

FINAL REGULATIONS - CHAPTER W-1 - FISHING

ARTICLE II - SPECIAL REGULATION WATERS

335. Rifle Gap Reservoir - Garfield County

- a. The bag and possession limit and minimum size for walleye ~~are is one~~ three fish, ~~18-15~~ inches in length.
- b. ~~The bag and possession limit for yellow perch is twenty fish. No more than one walleye greater than 18 inches in length may be taken per day.~~
- c. The bag and possession limit for yellow perch is twenty fish.

439. Vallecito Creek - La Plata and San Juan Counties

- a. From the headwaters downstream to the southern boundary of the Weminuche Wilderness:
 - 1. Fishing is by artificial flies and lures only.
 - 2. The bag and possession limit for trout is two fish.
- b. From the southern boundary of the Weminuche Wilderness downstream to the standing water line of Vallecito Reservoir~~La Plata Co Rd 501 bridge:~~
 - 1. All kokanee salmon must be returned to the water immediately upon catch from September 1 through November 14.
 - 2. Snagging of kokanee salmon is permitted from November 15 through December 31.
- c. ~~From the La Plata Co Rd 501 bridge downstream to the standing water line of Vallecito Reservoir:~~
 - 1. ~~Fishing is prohibited from September 1 through November 14.~~
 - 2. ~~Snagging of kokanee salmon is permitted from November 15 through December 31.~~

Basis and Purpose:

These regulations amend Chapter W-1 - Fishing - of the Parks and Wildlife Commission Regulations. These regulations are designed to manage statewide aquatic resources and provide a diversity of angling recreation opportunities for resident and nonresident anglers throughout Colorado. They are the result of public involvement and the application of biological information on aquatic species. All regulation changes are based on the best available biological information and are designed to manage aquatic resources towards stated objectives.

Modifying the bag and possession limit at Rifle Gap Reservoir

A lake management plan for Rifle Gap Reservoir was approved by the states of Utah and Wyoming, along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015 through the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, which now allows for the annual stocking of triploid (sterile) walleye. Following the stocking of triploid walleye, which began in 2015, increases in walleye densities have been observed. Increasing bag and possession limits will allow increased angler opportunities for the harvest of walleye benefiting the fishery by moderating the high density of walleye in the 15 to 18-inch length range, and reducing predation pressure on yellow perch.

Removing the regulation prohibiting fishing on the Vallecito Creek from La Plata Co Rd 501 Bridge downstream to the standing water line of Vallecito Reservoir

A no-fishing regulation from September 1 through November 14 on this section of the Vallecito Creek was to protect kokanee salmon so CPW could harvest the eggs for future propagation of Area and Statewide waters. However, changing habitat conditions associated with frequent low reservoir elevations, high water temperatures, low dissolved oxygen concentrations, and increasing predacious fishes are making management of this broodstock difficult. In the last 6 years, the kokanee salmon run in Vallecito Creek has been virtually absent. Increasing drought frequency and temperatures do not bode well for consistent management of the kokanee fishery. With an unpredictable salmon run, the prohibition of fishing from Sept. 1-Nov. 14 is unnecessary and denies anglers the opportunity to fish for other fall-run species like brown trout.

The statements of basis and purpose for these regulations can be obtained from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, Office of the Regulations Manager by emailing dnr_cpw_planning@state.co.us or by visiting the Division of Parks and Wildlife headquarters at 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO, 80216.

The statutory authority for these regulations can be found in § 24-4-103, C.R.S., and the state Wildlife Act, §§ 33-1-101 to 33-6-209, C.R.S., specifically including, but not limited to: §§ 33-1-106.

EFFECTIVE DATE - THESE REGULATIONS SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2023, AND SHALL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT UNTIL REPEALED, AMENDED, OR SUPERSEDED.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO ON THIS 17TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2022.

**APPROVED:
Carrie Besnette Hauser**

Chair

**ATTEST:
Marie Haskett
Secretary**