



Blue Mesa Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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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 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.

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

2010

120,000 ten inch (catchable) rainbow trout

3.4 million fingerling kokanee

2009

850,000 five inch (sub-catchable) rainbow trout

3.3 million fingerling kokanee

Sportfishing Notes

Kokanee Salmon

- Kokanee still predominate catch at 45% (primarily boat anglers) but are in decline

Rainbow Trout

- Catch rates are up with the stocking of catchable trout, reaching 23% of angler catch

Brown Trout

- Naturally reproducing brown trout make up about 20% of angler catch

Lake Trout

- Lake trout numbers are up, exerting significant predation pressure on stocked trout and salmon. In 2010, lake trout made up 11% of angler catch.

Yellow Perch

- Lots of small perch are present, but anglers have difficulty finding larger perch

For additional information about kokanee / lake trout information:

[CDOW Blue Mesa Page](#)

[CSU Fish Ecology BMR Page](#)

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FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

Table I. Gill net survey data for spring and fall seasons combined, 2010. Net data is from 1.75 square inch mesh nets (8'X200'). 1576 lake trout were removed to reduce predation on stocked kokanee (an additional 157 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	1649	20.6 (14.1-42.6)	3.5
brown trout	525	16.8 (8.7-24.4)	1.6
rainbow trout	49	14.8 (10.7-20.3)	1.3
kokanee salmon	35	17.0 (12-21.6)	1.7
yellow perch	6	12.1 (11.4-12.8)	.9
white sucker	1015	15.2 (13.5-17.9)	1.5
longnose sucker	830	14.4 (10.7-17.4)	1.5

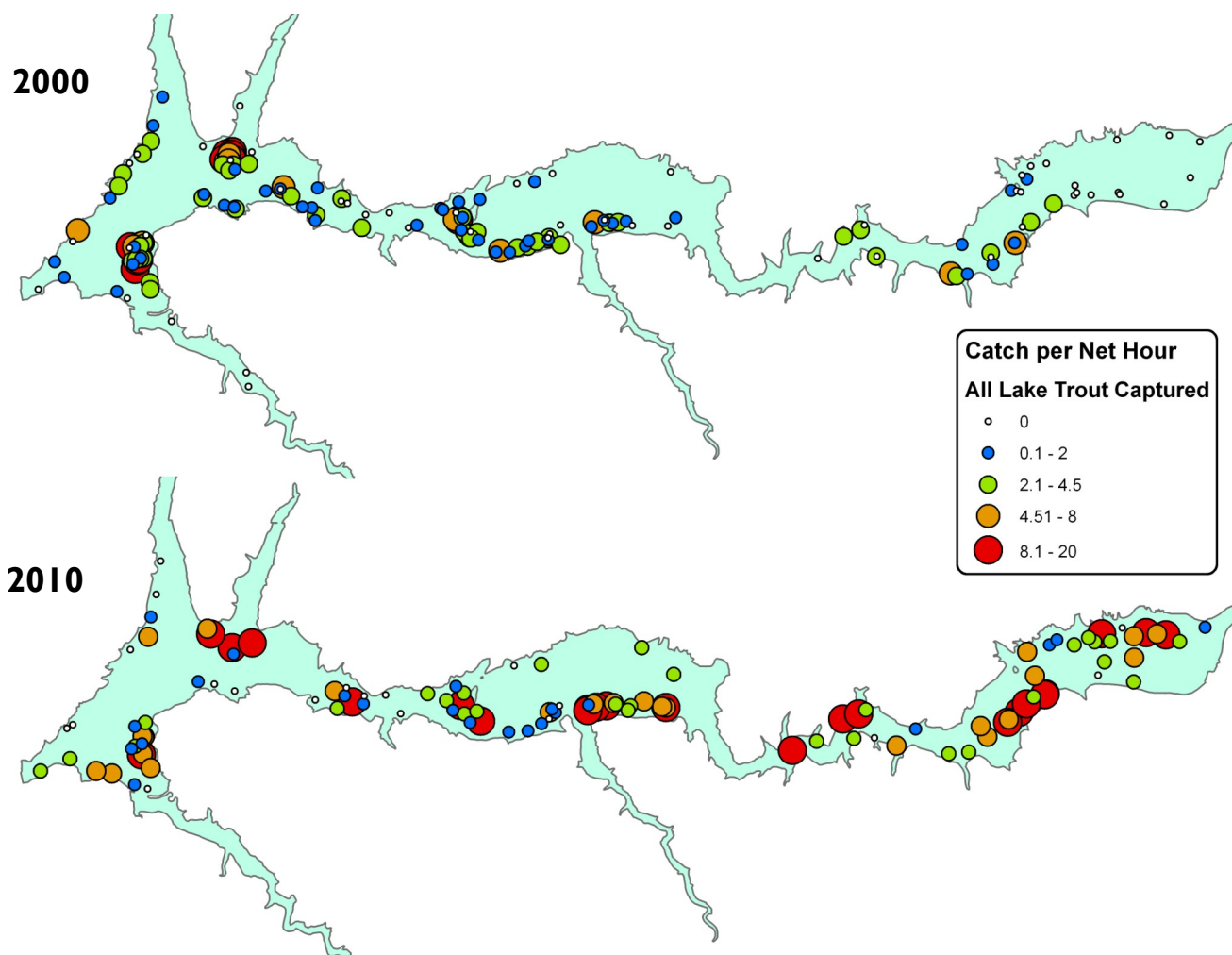


Figure I. Lake trout catch per hour of net soak time in spring 2000 and 2010 for all sizes of lake trout captured, showing an expansion of the lake trout population.

Blue Mesa Reservoir

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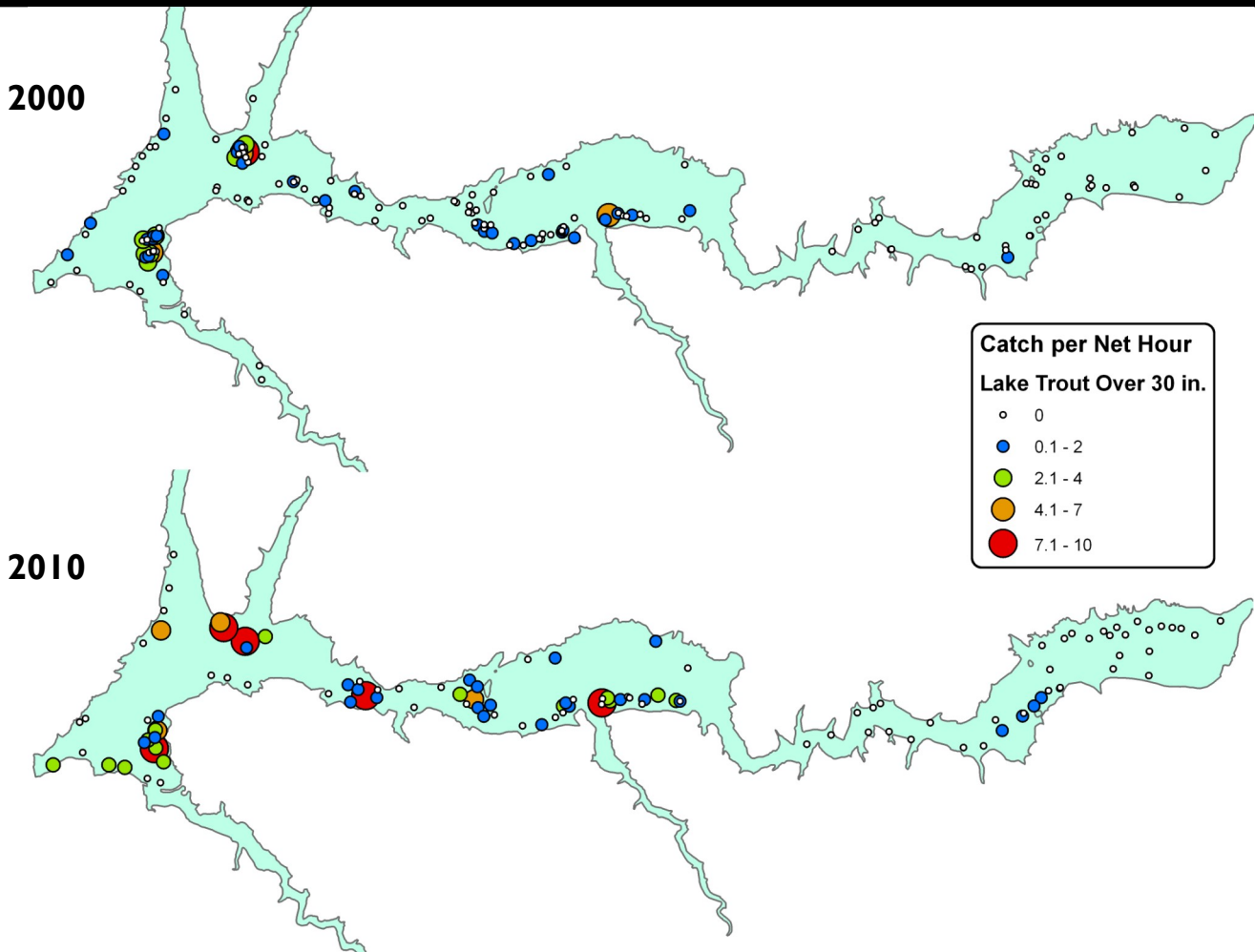


Figure 2. Lake trout catch per hour of net soak time in spring 2000 and 2010 for lake trout over 30 inches in length. Catch rates were significantly higher in 2010.

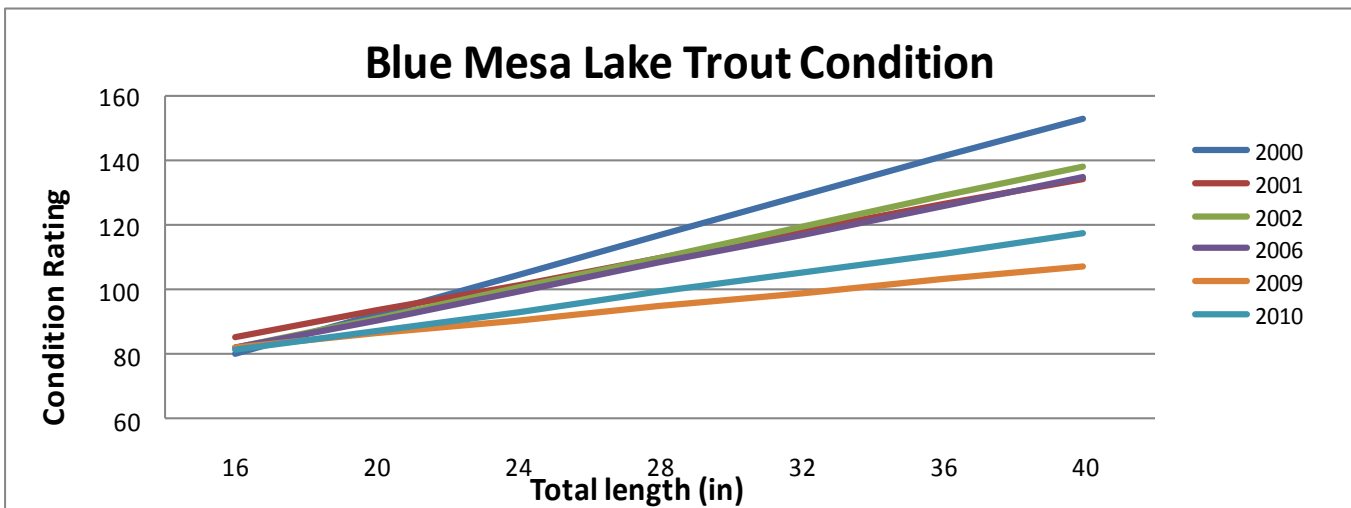


Figure 3. Mean relative weights for lake trout sampled in spring 2000-2010, showing decreasing condition or fatness in recent years. This is the result of decreased kokanee available for prey.

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FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

Boat Angler Total Catch by Species

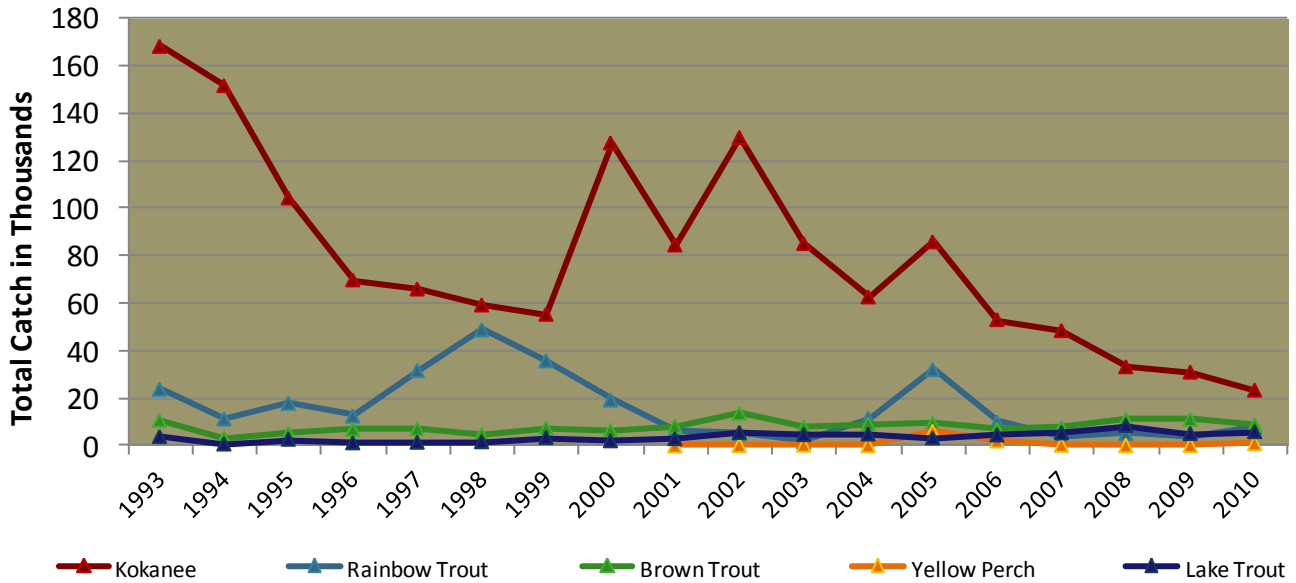


Figure 4. Boat angler catch by species for May-October surveys 1993-2010 showing significant decline in kokanee and catch.

Bank Angler Total Catch by Species

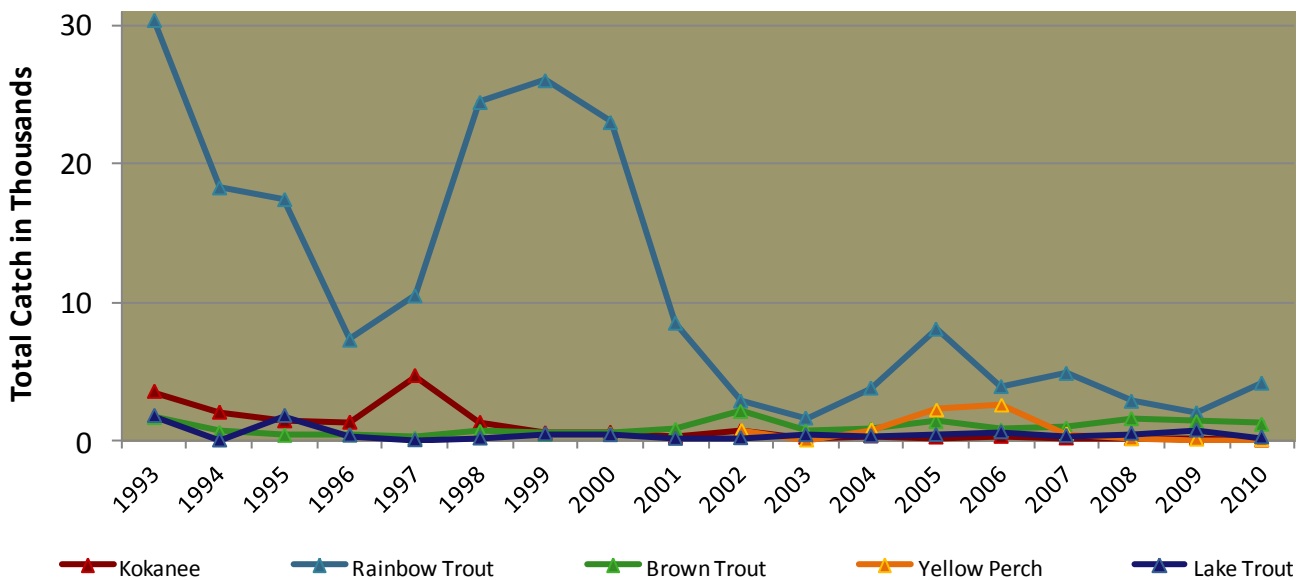


Figure 5. Bank angler catch by species for May-October surveys 1993-2010 showing decline in rainbow trout catch rates.

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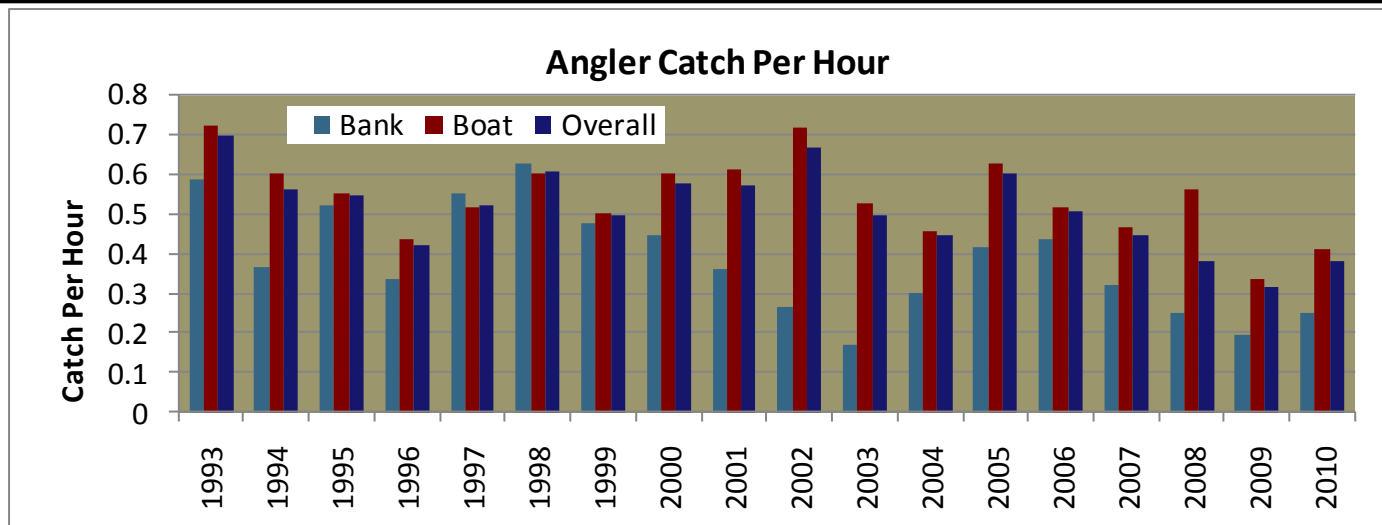


Figure 6. Fish catch rates during May through October for boat and bank anglers, 1993-2010. Catch rates have declined in recent years primarily due to declines in kokanee and rainbow trout populations.

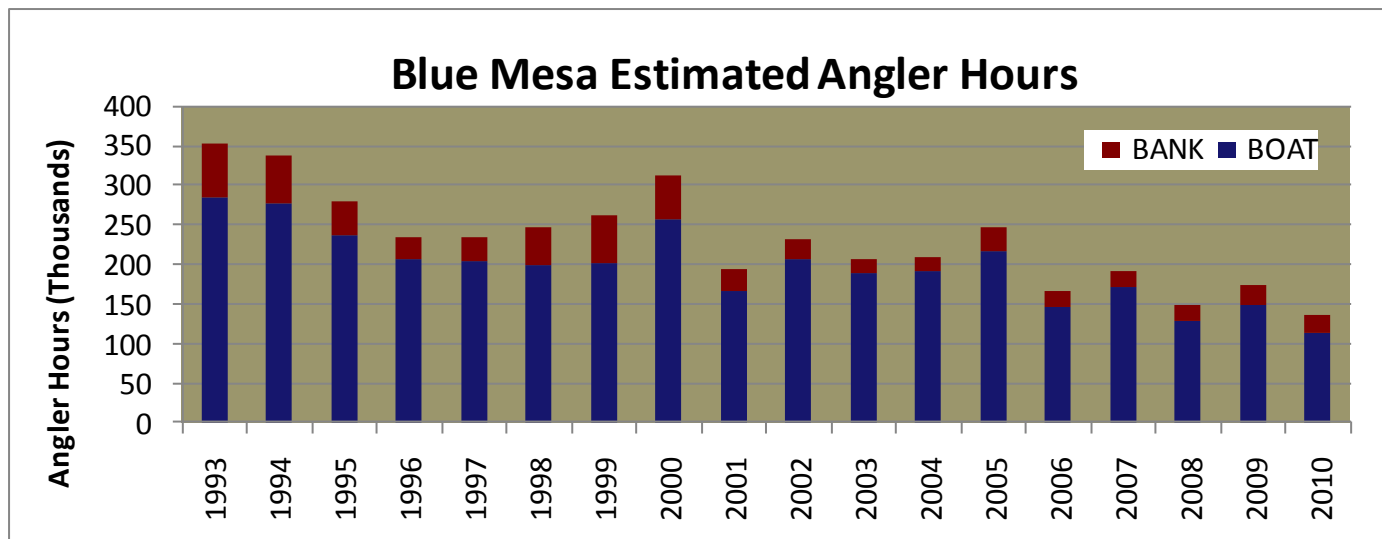


Figure 7. Overall angling use during May through October at Blue Mesa Reservoir split by boat and bank anglers, 1993-2010. Overall use has declined significantly likely due to reduced catch rates.

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. Recent declines in kokanee populations have reduced angling opportunity and kokanee egg supplies for restocking needs. Reduced numbers of kokanee are now negatively affecting lake trout growth and trophy potential. 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 over population of lake trout, harvest of lake trout captured is recommended. More information can be found on the CDOW Blue Mesa Reservoir Management Page. Rainbow trout survival has also been very low due to predation by lake trout, so efforts are underway to shift to a larger sized stocked fish. Rainbow trout are now stocked at a 10 inch size to attempt to reduce lake trout predation and increase return to angler creels.