



VERMEJO

A TED TURNER RESERVE

2024 FISHING FORECAST

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This Guest Fishing Forecast is provided to keep anglers up to date on fishing conditions at Vermejo for the upcoming season.

2024 WATER OUTLOOK AND FISH STOCKING OVERVIEW

Winter snowpack for 2023-24 is trending average to slightly below average. Despite the lack of water Adams, Bartlett, Merrick, Munn, and Bernal went into winter full and are all expected to be fishable this season. Lower Underwoods is still recovering, since draining it in 2021, but Vermejo was able to stock it in 2023.

Vermejo stocks on average approximately 10,000-14,000 pounds of trout (8,000-10,000 trout) in Vermejo's Class "A" Lakes annually. On average guests remove approximately 20-30% of the fish stocked. A high percentage of the fish remaining at the end of the season can overwinter and subsequently add to the population for the following season.

In Fall of 2023 Vermejo stocked 3,000 pounds of rainbow trout into Adams and Bartlett Lake for the 2024 spring fishing season. Vermejo plans to stock another 7,200 pounds of trout between 6 class A lakes.



BAG LIMIT

While it is fine to take a few fish to eat, Vermejo encourages guests to practice catch-and-release, especially of smaller fish, to help ensure availability of large trout for future seasons.

Bag Limit: Number of fish one guest can keep per day of fishing. Vermejo's class-A lake bag limit is 5 fish per day per person.

Possession Limit: The maximum number of fish one guest may keep during their stay. Vermejo's possession limit is 10 fish per person for their stay.

Maximum Trip Possession Limit: 10 trout

Adams, Bartlett, Munn, Upper and Lower Underwoods Bag Limit:

5 trout per person per day

Bernal: Fly fishing only - 2 fish per day limit

Merrick Lake: Catch and release only

Costilla Basin: 2 Rio Grande cutthroat trout total

Vermejo River, Ricardo Creek, Leandro Creek:

Catch and release only for Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout; unlimited harvest for brook trout.



2024 BY LAKE FISHING SEASON DETAILS

ADAMS LAKE

A beautiful 60-acre lake, one of the most popular in terms of fishing pressure. Adams had the second most fish brought into the fish house in 2022 with an average length of 16 inches and a weight of 1.6 pounds. Adams was stocked in the fall of 2023 with 1,500 pounds of 14-16 inch rainbow trout. In spring of 2024 Adams will be stocked with 200 pounds of brook trout.

BARTLETT LAKE

Vermejo's largest of the Class "A" lakes at 75-acres. Bartlett produced the most fish brought into the fish house last season. Our 2023 Fish House data showed that Bartlett Lake rainbows averaged 16 inches and weighed 1.7 pounds. The lake was stocked in late fall of 2023 with 1,500 pounds of 14-16 inch rainbow trout, and in spring of 2024 Bartlett will be stocked with 200 pounds of Brook trout.

BERNAL LAKE

Is the smallest of the lower elevation Class "A" Lakes. Vermejo is expecting to stock Bernal in late April or early May with approximately 800 pounds of rainbow trout. Bernal is fly-rod only

and has a 2 fish bag limit.

MARY'S LAKE

Mary's has been dry since 2010 due to the lack of snowfall in the Rock Creek drainage. We do not anticipate filling it in the future.

MERRICK LAKE

Merrick is the lowest lake in terms of elevation and is the last lake on the watershed making the lake very vulnerable to fluctuating water levels. Fortunately Merrick went into winter full, and we are expecting to stock the lake in early spring with 1,600 pounds of rainbow trout.

MUNN LAKE

A 40-acre lake known for classic Vermejo scenery, viewing wildlife, and plentiful quality fish. Vermejo plans to stock Munn this spring with about 2,400 pounds of rainbow trout. In 2023 Vermejo successfully treated Munn with herbicide to prevent growth of vegetation. If excessive weed growth continues Vermejo will continue herbicide treatments of the lake to provide quality fishing all through the summer months.



UNDERWOODS LAKES

The Upper and Lower Underwoods are the only two Class "A" lakes found in the high country. Due to maintenance issues; Vermejo was forced to drain Lower Underwoods in fall of 2021. The water level of the Underwoods lakes relies on snowmelt. Lower Underwoods was stocked in 2023. It will continue to be monitored and will likely be stocked for the 2024 fishing season.

VERMEJO RIVER AND IT'S TRIBUTARIES...

upstream from Vermejo Headquarters are a Rio Grande cutthroat trout management area. There are over 15

miles of high-quality stream with both open meadow areas and brushy, difficult-to-fish sections, as well as many miles of small tributary water (e.g. Leandro and Bernal creeks). Fish numbers increase as you go upstream. This area requires a New Mexico State Fishing License and is open to fly fishing only. Guests may catch and release cutthroat trout but harvest unlimited brook trout. In fact, harvesting non-native fish is encouraged to assist with our conservation efforts. The upper Vermejo River is well populated with Rio Grande cutthroat. Fishing last season was excellent and should remain so.

THE RIO COSTILLA BASIN

The Rio Costilla Basin has been the focus of a now completed effort to restore the native Rio Grande cutthroat trout to its native habitat. The Costilla Basin contains most of the wild trout fisheries on Vermejo and is home to the largest population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout in the world! These water support great fishing for native Rio Grande cutthroat.

Both the upper and lower reaches of Casias Creek and Costilla Creek have very good populations of Rio Grande cutthroat. Creek fishing in the spring may be sporty with high flows. Middle to late summer typically produces some great dry fly fishing on all streams and lakes.

While we encourage catch and release angling, guests are allowed to keep 2 cutthroat trout with no size limit. This is consistent with the New Mexico State fishing regulation. **A New Mexico and/or Colorado state fishing license is required for all waters in the Costilla Basin, depending on what state the fishing water is located in.** As part of the Rio Grande Cutthroat trout effort Vermejo is required to report the “usage” of the Costilla Basin. Please fill the survey if you fish the Costilla basin.

COSTILLA RESERVOIR

Costilla Reservoir is an irrigation water impoundment reservoir for the farmers of the Costilla Valley. Although it is located on Vermejo Park property, the Ranch does not have any control over how much water is held or released from the reservoir. Growth rates of the young cutthroat stocked in the reservoir have been phenomenal as the Costilla reservoir produces fish of quality size.



AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

In our effort to prevent the introduction of an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) such as zebra mussel, quagga mussel, rock snot and whirling disease into Vermejo waters we will no longer allow guests to bring and use personal boats on Vermejo lakes. Single person float tubes will still be allowed but will be subject to disinfection by Vermejo Staff. All person waders need to be disinfected as well as nets and other angling gear prior to use on Vermejo waters. Felt soled waders are prohibited on Vermejo. A Vikron™ disinfection station will be maintained at the Fish House and at Costilla Lodge for this purpose.

If you have recently fished waters that are positive for whirling disease (Rio Grande, San Juan, Colorado, Arkansas, Madison Rivers) or any other Aquatic Invasive Species (many reservoirs) please disinfect your gear (waders, nets, float tubes, etc) prior to coming to Vermejo. Steps for ensuring you do not transfer AIS are as follows:

CLEAN

Remove mud, plant fragments, and other debris from all equipment before leaving the site—this includes nets, mesh bags, boot tread, waders, boats, and ANY other equipment used in or adjacent to the water. Keep a scrub brush in your gear for this purpose as it will help to get things clean. Use a spray nozzle and water hose to finish cleaning equipment before use in another water body. A hot, high pressure spray is best. Using felt soled waders are highly discouraged.

DISINFECT

Soaking equipment with 10% bleach solution (i.e., 1 part household bleach to 9 parts water) for 10 minutes followed by a thorough rinse before drying can help to prevent transfer of zebra mussel larvae, golden algae, and fish pathogens such as viruses and protozoans should neutralize any hidden snails or plant fragments. Milder disinfectants (e.g., 1% Virkon Aquatic® for 10 minutes) or a 20-30 minute soak in very hot tap water (at least 110°F) can help decontaminate nets or equipment that bleach could damage.

DRY

Allow all equipment to dry completely before use in another water body.



FISHING GUIDELINES 2024

Aquatic Invasive Species: Personal waders, nets, float tubes, and all other angling gear must be disinfected at the Fish House prior to use anywhere on the property. Felt-soled waders and boots are prohibited.

Licenses: Upper Costilla Creek and Glacier Lake 1 require a Colorado fishing license. All other waters, except Class "A" lakes (Adams, Bartlett, Munn, Bernal, and Upper and Lower Underwoods) require a New Mexico fishing license.

Artificial flies and lures: Artificial lures and flies are acceptable for use; however, some water bodies are fly-fishing only or have restrictions. Bait is not permitted on Vermejo.

Barbed Hook Restrictions : Lakes and streams within cutthroat trout management areas (Costilla basin, upper Vermejo River) can be fished only with flies or artificial lures with a single barbless hook.

Fishing Restrictions: Bernal Lake and Upper Underwood are fly fishing only. The Upper Vermejo is catch and release only for cutthroat trout; Merrick is catch and release exclusively.

Fish Cleaning: Fish cleaning is prohibited at the lakes or streams. Please utilize our Fish House staff.

An introduction of any non-native plant, animal, or pathogen could be devastating to Vermejo fisheries and aquatic systems and seriously impact the quality of your future fishing. Currently, there is no known method for successful irradiation of these organisms. Thank you and we hope to see you this summer!

- Vermejo Management



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