We hope you brought your rod and reel because Mesa Verde Country® is filled with great places to fish. Whether you're looking for a secluded mountain stream or trolling deep for the big ones, southwest Colorado offers excellent opportunities to wet your line. This brochure will introduce you to our favorite fishing holes, how to get there and what you'll catch.

In addition to the information here, we suggest you check with area tackle shops and marinas near your destination. They can provide you with the local scoop on baits and secret spots as well as boat rentals, guides and other fishing needs.

**Licenses and Regulations**

A fishing license is required in Colorado for all lakes, streams and reservoirs open to public fishing. Licenses are available at many retail outlets in Mesa Verde Country. There are several varieties of resident and non-resident licenses, including 1-day and 5-day licenses, so make sure you purchase just what you need.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife provides a fishing brochure with information about local waters, baits and restrictions, possession limits and other pertinent information. The fishing brochure is free and you are expected to know the laws, so be sure to ask for the information when getting your license.

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**Welcome Anglers**

Mesa Verde Country® is filled with adventure all year long. Come back again and again!

- Archaeological Center of the United States
- Home to Mesa Verde National Park
- Casino Gaming at the Ute Mountain Casino
- Fine accommodations and restaurants for all budgets
- Gateway to the San Juan Skyway, “America’s Most Beautiful Drive”
- Day tours to historic and scenic wonders
- Indian dancers, storytellers, art, pottery, and trading posts
- Excellent area hiking, camping, bicycling and fishing on public lands
- Beautiful 18-hole golf course

We have additional brochures about area Day Trips, Archaeology Tours, Hiking, Biking, Boating and even Skiing. Just ask, they’re free!
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Colorado Division of Wildlife
151 East 16th Street
Durango, CO 81301
(970) 247-0855
www.wildlife.state.co.us

Dolores Public Lands Office
29211 Hwy 184
Dolores, CO 81323
(970) 882-7296
www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan

Colorado State Parks
Lone Mesa State Park
1321 Railroad Avenue
P.O. Box 1047
Dolores, CO 81323
(970) 882-2213
www.parks.state.co.us

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<th>West Mancos River</th>
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<th>Joe Moore Reservoir</th>
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For more information on public lands contact:
This area lies just north of Mancos and features four reservoirs plus the Mancos River; all are accessed from Colorado State Route 184 between Mancos and Dolores.

Jackson Gulch Reservoir is located in Mancos State Park and is accessed from County Road 42, just north of Mancos. Travel 4 miles east on CR 42 and turn west on CR N at the Mancos State Park turnoff. You’ll find excellent camping in a beautiful Ponderosa pine forest, a boat ramp and good fishing. For more information and current conditions check out the State Parks website at www.parks.state.co.us or call the Mancos State Park at 970-533-7065.

Joe Moore Reservoir, heading north on CO 184 from Mancos, turn north on County Road 40. You’ll find warm water fishing featuring trout, large mouth bass and panfish.

Traveling further west on CO 184, are Puett and Summit Reservoirs. Summit is a State Wildlife Area and Puett is known locally as “little” Summit. Both have boat ramps, and are stocked by the Division of Wildlife. Puett, from CO 184, turn south on County Road 33, then turn east on P.2 Road.

Narraguinnep Reservoir is accessible via CO 184 and is located just west of McPhee Reservoir. It has warm water fishing for catfish, bass, pike, walleye and panfish.

McPhee Reservoir, which stretches west and north from the town of Dolores, is one of our favorite places to fish. What makes it so special? As the second largest body of water in Colorado, McPhee is unique because it offers both cold water and warm water fishing. There aren’t many lakes in Colorado where rainbow trout and bass can be caught in the same water, but McPhee is one.

And you can catch a lot of them. To date, over 4.5 million fish have been stocked in McPhee and the DOW stocks more each year. Rainbow trout and Kokanee salmon are the primary fish species. The warm water species include large and small mouth bass, and black crappie. There are size limits for bass that are specific to McPhee Reservoir. Please refer to the Colorado State Fishing Regulations brochure available at any fishing licensing outlet. Check with the local tackle shops for more details about fishing at McPhee Reservoir.

There are two major recreation sites and five fisherman access points. With over 50 miles of shoreline, there’s plenty of area to spread out and bank fish, but we recommend you bring the boat. An ultra modern cleaning station at the McPhee Recreation site makes the aftermath much easier too.

Waters of the Lower Dolores River are catch-and-release only on the 11-mile stretch from the dam to the Bradfield Bridge. Anglers will find Colorado River rainbow, Snake River cutthroat and brown trout.
This area features a high altitude lake, Groundhog Reservoir, and excellent river and stream fishing along the Dolores River drainage.

The Dolores River starts high in the San Juan Mountains, near Lizard Head Pass. It travels down through Rico, along CO 145 to Dolores and into McPhee Reservoir. In this section we cover the fishing above McPhee. For information about fishing below the dam, please refer to next section and map 3.

Trout Magazine recently acclaimed the Dolores River as one of the 50 best trout streams in America. There are many excellent access points along CO 145 and the Department of Wildlife stocks the river between Stoner and Dolores every year.

Major tributaries to the Dolores that offer good fishing include Barlow Creek, Bear Creek, Taylor Creek, Stoner Creek and the biggest of these, the West Fork of the Dolores. It wanders along the roadside, FDR 535, sometimes easily accessible, other times more secluded. There is an abundance of private land parcels amongst public lands along the West Dolores River so be sure you are on public land.

Barlow Creek comes in above Rico from the east. You’ll find brook trout there. Taylor Creek and Bear Creek both located between Rico and Stoner off CO 145 host cutthroat and rainbow trout.

The Stoner Creek Trail (#625) breaks away from the Stoner Mesa Trail at Twin Springs and drops into Stoner Canyon. Stoner Creek offers solitude to those adventurous enough to hike down into the canyon. It is not recommended to go beyond the junction with the Spring Creek Trail, which is 1 1/4 mile down the trail once you reach the bottom of Stoner Creek. The Lower Stoner Creek Trail is not maintained and there is no outlet across private land at the bottom end.

Groundhog Reservoir is a premier fishing lake located high in the San Juans, about 32 miles north of Dolores on the Dolores/Norwood road, FDR 533. You’ll find beautiful scenery, camping, boat ramp, marina and store to make roughing it a bit easier.

Groundhog Reservoir is stocked with cutthroat trout annually. For those fishing in the early spring or late fall, please check in advance to make certain the lake is open and seasonal mountain snows have not closed the road.

Catch and Release

Certain areas are designated catch and release within the state, and/or they have specific bait or general fishing restrictions. Be sure to refer to the Colorado State Fishing Regulations brochure for specifics.

Returning fish to the water alive is not as simple as it sounds however. Some important reminders: don’t play the fish to exhaustion, keep it in the water if possible as you take the hook out, avoid squeezing the fish, and reacclimate the fish by gently facing it into the current. If a hook is swallowed and you can’t get it out, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and leave the hook in the fish. Do not try to pull the hook out.

Catching and releasing is a good habit to get into. It allows you to get all the sport out of fishing and put all the pleasure back.