



Lower Lake Fork Gunnison River

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Dan Brauch - Aquatic Biologist (Gunnison)

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

General Information: The Lake Fork Gunnison River provides excellent trout fishing opportunity for brown and rainbow trout on this 29 mile section. Kokanee angling is also popular during their fall migration in areas downstream of Red Bridge. Public access is good for bank or wade fishing.

Location: Gunnison and Hindsdale counties. Blue Mesa Lake Fork inlet 6 miles south-east of Blue Mesa Dam to Lake City. There are many access areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management as well as sections managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the National Park Service. For more information on these areas see: [BLM Map Page 1](#), [BLM Map Page 2](#)

Fishery Management: Coldwater angling

Amenities

- About 14 miles of public access for shore or wade angling at five separate access areas
- Several public access sites are public fishing easements on private land, but most easements should be well signed
- Seasonal restrooms available at BLM Gateview, Red Bridge, and the Gate Campgrounds
- Guided wade or float fishing available from several local guide services.

Regulations

Standard Regulations Sections:

Blue Mesa Reservoir to Red Bridge Campground and High Bridge Gulch to headwaters

Trout bag and possession is 4 fish

Special Regulations Section:

Upstream Boundary of Red Bridge Campground to High Bridge Gulch

Artificial Flies and Lures Only

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

Catch and release on rainbow trout

Previous Stocking

2009 and 2008

10,000 fingerling rainbow trout stocked annually (Lake City to Red Bridge, whirling disease resistant rainbows stocked in 2009)

2,000 to 3,500 catchable rainbow trout stocked annually

(Blue Mesa Reservoir to Red Bridge Campground)

Sportfishing Notes

Brown Trout

- Most common species making up about 80 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid October through November
- Fish with egg patterns during kokanee migration

Rainbow Trout

- Make up about 20 percent of angler catch
- Spawn in mid April through mid May

Kokanee Salmon

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

Lower Lake Fork Gunnison River

(Special fishing regulation section, flies and lures only)

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION



Figure 1. Lake Fork Gunnison River above Red Bridge Campground, sampled in September, 2008. This 1.2 mile reach was sampled with the use of a raft mounted electrofisher.

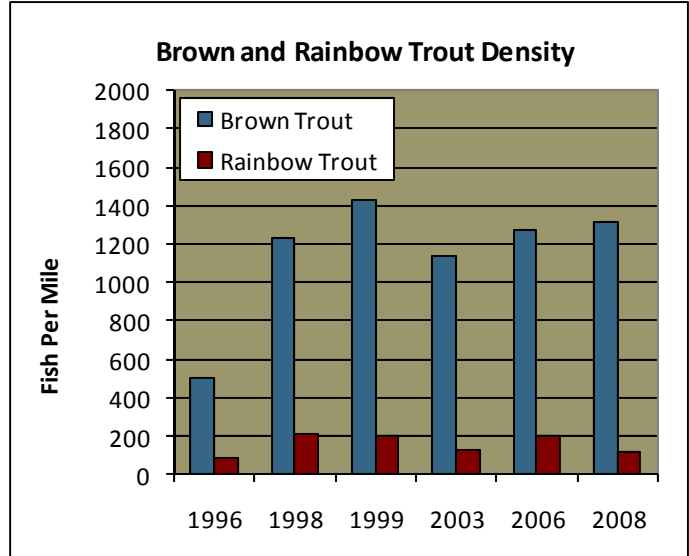


Figure 2. Density estimates for the Lake Fork, 1996-2008. The density estimate in 2008 for trout over 5 inches was $1,313 \pm 376$ fish per mile for browns and 119 ± 59 fish per mile for rainbows.

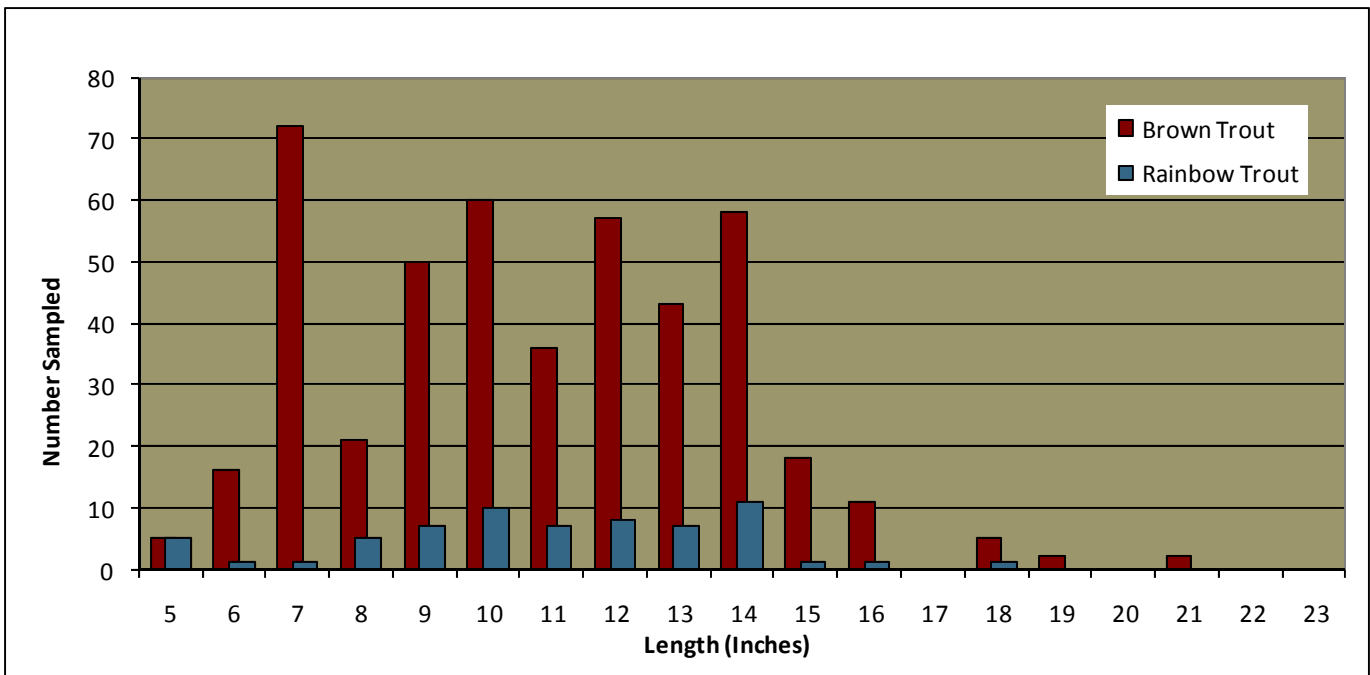


Figure 3. Brown and rainbow trout length-frequency for the Lake Fork Gunnison River above Red Bridge Campground, 2008.

Lower Lake Fork Gunnison River

FISH SAMPLING INFORMATION

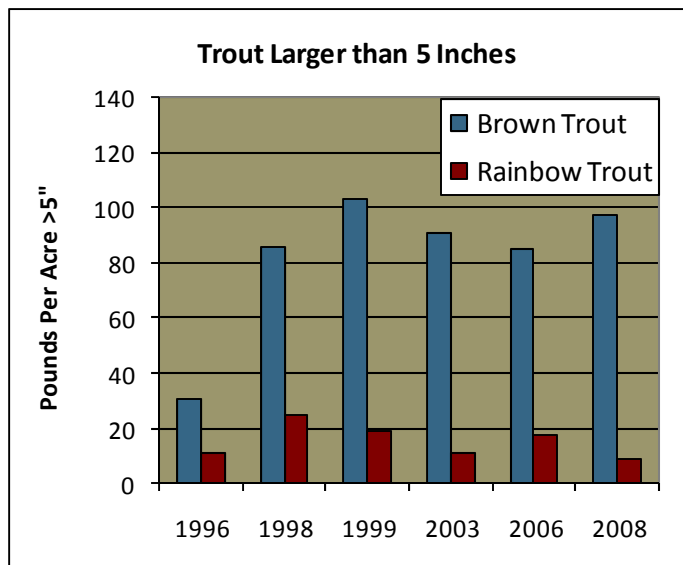


Figure 4. Biomass estimates for brown and rainbow trout one year old and older sampled from the Lake Fork, 1996-2008. In 2008, there was an estimated 97 ± 28 lbs. per acre of brown trout and 9 ± 5 lbs. per acre of rainbow trout.

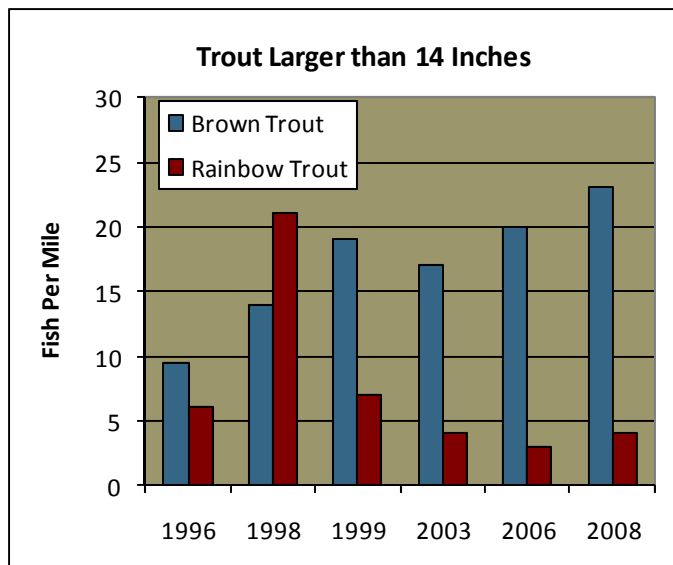


Figure 5. Density estimates for quality sized brown and rainbow trout sampled from the Lake Fork, 1996-2008. In 2008, there were an estimated 23 brown trout and 4 rainbow trout over 14 inches in length per acre.

Management Notes — The Lake Fork of the Gunnison River provides excellent opportunities for anglers to catch quality size brown and rainbow trout. Brown trout natural reproduction and survival is good and supports a quality wild trout component. Rainbow trout natural reproduction is less successful and is supplemented by the stocking of sub-catchable rainbow trout in the Lake City to Red Bridge Campground reach. Catchable rainbow trout are stocked from the Gateview Campground just above Blue Mesa Reservoir to Red Bridge Campground downstream to provide opportunity for anglers who would like to catch and keep rainbows in this section. Public access has been improved significantly in the last 20 years on the Lake Fork, with several areas now open to the public for fishing that were previously private property. Many of these access areas were purchased through funding from the Bureau of Reclamation to mitigate the flooding of the main-stem Gunnison River with the construction of Crystal, Morrow Point, and Blue Mesa Reservoirs. Some of these access areas, including several miles of access just above the Red Bridge Campground, have been improved through the construction of fish habitat structures to improve holding areas and overwinter survival of adult trout. Data provided above shows estimated biomass and density of quality sized fish for the BLM access upstream of the Red Bridge Campground which benefitted from a habitat restoration project in 1997. This project resulted in more than a doubling of both biomass and the number of quality sized trout in this reach.