



One More Cast

Newsletter for the Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited
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Presidential Perspective

Arnold Atkins, Truchas Chapter President

The Truchas Chapter Annual Banquet seems to be the *de facto* end of one Chapter year and start of another, and thus affords an opportunity for annual review. Details will be provided elsewhere in this issue, but it is fair to say that this was a very successful Banquet, with attendance as good as we've ever had and profitability by far our best ever. This means that we are able to proceed with our conservation efforts on a solid financial footing, and our hard working board of directors, supportive members and contributors are all to be thanked and congratulated! Our guest speaker, Bob Behnke, gave us yeoman service, and will be long remembered. Thanks, Bob! It is apparent that this chapter is alive and well, and we are continually striving to evaluate and improve on our performance. With that in mind, a Banquet committee has already started working on next year's event, and members are encouraged to offer comments or suggestions to any board member.

Our activities gain strength and scope from one another. From our association with the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Working Group, we learned of Alamitos Creek, where one of the largest populations of genetically pure Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (RGCT) remaining in the state has thus far escaped disaster and can be permanently protected by placement of a fish passage barrier. Problems with funding by government agencies led to the chapter taking a leadership role, which required some financially innovative thinking on our part. This led to the establishment of our RGCT Restoration Fund, which is now a "going concern", well on its way to funding the required environmental analysis for this project. Our fund's scope may soon be extended to the national level, with assistance from a neighboring state's chapter and an article in Trout, TU's national magazine, in advanced planning stages.

We've done all this in the past year, and have continued our work in multiple other areas. We have continued our work with our partners in the Rio Costilla restoration project with habitat improvement and placement of a barrier on Comanche Creek [see *Perspective*, page 2]



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**TU's Mission: To conserve, protect
and restore North America's
coldwater fisheries and their
watersheds.**

[*Perspective*, from page 1] (funded with a grant obtained by TU National). We support our friends in New Mexico Trout in their Jemez projects, and they gave us high marks and significant attendance at the Banquet. We continue to have a position on the advisory group for the Valles Caldera, but progress there is slow due to federal funding problems (the Caldera was allocated zero dollars in the President's proposed budget for next fiscal year). We have been asked to help with RGCT restoration issues by the Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association and by the Santa Clara and Nambe Pueblos, and have met with these groups.

On the local scene, we continue our Pecos River activities, now often in collaboration with the Upper Pecos Watershed Association (UPWA), and have been asked to provide a member for their advisory board. Next project is the spring Pecos River cleanup, June 7. We are also assuming a River Keeper role for the public stretch above Windy Bridge.

In all, our team has continued to build on its past successes, and I'm pleased with our progress in being a truly great conservation organization. I invite you all to continue your support in achieving this goal!

Pecos Spring Clean Up June 7th

Mark your calendar. Truchas Chapter and the Upper Pecos Watershed Association will be hosting their annual Pecos River Cleanup on Saturday, June 7th. Call or email Doug Jeffords, dcjeffords@aol.com or 424-0644, for more information.

Banquet Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2008 Annual Banquet. Our financial success was due to the generosity of everyone who purchased raffle tickets, bid on auction items, or donated prizes.

Special thanks to **Mark Kossler**, Vermejo Park Ranch; **Bo Preiskorn**, Brazos River Ranch; and **Elias Vigil**, Ute Creek Outfitters, who all graciously donated overnight trips for our Grand Raffle.

Donors for our dinner raffle, checkerboard raffle and silent auction include:

Arnold Atkins;
Patricia Ballesteros and Natalie Roberts, of
Form Fitness Core Conditioning;
Jim Benenson, Stonefly Custom Rods;
Jeff Croy and Toner Mitchell, The Reel Life;
Karen Denison, Outspire Hiking and Snowshoeing;
Donn Duncan;
Dale Heinemann, New Mexico Outdoors;
Thom Holmes;
Larry Huston and Ben Martinez, of
Sportsman's Warehouse;
Mary Johnson, Ten Thousand Waves;
Kent Little and Steve Bing, of
Sangre de Cristo Mountain Works;
Lorrie Lopez;
Benito Martinez;
Phil Nowlin, Las Campanas;
Peter Romero;
Jarrett Sasser, High Desert Angler;
Dennis Trujillo, Valles Caldera National Preserve;
Frank Weissbarth, of
Weissbarth Wild Trout Photography;
Bob and Lee Widgren, Los Pinos Rods.

A special thanks to generous donor Dale Heinemann, New Mexico Outdoors, who unintentionally wasn't acknowledged when the winners were announced (sorry, Dale).

Treasurer's Report

Ed Schulz, Chapter Treasurer

Our March 1 Banquet had the greatest financial success in Truchas Chapter history. We thank everyone for attending and for realizing that the Banquet is our primary fundraiser for the entire year.

Additional financial success is due to the list of donors recognized in this newsletter. Their generosity made every raffle and auction item 100% profit to your Chapter. We heartily thank these donors who helped us achieve a net profit of \$10,000 for our event. The Grand Raffle raised \$5,365, and auctions raised \$6,767, with all items for both totally donated. Banquet gross revenues were \$20,480, expenses were \$10,300 which produced a net gain to our chapter of \$10,180. Thank you again for a most successful Banquet.

Our current Chapter account balance is \$19,338, of which \$7,338 is liquid and the remainder is in two six-month CDs: \$5,000 maturing 6-13-08 and \$7,000 maturing 9-17-08. The Chapter is helping financially with the Pecos Clean-ups, TU's "Trout in the Classroom" education program, and other projects, but we are reserving some funds as we have committed to sharing the cost of the required environmental study for the Alamitos project. Please contact any Board member if you want us to consider additional projects.

March 1 was also the kickoff for our Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Restoration Fund (RGCTRF), established to finance restoration of native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. Your Board members have donated from their own pockets over \$1,300 to this fund, followed by a match of \$1,250 from Truchas Chapter. In addition, Mitch and Deb Bent of Wisconsin generously offered \$500 as a matching gift for the night of our Banquet; attendees responded by contributing \$1,180 that evening. We currently have a RGCTF balance of \$3,600, with \$1,100 liquid and \$2,500 in a six month CD maturing 9-17-08. We spent \$2,746 for Truchas Chapter RGCT donor merchandise; proceeds from the sale of some of this merchandise are reflected in the above balance. We still have \$1,367 worth of net cost items in our inventory. Upon sale of this remaining inventory, the initial surge of RGCT fundraising will be more than \$5,000. We are planning on using this money for the Alamitos project, but please contact board members if you see a need for RGCT support on other projects.

Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Restoration Fund

Bob O'Connor, Past-President

At the Christmas party in December, Truchas Chapter announced the formation of the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (RGCT) Restoration Fund, a stand-alone fund dedicated to identifying and financially supporting RGCT restoration projects in New Mexico where the Chapter's monetary contribution and hands-on volunteer labor can make a difference and significantly increase the likelihood of achieving success.

The RGCT Restoration Fund (RGCTRF) is designed to work in conjunction with other local and national conservation groups like New Mexico Trout and Trout Unlimited, local watershed and acequia associations, and state and federal agencies to provide seed money, pre-scoping field study funds, grants and possibly matching and/or challenge grants with other non-profits to achieve our stated goals and objectives.

Under both the Bush and the Richardson Administrations' budgets, there are very limited federal dollars available to pay for the scientific field studies, the habitat analysis and environmental impact reports required to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This work must be done before any RGCT restoration project can be approved. NEPA costs, depending on the size and scale of the project, can easily exceed \$20,000 per project.

As a result, our most urgent priority right now is raising money for the RGCTRF and the RGCT projects we have identified (see Kevin Reilly's Advocacy Report). We recently launched a line of RGCT Restoration Fund merchandise including Truchas logo ball caps, shirts, T-shirts and vest pins. All profits from this line, though modest, go directly to the RGCTRF. At the Annual Banquet in March we grossed \$1,180 in merchandise purchases from those who attended.

Advocacy Update

Kevin Reilly, Advocacy Chairman

Alamitos Creek Project

As you know from our last newsletter, our Chapter's board of directors has made a commitment to do what it can to help fund a fish passage barrier on Alamitos Creek. Alamitos Creek rises in the northeastern corner of the Pecos Wilderness in the Carson National Forest (the Carson) and flows northeast until it connects with the Rio Pueblo, a tributary of the Rio Grande. A population of approximately 4,500 genetically pure Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (RGCT) inhabits 7.1 miles of Alamitos Creek and its unnamed tributary.

If the population can be protected now before introgression from Rainbow Trout or depredation from Brown Trout occurs, the population can be saved without the necessity of using piscicides (fish poisons) to remove non-native fish. All that is required to protect the population is the construction of a permanent fish-passage barrier upstream of a current irrigation diversion that is part of La Sierra Acequia.

Since our last newsletter, Arnold Atkins, Ed Schulz, and I met with John Miera, a District Ranger for the Carson, and several other Forest Service personnel about the project. At that meeting, the Carson's engineer and its planner committed to do pre-environmental work for the project. Once that work is completed, the analysis of the environmental impact of the project can be done. We are also planning to meet with La Sierra Acequia Association to get the Acequia's support. In addition, the national committee of the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI), a federally funded effort, ranked the Alamitos barrier project as the eighth most significant western native trout project in the country, and WNTI will provide some funding for the barrier. The amount of the funding is uncertain at this time.

We have also received positive feedback on our proposal to the Guadalupe River Chapter of TU in Texas for partial funding for the environmental analysis for the project, and we expect to learn in April if we will receive a grant from that chapter.

Rio Costilla Watershed Project

Our Chapter is continuing to work with several agencies, other nonprofit organizations, and private entities to restore Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (RGCT) to the Rio Costilla in northern New Mexico. In April, the Department of Game and Fish will ask the Game Commission for permission to complete the piscicide treatment of Comanche Creek this year. The initial treatment took place this past summer. It is not at all unusual for a stream to be treated more than once to remove non-native fish. Rather, it is expected that more than one treatment will be required. Then, when RGCT and the other native fish are restored to Comanche Creek, we can be confident that non-native fish, which threaten the restoration, will not be present. Preliminary genetic tests on the trout removed from Comanche Creek have been completed, and about 300 of the trout removed alive from Comanche Creek are pure RGCT. When the treatment of Comanche Creek is complete, they will be restored to the creek.

We are continuing to work with the Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association (RCCLA) to help the RCCLA decide whether to join the project and have their waters, including the Latir Lakes, restored to RGCT. Several of their representatives have expressed continued interest in the project. We expect that the Association will make a decision this year whether to join the project.

Once the work on Comanche Creek is completed, the Rio Costilla and its tributaries on Vermejo Park Ranch will be restored to RGCT. If the RCCLA participates in the project, a total of 120 miles of stream, and several lakes, will be restored to RGCT. Significantly, all of those stream miles will be connected, thus allowing the trout to move freely throughout the Rio Costilla and its tributaries. Populations of native trout that are isolated in small headwater streams are much more vulnerable to population loss following disturbances such as flood, drought, and wildfire than populations that can move freely throughout several connected streams.

**Email Newsletter Is Coming This Fall
Subscribe for a chance to win!**

Each year, Truchas Chapter must raise nearly \$2000 to print and send member newsletters by regular mail. Although we've reduced those costs using bulk mailing, sending fewer newsletters per year and trimming the size of each newsletter, we'd like to have better communication with members at lesser cost—with savings going toward on-the-ground projects. Wouldn't you?

Please help by ensuring that we may send you Chapter news by email. Log on to the Chapter website at truchas-tu.org. Follow the link for subscribing and fill out the form completely. We promise to NEVER sell or share your address with other organizations. You will later receive a test/confirmation by email. Not sure you're subscribed for the newsletter now? Please use the website form to be certain.

As an incentive, Chapter members who are signed up for receiving the newsletter by email before November 1, 2008 will be eligible to win a custom rod donated by Jim Benenson of Stonefly Rods. Winner will be notified by email!

**Call for Volunteers:
Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal**
Art Vollmer

Trout Unlimited, New Mexico Trout, and The Quivira Coalition are working together with the Carson National Forest and the New Mexico Environment Department to restore Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout habitat along Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal through a grant from the U.S. EPA. The Truchas Chapter needs your support for hands-on riparian restoration volunteer work days on Comanche Creek this summer. Come be a part of the

solution. This is a great opportunity for anyone interested in stream restoration to see the impact of almost 10 years of work by volunteers (and see the fish barrier we helped get installed last year) and lend a hand.

JULY 10-13: MAINTENANCE OF GRAZING EXCLOSURES A key element of the restoration effort involves encouraging the re-growth of willows and other woody vegetation along Comanche Creek. Carson National Forest personnel and Quivira Coalition contractors will lead a volunteer effort to perform maintenance work on the small cow/elk grazing exclosures we (mostly NM Trout and TU volunteers) have been installing along Comanche Creek for the last 10 years. These exclosures are designed to protect woody vegetation along the creek which will in turn help armor the banks of the creek to reduce erosion. Another task will be to disassemble a fence around a very large area (hundreds of acres) at the upper end of the creek. This fence was constructed by USFS 15-20 years ago as an experiment to see what effect the elk and cows had on the vegetation along the creek. It generally worked for the cows but the elk just kept busting through the fence, and maintenance was unable to keep up with the damage. So the plan is to remove most of the fence and just keep a much smaller 2-3 acre section intact. This will be a big effort and will require lots of volunteers if we are to get it done in four days. Since the trout groups have been the primary workers on these exclosures in the past, we hope to rely on them to provide the bulk of the volunteer force for this work. While the work is planned to cover four days (Thursday-Sunday), you can just come for one or two days.

JULY 18-19: INSTALLATION OF IN-STREAM STRUCTURES If you cannot make the previous weekend, but would still like to contribute, come help install post vanes within Comanche Creek to induce stream flow away from severely cut banks. This work is also part of our collaborative effort to restore habitat on Comanche Creek for the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. Learn about this innovative low-cost, low-tech riparian restoration technique under the guidance of Bill Zeedyk. The Albuquerque Wildlife [see *Volunteer*, page 6]

[*Volunteer*, from page 5] Federation is planning to send a group of volunteers up for this weekend, but if NMT/TU folks wanted to join them we would be welcome too.

Comanche Creek is located in the Valle Vidal unit of the Carson National Forest north of Questa and east of Costilla off State Road 552 close to the Colorado border. Drive time from Santa Fe is 3 1/2 hours. Free group camping for these weekend workshops will be available at Shuree Lodge courtesy of the Carson National Forest. Our days will end mid-afternoon so there will be plenty of daylight left to enjoy fishing, hiking and watching wildlife! Volunteers are asked to bring a hat, work gloves, plenty of sunscreen, and wear appropriate clothes for getting dirty and wet. Come enjoy this scenic valley

while making a difference on the land! The Valle Vidal is a great place to spend some time that time of year. Also at the end of the day, you can fish for rainbows, cutbows, and cutthroats in the streams or go for big rainbows in the Shuree ponds. The work is hard, but fun, and evenings back at the campsite are great times for catching up with each other and sharing.

For more details on these volunteer activities, RSVP to Art Vollmer in Santa Fe at 505-476-6004 (days) or 505-474-1495 (evenings) or email him at art.vollmer@nmenv.state.nm.us. He'll create a volunteer list to whom he'll provide updates as July approaches.