

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### Environmental Assessment Native Trout Restoration and Enhancement Projects in Northern Utah

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it applies to the Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts (64 Stat. 430; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 777 *et. seq.* and 50 State 916; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 669 *et. seq.*). National Environmental Policy Act compliance is necessary to analyze potential impacts to the environment because partial funding for this project will be granted pursuant to the Sport Fish Restoration Act administered through the Service.

Removing non-native trout then reintroducing native cutthroat trout are strategies applied to advance the broad goals of population replication and persistence defined in the cutthroat trout conservation agreements. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (Division) is proposing to implement rotenone treatments in eight streams in northern Utah from 2012 to 2018. Fish migration barriers would be constructed where necessary before treatment to prevent the reinvasion of non-native trout. Native trout from "core" wild populations or fish produced from UDWR native trout brood stocks would be introduced with the goal of establishing self-sustaining populations. Native nongame fish, namely sculpin and mountain sucker, would be reintroduced into currently or previously (known) occupied streams following treatment. Following the rotenone treatment, other native fish, including northern leatherside chub and bluehead sucker, would be introduced into select streams containing suitable habitat within their respective historic ranges.

This Environmental Assessment documents an analysis of the effects of the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action, and the Mechanical Removal with Electrofishing Alternative. Under the No Action alternative, current management in all of the streams listed in this document would continue. Under this alternative, non-native fish would not be removed from project waters and no additional fish migration barriers would be constructed. As a result, native cutthroat trout enhancement in these waters would not be possible. Cutthroat trout conservation actions cannot occur in streams containing rainbow trout because the two species readily hybridize. Streams containing brook trout and brown trout present significant conservation challenges because these species are well known to displace cutthroat trout (Griffith 1988; McHugh and Budy 2006).

The Proposed Action would expand the number of native fish populations and the extent of occupied stream miles within native fish historic ranges, thus implementing specific conservation actions listed in conservation agreements and strategies for native trout in Utah. Implementation of this project would offset threats to Bonneville cutthroat trout, a species recognized by state and federal agencies as a species in need of special protection. The proposed project follows recommendations from the Service to reduce threats to native fish and to provide for the long-term conservation of these species. The proposed action will be implemented in cooperation

with the Bureau of Land Management - Salt Lake Field Office, and in coordination with both the Sawtooth National Forest and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

There would be no filling or obstruction of floodplains or wetlands during the proposed treatments. Small pools will be created by migration barriers to be installed as part of the project at some locations. Compliance with regulations governing alteration of stream channels, including approval from the State Engineer and Army Corps of Engineers, will be obtained prior to construction of the barriers. The Environmental Protection Agency approves rotenone for the use intended in this project and it would be applied according to label instructions by personnel certified as Non-Commercial Pesticide Applicators.

Prior to publishing the final decision, the EA underwent a 30-day public comment period. During the comment period only two letters were received, both were in full support of the project. The two public comment letters as well as the Division's responses are included in the Addendum.

Based on review of the EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Consequently, I have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

APPROVAL



8/6/12

**Deputy** Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6

Date