



# Blue Mesa Reservoir

## FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Dan Brauch - Aquatic Biologist (Gunnison)

dan.brauch@state.co.us / 970-641-7070

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**General Information:** Blue Mesa Reservoir, a 9000 acre storage reservoir, offers good fishing for kokanee salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout, and trophy lake trout. Blue Mesa Reservoir is located within Curecanti National Recreation Area. For Curecanti information: <http://www.nps.gov/cure/index.htm>

**Location:** Gunnison County. Gunnison River inlet to Blue Mesa Reservoir is located 5 miles west of Gunnison. For map of Blue Mesa Reservoir and Curecanti: [CNRA Map](#)

**Recreational Management:** National Park Service

**Fishery Management:** Coldwater angling for kokanee and rainbow, brown, and lake trout.

**Purchase a Fishing License:** <http://wildlife.state.co.us/ShopDOW/AppsAndLicenses/>

### Amenities

- 9000 surface acre reservoir can be accessed by boaters from two marinas, five developed boat ramps, and several additional access points
- 96 miles of shoreline is available for shore anglers.
- Campground facilities and restrooms are available at several locations.

### **WARNING!!!**

#### **Prevent the Spread of Zebra Mussels and other Aquatic Nuisance Species**

- **Clean, drain, and dry your boat after each use.**
- **Blue Mesa Reservoir requires mandatory inspections before launching. See CNRA web site for more info.**
- Find additional local fishing info and a list of fishing guides at: [Gunnison - Crested Butte/Activities](#)

### Regulations

Ice fishing shelters must be portable

Kokanee snagging permitted November 1-December 31

Bag and possession for lake trout is unlimited for lake trout up to 38 inches, one fish over 38 inches

Bag and possession for kokanee is 10 fish

Bag limit for cutthroat, brook, brown, and rainbow trout is 4 fish with possession limits of 8 fish

### Previous Stocking

#### **2011**

120,000 ten inch (catchable) rainbow trout

3.5 million fingerling kokanee

#### **2010**

106,000 ten inch (catchable) rainbow trout

3.4 million fingerling kokanee

### Sportfishing Notes

#### **Kokanee Salmon**

- Kokanee catch improved in 2011, consisting of 2/3 of summer boat angler catch

#### **Rainbow Trout**

- Catch rates continue to improve, consisting of 69% of bank angler catch in 2011

#### **Brown Trout**

- Naturally reproducing brown trout make up about 15% of angler catch

#### **Lake Trout**

- Lake trout numbers are up, exerting significant predation pressure on stocked trout and salmon. In 2011, lake trout made up 9% of angler catch.

#### **Yellow Perch**

- Lots of small perch are present, but anglers find larger perch tougher to find

For additional information about kokanee / lake trout information:

[CPW Blue Mesa Page](#)

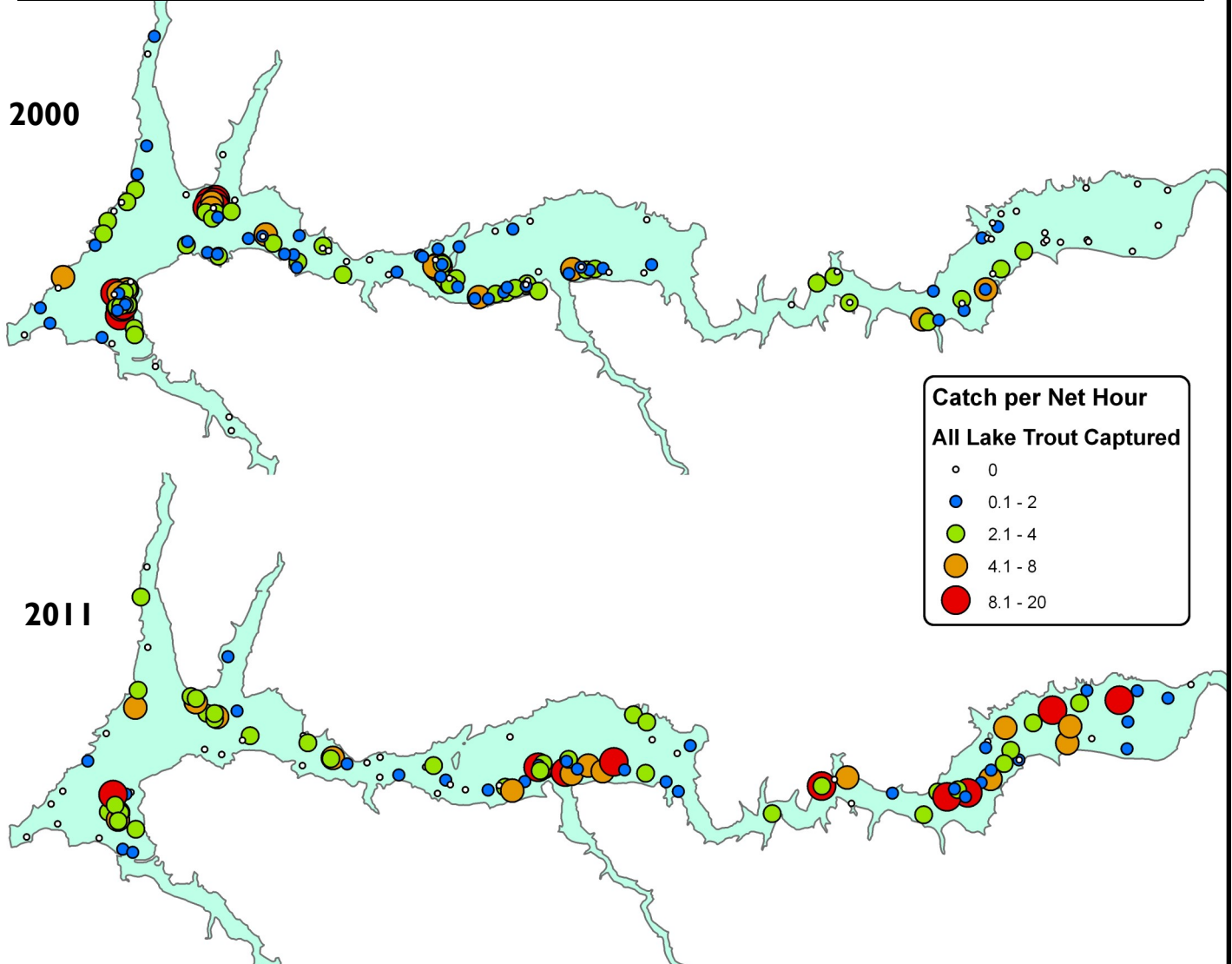
[CSU Fish Ecology BMR Page](#)

# Blue Mesa Reservoir

## FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

**Table 1.** Gill net survey data for spring and fall seasons combined, 2011. Net data is from 1.75 square inch mesh nets (8'X200'). 1335 lake trout were removed to reduce predation on stocked kokanee (an additional 81 lake trout were removed during other research sampling activities)

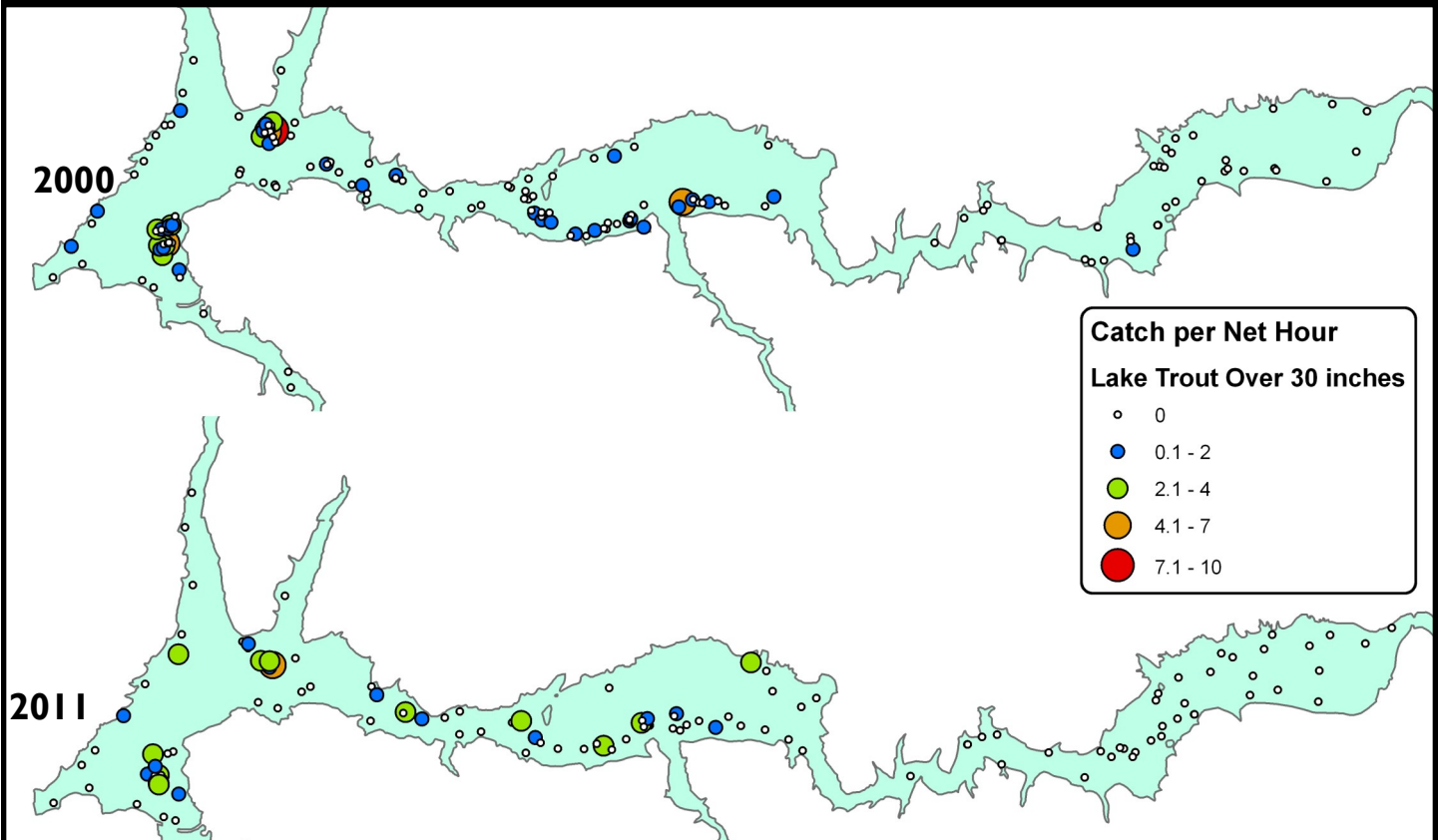
Fish Species (sportfish listed in order of abundance)	# Caught	Average Length (Range) in inches	Average Weight in pounds
lake trout	1437	20.2 (8.7-40.8)	2.9
brown trout	442	15.8 (7.7-22.1)	1.4
rainbow trout	44	14.8 (8.9-17.4)	1.3
kokanee salmon	21	14.4 (10.8-20.1)	1.3
white sucker	367		
longnose sucker	290		



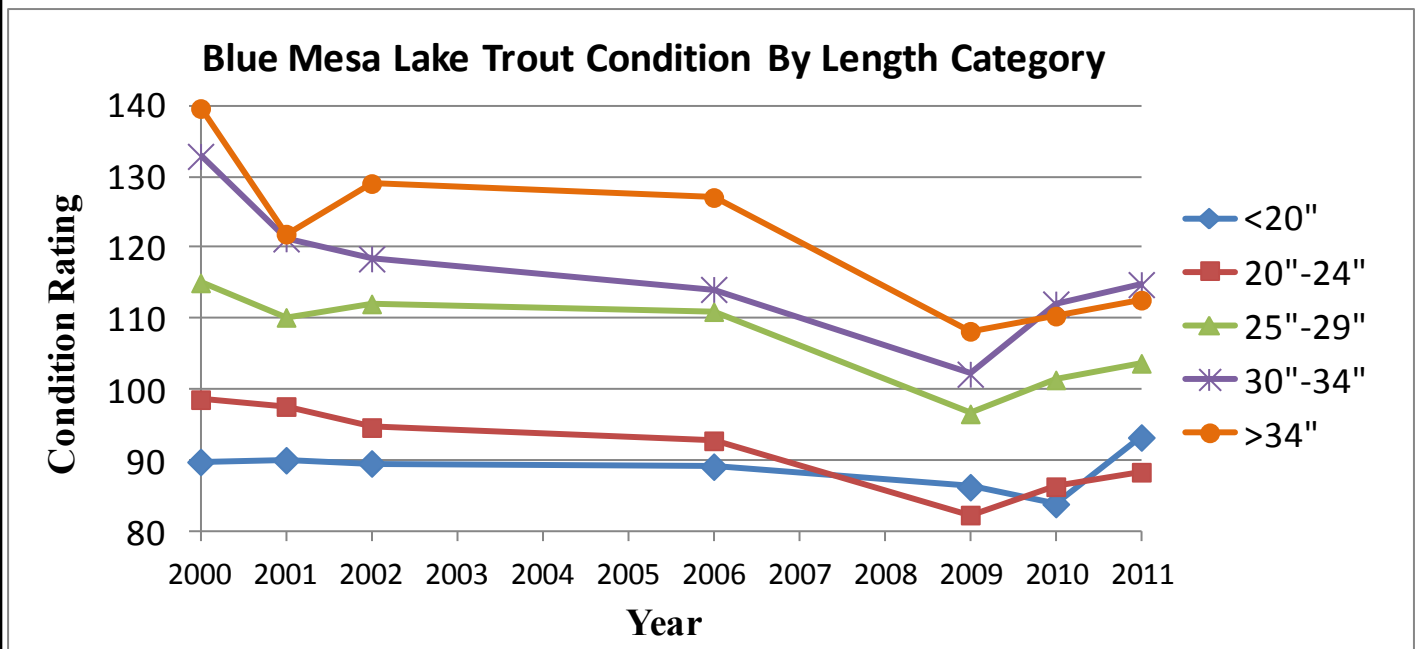
**Figure 1.** Lake trout catch per hour of net soak time in spring 2000 and 2011 for all sizes of lake trout captured, showing an expansion of the lake trout population.

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## FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



**Figure 2.** Lake trout catch per hour of net soak time in spring 2000 and 2011 for lake trout over 30 inches in length. Catch rates were slightly higher in 2011.



**Figure 3.** Mean relative weights for lake trout sampled in spring 2000-2011 by length category, showing continued improvement for all size classes in 2011, coinciding with improved kokanee densities.

# Blue Mesa Reservoir

## FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

### Boat Angler Total Catch by Species

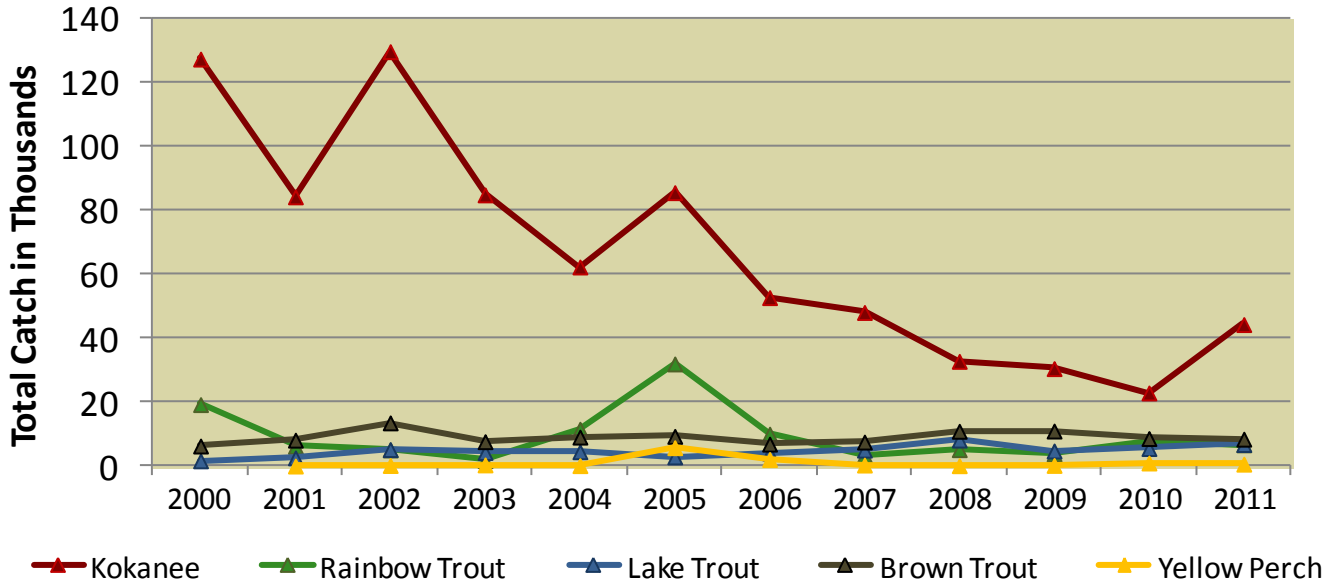


Figure 4. Boat angler catch by species for May-October surveys 2000-2011 showing significant long term decline in kokanee catch but improved numbers in 2011.

### Bank Angler Total Catch by Species

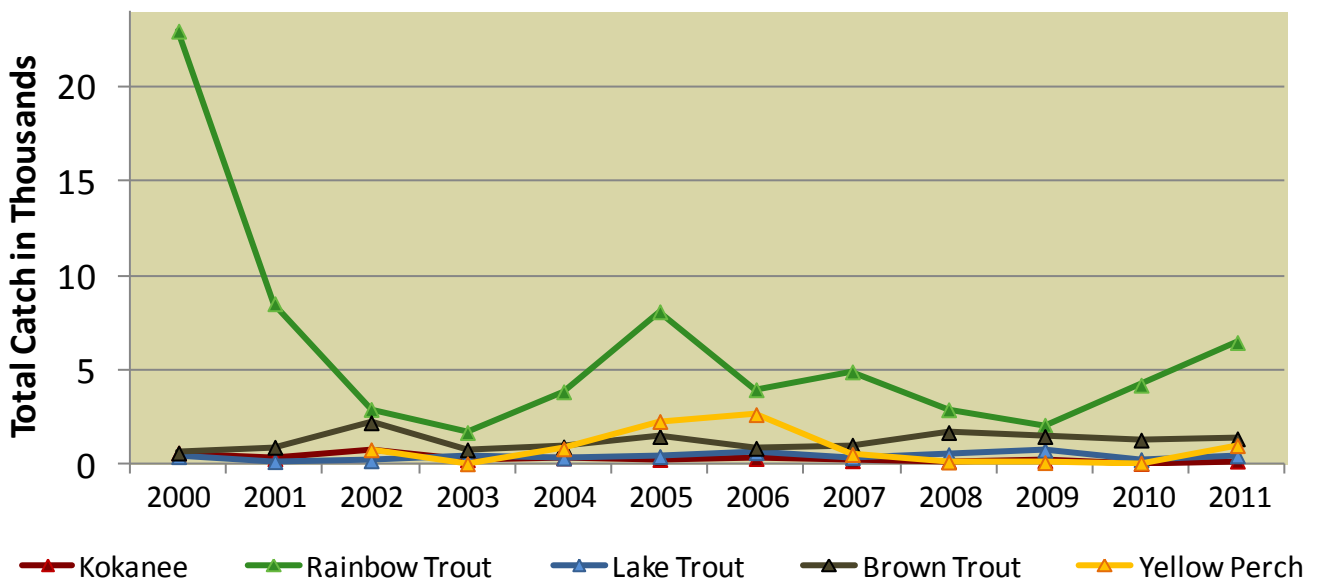
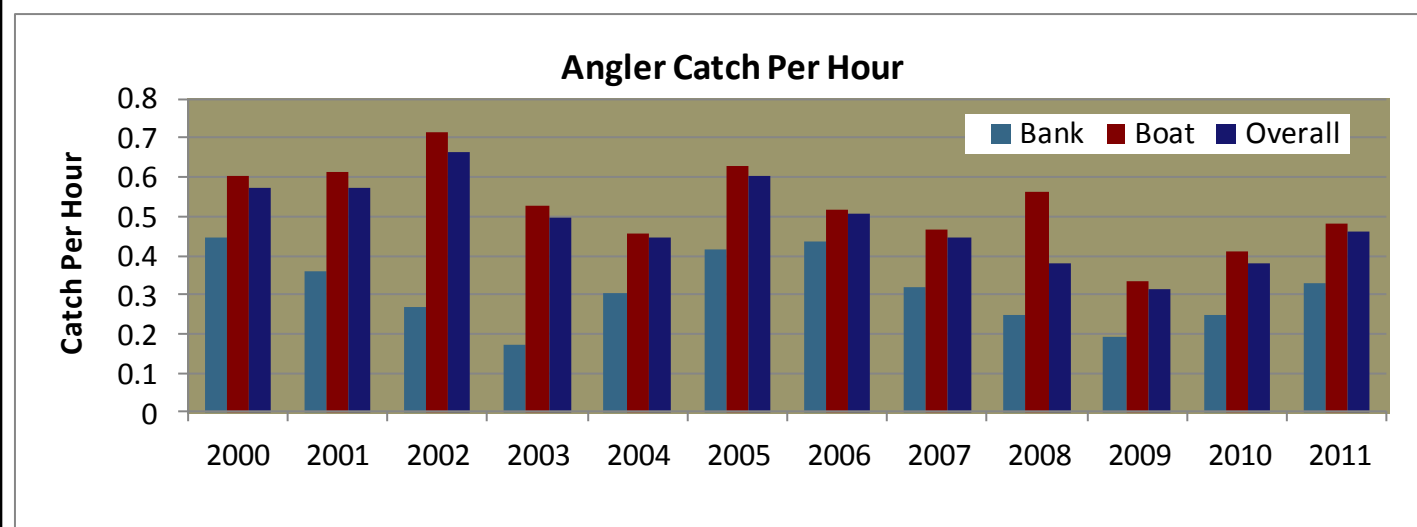


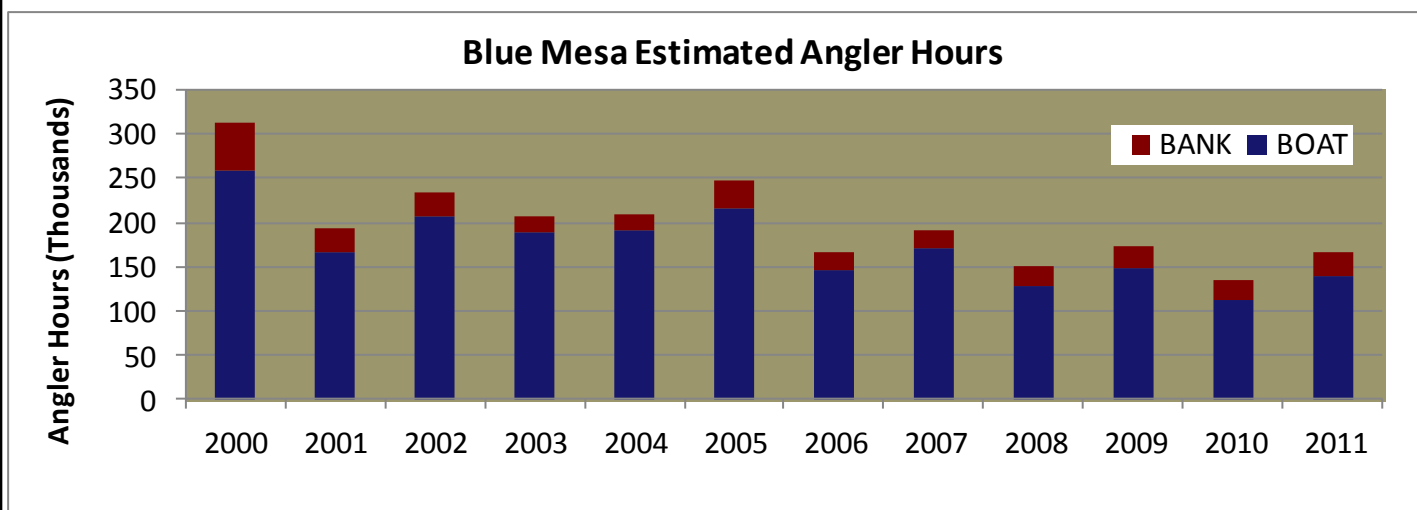
Figure 5. Bank angler catch by species for May-October surveys 1993-2011 showing decline in rainbow trout catch rates, but improvement since 2009.

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## FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



**Figure 6.** Fish catch rates during May through October for boat and bank anglers, 2000-2011. Both bank and boat catch rates have improved in 2010 and 2011.



**Figure 7.** Overall angling use during May through October at Blue Mesa Reservoir split by boat and bank anglers, 2000-2011. Overall use has declined significantly likely due to reduced catch rates.

**Management Notes** — Blue Mesa Reservoir is a destination fishery for anglers interested in fishing for kokanee salmon and trophy lake trout, as well as stocked rainbow trout and wild brown trout. Since 2009, kokanee numbers have rebounded but are still significantly below peak numbers. With improved kokanee abundance, lake trout condition or “fatness” has also improved but is still significantly below levels seen when kokanee numbers were at their peak. Recent kokanee declines are due in large part to significant increases in the level of predation by an expanding lake trout population at the reservoir since the early 1990’s. Due to continued over population of lake trout, harvest of lake trout caught by anglers is recommended. More information can be found on the CPW Blue Mesa Reservoir Management Page. Although lake trout predation on stocked rainbow trout is significant, shifting to a larger size at stocking has improved rainbow trout catch rates in recent years. Rainbow trout continue to be the primary species caught by shore anglers as well as a significant part of the ice fishing angler catch.