

URBAN RIVER RESTORATION

by Todd Fehr

In 2005, the Denver Chapter of Trout Unlimited (DTU) embarked on a journey to complete a river restoration project within our home waters. Meandering through the Denver-metro area, the urban section of the South Platte River was an unlikely candidate for any other chapter—not considered a cold-water environment and distressed from decades of development and habitat degradation. But what the urban South Platte River lacks as a fishery it makes up for through its proximity to Denver's urban core, providing young people and the greater Denver-metro community an opportunity to experience a real river ecosystem in their own backyard.

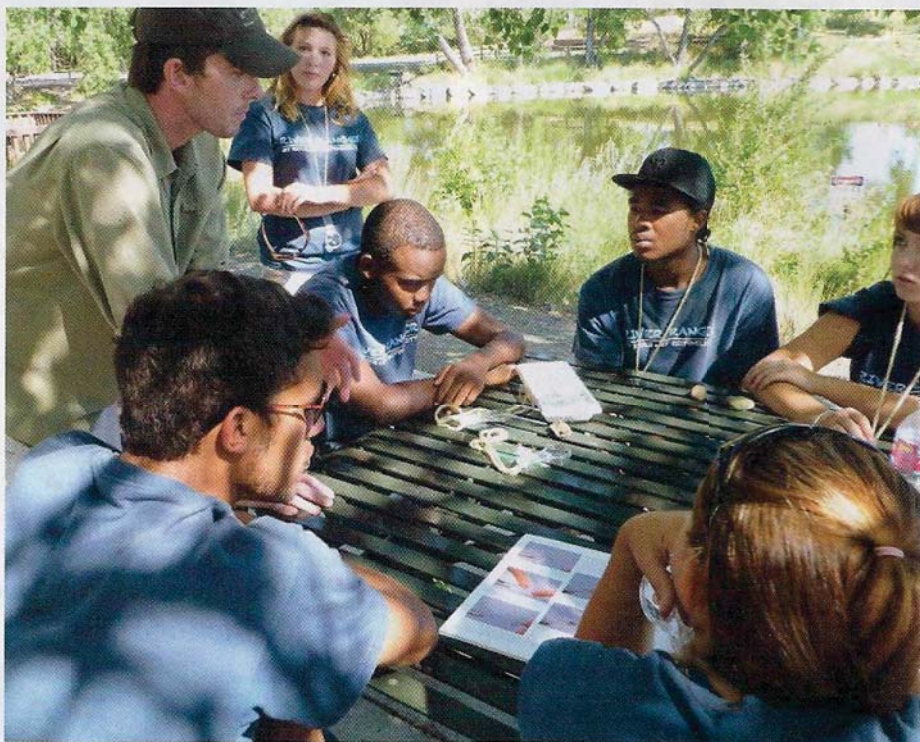
The challenges presented by the river's condition along with concerns about working on a project outside of our cold water focus made some members hesitant, but they quickly threw their support behind the effort after realizing the benefits of this project to the local community and to sustaining our chapter's river conservation efforts long into the future. The idea was simple: incrementally restore a river and expose as many people possible to angling and recreation opportunities close to home, and cultivate respect for Colorado's most valuable natural resources: water, free-flowing rivers, and the fish and wildlife that depend on these places for survival.

After two years of meetings, gaining permissions and clarifying our concept, we chose a site for our first series of restoration projects to demonstrate and prove the viability of our restoration concepts. South Platte Park, part of Littleton's South Suburban Parks and Recreation, was perfect: located in a large open space park and closest to the cool, if fickle water that flows from Chatfield Reservoir's outlet.

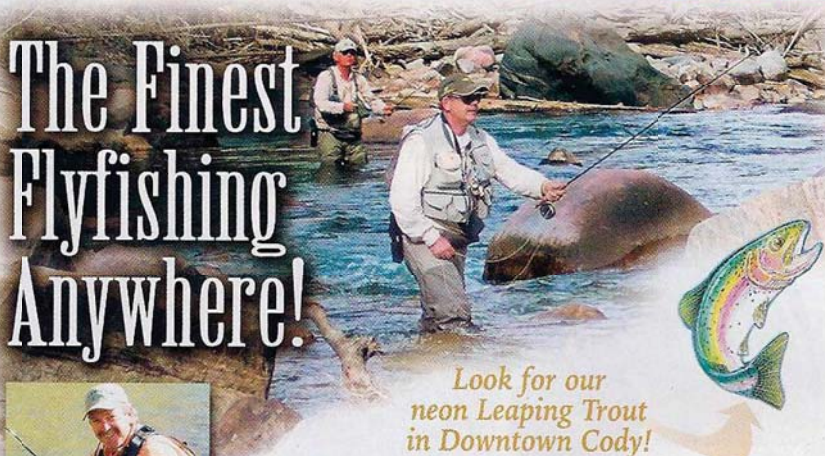
As designed by longtime TU partner Ecological Resource Consultants, the demonstration project's main features consist of bank stabilization to reduce sediment, the enhancement of an existing connection to an adjoining lake that serves as a place of refuge during extremely high and low flows, and riffle and pool sequences located in front of a new handicapped-accessible fishing pier adjacent to the existing Carson Nature Center.

The total cost of design and construction for the demonstration projects is estimated at almost \$500,000. As this issue goes to press, DTU is proud to announce that our project has just received a Fishing is Fun Grant for \$80,580 to cover a portion of the costs for one of the demonstration projects. That funding was a keystone that provided the catalyst needed for other members of the partnership to fund the balance of design and construction.

Hopefully, DTU will complete our first urban restoration demonstration project by the end of 2011. Eventually, our goal is to improve 20 stream miles of the urban South Platte. To learn more about the urban South Platte project and for frequent updates, along with opportunities to get involved, visit DTU's website: www.dentertu.org.



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