

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY

TITLE: WILD AND GOLD MEDAL TROUT MANAGEMENT

Effective Date: June 6, 2019

I. PURPOSE

The Commission recognizes its responsibility to preserve, protect and maintain both native and non-native wild trout populations for the benefit of the people of Colorado and its visitors. Most mountain streams and some high lakes in Colorado support populations of wild trout. These resources are important to the integrity of Colorado's trout fisheries; as an indicator of properly functioning aquatic ecosystems; and for their intrinsic value to those seeking a unique, aesthetic, and significant fishery resource. To guarantee the continuation and availability of wild self-sustaining trout populations in the larger and more accessible waters, however, it is necessary to establish specific management guidelines. The Commission recognizes that Colorado contains a diversity of habitats which support all life stages of trout. These waters are to be managed to the extent possible to maintain these wild trout populations.

Gold Medal waters are the highest quality cold water habitats and have the capability to produce many quality size (14 inches or longer) trout. The Commission recognizes the public interest in angling, observing, and protecting these significant coldwater fishery resources. The purpose of this policy is to establish; (1) criteria Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) will use to manage Wild Trout and designate Gold Medal Waters; (2) management goals and guidelines for these waters; (3) procedures for the designation of these waters; and (4) criteria CPW will use to withdraw designation.

II. AUTHORITY

1. C.R.S. § 33-1-101 Legislative Declaration (1) "It is the policy of the state of Colorado that the wildlife and their environment are to be protected, preserved, enhanced, and managed for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of this state and its visitors."
2. C.R.S. § 33-1-104 General duties of commission. (1) The commission is responsible for all wildlife management, for licensing requirements and for the promulgation of rules, regulations and orders concerning wildlife programs.
3. C.R.S. § 33-1-105 (d) authorizes the Commission to control the capture, propagation or transport of any species of wildlife needed for the purpose of stocking the lands and waters of the state; 33-1-106 (c) C.R.S. further authorizes the Commission to control export, import, release, possession and transfer of wildlife.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Wild Trout:** A trout that completes its entire life cycle in a lake or stream.

- B. **Wild Trout Populations:** A population of trout that can sustain itself through natural reproduction and recruitment.
- C. **Wild Trout Water:** A lake or stream that contains a wild trout population.
- D. **Quality Trout:** Any trout 14 inches or longer in length.
- E. **Gold Medal Water:** A lake or stream that supports a trout standing stock of at least 60 pounds per acre, and contains an average of at least 12 quality trout per acre.

IV. **POLICY STATEMENT**

CPW will manage any stream or lake as a Wild Trout water if; 1) that habitat is capable of sustaining a wild trout populations, and 2) the primary fishery management category and objective for such water is to maintain a wild trout populations and fishery.

CPW may designate a water as Gold Medal once it has been demonstrated that the fishery consistently; (1) produces a minimum trout standing stock of 60 pounds per acre; and (2) produces a minimum average of 12 quality trout per acre. Gold Medal water designation can only be applied to waters of the State that are accessible for fishing by the general angling public.

V. **IMPLEMENTATION**

A. **WILD TROUT WATER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

CPW will manage Wild Trout waters using these guidelines:

1. Promote the protection and enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitats that perpetuate wild trout populations through cooperation with appropriate land management agencies.
2. Loss or degradation of a Wild Trout water as a result of human actions may be the basis for requesting mitigation from the person or agency contributing to that loss or degradation.
3. Special regulations may be recommended to sustain or enhance a wild trout population and provide for quality fishing opportunities.
4. CPW may stock hatchery reared fish in Wild Trout managed waters to establish or restore a wild trout population, or to provide species diversity by establishing a self-sustaining secondary wild trout fishery. Stocking of fry or fingerling size trout is preferred, but larger sizes may be used in cases where predation may preclude recruitment of smaller stocked fish.

B. **GOLD MEDAL WATER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

CPW will manage Gold Medal waters using these guidelines:

1. Promote the preservation and protection of Gold Medal waters through cooperation with appropriate land management agencies.
2. Loss or degradation of Gold Medal water as a result of human actions may be the basis for requesting mitigation from the person or agency contributing to that loss or degradation.
3. Strive to improve habitat and biological integrity of coldwater resources with the intent of providing conditions that can sustain Gold Medal populations.
4. CPW can recommend fishing regulations for purposes of maintaining or exceeding Gold Medal population criteria.
5. Trout may be stocked in Gold Medal waters to achieve or maintain Gold Medal status. Stocking of fry or fingerling size trout is preferred, but larger sizes may be used in cases where predation may preclude recruitment of smaller stocked fish.

C. GOLD MEDAL WATER DE-LISTING PROCEDURES

CPW may de-list designated Gold Medal waters when:

1. Habitat conditions are such that the trout population can no longer meet the criteria.
2. Socio-economic conditions or administrative land use changes are such that it is deemed to be in the best interests of the people of the State.

D. REPORTING

The Director, or his/her designee, will inform the Parks & Wildlife Commission at their January meeting of all waters being considered for listing and de-listing in the Gold Medal category. The Commission encourages Wild Trout management and expects CPW to manage for an increase of Gold Medal waters throughout the state.