

# 2023



# HERITAGE AND WILD TROUT PROGRAM

California Department of Fish and Wildlife





# Heritage & Wild Trout Program

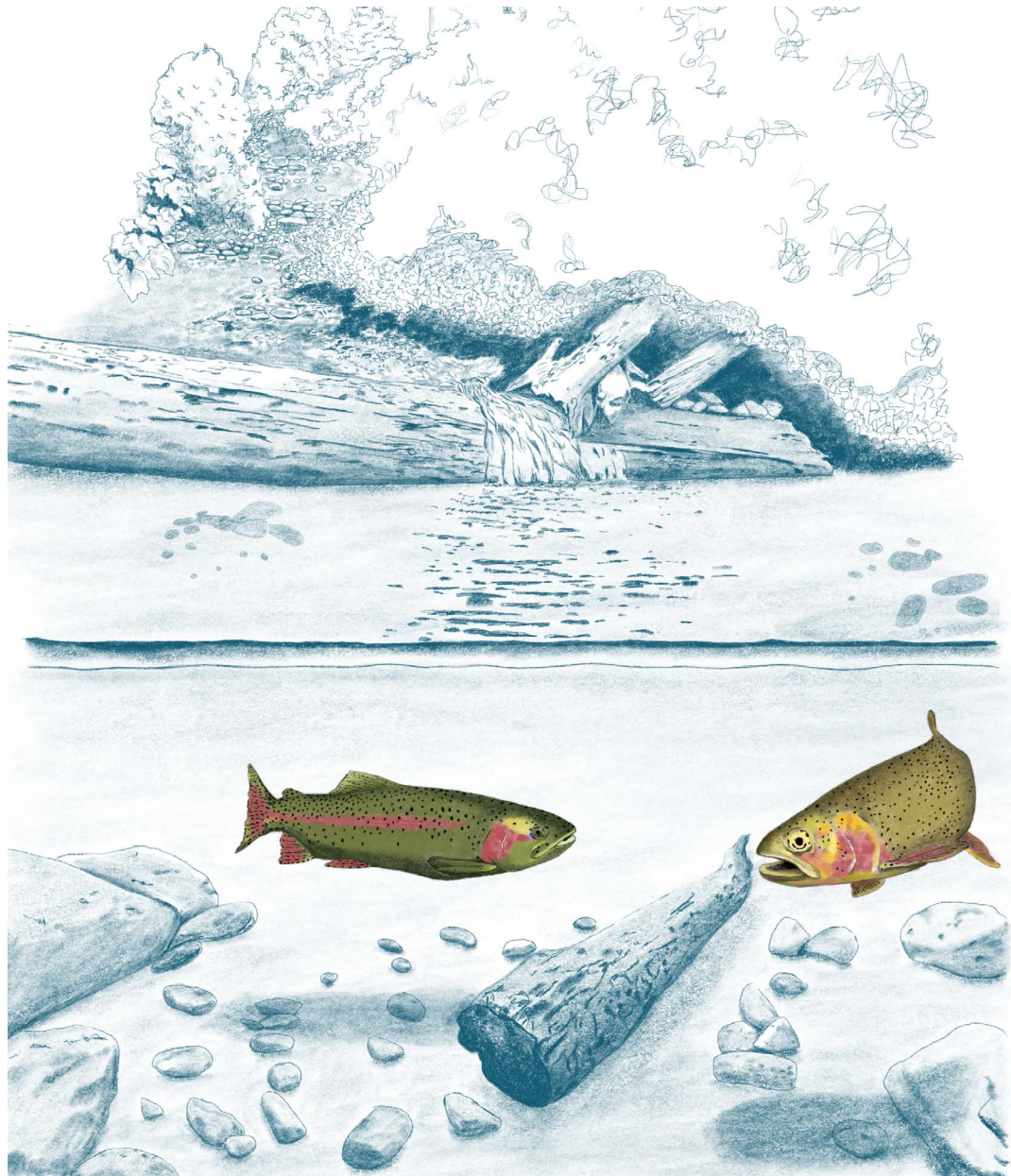
## 2023 Annual Report in Numbers

### RESOURCE ASSESSMENT & FISHERY MONITORING

- **43 Waters** visited
- Over **50 stream miles** and **7 lakes** surveyed
- Over **12,000 trout** captured/observed
- **9 native trout** species monitored
- **Fish Creek** and the **Hilton Lakes** complex designated as **Wild Trout Waters**

### HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

- **1 Lahontan Cutthroat Trout** restoration project
- **2 McCloud Redband** habitat improvement projects



### POPULATION MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

- **2** Strategic Plans Finalized
- **10** Fishery Management Guidelines drafted



### PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- **7** Fishing club presentations
- **2** Sport shows
- **1** Kids fishing day



### RESEARCH

- **3** Genetics studies
- **1** Temperature study
- **1** Sonar study





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Heritage and Wild Trout Program consists of fisheries biologists throughout the state working on all aspects of California's numerous and diverse wild and heritage trout fisheries. This includes preserving sport fisheries through regulations, conservation actions, restoration projects, and public outreach to promote wild trout conservation and management. This report summarizes all activities completed during the 2023 calendar year, including fieldwork conducted in dozens of watersheds, development of fisheries management guidelines, designation of Wild Trout Waters, and engagement with the public. This document is intended for publication on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website to showcase the extensive work completed by the program, promote collaboration with our partners, and support accountability and transparency.

The 2022/2023 winter was one of California's highest water years on record. Higher flows have helped improve habitat by reducing sedimentation in many watersheds impacted by drought and wildfire. Although trout numbers have not fully recovered, the habitat has greatly improved in parts of the Little Kern River and several native Rainbow Trout watersheds in Southern California.

A primary focus of the 2023 season was continuing to support the Inland Deserts Region's multiyear Lahontan Cutthroat Trout restoration project on Silver Creek (Mono county). The project used labor-intensive dewatering techniques to improve electrofishing efficiency and subsequent success of non-native trout removals. Although the entire restoration section was electrofished, the high

flows prevented full dewatering in a few higher gradient sections. In total only 47 Brook Trout were detected and removed from the entire restoration section, a reduction from 5,341 in 2022.

Surveys included monitoring and responding to two major setbacks for native trout conservation. In 2023 Brown Trout were detected above the Templeton Fish Barrier in the South Fork Kern River, where a decades long non-native trout removal project occurred from the 1960s to early 2000s. Future surveys will be needed to determine how they passed the barrier, the extent of their distribution, and their impacts to California Golden Trout. Additionally, CDFW has been involved in a multi-agency mechanical removal effort to minimize the impacts of a recent reintroduction of Rainbow Trout into the lower section of Silver King Creek.

The Heritage and Wild Trout Program is mandated to propose at least 25 miles of stream and one lake annually to be designated as Wild and/or Heritage Trout Waters. In 2023 Fish

Creek (Fresno and Madera Counties) was designated from its confluence with the Middle Fork San Joaquin River upstream to its headwaters including Sharktooth Creek. Additionally, the previously designated Hilton Lakes were consolidated to a single Wild Trout Water and expanded to include the entire watershed, now referred to as the Hilton Lakes Complex Wild Trout Water.

