

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.

2018 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 2018 will be the second-year phase of this three-year project, ending in 2019.
 - 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 2018 - 19. **NO** additional walleye will be lethally removed for this research.

2018 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"	3,275	September
Rainbow Trout	10.0"	15,781	End of June, then July, Aug., Sept.
Rainbow Trout	11.6"	1,470	Feb. 9, 2018

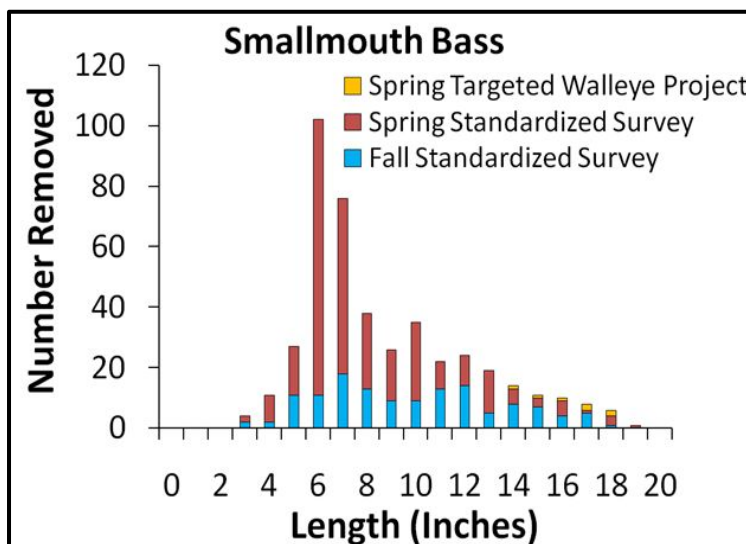
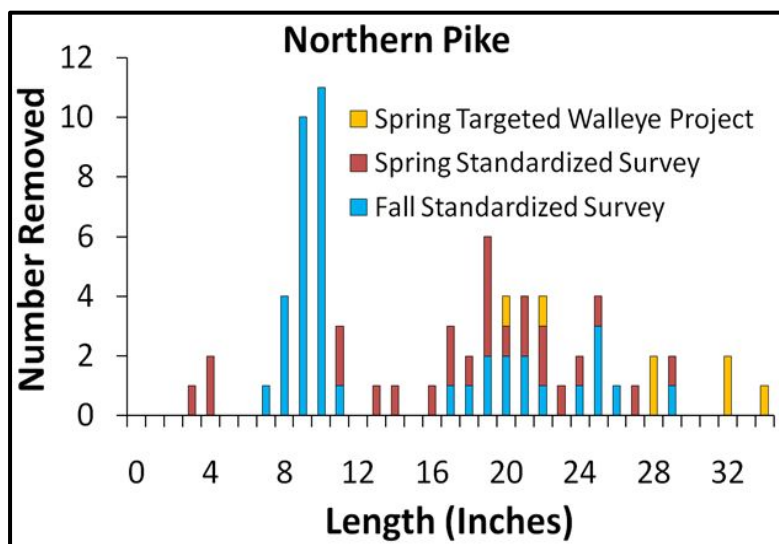
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2017 Sampling Results

Walleye, Northern Pike, and Smallmouth Bass Handled in 2017 During Spring Targeted Walleye Project and Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys	#	Length Range (inches)	Weight Range (pounds)	Disposition
Ripe, Female Walleye (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	87	18.5 – 29.6	2.4 – 10.6	Lethally removed
Male and Non-ripe Female Walleye (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	58	14.3 – 26.9	0.9 – 10.1	50 released alive, 8 died in nets
Walleye (Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys)	33	5.9 – 27.8	0.05 – 9.5	26 released alive, 7 died in nets
Northern Pike (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	7	19.5 – 33.1	1.3 – 10.1	Lethally removed
Northern Pike (Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys)	68	2.9 – 28.9	0.06 – 7.1	Lethally removed
Smallmouth Bass (Spring Targeted Walleye Project)	7	13.5 – 17.5	1.3 – 3.4	Lethally removed
Smallmouth Bass (Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys)	427	2.2 – 19.0	0.01 – 3.2	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 2017 during the *Spring Targeted Walleye Project* and *Spring and Fall Standardized Surveys*.



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