



California Golden Trout
(Oncorhynchus mykiss aguabonita)
Literature Review

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Executive Summary

The California golden trout, *Onchorhynchus mykiss spp.*, is California's state freshwater fish and considered a species of special concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Golden trout have become widely distributed throughout the United States, but are endemic to only two small watersheds in the Sierra Nevada of California where they are threatened by a multitude of factors (Stephens et al. 2004). There are two subspecies of golden trout: *Onchorhynchus mykiss aguabonita* is native to the headwaters of the South Fork of the Kern River (SFKR) and Golden Trout Creek (GTC), and *Onchorhynchus mykiss whitei* is native to the Little Kern River (LKR) (Knapp and Dudley, 1990). These watersheds are located within the Golden Trout Wilderness that was created in 1978 to provide protection specifically for golden trout. This species faces many severe ecological and anthropogenic threats which include genetic hybridization with non-native rainbow trout (*Onchorhynchus mykiss*), predation by introduced brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), interspecific competition, and degraded habitat due to livestock grazing (Stephens et al. 2004).

There is currently a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process underway to evaluate and decide under what conditions, if any, should cattle grazing be permitted within the Golden Trout Wilderness. This report will synthesize pertinent academic, federal, and scientific documents to address our current understanding of the health and condition of golden trout, the current state of science, the projected impacts of climate change, the status of government management plans, the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and identify significant gaps in knowledge to enhance populations of golden trout within the Golden Trout Wilderness on behalf of California Trout's Eastern Sierra Regional Program.