



UINTA-WASATCH-CACHE NATIONAL FOREST

Mill Creek Restoration Project

Salt Lake Ranger District

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

April 18, 2013

Background: The U.S. Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, PacifiCorp, Trout Unlimited, Utah Anglers Coalition and others are working cooperatively to explore the restoration of native Bonneville cutthroat trout in the Mill Creek drainage of Salt Lake County. This proposed project will restore genetically pure Bonneville cutthroat trout and habitat within the historical range of the species. The project will also provide the public unique opportunity to interact with a completely native aquatic ecosystem – dominated by Utah’s State Fish, the Bonneville cutthroat trout.

Restoration efforts will be focused on the upper nine miles of Mill Creek and the lower mile of Porter Fork in Mill Creek Canyon. Efforts will include the removal of all fish species, stocking of native fish species, planting riparian vegetation and potential removal of man-made barriers.

The most effective way to remove fish is with the use of an EPA-approved root-based chemical called rotenone. Rotenone blocks the uptake of oxygen through gills. It is not toxic to humans or terrestrial animals (dogs, cats, deer, etc.). Rotenone only acts on species with gills. Care will be taken to ensure source areas are available to allow re-colonization of amphibians and macroinvertebrates (i.e. aquatic insects like stoneflies, mayflies, caddis flies, etc.) Treatments do not negatively affect water quality or human health. This drainage is not a municipal watershed.

Removal of undesirable man-made barriers in the drainage may occur in order to allow natural fish movement, which is a key component for healthy, sustainable fish populations. Barriers to be removed may include old gaging stations, the dam and fishing pier across from the Mill Creek Guard Station, and a weir and waterwheel in Porter Fork. Road culverts may also be removed and replaced with fish passible structures. Currently the fishing pier is unusable because of sediment has filled the dam. This is a constant maintenance issue. Removal of the fishing pier and the associated pond may displace some recreationists. Similar fishing piers are found in Big Cottonwood.

The fish removal component of this project will occur in three phases, for one or two days in the fall each year a section of stream would be treated to remove the existing fish. The upper 9 miles of stream have been split into three treatment sections. The first or upper most section is projected to be treated in 2013 and 2014. The second section will be treated in 2014 and 2015 and the third section will be treated in 2015 and 2016. The rotenone will be neutralized at the bottom of each of the treatment section so that no fish or invertebrates will be removed or impacted below the treatment section. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality will regulate all rotenone applications. Personnel from multiple agencies and interest groups will implement the applications. Restocking of native Bonneville cutthroat will occur after the final treatment has occurred in each section has been completed.

Treatment would occur over a four year period and would be staged to allow for continuous fishing access in part of the project area.

Current Status: The Forest Service is working with the Division of Wildlife Resources and other cooperators to develop a proposal for this project and determine what terms and conditions would be necessary to adequately protect National Forest System lands and resources.

DWR crews are currently collecting information about water flows, estimating population of existing fish species, and determining carrying capacity for stocking fish.

The Forest Service is also working to identify potential habitat restoration projects. Design work on the culvert replacements is also occurring.

The Forest Service is the process of notifying key contacts through letters, presentations, and meetings. Landowners, business owners, permitted, and other affected stakeholders are being contacted regarding the project and may request additional information and/or presentations by contacting: Paul Cowley, 801-999-2177, pcowley@fs.fed.us.