**General Information:** The Animas River provides “Gold Medal” trout fishing opportunities for primarily brown and rainbow trout in the heart of Durango. Public access is very good for bank, wade, or float fishing on this 7 mile reach of river.

**Location:** La Plata County. Reach starts at approximately 32nd Street Bridge in Durango and extends downstream to the Rivera Crossing Bridge at Dallabetta City Park.  

**Primary Management:** Coldwater angling

**Survey Data:** [Angler Use and Fish Sampling Info](#)

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| - Seven miles of public access for shore or wade angling at numerous access sites along the Animas Riverwalk  
- Four public boating access points for deployment or pickup of small rafts or boats  
- Seasonal restrooms available at Schneider Park  
- Guided wade or float fishing available from several local guide services.  
- For additional info about local amenities and services, visit the Durango web site at: www.durangogov.org | 32nd Street Bridge to Lightner Creek  
Standard bag limits (4 trout per day) are in effect in this reach. Use of bait (see definition in regulation brochure) is permissible.  
Lightner Creek confluence to Rivera Crossing Bridge  
Designated Gold Medal reach. Artificial Flies and Lures only. Trout bag limit is 2 fish 16 inches or longer. | **Rainbow Trout**  
- Historically, most common species making up about 70 percent of angler catch  
- Spawn in mid March to mid-April  
**Brown Trout**  
- Make up about 25 percent of angler catch  
- Spawn in mid October through mid November  
**Cutthroat Trout**  
- Very limited survival of native cutthroat trout |

**Previous Stocking**

**2014**  
Rainbow Trout, 2,400 10 inch trout and 20,000 fingerlings  
Brown Trout, 20,000 fingerlings

**2015**  
Rainbow Trout (cutbows), 2,500 10 inch and 20,000 fingerlings  
Brown Trout, 39,300 fingerlings
Animas River in Durango

32nd St. Bridge

9th Street Bridge

Lightner Creek confluence

Rivera Bridge Crossing (behind Home Depot)

Boat (raft and drift) launches/retrievals at 32nd and 9th streets plus High Bridge (160/550) and Dallabetta Park (Rivera Bridge; upstream to downstream)

Standard regulation water from 32nd to Lightner Ck. Gold Medal water between Lightner and Rivera Bridge

Animas River trail provides access along most of the river starting at 32nd Street Bridge and ending around Rivera Bridge
Animas River in Durango

ANGLER USE AND FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

Jim White—Aquatic Biologist
Durango Service Center

- Latest angler survey was done in 2012. 115 anglers were interviewed on the Gold Medal Reach. Of an estimated 5,193 trout caught from mid-June to mid-October, 79% were rainbows and 17% brown trout. 98% of the fish captured were released. In the Standard Bag Reach, 80 anglers were contacted. An estimated 5,927 trout were caught of which 76% were rainbows and 23% brown trout. Anglers released 98% of what they caught. Overall, angler numbers were about the same as in the last survey done in 1997.

- Minimum standard for Gold Medal designation is trout biomass must be >60 lbs/ac and contain 12 fish >14 inches/ac (red line on graphs at left).

- Gold Medal Reach meets biomass criteria but not quality of fish criteria (graph at left).

- The number of quality fish in the Animas has fallen since 2006.

- Rainbow trout (RBT) make up the majority of the trout population. Rainbow numbers have increased in the Gold Medal Reach while brown trout (LOC) as a percent of catch have decreased (graph in next panel).

- Most rainbow trout are not living past their first year in the river. Brown trout are also not recruiting in sufficient numbers to maintain the quality sized fish expected in a Gold Medal fishery.

- Trout populations and demographics measured in 2014 before the Gold King Mine (GKM) Spill are similar to those measured after the GKM Spill in 2015 (see graphs above).

- Native coldwater mottled sculpin showed no reduction in either numbers or age classes before the GKM Spill compared to after the GKM Spill.

- 2015 trout fry surveys suggest very little natural reproduction in the Animas River.

Management Notes — Fish populations in the Animas River are primarily sustained though annual stocking of fingerling rainbow and brown trout. Stocking is necessary because dissolved heavy metals from past mining operations occurring primarily in Silverton limit the survival of trout eggs. A whirling disease resistant rainbow trout has been stocked since 2008. These fish have not survived well from year to year but it is unknown if it is the fish or habitat conditions in the Animas River. This same strain of rainbow has done relatively well in some areas and poorly in others. Larger brown trout were stocked in 2015 to try and increase recruitment of these fish. The Animas River will be re-surveyed again this year as part of the POST GKM Spill response looking at possible chronic effects from the spill.
Photos (from right hand corner clockwise): Gold King Mine spill, large brown trout post GKM, native bluehead sucker post GKM, electrofishing raft and shocking crew, River Closed sign due to GKM spill, electrofishing crew looking at disturbed sediments on the Animas River.