



Blue River below Dillon Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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General Information: The Blue River offers ample public access within the town of Silverthorne, as well as on the Blue River State Wildlife area and US Forest Service parcels north of Silverthorne.

Location: Town of Silverthorne

Recreational Management: Town of Silverthorne, Colorado Division of Wildlife, US Forest Service

Fishery Management: Gold medal river trout fishery

Amenities and General Info.

- The Blue River in Silverthorne offers probably the most “urban” gold-medal trout fishing experience in Colorado. The river is flanked by shopping malls, restaurants, and other modern amenities. The river has excellent access through Silverthorne, with a bike/walking path paralleling the river along most of its length in town.
- Guide services available through several area businesses.

Regulations

From Dillon Dam downstream to the north city limits of the town of Silverthorne:

1. Fishing is by artificial flies and lures only.

2. All trout must be returned to the water immediately upon catch.

c. From the north city limits of the town of Silverthorne downstream to the Colo 9 bridge over the Blue River at Blue River State Wildlife Area:

1. Fishing is by artificial flies and lures only.

2. The bag and possession limit and minimum size for trout is two fish, 16 inches in length.

d. From the Colo 9 bridge over the Blue River at Blue River State Wildlife Area downstream to the Green Mountain Reservoir inlet:

1. Snagging for kokanee salmon is permitted from September 1 through December 31.

Previous Stocking

2011

- Rainbow trout

2010

- Rainbow trout

2009

- Rainbow trout

2008

- Rainbow trout

2007

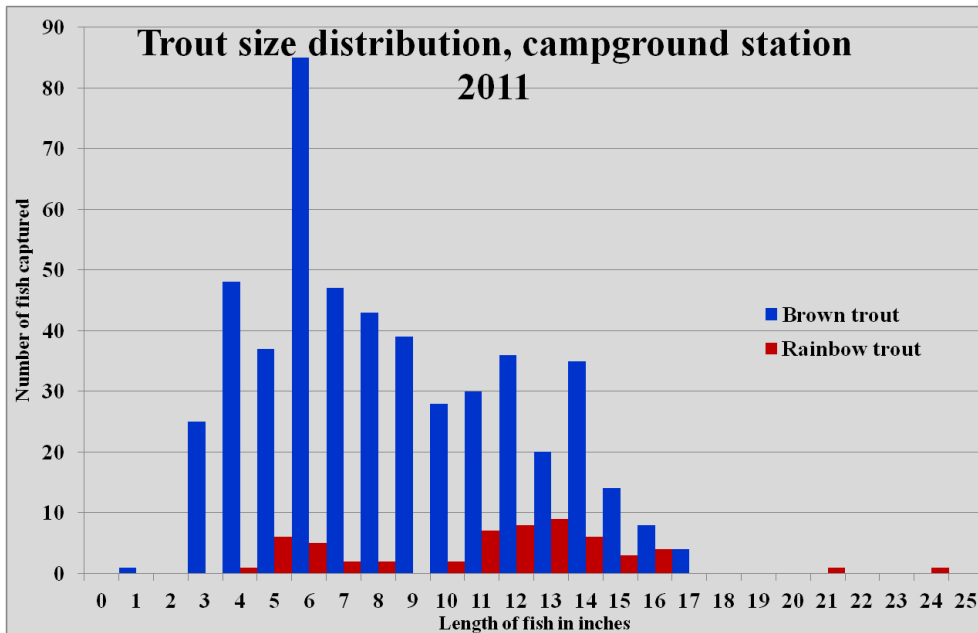
- Rainbow trout

Sportfishing Notes

- This reach of the Blue River is one of the most technically challenging trout fisheries in the entire state. The water coming from Dillon Dam is cold and extremely clear. Insect life consists of mostly small species, demanding delicate fishing with tiny flies. The fish are well-educated and demand a flawless presentation.

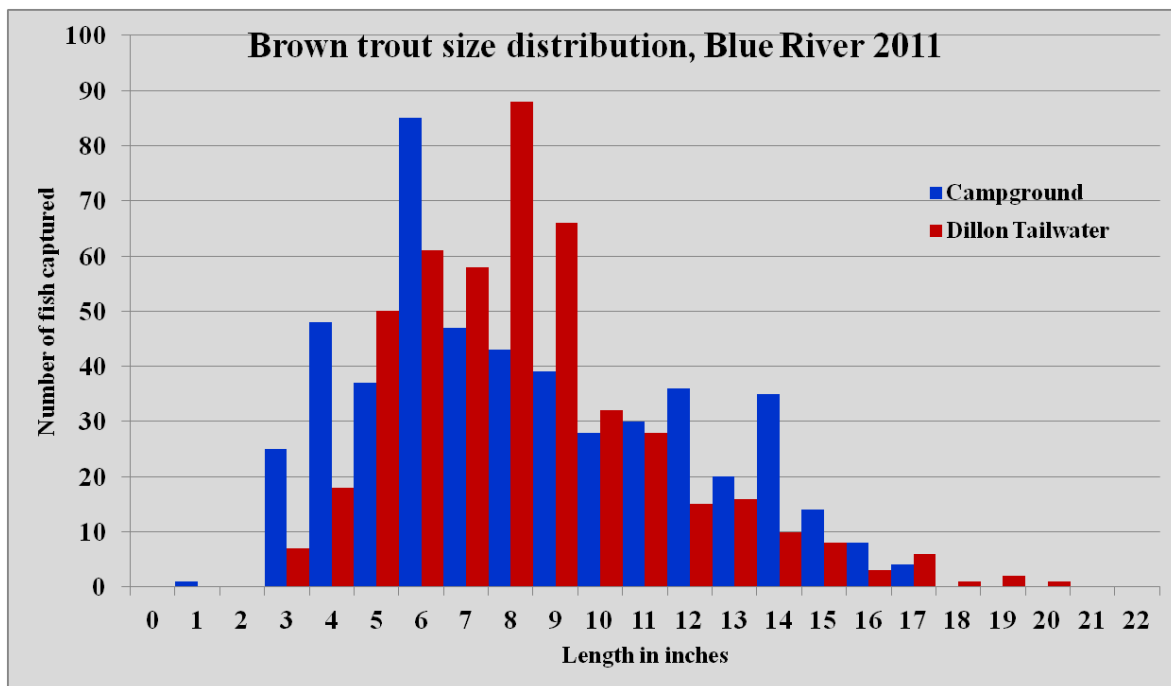
	Brown trout >6" per mile	Brown trout >14" per mile (surface acre)	Rainbow trout >6" per mile	Rainbow trout >14" per mile (surface acre)	Total trout biomass (lbs./surface acre)
Tailwater	1,113	58 (7)	606	203 (24)	110
Campground	521	43 (4)	90	19 (2)	31

The table above contains the results of the 2011 electrofishing surveys. The Campground reach of the Blue River has always been known to be a relatively unproductive reach of river and this year's survey confirms that with data that is similar to what has been collected there in the past.



The figure to the left depicts the size distribution of the trout captured in the Campground station in 2011. One limitation which appears to be hampering the fishery in this area is slow growth. The group of brown trout at four inches are one-year-old fish, born in 2010. The group at six inches are two-year-olds, born in 2009. For a trout to reach six inches in its third growing season indicates a poor growth rate for a river of this size in Colorado. On the nearby Colorado River in the Parshall area, brown trout easily reach 10 inches in their third growing season — placing them at least a full year ahead of fish living in the Blue River. This issue of slow growth was observed as early as the mid-1980's on the Blue River.

The figure below shows a comparison of the size structure of the brown trout populations in the Dillon Tailwater and Campground reaches. The tailwater reach appears to exhibit better growth than the campground reach, likely due to the moderating effect of winter water temperatures closer to the dam. The presence of mysis closer to the dam probably contributes as well. There are not large differences in the proportion of quality brown trout (>14") between the two reaches.

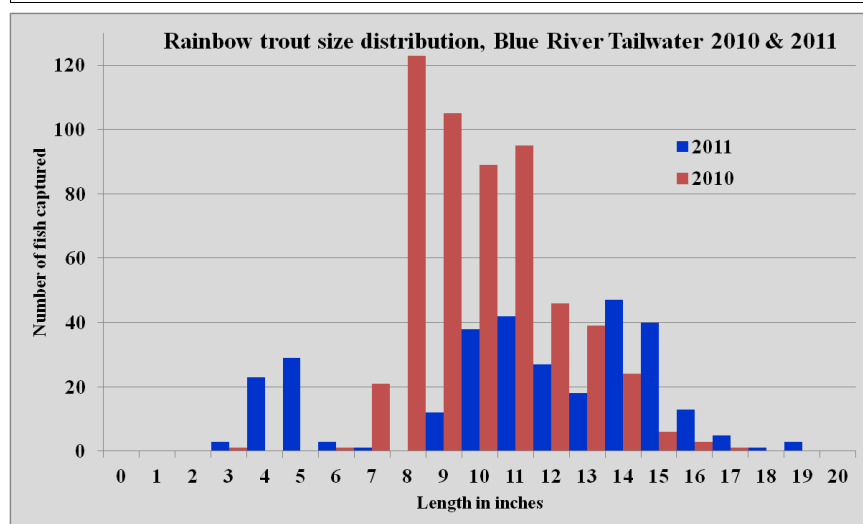


Rainbow trout stocking in the Blue River Below Dillon Reservoir

2009			2010			2011		
Date	Size (inches)	Number	Date	Size (inches)	Number	Date	Size (inches)	Number
3/12	16	326	3/25	14	161	1/05	17	500*
5/13	5	30,000	6/30	10	1,333	3/01	17	500*
6/29	9	5,000	8/11	10	4,192	9/14	4	50,000**
			8/26	3	45,000**			

*The 2011 brood cull plant was marked with clipped adipose fins.

**The 2010 and 2011 fingerling plants were stocked AFTER sampling occurred that year.



The table above contains the stocking history for rainbow trout over the past three years. The graph to the left shows the size distribution for rainbow trout sampled in 2010 and 2011. In 2010, the sample was dominated by fish in the 8-11" size range. The origin of most of those fish is probably the two plants made earlier that same year. The fingerling plant made on 8/26/2010 of 3" fish appears to have survived and is present in the 2011 sample as 4-5" fish. This is an encouraging sign that fingerling plants in this reach of river may sometimes be successful even given the challenge of slow growth.

In 2011, 1,000 marked brood fish were stocked. The population estimate for marked rainbow trout over 14" in the electrofishing survey was 21 fish per acre. This constitutes 88% of the rainbow trout population over 14" (see table on previous page). This is a discouraging sign, suggesting that rainbows in this reach of river are not growing beyond 14" on their own, but rather that the quality-sized fish population is being supported with annual plants of large brood fish.

In the near future, only fingerlings and brood fish will be stocked. 10" rainbow trout will no longer be stocked, in order to assess whether or not the fingerling plants are successful in growing to a catchable size.

