

# The time for band-aids has passed

by [Chris Wood](#), Trout Unlimited CEO

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Someone recently said to me, “Trout Unlimited should get out of political issues such as climate change and focus instead on what it does best—fixing streams!” Here is a secret... everything we do at Trout Unlimited helps our rivers, streams and fisheries withstand the harmful effects of climate change.

When we protect the highest quality sources of cold and clean water; reconnect those areas downstream; and restore streams we are helping to recover nature’s resilience to the more intense floods, more frequent and damaging fires, and prolonged drought brought on by climate change.



TU scientists and collaborators [predict](#) a 47 percent decline in total suitable habitat for trout in the interior west by 2080 because of the changing climate. Native cutthroat trout are estimated to lose 58 percent *more* habitat due to thermal stress and negative interactions with non-native trout. These predictions are affirmed by [recent research](#) published in the journal, Restoration Ecology, that predicts brown trout could competitively displace brook trout from key thermal refuge habitats. Thus, it will be more difficult for brook trout to withstand increasing temperatures, especially when they share their waters with non-native brown trout.

Salmon will not fare better. For example, scientists from the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station predict that sockeye salmon returning to spawn will face a 5–16 percent increase in “thermal exposure.” That means that while there will certainly be suitable habitat for migratory salmon in most rivers, some reaches will prove lethally warm for these iconic fish.

Trout and salmon anglers should be the strongest advocates for our efforts to help salmon and steelhead adapt to climate change. That alone, however, is not enough. Just as we learned in the 1990s that we

had to move from the stream to the watershed scale to recover trout and salmon, we must reduce carbon emissions to slow climate change.

For this reason, Trout Unlimited is supporting passage of common sense legislation such as the [Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act](#). The bill would put a fee on fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas. The fee starts low and would grow over time. This will drive down carbon pollution because energy companies, leading industries, and American consumers will move toward cleaner, cheaper options.



The collected fees will not sit in Treasury. Every American taxpayer will receive a share of the amount collected. Most important, it would yield a 40 percent reduction in carbon emissions over the next 12 years.

Make no mistake, we will double down on making communities and landscapes more [resilient to the effects of climate change](#), and do so in a way that benefits wild and native coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. At the same time, we will work very hard with our many partners and members and supporters to pass federal legislation that slows the causes of climate change.

A generation ago, acid rain causing sulfur dioxide emissions threatened the health of our fisheries. Trout Unlimited volunteers, scientists and staff advocated for a market-based legislative solution. The result was the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. The legislation's cap and trade approach contributed to dramatic reductions for acid rain causing sulfur dioxide emissions.



Some were skeptical of cap and trade in 1990. Some will be skeptical of new legislation to control carbon emissions now. Just as with the amendments to the Clean Air Act in 1990, we are at the start of a long legislative process—a process that we must begin and finish. The time for band-aids has passed. Nothing less than the future of trout and salmon; the future of fishing—the future for our children is at stake.