

Rifle Gap Reservoir Fishery Management



CPW's fish management efforts, including non-native fish removal, allow for the stocking of a variety of cool, cold and warmwater sportfish while at the same time conserving Colorado's native fish

Rifle Gap Reservoir Management Overview

- In 2013, working with multiple partners, CPW installed a fish screen on Rifle Creek immediately downstream from the reservoir as required by an approved *Rifle Gap Lake Management Plan*. CPW finalized the plan in 2015 in cooperation with the *Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program*. You can find the plan at www.cpw.state.co.us.
- The screen is effective at keeping non-native predatory fish that have escaped from the reservoir - including Northern Pike, Smallmouth Bass and Walleye - from traveling downstream into critical, native fish habitat in the Colorado River.
- Regardless of the screen, removal of non-native fish will continue as prescribed by the *Rifle Gap Lake Management Plan* because of the potential for screen failure or the potential for someone moving fish illegally.
- With the screen in place and the approved *Rifle Gap Lake Management Plan*, CPW has the ability to stock desirable cool/warmwater sportfish for the first time in 50 years, including Yellow Perch, Black Crappie and triploid (sterile) Walleye.

2019 Rifle Gap Fishery Management Plans

- To allow the stocking of the cool/warmwater sportfish species mentioned above, the *Rifle Gap Lake Management Plan* requires CPW to complete several actions described below:
 - Conduct a *Spring Targeted Walleye Project* (March-April) to target and remove ripe, female Walleye using gill nets along the dam. The work in 2019 will be the final year of this three-year project.
 - Complete *Spring* (April-June) and *Fall* (September-October) *Standardized Surveys*, lasting approximately one day each.
 - Remove Northern Pike and Smallmouth Bass collected during the *Spring Targeted Walleye Project* and *Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys*, then donate the larger fish to licensed anglers and/or to the needy, when possible.
 - Replace fertile Walleye with triploid (sterile) Walleye. Sterile fish look and taste the same as fertile fish, but sterile fish cannot reproduce. This helps reduce a threat to native fish by keeping Walleye populations from expanding.
- CPW will donate removed Walleye to licensed anglers on a first-come, first-served basis during a *CPW Fish Give-Away* event hosted by Rifle Gap State Park. Date and time to be announced.
- CPW is working with Colorado State University to collect age, growth, diet and other information from Walleye collected in 2019. **NO** additional Walleye will be lethally removed for this research.

2019 Rifle Gap Stocking Plans - Subject to change (*Detailed stocking reports available at www.cpw.state.co.us*)

Species	Size	Total Fish	Estimated Time
Triploid (sterile) Walleye	1.2"	36,000	May - June
Black Crappie	2.0"	6,200	September
Rainbow Trout	10.0"	18,305	End of June, then July, Aug., Sept.

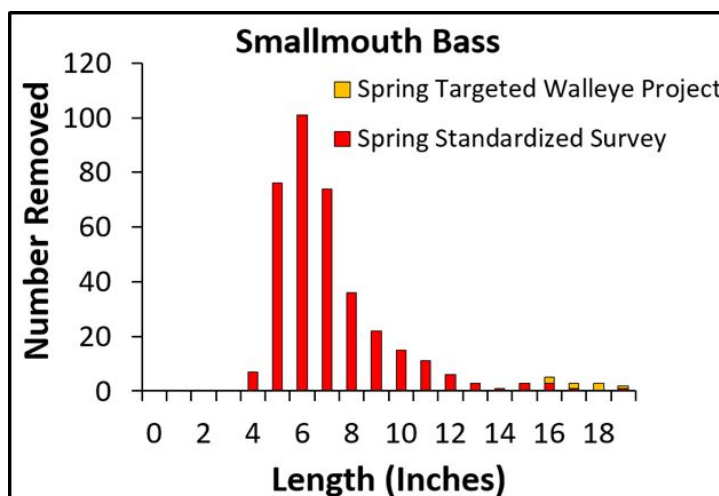
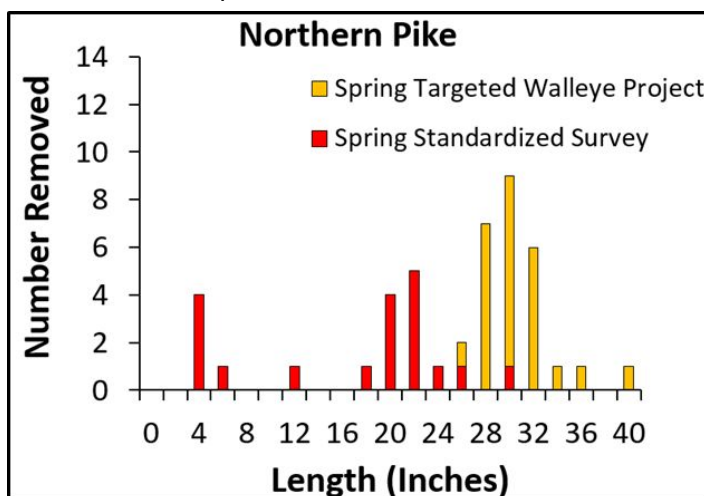
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2018 Sampling Results

Walleye, Northern Pike, and Smallmouth Bass Handled in 2018 During Spring Targeted Walleye Project and Spring Standardized Survey	#	Length Range (inches)	Weight Range (pounds)	Disposition
Ripe, Female Walleye (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	57	17.8 - 27.9	2.1 - 8.4	Lethally removed
Male and Non-ripe Female Walleye (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	58	15.4 - 32.0	1.2 - 16.5	52 released alive, 6 died in nets
Walleye (Spring Standardized Survey)	46	1.3 - 30.6	0.01 - 8.1	39 released alive, 7 died during sampling
Northern Pike (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	25	24.4 - 39.2	3.9 - 17.5	Lethally removed
Northern Pike (Spring Standardized Survey)	19	3.0 - 29.8	0.01 - 6.4	Lethally removed
Smallmouth Bass (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	8	15.8 - 18.6	2.4 - 3.6	Lethally removed
Smallmouth Bass (Spring Standardized Survey)	360	3.2 - 18.6	0.02 - 2.9	Lethally removed

Graphs show the numbers and sizes of Northern Pike (left) and Smallmouth Bass (right) surveyed and lethally removed from Rifle Gap Reservoir in 2018 during the *Spring Targeted Walleye Project* and the *Spring Standardized Survey*. The *Fall Standardized Survey* was not conducted in 2018 due to low water levels.



For more information about the Rifle Gap fishery, contact CPW Area Aquatic Biologist Ben Felt at 970-255-6126 or benjamin.felt@state.co.us

To read the *Rifle Gap Lake Management Plan*, visit: cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/RifleGapReservoirManagement.aspx

For more information on the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, visit: coloradoriverrecovery.org