



Gunnison River at Gunnison

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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General Information: The upper Gunnison River provides excellent trout fishing opportunity for brown and rainbow trout on this 18 mile reach. Kokanee angling is also popular during their fall migration. Public access is generally good for bank, wade or float fishing. The Gunnison River from the town of Almont to U.S. Highway 50 was designated as a Gold Medal water in January 2023.

Location: Gunnison county. Blue Mesa inlet 5 miles west of Gunnison on Hwy 50 to Almont, 9 miles north of Gunnison on Hwy 135.

Recreational Management: Colorado Division of Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service

Fishery Management: Coldwater angling

Purchase a Fishing License: <https://cpw.state.co.us/buyapply/pages/fishing.aspx>

Amenities

- Six miles of public access for shore or wade angling at seven access sites
- Five public boating access points for deployment or pickup of small rafts or boats
- Seasonal restrooms available at USFS Almont Campground, Tomichi Riverway Park, Gunnison Whitewater Park, and McCabes Lane
- Guided wade or float fishing available from several local guide services
- Find additional local fishing info and a list of fishing guides at:
<https://gunnisoncrestedbutte.com/visit/trip-planning/things-to-do/fishing/>

Regulations

Gold Medal Section: Almont to Hwy 50

Artificial Flies and Lures Only

Bag and possession for brown trout 2 fish 16" or longer

Catch and release on rainbow trout

Taking kokanee prohibited
August 1-October 31

Standard Regulations Section: Hwy 50 to Blue Mesa Reservoir

Trout bag and possession is 4 fish

Taking kokanee prohibited

Previous Stocking

2015

17,600 fingerling whirling disease resistant rainbow trout stocked

2014

19,500 fingerling whirling disease resistant rainbow trout stocked

Stocking was discontinued beginning in 2016 as natural reproduction of rainbow trout is currently sustaining the fishery.

Sportfishing Notes

Brown Trout

- Most common species making up about 40-70 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid October through November
- Fish with egg patterns during kokanee migration

Rainbow Trout

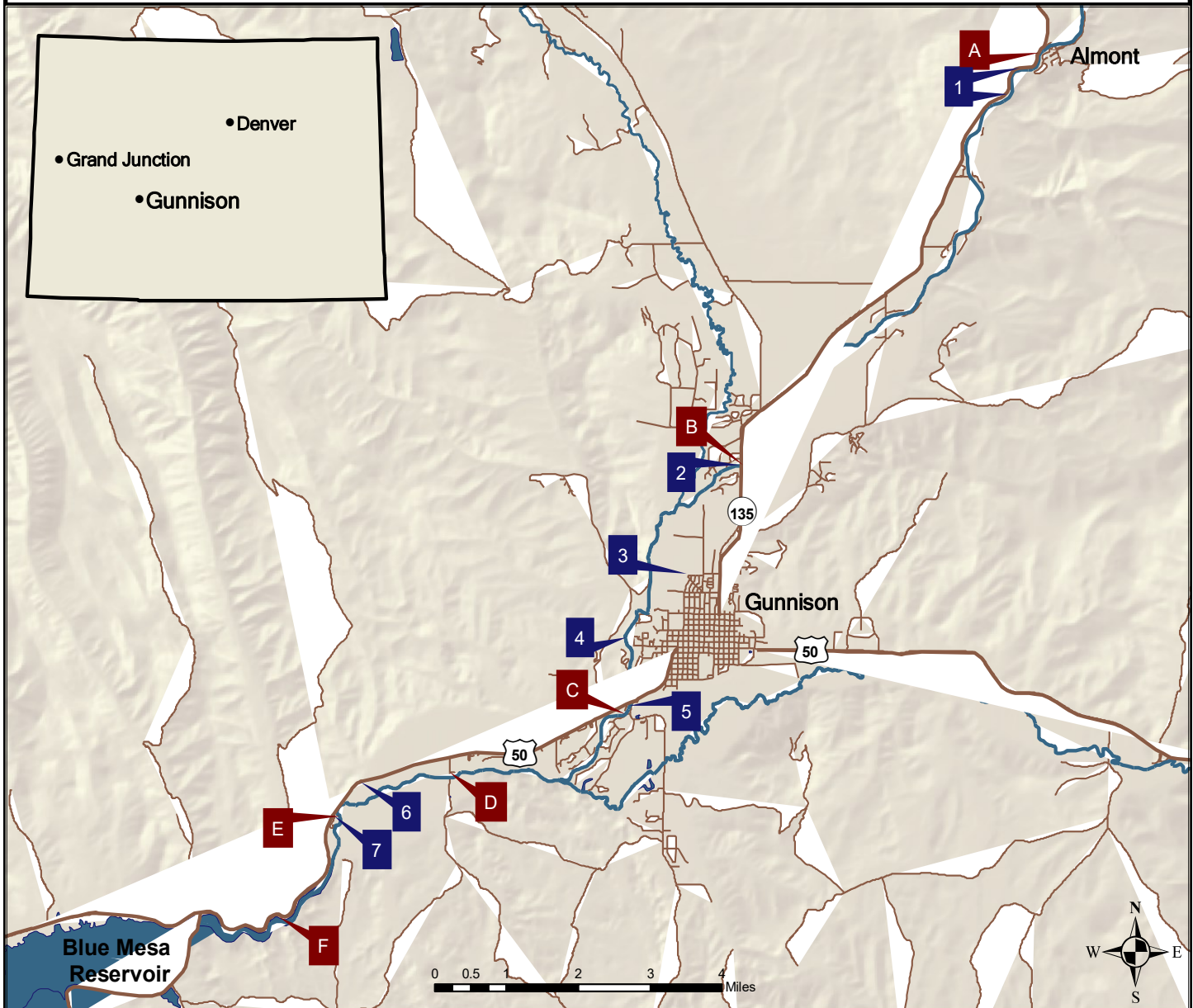
- Make up about 15-50 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid April through mid May
- Try Cooper's Ranch and Neversink access points for excellent rainbow fishing

Kokanee Salmon

- Spawning run begins in early August and runs through early November
- Fish nymphs and streamers through kokanee pods for good kokanee action

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MAP AND ACCESS INFORMATION



Bank or Wading Access

- 1—Almont to Almont Campground 1.7 miles
- 2—Redden Access .25 mile, south side of river
- 3—VanTuyl Access 1.5 miles (accessed via a 1/2 mile trail from Char-Mar Park)
- 4—West Tomichi Riverway Park .25 mile
- 5—Gunnison Whitewater Park, .7 mile
- 6, 7—Neversink and Cooper Ranch Access (National Park Service), 2 miles

Boating Access

- A—Almont Hwy 135
- B—North Bridge Hwy 135 / Shady Island (Gunnison County)
- C—Gunnison Whitewater Park HWY 50 (Gunnison County)
- D—McCabes Lane (National Park Service)
- E—Cooper Ranch Access (National Park Service)
- F—Blue Mesa Reservoir (National Park Service)

Gunnison River Almont to County Rd 10 (Gold Medal section, flies and lures only)

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



Figure 1. Gunnison River below Almont, top of reach, sampled in July, 2021. This reach was sampled from the top of the Gunnison River Ranch with the use of two electrofishing rafts.

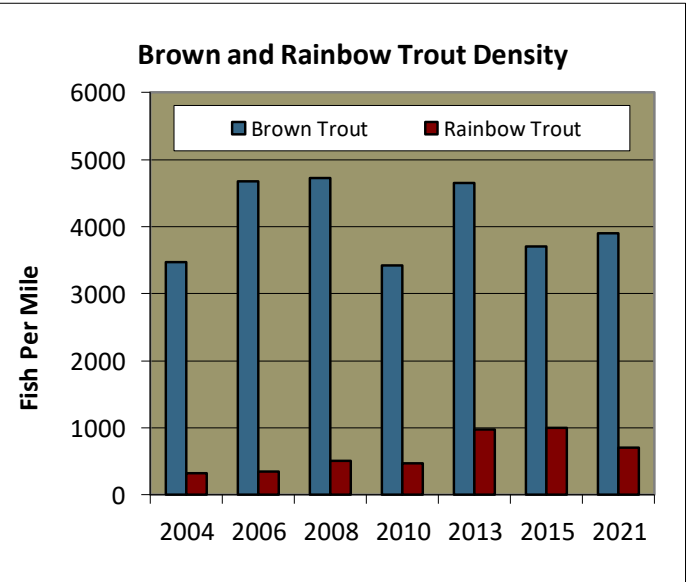


Figure 2. Density estimates for Almont to CR 10 / Gunnison River Ranch, 2004-2021. The density estimate for trout over one year old was 3897 brown trout and 703 rainbow trout per mile.

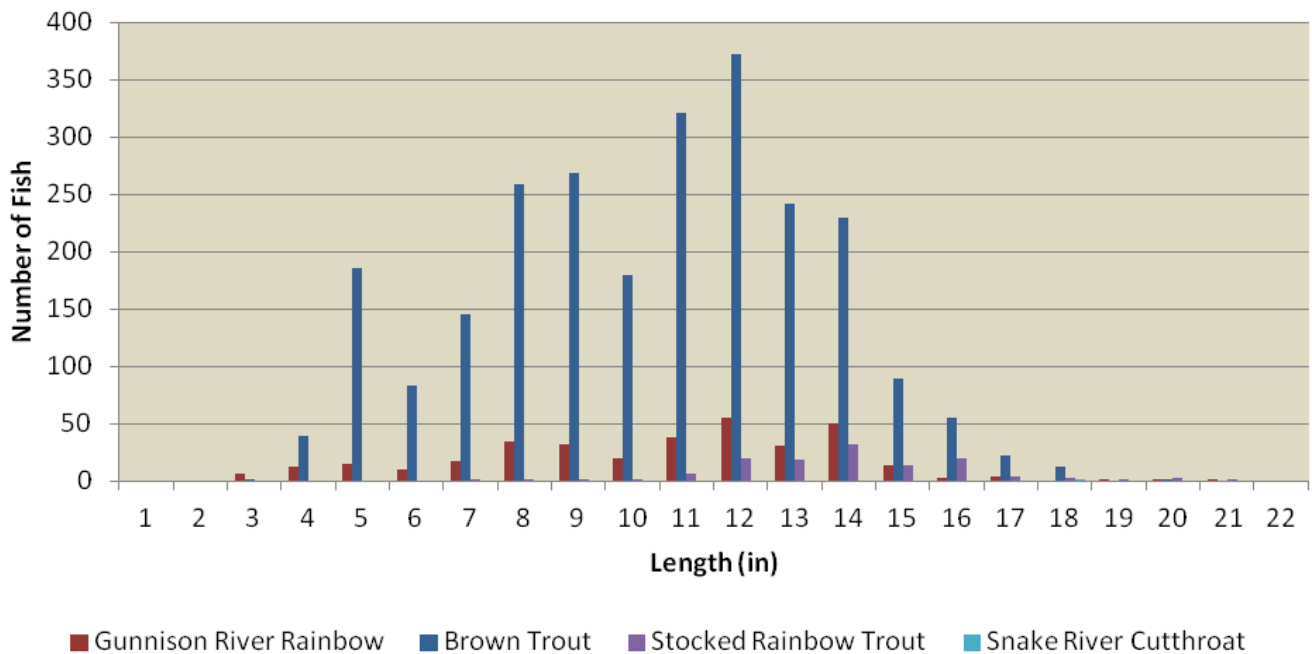


Figure 3. Brown and rainbow trout length-frequency for the Gunnison River from Almont to Gunnison River Ranch, 2021. There was an estimated 173 lbs. per acre of brown trout and 50 lbs. per acre of rainbow trout, with an estimated 70 fish present over 14 inches long per acre.

Gunnison River on the Gunnison River SWA (Gold Medal section, flies and lures only)

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



Figure 4. Gunnison River NW of Gunnison on the Gunnison River SWA near bottom of reach. This 2.7 mile reach was sampled with the use of two electrofishing rafts.

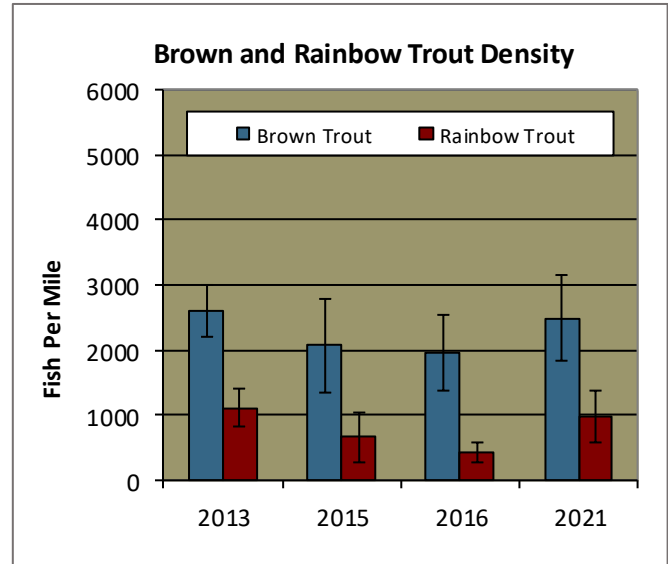


Figure 5. Density estimate for the Gunnison River SWA, 2021. The density estimate for fish over 1 year old was 2486 fish per mile for browns and 989 fish per mile for rainbows.

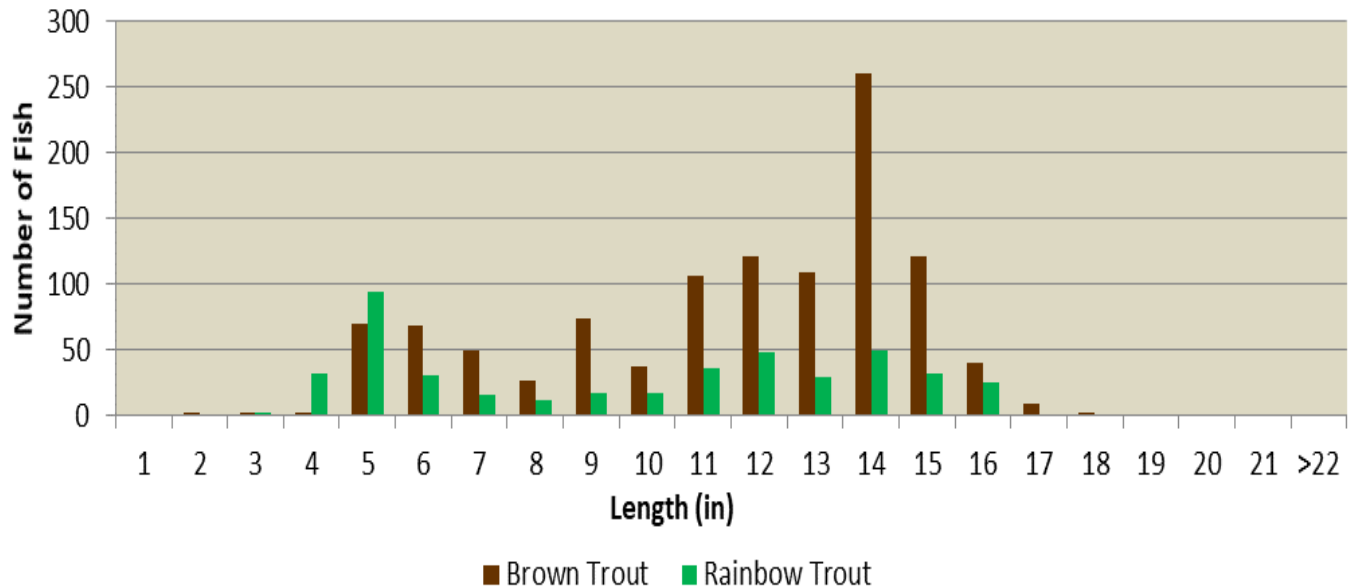


Figure 6. Brown and rainbow trout length-frequency for the Gunnison River on the Gunnison River SWA, 2021. There was an estimated 156 lbs. per acre of brown trout and 47 lbs. per acre of rainbow trout.

Gunnison River below McCabe's Lane (Standard fishing regulation section)

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



Figure 4. Gunnison River at McCabes Lane, top of reach sampled in August, 2008. This 1.8 mile reach was sampled with the use of two electrofishing rafts.

Brown and Rainbow Trout Density

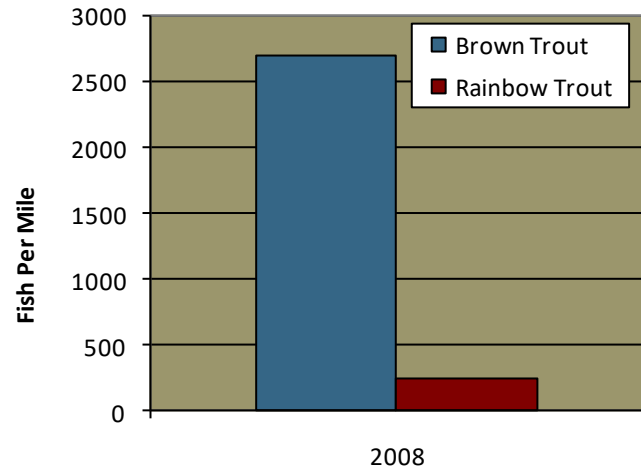


Figure 5. Density estimate for McCabe's Lane to Coopers Ranch, 2008. The density estimate for fish over 1 year old was 2693 fish per mile for browns and 241 fish per mile for rainbows.

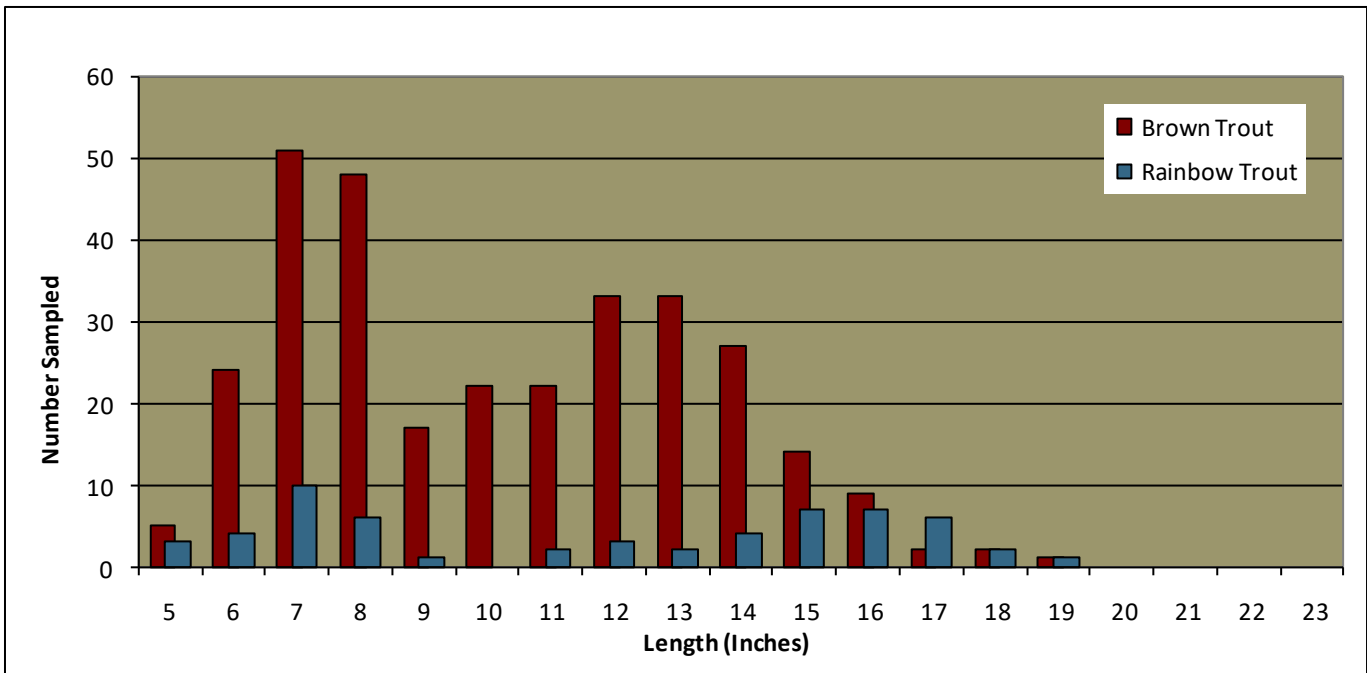


Figure 6. Brown and rainbow trout length-frequency for the Gunnison River from McCabe's Lane to Coopers Ranch, 2008. There was an estimated 91 lbs. per acre of brown trout and 14 lbs. per acre of rainbow trout. Very poor electrofishing catchability led to wide estimate confidence intervals.

Gunnison River near Gunnison

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

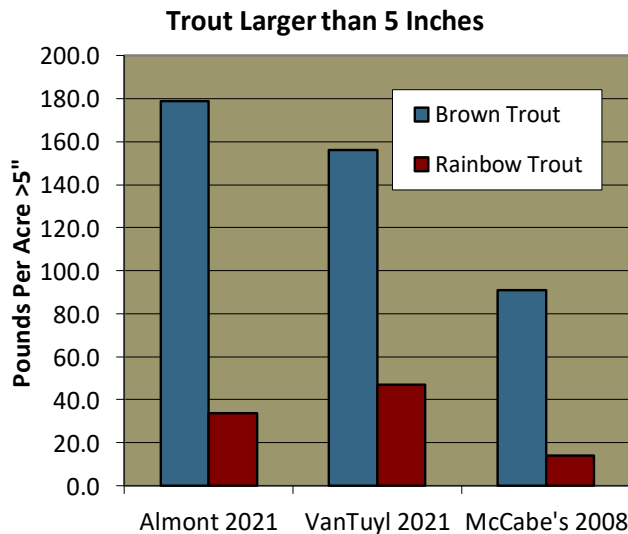


Figure 7. Most recent biomass estimates for brown and rainbow trout one year old and older from three reaches of the Gunnison River.

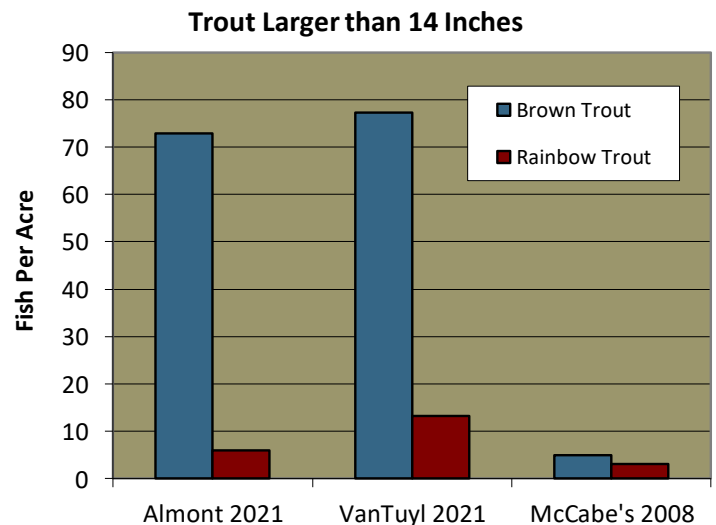


Figure 8. Density estimates for quality sized brown and rainbow trout from three reaches of the Gunnison River.

Management Notes —

The Gunnison River begins near the town of Almont where the East River and Taylor River join to form the Gunnison. The Gunnison River contains one of Colorado's best coldwater stream fisheries, benefitted by good water supply in most years and good water quality. Releases from upstream Taylor Park Reservoir are managed to benefit fisheries, recreational, and downstream irrigation needs on the Taylor and Gunnison Rivers. The result is a release pattern that provides stable winter flows to maximize trout reproduction as well as more optimal summer flows to maximize trout growth and production. With supplemented flows from the Taylor River, the Gunnison River normally exhibits good stream-flows during summer months, although fall months can see flows drop below boatable flows in dry years. Fish populations in the upper Gunnison River consist of wild brown trout and a mix of stocked and wild rainbow trout, with about 3,500 brown trout and 1,000 rainbow trout present per mile. The Gunnison River's rainbow trout population was impacted by whirling disease in the 1990's, but has rebounded to historic levels after stocking of sub-catchable whirling disease resistant rainbow trout by Colorado Parks and Wildlife beginning in 2008 (Trout populations are also supplemented by private stocking of catchable rainbow and cutthroat trout). 2015 and 2021 fish surveys indicated continued improvement in rainbow trout numbers. Rainbow trout natural reproduction has re-established the rainbow trout population to pre-whirling disease levels and rainbow trout fry have been shown to be resistant to whirling disease. The Upper Gunnison River from Almont to Hwy 50 was designated a Gold Medal water in January, 2023. Biomass estimates within this reach were over 200 pounds per acre on both reaches sampled in 2021 (the Gold Medal standard is 60 pounds per acre). Estimates of densities of quality sized trout (over 14 inches in length) were an estimated 79 to 90 trout over 14 inches per acre (the Gold Medal standard is 12 over 14 inches per acre). Most sections of the Gunnison River are excellent for wade and float fishing (Class I and II at most flows). Several small rapids are found in the section of the Gunnison River just below Hwy 50 within the Gunnison Whitewater Park and through a private irrigation diversion just downstream. These rapids can flip boats at higher flows, especially smaller boats, so boaters should take care when floating this reach of the Gunnison River.