

Summary: Four historic sites in the Upper Animas River drainage (site “A72 Gauge” not shown; too few fish collected to be meaningful) were surveyed in early October 2020 by Colorado Parks and Wildlife personnel. River levels were low. Stream discharge on Oct. 1st at the A72 gauge (just below Cement Ck in Silverton) was reading 30 cfs (historic average is 77 cfs).

The number of adult Brook Trout were up in both sites that typically harbor fish. Brook Trout at the Teft Spur site (just above Cascade Ck. Confluence) was 116 fish/mile compared to 74 f/mi in 2018 (Figure 1). No Brown or Rainbow trout were captured.

The 1,000 foot survey site at Elk Park (just upstream of Elk Creek confluence) was up considerable from 2018. We captured a total of 7 Brook Trout and 3 Rainbow Trout. The Rainbow Trout appeared to be hatchery stocked “catchables” or 10 inch fish. Fish per mile was estimated at 37 compared to a baseline of around 10 fish/mi since 2015. Two adult Brook Trout were captured at the A72 site.

The Howardsville site is located upstream of Cunningham Gulch about ½ mile. This is our “control” site or a site where the Brook Trout population is not significantly affected by dissolved metals but other sensitive species to dissolved metals might be impacted (i.e., Cutthroat Trout). We saw a dip in the number of fish per mile but at almost 1,000 fish per mile this was not a cause for concern. This section of river is subjected to a fair amount of angling and the heavy use of the Silverton area and increased fish harvest could explain some of that dip. One Cutthroat Trout was captured at the Howardsville site this year; a first to my knowledge.

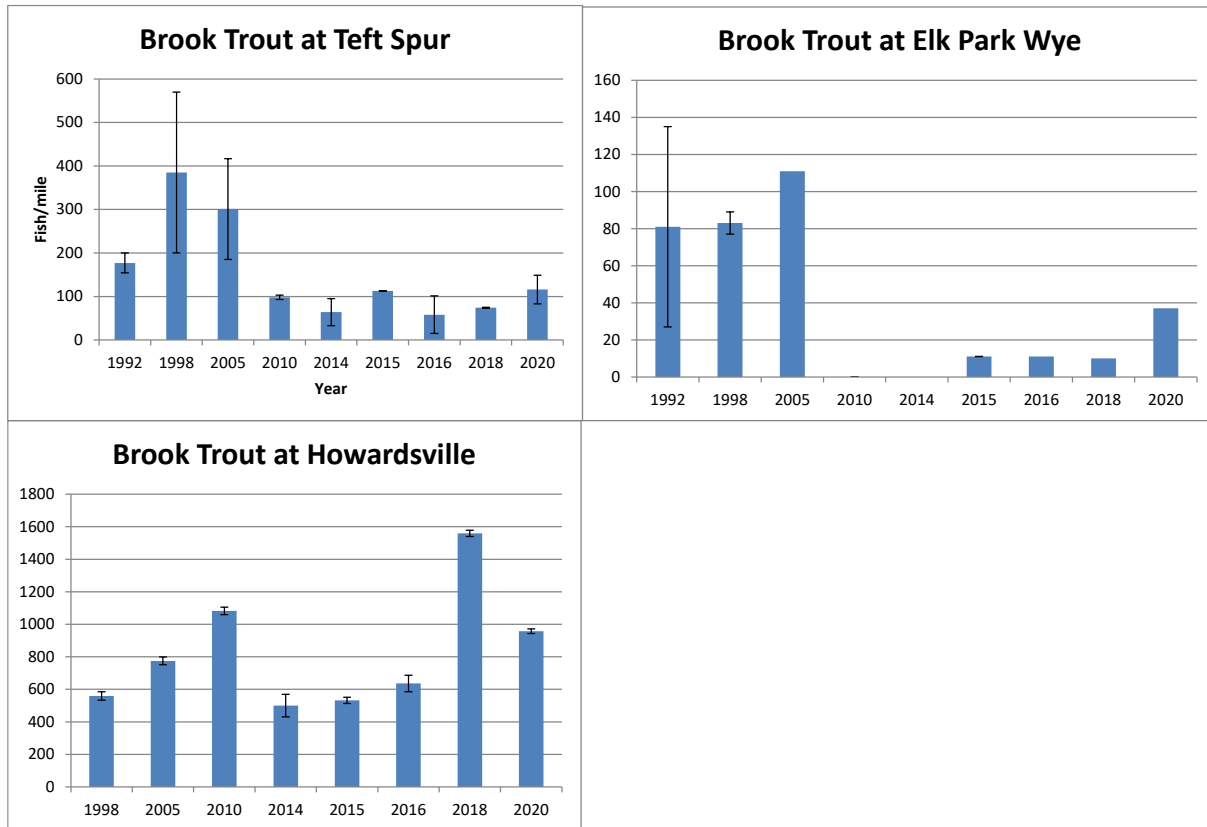


Figure 1. Fish population trends in the Upper Animas River basin collected by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.