he Lahontan cutthroat trout is a distinctive subspecies of cutthroat trout native to the western Great Basin. These fish are recognized by their generally yellowish coloration, heavy black spotting, and red slash marks under the jaw. Lahontan cutthroats historically occurred in a wide variety of stream and lake habitats, ranging from terminal alkaline lakes, such as Pyramid and Walker Lakes, to the clear alpine waters of Lake Tahoe and Independence Lake. They were found in large, low gradient rivers, such as the Humboldt River and Prosser Creeks. Lahontan cutthroat trout are most plentiful in large, low gradient rivers, such as the Humboldt River and Prosser Creeks. Lahontan cutthroat trout are native to the Great Basin watersheds in eastern California, southern Oregon, and northern Nevada. In California, they were found only in the Carson, Walker, Truckee, and Susan River drainages on the east-side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In 1949, their distribution included 21 lake populations occupying approximately 324,000 acres of lakes and other populations living in more than 3,600 miles of streams. Today, there are approximately 79 lakes and streams that still contain Lahontan cutthroat within their historical ranges and an additional nine creeks outside of their historic sales ranges.

**ABUNDANCE:** Lahontan cutthroat populations in California most likely contain less than 200 adult fish each. Definitive population estimates for Lahontans are lacking, but it is estimated that they occupy less than 10% of their original stream habitat and less than 10% (0.4%) of their original lake habitat. Lahontan cutthroat populations in California likely total only a few hundred fish age one and older. There is only one self-sustaining wild lake population of Lahontan cutthroat trout in California; located in Independence Lake.

**FACtORS AFFECTING STatus:** The threat to Lahontan cutthroat trout include, (1) non-native fish introductions which create problems of competition, predation and hybridization; (2) overfishing during the 19th and early 20th centuries; (3) water diversions; (4) impacts to habitat from overgrazing, logging, and development; and (5) loss of genetic diversity. Re-introductions of Lahontan cutthroat can only be made to streams and lakes from which non-native trout have been eliminated, indicating that interactions with alien trout are the single biggest factor in their decline.

**sTAtus:** Lahontan cutthroat trout have a high likelihood of extinction in California within 50 to 100 years. They are listed as threatened in both federal and state Endangered Species Acts. As of 1999, ten populations of Lahontan cutthroat had been reestablished in their native range in California, however all but one suffer from geographic isolation and small population size. Hatchery propagation of Lahontan cutthroat has been ongoing since 1939 and continues today with releases of approximately 50,000 fish a year. Habitat alteration, abundant alien trout, and the loss of inter-connected populations has left managers trying to recover a species with very little habitat available for re-introductions.

**Conservation reCommendaTions:** Conservation challenges for the Lahontan cutthroat include determining suitable remaining habitats for re-introduction, habitat restoration, and elimination of competing species of trout from reintroduction watersheds. Continued management efforts are necessary to maintain the genetic diversity of Lahontan cutthroat trout, since wild populations are no longer inter-connected due to dams, diversions and urbanization.

**cATEGORIES**

- **Range:** Occupies multiple watersheds in California, but they are not connected.
- **Population size:** Wild populations have less than 1,000 fish each.
- **Intervention needs:** Hatchery programs using wild brood stock are required for survival.
- **Recovery needs:** They are fairly long-lived, breed multiple times and demonstrate broad physiological tolerances.
- **Genetic risk:** Hybridization risk and loss of genetic variation is well documented.
- **Climate change:** Lahontan cutthroat vulnerable to climate change in all watersheds inhabited.
- **Reliability:** Reports concerning this risk level are found in published scientific literature.

**Present**

**Historic Range Of Lahontan Cutthroat Trout**

**California Trout**

**California Trout is There for the Fish!**

In 1999, California Trout worked with the California Department of Fish and Game to establish the Heritage Trout Program to protect the state’s native trout and steelhead. Hixton Lake and the Upper Truckee River are included in the Heritage Trout Program, both of which are home to the Lahontan cutthroat trout.