Vallecito Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA
Jim White - Aquatic Biologist (Durango)
j.white@state.co.us / 970-375-6712

General Information: Vallecito Reservoir, 2,718 surface acre reservoir, offers good fishing for trophy northern pike and brown trout. Anglers commonly catch rainbow trout and kokanee salmon and occasionally smallmouth bass and walleye.

Location: La Plata County. Go 14 miles N. of Bayfield on CR 501 or 16.5 mi E. on CR 240 from Durango then 6 mi N. on 501.

Recreational Management: Pine River Irrigation District (PRID) and USFS (970) 884-2512

Fishery Management: Warm and Cold water species. CPW Area Office 970-247-0855

Annual Survey Data: (see page 3)

Amendities and General Info.
- Boat Ramps (1)
- Picnic Areas
- USFS Camping
- Restrooms at Boat Ramp
- Marinas (1)
- Hiking trails
- Boat rentals

Regulations
- Daily bag for trout is 4.
- Daily bag for walleye is 5.
- Daily bag limit for kokanee is 10 (see snagging below)
- Bag limit for northern pike, smallmouth bass and yellow perch is unlimited.
- Snagging is permitted for kokanee in Vallecito and Grimes creek ONLY from Nov. 15- Dec. 31. No fishing is allowed from the standing water line of the reservoir to the BOR boundary in Grimes Creek and CR 501 Bridge in Vallecito Creek from September 1 - Nov. 14th.

Boats
- A boat permit is required from PRID. Cost is $20. Pick up at Marina or PRID office
- If your boat has been out of the state in the last 30 days it must be inspected for unwanted aquatic nuisance species before launching. Inspections can be obtained at the boat ramp from May 1-Oct 1

Previous Stocking

2013
Rainbow Trout (21,417 13” catchables)
Kokanee Salmon (458,358 fingerlings)

2014
Rainbow Trout (19,422 13” catchables)
Kokanee Salmon (483,089)

2015
Rainbow Trout (20,322 13” catchables)
Kokanee Salmon (549,949)

Northern pike, walleye, smallmouth bass, and brown trout are self-sustaining and do not require stocking

Sportfishing Notes

Northern Pike
- During the drought in the early 2000s, pike did very well. Large northerns are abundant and fishing the shallow north end of the lake right after ice-out is productive using large “rainbow trout” lures.

Smallmouth bass
- Smallmouth bass fishing has become increasingly popular. Fish the rip-rap along the dam using crayfish imitations.

Rainbow Trout
- Trout fishing is generally good year round using traditional baits. It is particularly good in the fall and into the winter.

Kokanee Salmon
- Fishing for “koks” could be tough the next few years because many of these fish may have escaped the reservoir over the spillway in the spring of 2015.

Walleye
- There are large walleye in Vallecito Lake but they are not abundant. They are mostly concentrated around the islands on the East side.
Vallecito Reservoir

Main Boat Ramp—Sawmill Point
Vallecito Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA

2015 Gill Net Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th># Caught</th>
<th>Average Length (Range) in inches</th>
<th>Average Weight in pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rainbow trout</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.6 (10.0 - 18.0)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northern pike</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.6 (26.4 - 39.3)</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walleye</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.4 (15.2 - 24.1)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokanee salmon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brown trout</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.0 (12.8 - 19.7)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white sucker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gillnet surveys consist of setting four 150 foot nets overnight at the same location and time (1-2 weeks after ice off) each year. Table is the combined catch for 2015.

TOP LEFT GRAPH:
- Blue bars are the total number of rainbow trout stocked in the fall; red line is the total number of rainbow trout caught the next spring
- Black bar is when CPW due to budget constraints stopped buying large rainbow trout to augment our stocking
- Average number of rainbows caught in the gillnets with purchased fish was 28.7 and after the purchased fish were dropped was 17.4 fish/year.
- 20,000 - 30,000 13 inch catchable rainbows stocked in the fall resulted in good overwinter fishing and average summer fishing until 2014
- Only 9 RBT were captured in spring gillnets; validating the slow overwinter season of 2014/15

MIDDLE LEFT GRAPH:
- Three year average number of walleye in gillnets plotted against time. A moving average was used to reduce the variability between sample years and determine trends.
- Walleye have become significantly more abundant in Vallecito Reservoir since about 2003
- The increase in walleye abundance coincides with the low point in the reservoir and subsequent filling after the 2002 Missionary Ridge fire
- Walleye can and do eat rainbow trout up to about 1/2 their body length meaning trout over 11-12 inches should be able to escape predation by walleye which average around 20-21 inches.

BOTTOM LEFT GRAPH:
- Northern pike abundance (blue bars) compared to white sucker abundance (red line)
- White sucker abundance was very high up to about 1992 and declined to less than 20 suckers per survey year since 2002
- White sucker are primarily controlled by northern pike
- Northern pike abundance over 10 fish/survey year doubled after 2000
- Northern pike average around 31 inches and can consume white sucker and rainbow trout half their body length meaning a 15 inch trout is not safe from a 30 inch pike!
Vallecito Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA

Management Notes: Vallecito Reservoir is managed primarily as a coldwater combined subcatchable and catchable lake. Primary sportfish management is directed toward kokanee salmon and rainbow trout. Vallecito provides about 9,000 angler days per year, with an estimated total catch of about 7,000 fish. Rainbow trout comprise 77% of the catch, followed by smallmouth bass (9%), northern pike (7%) kokanee salmon (5%) and brown trout (2%). These estimates were derived from a creel survey done in 2007. Fish species present: white sucker, kokanee salmon, rainbow trout, northern pike, brown trout, walleye, smallmouth bass, yellow perch (bass and perch illegally introduced).

Vallecito Reservoir has been managed as a kokanee salmon brood lake since 1968. The average annual kokanee egg take at Vallecito for the last forty years approximately 1 million. Catchable rainbow trout stocking has been a regular management practice at Vallecito since the early 1950's. Catchable size trout are stocked because they are better suited than fingerlings to survive in a lake with northern pike. Northern pike were introduced at Vallecito in 1962, as a biological control for an expanding population of white suckers. Northern pike have proved effective at controlling suckers, in addition to providing a popular trophy fishery for a dedicated minority of anglers.

As with many SW waters, there is a Fish Consumption Advisory warning anglers to limit their consumption of fish because some species may have higher concentrations of mercury than what the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommends. Specific information is posted at the lake.