

COLORADO WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY

Number: D-6
Title: **Wild and Gold Medal Trout Management**
Effective Date:
Revised Date: February 26, 2008

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 the Division will use to designate Wild Trout and Gold Medal Waters; (2) management goals and guidelines for these waters; and (3) procedures for the designation of these waters; and (4) criteria the Division will use to withdraw designation.

WILD TROUT WATERS

DEFINITIONS

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

Wild Trout Populations: A population of trout that can sustain itself through natural reproduction and recruitment.

Wild Trout Water: A lake or stream that contains a wild trout population.

DESIGNATION OF WILD TROUT WATERS

- a. The Division may designate any stream or lake as a Wild Trout water if; (1) that habitat is capable of sustaining a wild trout population; and (2) the primary fishery management objective for such waters is to maintain a wild trout population and fishery.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The Division will manage Wild Trout waters using these guidelines:

- a. Promote the protection and enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitats that perpetuate wild trout populations through cooperation with appropriate land management agencies.
- b. Loss or degradation of a Wild Trout water as a result of human actions will be the basis for requesting mitigation.
- c. Special regulations may be recommended to sustain or enhance a wild trout population and provide for quality fishing opportunities.
- d. The Division may stock hatchery reared fish in designated Wild Trout 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.

DE-LISTING PROCEDURES

The Division may withdraw Wild Trout designation when:

- a. The trout population is no longer self-sustaining through natural reproduction.
- b. The primary management objective for the water is no longer for wild trout due to changes in biological, environmental, or social priorities.

GOLD MEDAL WATERS

DEFINITIONS

Quality Trout: Any trout 14 inches or longer in length.

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.

DESIGNATION OF GOLD MEDAL WATERS

The Division may designate a water as Gold Medal once it has been demonstrated that the fishery consistently meets the following criteria:

- a. Produces a minimum trout standing stock of 60 pounds per acre

- b. 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.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The Division will manage Gold Medal waters using these guidelines:

- a. Promote the preservation and protection of Gold Medal waters through cooperation with appropriate land management agencies.
- b. Loss or degradation of Gold Medal water as a result of man's actions will be the basis for requests for mitigation.
- c. Strive to improve habitat and biological integrity of coldwater resources with the intent of providing conditions that can sustain Gold Medal populations.
- d. The Division can recommend fishing regulations for purposes of maintaining or exceeding Gold Medal population criteria.
- e. 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.

DE-LISTING PROCEDURES

The Division may de-list designated Gold Medal waters when:

- a. Habitat conditions are such that the trout population can no longer meet the criteria.
- b. 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.

REPORTING

The Division will annually update a list of designated Wild Trout waters. The Director will inform the Wildlife Commission at their January meeting of all waters being considered for listing and de-listing in the Gold Medal categories. The Commission encourages Wild Trout waters to be designated and expects the Division to manage for an increase of Gold Medal waters throughout the state.