



Vallecito Reservoir

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA

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General Information: Vallecito Reservoir, 2,718 surface acre reservoir, offers good fishing for trophy northern pike and brown trout. Anglers commonly catch rainbow trout and kokanee salmon and occasionally smallmouth bass and walleye. **Location:** La Plata County. Go 14 miles N. of Bayfield on CR 501 or 16.5 mi E. on CR 240 from Durango then 6 mi N. on 501.

Recreational Management: Pine River Irrigation District (PRID) and USFS (970) 884-2512

Fishery Management: Warm and Cold water species. CDOW Area Office 970-247-0855

Annual Survey Data: [\(see page 2\)](#)

Amenities and General Info.

- Boat Ramps (3)
- Picnic Areas
- Camping
- Restrooms
- Marinas (2)
- Hiking trails
- Boat rentals

Regulations

- Daily bag for trout is 4.
- Daily bag for walleye and/or smallmouth bass is 5.
- Daily bag limit for kokanee is 10 (see snagging below)
- Bag limit for northern pike and yellow perch is unlimited.
- Snagging is permitted for kokanee in Vallecito Creek ONLY from Nov. 15-Dec. 31. Check CDOW regulation brochure for location, seasonal closures, and other fishing regulations on Vallecito and Grimes Creeks.

Boats

- A boat permit is required from PRID. Cost is \$20. Pick up at Marinas or PRID office
- If your boat has been out of the state in the last 30 days it must be inspected for unwanted aquatic nuisance species before launching (call CDOW Area Office)

Previous Stocking

2008

Rainbow Trout (35,000)
Kokanee Salmon (500,000)

2007

Rainbow Trout (45,000)
Kokanee Salmon (500,000)

2006

Rainbow Trout (45,000)
Kokanee Salmon (500,000)

Northern pike, smallmouth bass, and brown trout are self-sustaining and do not require stocking

Sportfishing Notes

Northern Pike

- During the drought in the early 2000s, pike did very well. Large northern pike are abundant and fishing the shallow north end of the lake right after ice-out is productive using large "rainbow trout" lures.

Smallmouth bass

- Smallmouth bass fishing has become increasingly popular. Fish the rip-rap along the dam using crayfish imitations.

Rainbow Trout

- Trout fishing is generally good year round using traditional baits. It is particularly good in the fall and into the winter.

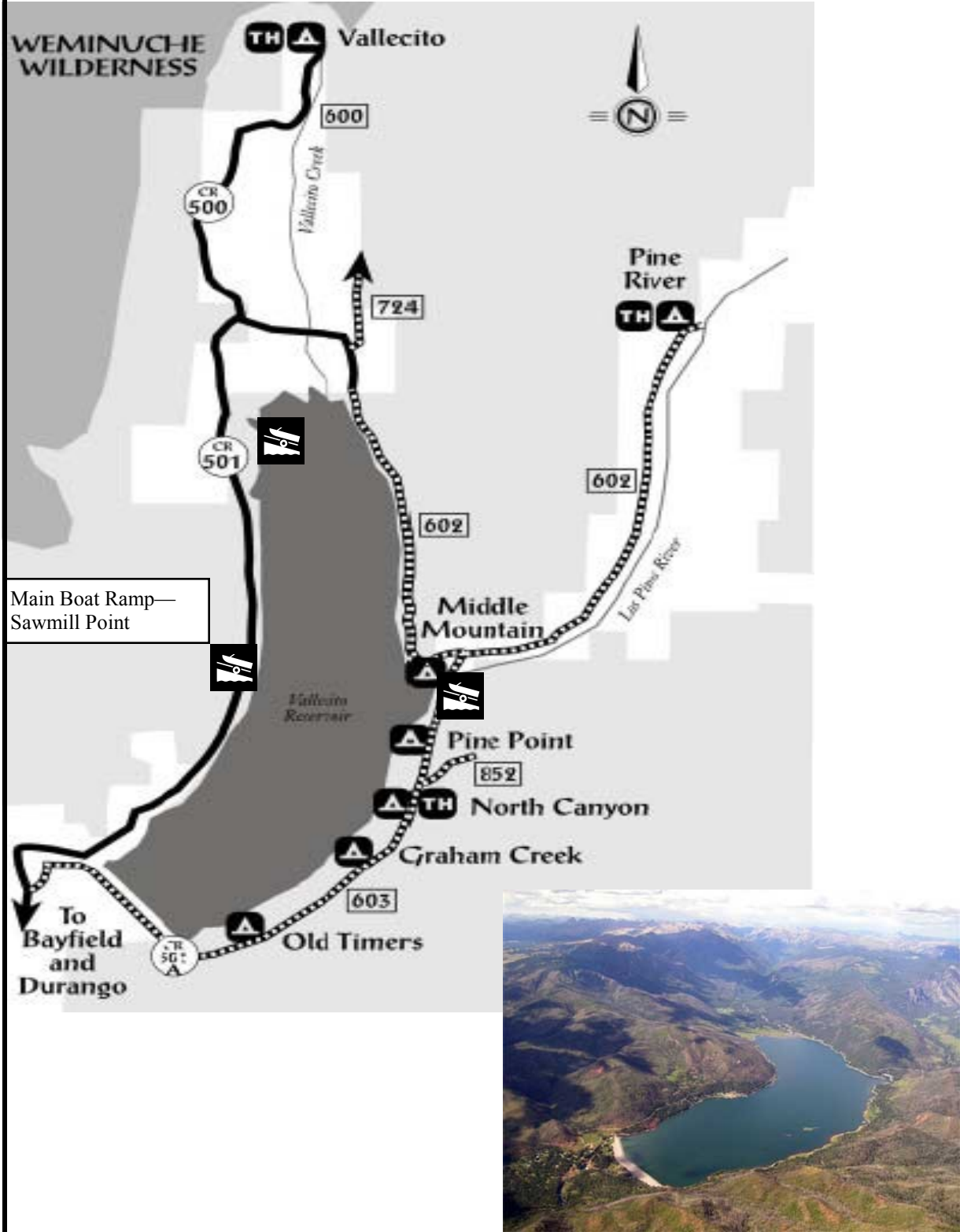
Kokanee Salmon

- Fishing for "koks" appears to be on the rebound compared with previous 5 years.

Walleye

- There are large walleye in Vallecito Lake but they are not abundant. They are mostly concentrated around the islands on the East side.

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2009 Gill Net Survey Results*

Fish Species	# Caught	Average Length (Range) in inches	Average Weight in pounds
rainbow trout	23	13.7 (11.4-14.7)	0.97
northern pike	8	31.8 (22.4-41.0)	10.31
walleye	7	19.0 (17.3-21.1)	2.49
kokanee salmon	6	13.7 (11.4-17.7)	0.97
brown trout	2	19.7 (18.1-21.3)	2.47
white sucker	11	16.8 (12.8-19.3)	2.41

*Gillnet surveys consist of setting four 150 foot nets overnight at the same location and time (1-2 weeks after ice off) each year. Table is the combined catch for 2009.

Management Notes: Vallecito Reservoir is managed primarily as a coldwater combined sub-catchable and catchable lake. Primary sportfish management is directed toward kokanee salmon and rainbow trout. Vallecito provides about 9,000 angler days per year, with an estimated total catch of about 7,000 fish. Rainbow trout comprise 77% of the catch, followed by smallmouth bass (9%), northern pike (7%) kokanee salmon (5%) and brown trout (2%). These estimates were derived from a creel survey done in 2007. Kokanee salmon typically comprise a much larger percentage of the catch but at the time of the creel survey densities were very low due to a 2003 die off associated with the Missionary Ridge fire. The population of kokanee has rebounded and catch rates have improved. Fish species present: white sucker, kokanee salmon, rainbow trout, northern pike, brown trout, walleye, smallmouth bass, yellow perch (bass and perch illegally introduced).

Vallecito Reservoir has been managed as a kokanee salmon brood lake since 1968. The average annual kokanee egg take at Vallecito for the last forty years approximately 1 million. In 2009 we took 2 million eggs from Vallecito. Catchable rainbow trout stocking has been a regular management practice at Vallecito since the early 1950's. Catchable size trout are stocked because they are better suited than fingerlings to survive in a lake with northern pike. Northern pike were introduced at Vallecito in 1962, as a biological control for an expanding population of white suckers. Northern pike have proved effective at controlling suckers, in addition to providing a popular trophy fishery for a dedicated minority of anglers.

As with many SW waters, there is a Fish Consumption Advisory warning anglers to limit their consumption of fish because some species may have higher concentrations of mercury than what the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommends. Specific information is posted at the lake.