

Narrator:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program provides a reliable funding source for state fish and game agencies to conduct essential work. Manufacturers and importers of hunting and fishing gear pay an excise tax to the federal government. That tax is passed on to hunters and anglers in the price paid for hunting and fishing gear at the cash register. That tax, held in trust by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, is given to state agencies such as the NMDGF. The money must be used on projects that benefit fish and wildlife, boating access or research and education. This partnership between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and state game and fish agencies has provided beneficial conservation since 1937.

The work of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on Rio Grande cutthroat trout stands as an example of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program in action.

The Rio Grande cutthroat trout, New Mexico's official state fish, lives in wild and beautiful places and NMDFG biologists are at the vanguard conserving this native fish that is important to the economy and

ecology and the citizenry.

Bryan Bakevich

Well the Rio Grande Cutthroat trout is the state fish of New Mexico. It's native to northern to New Mexico and southern Colorado; it's a very beautiful fish and it's a fish the anglers like to catch in the high mountain streams

The fish was reduced to about eleven percent of its historic range and it was on a negative trend for 50 or 60 years so on the last 20 or so we've seen a bump up in its numbers. I work here at Seven Springs Hatchery and every spring we bring new genetic material, new eggs in from the wild, with spawn fish way out in the mountains and bring those eggs back to the hatchery so we can raise them up; and the other way I interact with the hatchery when we do restoration projects and we need new fish to start a new population of cutthroat trout, we come to the hatchery here so and we get small fishes to start new start stocking streams so they can have new populations of trout on the landscape. The source of the funding of the for this projects that I work on and the hatcheries is derived from excise tax on fishing equipment and additional funding comes from New Mexico Dept of Game and Fish from the sales of fishing licenses so really the project I work on, the conservation of native cutthroat trout is entirely funded by sport fish and angler dollars.

So the work that's been done on the ground here at New Mexico Game and Fish, through both the work that I do out in the field, and at Seven Spring Hatcheries, the funding that comes from sport fish restoration funding and from license sales has been a major factor in preventing the listings of Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout under the Endangered Species Act.

Narrator

Rio Grande cutthroat trout populations suffered significant challenges over decades and has become a conservation priority for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Bryan Bakevich

The conservation for Rio Grande cutthroat trout has been very successful and the recent decision to not list the species under the Endangered Species Act has really proved that what we've been doing is really been effective and we're having an upward trend in the species getting out in the landscape and more anglers are having that opportunity to get out there and walk some beautiful country in New Mexico and have their shot at catching a really unique fish.

The opportunities for angling that we try to cultivate for the projects that I work on for the Dept of Game and Fish, those directly benefit anglers because they can go out and fish these very unique and strikingly beautiful fish, and in several places across New Mexico, they can walk a few feet or hike eight miles up into the wilderness, and there's opportunities for anglers to catch this very special fish.

Narrator

Seven Springs Hatchery operated by the NMDGF was renovated in 2001 with funding from the Wildlife

and Sport Fish Restoration Program, which continues to fund its operation and maintenance. The

hatchery is devoted to Rio Grande cutthroat trout, raising four strains of the fish which are stocked in

cold mountain streams where habitats have been renovated.

Narrator

The Rio Costilla project in northern New Mexico has been a major success in cutthroat trout

conservation. Strong partnerships and Sport Fish Restoration funding fuel that success.

Since first enacted into law by Congress in 1937, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs

have sent over \$18.6 billion to state agencies to conserve fish and wildlife. Hunters and anglers foot

the bill but everyone reaps the benefits of conservation.