



Animas River, Durango

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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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. [Animas River Map and Access Information](#)

Primary Management: Coldwater angling

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

Amenities

- 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 29th St., VFW Parking Lot, Cundiff, Schneider, Santa Riata, & Dallabetta Parks
- 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

Regulations

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.

Previous Stocking

2019

Rainbow Trout, 3202 10 inch and 22,976 fingerlings (GRR)

Brown Trout, 24,960 fingerlings

Cutthroat Trout, 1269 10 inch fish (+10,050 fingerlings)

2020

Rainbow Trout, 1,018 10 inch and 50 20 inch fish (March), 27,438 fingerlings

Brown Trout, 40,200 fingerlings

2021

3,000 10-12 inch RBT and 46,179 fingerling RBT. 15,795 Brown Trout fingerlings

Sportfishing Notes

Rainbow Trout

- Historically, most common species making up about 70 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid March to mid-April

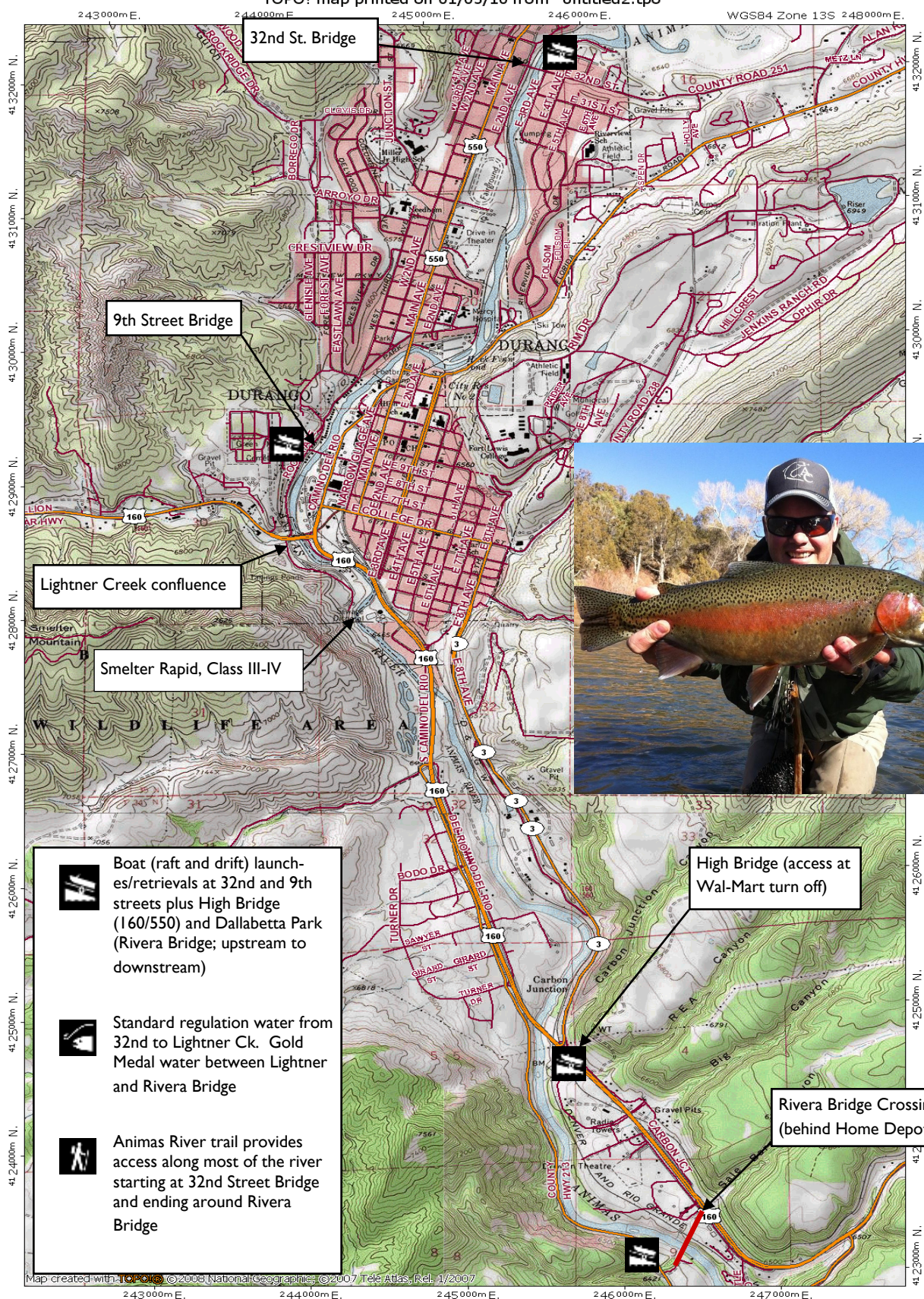
Brown Trout

- Make up about 25 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid October through mid November

Cutthroat Trout

- Very limited survival of native cutthroat trout but CPW does stock some retired broodstock occasionally

Animas River in Durango

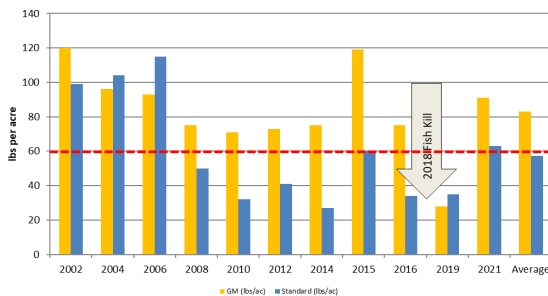


Animas River in Durango

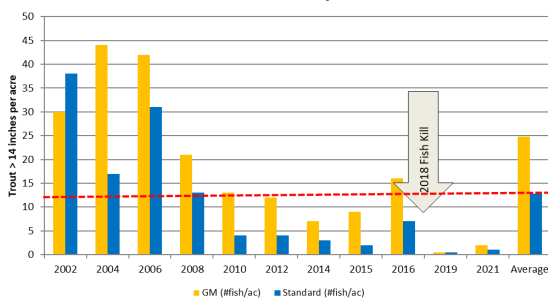
ANGLER USE AND FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

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Durango Service Center

Trout Biomass



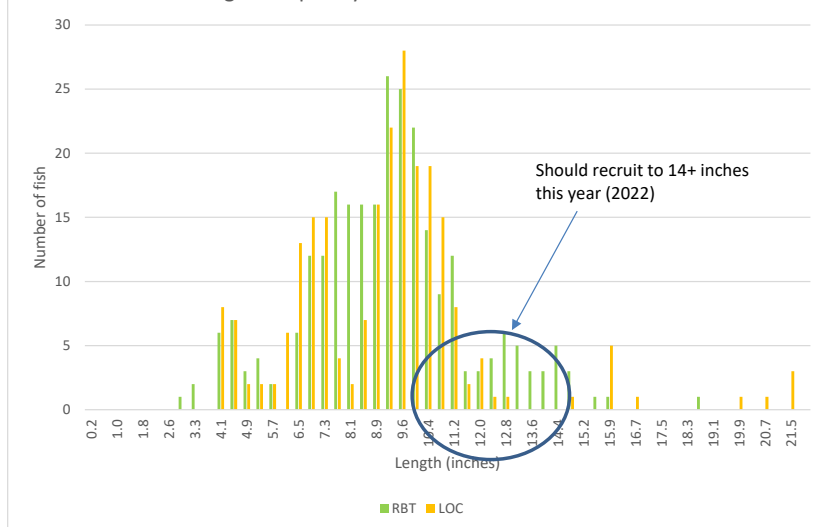
Trout Quality



- The Gold King Mine spill in 2015 had no discernable effect on the fish populations in the Animas River.
- The 416 Fire in 2018 created heavy ash and debris flows after the first summer thunderstorms. A significant fish kill (80% or more) occurred in the Animas River. However, the river has been restocked and is fishing well.
- Creel census suggest most angler catch and release their fish. Estimated catch was approx. 6,000 fish. 79% were rainbows and 17% browns. 98% of the fish captured were released.
- 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 meet the biomass but not the quality standard in 2021. Not unexpected given the fish die off from the 416 Fire and time it takes to naturally grow a trout to 14 inches.
- Anglers report good fishing in the Animas on stocked and carry-over Rainbow Trout and a few larger Brown Trout.

2021 Fish Survey

2021 Length Frequency of Trout in the Gold Medal Section

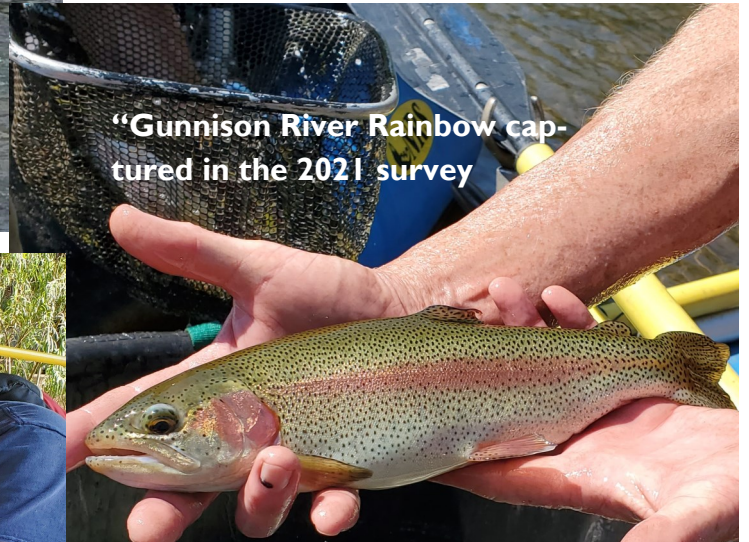


- Rainbow Trout ranged from 3 to 18.5 inches (see length frequency charts at left) while browns ranged from 4 to 21.5 inches.
- Despite the 2018 fish kill, larger Brown Trout were still present in the Animas River and there is a large cohort of Rainbow Trout moving into the 14+ inch size class this year
- Native coldwater mottled sculpin, a favorite prey item for larger Brown Trout, showed an 80% decrease in abundance but rebounded to normal densities in 2021.
- CPW is using wild Rainbow Trout that developed whirling resistance on their own to restock the Animas River. These fish appear to be surviving from one year to the next and contributing to the larger size classes.

Management Notes — Natural reproduction by trout is limited in the Animas River. Dissolved heavy metals from legacy mining in Silverton, sediment runoff from the streets of Durango, and fine silt from the nearby Mancos Shale formations effect the survival of trout eggs. Fish populations in the Animas River are primarily sustained through annual stocking of fingerling rainbow and brown trout. Although the Gold King Mine altered the water quality of the Animas River, it was short lived and had no discernable effect on the fish population. The 416 Fire did. We estimate 80% of the fish were killed by debris and ash flows post fire. Spring runoff and summer thunderstorms still add sediment to the Animas River but the deadly ash flows are over. 2021 was a below average snowpack year and voluntary fishing closures were enacted after 2PM. We expect similar conditions this year (2022) with an average snowpack contributing to low water/warm water temperatures by late-July. Please anticipate voluntary closures in the warmer months.



Electrofishing



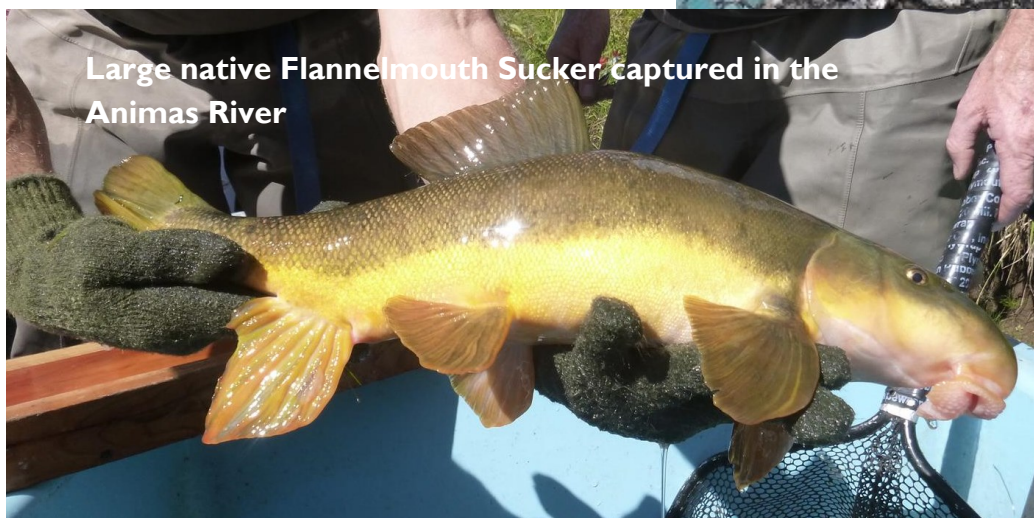
"Gunnison River Rainbow captured in the 2021 survey



2021 Brown Trout



Young native Bluehead



Large native Flannelmouth Sucker captured in the Animas River