the point of facing an ESA listing. Fortunately, we do have some time before the fish is listed, perhaps several years. We believe that a concerted effort to recover the fish could help to keep it off the endangered species list, but we must act now. This would not only protect this fish, but it would also avoid the serious economic harm to northern New Mexico that a listing would cause.

The \$250,000 is needed to hire an additional biologist and pay for seasonal workers and project expenses. Avoiding the potential complications to water, grazing and recreational angling by keeping the fish from listing is well worth the price. More importantly, this is an opportunity to protect the heritage of our increasingly rare state fish.

In its decision, the USFWS lists the potential impacts of global warming as one of the concerns for the sustainability of the fish. We believe that it is imperative for the state to continue funding riparian ecosystem restoration as it has over the past two years. In fact, we would like to see this program become permanent. Because of the potential impacts of climate change, we feel it is essential to shore up our riparian resources, which have suffered much abuse over the past century. Besides helping the cutthroat, this program insures that our waters will better withstand a warming climate, and doing that would benefit all water users and citizens of the state.

Trout Unlimited will continue to work towards the recovery of New Mexico's state fish and we look forward to new partnerships with the State of New Mexico that will enable us to ensure the long-term survival of an important part of our New Mexican heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Schudlich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

William Schudlich
Chairman
New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited

cc: Sarah Cottrell
Director Bruce Thompson
Chairman Tom Arvas
Vice-Chairman M. H. Salmon
Commissioner Sandy Buffett
Commissioner Jim McClintic
Commissioner Alfredo Montoya
Commissioner Oscar Simpson
Commissioner Leo Sims