

NEWS



Forest Service

*United States
Department of
Agriculture*

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**Inyo
National Forest**

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The Forest Service is Seeking Comments on a Proposal to Improve Spawning Habitat in the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek

The Inyo National Forest is proposing to improve spawning habitat within the North Fork Cottonwood Creek, located in the White Mountains, for the federally endangered Paiute cutthroat trout.

The North Fork of Cottonwood Creek provides habitat for the endangered Paiute cutthroat trout. Paiute cutthroat trout were transplanted in this creek as a refuge for their native habitat in the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. This is an important population with regards to recovery of this species, however, the creek does not provide sustainable spawning habitat for this small trout, due to lack of spawning sized gravel substrate. This action is intended to enhance the spawning areas in order to perpetuate this Paiute cutthroat trout population into the future. The last gravel augmentation was completed by the Inyo National Forest and the California Department of Fish and Game in 1994 and 1995, and much of the gravel is embedded, has washed downstream, or is otherwise unavailable for spawning.

The North Fork Cottonwood Creek Gravel Augmentation Project would improve spawning habitat by adding gravel within an approximately two mile section of North Fork Cottonwood Creek. Up to three cubic yards of weed-free rounded gravel from ½ inch to 1 inch in diameter would be delivered by truck to a stockpile site above the Cottonwood Creek 4WD route, and transported from there to the project site by pack stock, and stockpiled in small piles in the vicinity of the creek.

The gravel would be placed in the creek by hand, using a standard shovel and buckets at up to 25 individual sites, until enough gravel has been placed to adequately provide for spawning habitat (approximately three inches deep, in areas ranging from 5 to 10 square feet at each site). Implementation of the project is expected to be completed within five days, and would occur during the late summer/early fall months, outside the spawning period for the Paiute cutthroat trout.

Monitoring would occur during the next several years, and follow-up work would occur as needed. It is anticipated that additional gravel augmentation would be needed within 10 to 12 years, as gravel becomes embedded or washed downstream and unavailable as spawning habitat.

If you have questions about the proposed project, please contact Erin Lutrick at 760-873-2545. If you have information you feel the Forest Service may not be aware of, or feel you have issues regarding potential effects of the proposed action, please send those issues in writing to: Inyo National Forest, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514, Attn: Erin Lutrick or by email to elutrick@fs.fed.us. Comments should be received by August 21, 2009 in order to be most helpful in the analysis. (end)