



Colorado River

State Bridge to Dotsero

Fish Management and Survey Information

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General Information: Approximately 40 miles of the Colorado River between Dotsero and State Bridge offers great angling opportunities at a number of public access points and new boat launches. State Bridge, Two Bridges, Catamount, Pinball, Horse Creek, Cottonwood, Lyons Gulch, and Dotsero are very popular launching points for floating the river by both anglers and other recreational boaters. [BLM Map](#)

Location: Accessed along the Colorado River Road between Dotsero and Hwy 131 north of Wolcott.

Recreational Management: Bureau of Land Management or Eagle County. Use fees may apply.

Fishery Management: Wild Trout

Travel Information

- BLM recreation areas at State Bridge, Catamount, Pinball, Cottonwood, and Lyons Gulch offer camping, boat ramps, and pit toilets. Privately owned facilities at State Bridge offer lodging options and summer entertainment options on site.
- More information available at local BLM offices in Silt and Kremmling or on their website: [Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area](#)
- [Map](#)

Fish Stocking

- This reach of the Colorado River is managed primarily as a wild, self-sustaining sport fishery.
- However, the presence of Whirling Disease (WD) has virtually eliminated wild rainbow trout reproduction in the Colorado River and many of its tributaries.
- **WD-Resistant Colorado River Rainbow Trout:** Since a large fish-kill related to a storm event in 2012, CPW has stocked WD-resistant rainbow trout in the Colorado River above Dotsero. Disease resistance from these stocked fish should be passed down to wild produced rainbow trout and, hopefully, lead to the recovery of the renowned wild rainbow trout of the Colorado River.

Sportfishing Notes

- One of the largest trout rivers in the state, this reach of river offers a wide diversity of habitat to fish. Sportfish species include rainbow trout, brown trout, cutthroat trout, and mountain whitefish.
- Float fishing is highly popular, although wading is highly productive as well, especially at lower flows, and for those willing to hike to more secluded locations.
- Large populations of the giant *Pteronarcys* stonefly inhabit the reach around State Bridge and can produce spectacular fishing. Because this species has a multi-year life cycle in its larval form, nymphs of this species are present virtually year-round and fishing with large salmonfly nymphs can be productive nearly any time.
- In addition to the stoneflies, there are many other prey items available to trout including caddis, mayflies, and a variety of forage fish. Streamer fishing can be productive.

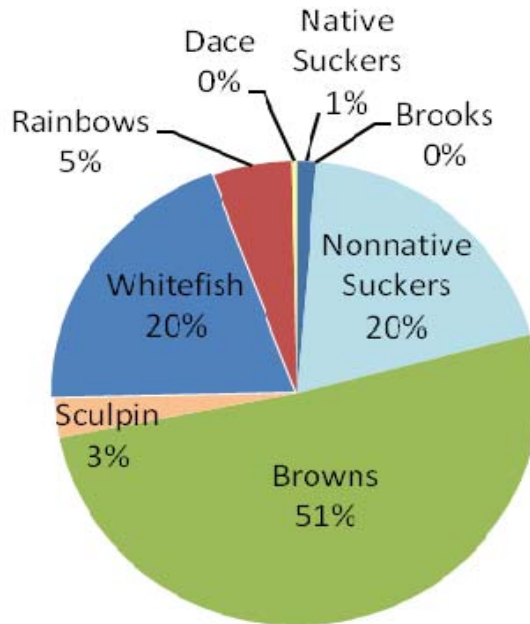
Regulations

- The bag and possession limit for trout is 2 fish.
- Removal of the following species is strongly encouraged with no bag or possession limit for channel catfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, green sunfish, bluegill, bullhead, yellow perch, or crappie.

Colorado River: State Bridge & Catamount

Fish Survey Information

Species Composition



2009 - 2013 Summary Sportfish Data

| | State Bridge 2013 | Catamount 2009 | Catamount 2011 | Catamount 2013 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Adult Trout per Acre (>6") | 474 | 323 | 76 | 282 |
| "Quality Trout" per Acre (>14") | 51 | 57 | 21 | 32 |
| Biomass (lbs/acre) | 306 | 114 | 59 | 112 |
| Mtn Whitefish per Acre (>6") | 68 | 27 | 111 | 84 |
| Biomass (lbs/acre) | 10 | 18 | 44 | 23 |

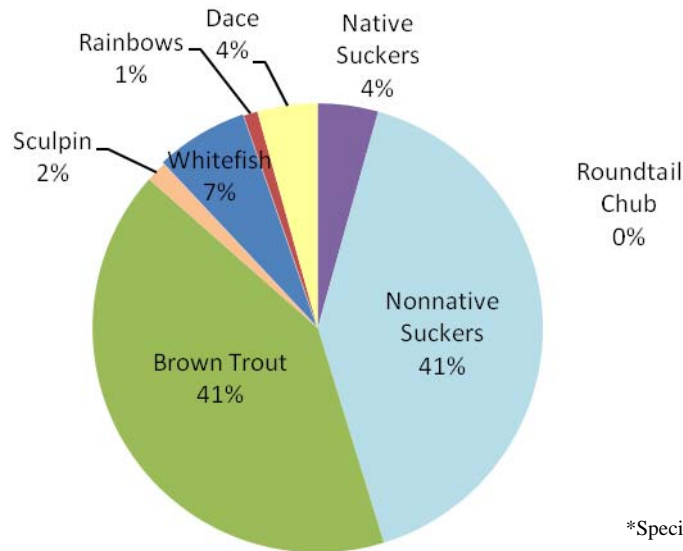
Management Notes — Although rainbow populations in the Colorado River crashed when whirling disease was introduced to the river, WD-resistant rainbow trout are providing new opportunities to catch rainbows. Hofer rainbows are now stocked from Catamount downstream in an attempt to introduce disease resistance into the local rainbow population, increasing wild reproduction and recruitment. These WD-resistant rainbow trout are aggressive fish that fight hard when caught on a fly.

The best trout fishing exists in the higher gradient reaches of the Colorado River between Dotsero and State Bridge. High trout abundance (rainbow and brown trout combined) exists in the reaches found upstream of Cottonwood Boat Ramp. Indeed, Gold Medal standards (12 trout per acre > 14" and >60 lbs of trout per acre) are met at the two survey locations representative of much of the fish habitat in this stretch of the river. These monitoring locations are just downstream of the Catamount and State Bridge boat launches. Through our surveys, we have found that fish abundance is influenced by spring run-off and creates variation from year to year.

Colorado River: Lyons Gulch

Fish Survey Information

Species Composition*



*Species composition prior to the flood in 2012

2008 - 2013 Summary Fish Abundance (fish per acre)

| | Lyons Gulch 2008 | Lyons Gulch 2010 | Lyons Gulch 2012 | Lyons Gulch 2013 |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Adult Rainbow Trout (>6") | 0.5 | 0.4 | 1 | 12 |
| Adult Brown Trout (>6") | 13 | 42 | 55 | 7 |
| Adult Mtn Whitefish (>6") | 0.1 | 7 | 7 | 15 |
| Native Suckers | 6 | 7 | 5 | 1 |

Management Notes — The Colorado River below the Cottonwood Boat Launch is an interesting reach of the Colorado River where river gradient and velocity decreases and waters warm. While this precludes a “quality trout” fishery due to habitat changes and water temperature, it is an excellent location for our native river fishes including “The Three Species” - Flannelmouth and Bluehead Suckers, and the occasional Roundtail chub. Small native sculpin and dace also reside here and are likely under-represented in estimates because small fish (including juveniles) are not sampled efficiently using the methods employed in these surveys. Unfortunately, one of the biggest threats to our native suckers is hybridization with non-native suckers, a common occurrence in this reach.

On the other hand, the river just above Dotsero is an excellent nursery location for juvenile trout and mountain whitefish.

In 2012, a large monsoonal rain event caused flows in the Colorado River above Dotsero to soar from 1,400 cfs to more than 5,000 cfs in less than 3 hours. The debris carried in this flow caused high mortality in the fish populations in the river above Dotsero. To take advantage of the reduction in competitive fish species, CPW has stocked a large number of WD-resistant rainbow trout in an attempt to introduce disease resistance into the local rainbow population, increasing wild reproduction and recruitment. Note, fish abundance was down in 2013 for most species, but Rainbow Trout and Mountain Whitefish abundance has increased.