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**AGENCIES HONORED FOR GILA TROUT RECOVERY EFFORT**

*Representatives of FWS, USFS, NMDGF, AZGFD Honored with Extraordinary Action Award*

Representatives from Region 2 US Fish and Wildlife Service: New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Mora National Fish Hatchery; US Forest Service: Gila National Forest and Coronado National Forest; and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Arizona Game and Fish Department were honored by the National Fish Habitat Board with the 2012 Extraordinary Action Award for fish habitat conservation at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Native Trout Conference held in Phoenix, AZ on April 18.



**Figure 1: Packstring waiting for tree cutting in upper South Fork Whitewater Creek, June 2012.**

These agencies are being recognized for their cooperative effort to successfully rescue, conserve and protect critical populations of Gila Trout within the Gila Wilderness damaged by the devastating Whitewater–Baldy Complex forest fire in New Mexico in 2012. The National Fish Habitat Board would like to recognize your hard work and dedication in conservation of threatened Gila Trout populations in the Western US.

The Gila trout rescue effort began when it was deemed relatively safe to reach the streams before monsoon events may have compromised the trout populations and habitat. Field crews in NM horse backed into the Gila Wilderness to collect and evacuate Gila trout from Whiskey, Langstroth, and Spruce creeks. Once captured, Gila trout were transported from each creek in large fish container attached to a long line carried by helicopter to waiting hatchery trucks outside of the wilderness area. Trout from Whiskey and Langstroth creeks were then transferred to hatchery facilities at the Mora National Fish Hatchery or the New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. Trout from Spruce Creek were taken to the Mora National Fish Hatchery and Ash Creek, AZ. At Ash Creek, there were more than 25 people, biologists and volunteers, to help backpack the trout into Ash Creek.



Figure 2: Helicopter long-lining transport tank to ground at pickup site on Spruce Creek, June 2012

This was a great effort among seven agencies across two states. Over 40 individuals assisted in this effort conserve fish and set their sights on working to restore habitat damaged by the 2012 fire. The project was successful due to the incredible coordination and dedicated biologists, especially ground crews in NM that traveled on the forest immediately after the fire.



Figure 3: Award Recipients from (L to R): Kirk Patten (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish), Yvette Paroz (U.S. Forest Service), Jeremy Voeltz (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Julie Carter (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Robin Knox (Presenter) (Western Native Trout Initiative)

## **Previous Winners of the NFHAP Awards include:**

### **2012:**

- Corinne Smith (TNC) (Scientific Achievement Award)

### **2011:**

- Maureen Gallagher (FWS) (Jim Range Conservation Vision Award)
- BLM, Coos Bay District Office (Extraordinary Action Award)\*
- National Fish Habitat Assessment Team, Michigan State University & NOAA (Scientific Achievement Award)
- Glen Lake Association (Outreach and Education Award)

### **2010:**

- Scott Robinson (SARP) (Jim Range Conservation Vision Award)
- Lower Bourbeuse Landowner Committee/Missouri Department of Conservation (Extraordinary Action Award)\*
- David Moe Nelson (NOAA) (Scientific Achievement Award)
- Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District (Outreach and Education Award)

### **2009:**

- Lake Leaders Institute, University of Wisconsin- Extension Lakes (Outreach and Education Award)
- EPA Office of Research and Development (Scientific Achievement Award)
- Yvon Chouinard – Patagonia (Jim Range Conservation Vision Award)
- Project SHARE (Extraordinary Action Award)\*

### **2008:**

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation (Outreach and Education Award),
- The Fish and Aquatic Ecology Unit of the U.S. Forest Service & Trout Unlimited (Co-winners – Scientific Achievement Award)
- Stephen Perry (NH) (Exceptional Vision Award)

*\*Extraordinary Action award in support of fish habitat was introduced in 2009*

## **About the National Fish Habitat Partnership:**

The National Fish Habitat Partnership works to conserve fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal, state, and private funding sources to achieve the greatest impact on fish populations through priority conservation projects. The national partnership implements the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and supports 18 regional grassroots partner organizations. For more information visit, <http://fishhabitat.org/>, <http://www.facebook.com/NFHAP>, <https://twitter.com/FishHabitat>, <http://www.scoop.it/t/fish-habitat>

