

# Vail Daily



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## Trout Unlimited revives Vail Valley chapter

Vail Valley organization already working on conservation projects

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VAIL VALLEY, Colorado — Rivers may look alike on maps, but the people who fish those Vail Valley streams know better. That's one reason the Eagle Valley has its own Trout Unlimited chapter again.

Trout Unlimited, an organization dedicated to preserving and protecting coldwater fisheries around the county, has had a presence in Eagle County almost since its founding 50 years ago. In fact, the local chapter was among the first 10 created in the country.

But a little more than a decade ago, the chapters for the Eagle Valley, Roaring Fork Valley and Garfield County merged, in order to combine fundraising and lobbying efforts.

It was that group Alex Schaefer, a local financial adviser, joined a few years ago. But as he became more involved with the group, it became more apparent to Schaefer and others that the Eagle Valley might need a chapter to call its own again.

"We have two very distinct watersheds with different issues in this valley and the Roaring Fork," Schaefer said. "Our watershed may need more work, or help, with the (Eagle) mine here."

Since deciding to revive the valley-specific Trout Unlimited chapter, Schaefer — the group's president — and others have worked to both build membership and get involved in local issues and projects. The group has already joined groups including the Eagle River Watershed Council, the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District and the Colorado Division of Wildlife on various projects, and has signed on as a supporter of a plan to preserve land on the Colorado River Ranch.

So far, the local chapter has been well received by local anglers.

"About half of our local membership wants to be active in what we do," board member Nick Rader said. That membership includes local fishing shops. Rader said keeping the shops involved is critical to getting people on the rivers, and bringing in people to help with various projects and events.

The group has already organized a handful of events, including a couple of fundraisers and local showings of fishing- and conservation-related movies.

"About 60 people showed up at the first one," Rader said. And more than 150 people showed up at a recent "Fat Tire and Fish Stories" event.

As the group raises funds, Rader and Schaefer said they want people to know that money raised locally will be used for local projects, from habitat protection to getting more youngsters involved in the sport.

"The more folks we can engage and get interested in the sport is more energy that can be put into our watershed," Schaefer said.

While the new chapter is active, and actively looking for more members and more projects to become involved in, Schaefer said the group will stay out of politics as much as possible.

"We're leaving that to the state chapter for now," Rader said.

As the Vail Valley heads into the season when all but the most ardent anglers hit the rivers, the local Trout

Unlimited chapter is already working on projects for next year.

At the top of the list is a chapter meeting in January, followed in the spring by a fund-raiser.

"The energy we've had so far has been great," Schaefer said. "We're really starting to get wheels under this thing."

**On the Web**

[www.eaglevalleytu.org](http://www.eaglevalleytu.org)

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