# General Information
Blue Mesa Reservoir, a 9000 acre storage reservoir, offers good fishing for kokanee salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout, and lake trout. Blue Mesa Reservoir is located within Curecanti National Recreation Area.

**Location:** Gunnison County. Gunnison River inlet to Blue Mesa Reservoir is located 5 miles west of Gunnison. For map of Blue Mesa Reservoir and Curecanti: [CNRA Map](#).

**Recreational Management:** National Park Service

**Fishery Management:** Coldwater angling for kokanee and rainbow, brown, and lake trout.

**Purchase a Fishing License:** [http://cpw.state.co.us/buyapply/Pages/Fishing.aspx](http://cpw.state.co.us/buyapply/Pages/Fishing.aspx)

## Amenities
- 9000 surface acre reservoir can be accessed by boaters from two marinas, five developed boat ramps, and several additional access points
- 96 miles of shoreline is available for shore anglers.
- Campground facilities and restrooms are available at several locations.

**WARNING!!!**
**Prevent the Spread of Zebra Mussels and other Aquatic Nuisance Species**
- **Clean, drain, and dry your boat after each use.**
- **Blue Mesa Reservoir requires mandatory inspections before launching. See CNRA web site for more info.**
- Find additional local fishing info and a list of fishing guides at: [Gunnison - Crested Butte/Activities](#)

## Regulations
- Ice fishing shelters must be portable
- *Kokanee snagging permitted November 1-December 31*
- Bag and possession for lake trout is unlimited for lake trout up to 32 inches, one fish over 32 inches
- Bag limit for kokanee is 5 fish and possession is 10 fish
- Bag limit for cutthroat, brook, brown, and rainbow trout is 4 fish with possession limits of 8 fish

## Previous Stocking

**2018**
- 112,000 ten inch (catchable) rainbow trout
- 3.5 million fingerling kokanee

**2019**
- 124,684 ten inch (catchable) rainbow trout
- 434,000 three inch rainbow trout
- 3.5 million fingerling kokanee

## Sportfishing Notes

**Kokanee Salmon**
- Kokanee catch majority of summer boat angler catch

**Rainbow Trout**
- Rainbow trout predominate shore angler catch.

**Brown Trout**
- Brown trout add a significant catch for boat and shore anglers and ice fishing anglers.

**Lake Trout**
- Lake trout provide trophy opportunity with fish up to 50 pounds caught. Lake trout catch best in spring and ice fishing seasons.

**Yellow Perch**
- Perch provide additional opportunities, especially in summer and ice fishing seasons.
Figure 1. Blue Mesa Reservoir kokanee catch rates (creel survey last completed in 2012) compared with previous year estimated open water fish abundance (primarily kokanee). Kokanee stocking rate was doubled in late 1990’s and increased by 500,000 in 2009, creating a bump in abundance. Sonar estimates did a good job of predicting following year kokanee catch rates most years although did not explain bump in catch rates in 2011 and 2012.

Figure 2. Blue Mesa Reservoir kokanee stocking totals by location 1965-2019. Stocking has been increased to offset increased predation within Blue Mesa Reservoir.
Figure 3. Boat angler catch by species for May-October surveys 2000-2012.

Figure 4. Bank angler catch by species for May-October surveys 2000-2012.
**Figure 5.** Winter angler catch by species in 2004, 2006, and 2012 at Blue Mesa Reservoir. Most of catch was by ice anglers (8,910 fish) followed by boat anglers (3,871 fish) and bank anglers (1,282 fish).

**Figure 6.** Species targeting by anglers at Blue Mesa Reservoir during January through April (left table) and May through October 2012 (right table). Anglers with a response of Any/All Species were not specifically targeting a single species or were fishing for whatever they happened to catch.
Figure 7. Length frequency for harvested fish checked during creel survey interviews at Blue Mesa Reservoir, January—October 2012. Lengths were measured or reported for 10,398 fish from 6,161 anglers.
### Table 1. Summer shoreline electrofishing survey 2019 entire reservoir (perch monitoring sites).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish Species (sportfish listed in order of abundance)</th>
<th># Caught</th>
<th>Average Length in inches</th>
<th>Length Range in inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow perch</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.0—12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow trout</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>4.1—17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown trout</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2.1—19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokanee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White sucker</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.4—19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longnose sucker</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.6—15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longnose dace</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Figure 8. BMR yellow perch electrofishing length frequency for 2004-2019.

#### Figure 9. Yellow perch catch rates for all perch and for perch 5 inches and longer in length 2004-2019.
**Figure 10.** Length-frequency distributions (25 mm size bins) of lake trout captured during consecutive SPIN surveys on Blue Mesa Reservoir.

**Figure 11.** Summer lake trout sampling (SPIN) population estimates 2011-2018 (right) for trout greater than 275 mm (light gray bars) and 400 mm (dark gray bars).

For more info please see:

- [BMR SPIN 2018](#)
- [Lake trout sampling fact sheet](#)
Management Notes — Kokanee populations have rebounded well from lows seen after 2013, where poor reservoir habitat conditions likely impacted kokanee survival. Kokanee catch rates and kokanee egg takes (for restocking purposes) in recent years have been good with record kokanee egg takes in 2016 and 2017 but lower egg takes in 2018 and 2019. The 2019 sonar survey estimated late July open water fish abundance of about 426,000 fish (primarily kokanee), which should result in good kokanee catch rates in 2020.

Blue Mesa Reservoir habitat conditions were generally good in 2014 through 2017, but a 2018 drought did see some development of a warm temperature / low oxygen squeeze in the Cebolla Basin. In 2019, a return of full storage levels improved habitat conditions with oxygen levels remaining good throughout the reservoir.

Gill lice, after first being detected in Blue Mesa Reservoir in 2015, have continued to increase in both incidence and burden in kokanee. Gill lice infection rates were likely higher in 2018 through 2019 due to drought conditions in 2018. Gill lice numbers were significantly higher in 2019 in the fall kokanee spawning run with an average of 37 gill lice counted per fish. Gill lice at this level likely are stressing kokanee but did not appear to cause additional mortality after kokanee reached the Roaring Judy Kokanee Spawntake Facility. Monitoring will continue to assess the impact of gill lice to kokanee within Blue Mesa Reservoir and to trout populations in upstream tributaries.

Lake trout suppression work was conducted from 2009 through 2017, with an average of about 1200 lake trout removed annually (lake trout over 27 inches in length are released to maintain trophy lake trout opportunities). This work was completed to supplement angler lake trout harvest to reduce predation on kokanee to maintain kokanee angler catch rates and kokanee egg supplies as well as to maintain a forage base for trophy lake trout. 2018 SPIN results estimated reduced numbers of piscivorous lake trout but also indicted that a large number of smaller lake trout will soon shift to eating fish and will be growing to a size that is more catchable by anglers. A lake trout harvest incentive program is being implemented beginning in 2020 to maintain lake trout populations at appropriate levels and allow trophy lake trout and kokanee population objectives to be met in future years. Monitoring of kokanee and lake trout populations will continue to assess the effectiveness of this program and to allow development of recommendations for future management.