San Juan River, Pagosa Springs

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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General Information: The San Juan River, running through the scenic town of Pagosa Springs, provides the angler with an opportunity to capture quality rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout while the family soaks in the riverside Hot Spring pools. Public access is very good for bank, wade, or float fishing on this 2 mile reach of river. Although mostly private, float fishing opportunities exist for another 16 miles downstream under higher water flow conditions.

Location: Archuleta County. Reach starts at the intersection of US 160 and Highway 84 down to Apache Street Bridge (see map) in Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Primary Management: Coldwater angling

Survey Data: Angler Use and Fish Sampling Info on Page 3

Amenities

- Two miles of public access for wade or float fishing at numerous access sites along the Pagosa River-walk
- Two boating access points for deployment or pickup of rafts (see map)
- Seasonal restrooms available at Town and Yamaguchi Parks
- Guided wade or float fishing available from several local guide services.
- For additional info about local amenities and services, visit the Pagosa Springs web site at: www.townofpagosasprings.com

Regulations

From US 160 and 84 Highway intersection downstream to Apache St. Bridge

Bag and possession limit is 2 trout.

Above and Below Pagosa Reach (see above)

Standard bag limit for trout is 4 per day and 8 in possession. Mostly private land above and below access by raft or drift boat only.

Previous Stocking

2018 & 2019

3,128 rainbow catchables each year and 10,000 Brown Trout fingerlings
10,000 whirling disease resistant rainbow fingerlings

The Town of Pagosa Springs also supplements CPW stocking with up to 2,000 catchable trout ranging from 10-16 inches

Rainbow Trout

- 95% of fish captured are Rainbow Trout. Since the Town of Pagosa Springs started it’s quality fishing program it is not uncommon to capture 3-5 lb rainbow in the 20-25 inch range after stocking

Brown Trout

- Brown Trout make up a smaller percentage of the catch but provide a quality angling experience in the fall during the spawning season (October—mid November)

Sportfishing Notes
San Juan River in Pagosa Springs

Raft launch behind “Malt Shoppe”

Take out on S end of Yamaguchi Park
### San Juan River in Pagosa

**ANGLER USE AND FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION**

Jim White – Aquatic Biologist

Durango Service Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Trout (number of fish/mi)</th>
<th>Biomass - RBT* (lbs/ac)</th>
<th>Biomass - LOC* (lbs/ac)</th>
<th>Biomass - All Trout (lbs/ac)</th>
<th>BRN&gt;14 in (fish/ac)</th>
<th>RBT&gt;14 in (fish/ac)</th>
<th>All Trout&gt;14 in (fish/ac)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>526</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019*</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*RBT = Rainbow Trout; LOC = Brown Trout. Fish data obtained by a “mark and recapture” effort using a raft electrofishing boat with a “throwable” anode. *2019 survey was a 1,000 foot section; river level too low to survey from 2014-2019.

**TOP LEFT GRAPH:**
- Rainbow Trout were the most abundant fish collected during the 2019 survey.
- Rainbows ranged from 4.5 (stocked fingerlings) to 18 inches.
- The most abundant size class of Rainbow Trout were fish in the 10-11 inch range suggesting these were primarily stocked fish.
- The rainbows in the 7-8 inch range are wild fish as are the fish greater than 12 inches.

**BOTTOM LEFT GRAPH:**
- Raft electrofishing requires flows in early September greater than 100 cubic feet per second or cfs.
- Despite the extraordinary wet winter of 2018/2019, flows in the San Juan River still dropped below 100 cfs by late August (dark blue line).
- Drought years like 2018 (gold line) are tough on trout. Water temperatures in the San Juan during the summer months when flows are less than 50 cfs can exceed 75F.
Management Notes — Fish populations in the San Juan River through Pagosa are primarily sustained through annual stocking of fingerling rainbow and Brown Trout as well as catchable Rainbow Trout. The Town of Pagosa Springs has been very proactive in developing a quality fishery through this reach by funding and stocking trophy trout and obtaining grants and constructing pools and cover boulders for fish. Periodically, CPW assesses angler success and attitudes by conducting a “Creel Census”. A creel census was done in 2001 revealing that approximately 2,140 anglers captured a total of 3,770 fish between July 1st and September 30th for a catch rate of 1.57 fish per hour. 95% of the catch were Rainbow Trout and 79% of those trout were released back into the river.

The San Juan River also supports a robust population of native fish species, particularly Bluehead Sucker. Native fishes (or non-game fish) must be returned to the water immediately.