



Arizona Game and Fish Department

September 2026

Regional Fishing Reports



Table of Contents

Region I – Pinetop..... 4

 Big Lake..... 5

 Rim Lakes (Willow Springs, Woods Canyon, and Bear Canyon)..... 5

 West Fork Little Colorado River (Mount Baldy Wilderness)..... 5

 Main-stem Black River..... 6

 Fool Hollow Lake..... 6

 Silver Creek..... 7

Region II – Flagstaff..... 7

 Kaibab Lake..... 8

 Cataract Lake..... 9

 City Reservoir (Buckskinner Park)..... 9

 Dogtown Lake..... 9

 Santa Fe Reservoir..... 9

 JD Dam..... 10

 Whitehorse Lake..... 10

 Russell Tank..... 10

 Lower Lake Mary..... 10

 Upper Lake Mary..... 11

 Frances Short Pond..... 11

 Ashurst Lake..... 11

 Kinnikinick Lake..... 11

 Mormon Lodge Pond..... 12

 Marshall Lake..... 12

 Oak Creek..... 12

 West Clear Creek..... 13

 Wet Beaver Creek/Beaver Creek..... 13

 Blue Ridge/C.C. Cragin Reservoir..... 13

 Knoll Lake..... 14

 Huffer Tank..... 14

 Lees Ferry..... 14

 Lake Powell..... 14

Region III – Kingman..... 15

 Dead Horse State Park Lagoons..... 15

 Goldwater Lake (Upper)..... 15

Goldwater Lake (Lower).....	16
Watson Lake.....	16
Mingus Lake.....	17
Yavapai Lakes.....	17
Fain Lake.....	17
Lake Mead.....	18
Willow Beach on Lake Mohave.....	18
Lake Mohave.....	18
Colorado River Below Davis Dam.....	19
Region IV – Yuma.....	20
Lake Havasu.....	20
Alamo Lake.....	20
Martinez Lake.....	20
Mittry Lake.....	21
Region V – Tucson.....	22
Riggs Flat Lake.....	22
Rose Canyon Lake.....	22
Patagonia Lake.....	23
Parker Canyon Lake.....	23
Pena Blanca Lake.....	23
Arivaca Lake.....	24
Roper Lake.....	24
Region VI – Mesa.....	25
East Verde River.....	25
Horton Creek.....	26
Canyon Creek.....	26
Tonto Creek.....	27
Haigler Creek.....	28
Christopher Creek.....	28
Canyon Lake.....	29

Region I – Pinetop

Jump to: **Big Lake · Rim Lakes (Willow Springs, Woods Canyon and Bear Canyon) · West Fork Little Colorado River (Mount Baldy Wilderness) · Main-stem Black River · Fool Hollow Lake · Silver Creek**

BIG LAKE

Fishing is moderate; anglers have reported catching large (16-plus inches) healthy fish. Fishing early in the day is recommended as water temperatures are still approaching stressful levels, which is resulting in lower feeding activity and fish seeking deeper water for refuge. Fishing should pick up as water temperatures start to cool this fall.

RIM LAKES (WILLOW SPRINGS, WOODS CANYON AND BEAR CANYON)

Regular stockings are done for the year, but trout fishing should improve as the water cools. Boat ramps are open. Regular stockings have concluded for the year at the Rim Lakes, but that doesn't mean that angling opportunities stop at these waters. As water temperatures begin to cool, trout fishing will improve through the fall. The boat ramps at Woods Canyon and Willow Springs are accessible, and anglers fishing from boats tend to be more successful this time of year. Fishing early in the morning will allow you to target fish when they are actively feeding.

WEST FORK LITTLE COLORADO RIVER (MOUNT BALDY WILDERNESS)

Good wild Apache Trout fishing via a 1- to 3-mile hike; small flies (size 16 to 10) are working best. Anglers looking to target wild Apache Trout can utilize the West Baldy trail (off of State Route 273) to take a short 1-mile hike into the Mount Baldy Wilderness along a low-gradient trail. Upon entering the wilderness boundary, one will be met with a gentle meandering mountain stream winding through lush meadows lined with tall conifers. Targeting undercut grassy banks with dry flies or

in-line spinners will yield willing trout ranging from 5 to 10 inches. For those willing to hike above the meadows on the West Baldy Trail, after a 3-mile walk from the trailhead, the waterway transforms from a meandering meadow stream to a high-gradient series of cascades and plunge pools. This high-gradient reach lends itself to the fly fisherman looking to test their small water casting skills in a section of water seldom pressured by other anglers. Fish are very willing with a well-placed cast and stealthy approach, and offerings from a size 16 elk hair caddis all the way up to a size 10 hopper producing takes. However, with fish maxing out around 10 inches, smaller size flies are recommended. General statewide fishing regulations apply on this waterway with no special regulations.

MAIN-STEM BLACK RIVER

With warm summer temperatures and low flows still existing in the White Mountains, many comparatively lower elevation trout rivers in the region can yield slow fishing in all hours but dawn and dusk this time of year. However, targeting species other than trout in these bodies of water can produce memorable days. The Black River below the confluence of the West Fork and East Fork Black River is currently fishing great for Roundtail Chub and Smallmouth Bass. Anglers can access this stretch of river from the Buffalo Crossing area or the Bear Creek Trailhead, both along Forest Road 24. Targeting stretches of river where riffles empty into deep pools is a recipe for success, with streamers being the ticket for fly fishermen, and crankbaits and jerkbaits offering a good option for conventional gear. As an added bonus, you might just hook into a 20-plus-inch trophy Brown Trout fish, making this fishery a unique experience to catch nice-sized fish of many species.

FOOL HOLLOW LAKE

Water levels and water quality unfortunately remain poor at Fool Hollow Lake. In addition, both boat ramps remain closed at this time. However, even given these conditions, fishing, particularly for Channel Catfish, remains quite good. Anglers are encouraged to target warmwater sportfish at the lake, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department is recommending harvesting fish at this time because there is a chance that the lake experiences a fish kill if water levels continue to fall.

Channel Catfish numbers are high at Fool Hollow with anglers doing well on chicken livers, worms or other smelly baits. For other warmwater and cool-water sportfish, anglers should cast baits near the shoreline or use shallow running baits that target the shallow water. Anglers should time their fishing trips at dawn and dusk when targeting bass, panfish and Walleye. The bite window can be particularly short for these species, but quality-sized fish can still be found.

SILVER CREEK

On Oct. 1, 2026, upper Silver Creek located on the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Silver Creek Hatchery Property switches to its catch-and-release season regulations until March 31, 2027. During this time, only artificial flies/lures and single, barbless hooks are allowed. Changes to the size of the fish being stocked at this location should make for a very fun catch-and-release season for anglers this year.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will stock extra-large Rainbow Trout into the lower section of Silver Creek upon the opening of the six-month-long catch-and-release regulation season. These fish are expected to average over 4 pounds, and most will remain in this segment of Silver Creek until April 1, 2027, when the regulations revert to catch-and-keep. The upper section of Silver Creek will provide opportunities for anglers to catch truly large trout that range in size anywhere from 5 to 15 pounds.

Anglers should be aware that fishing gear that most anglers use for trout is likely inadequate to safely land the fish the Department is stocking in Silver Creek this year and could result in the mortality of these fish. Due to the size of fish being stocked, Department staff are recommending that anglers fish with a fly rod no lighter than a 5-weight with 3X (8-pound breaking strength) tippet or a medium-action spinning rod with no lighter than 8-pound breaking strength line. Anglers will also need a large, long-handled dip net to land these fish and take the hook out. Anglers should keep these fish in the water until they are prepared to take a picture. They should quickly take the picture and then immediately release the fish back into the water.

Region II – Flagstaff

Jump to: **Kaibab Lake · Cataract Lake · City Reservoir (Buckskinner Park) · Dogtown Lake · Santa Fe Reservoir · J.D. Dam · Whitehorse Lake · Russell Tank · Lower Lake Mary · Upper Lake Mary · Frances Short Pond · Ashurst Lake · Kinnikinick Lake · Mormon Lodge Pond · Marshall Lake · Oak Creek · West Clear Creek · Wet Beaver Creek/Beaver Creek · Blue Ridge/C.C. Cragin Reservoir · Knoll Lake · Huffer Tank · Lees Ferry · Lake Powell**

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

TOP PICKS FOR FALL FISHING

Trout — Ashurst Lake, Frances Short Pond, City Reservoir, Santa Fe Reservoir, Dogtown Lake, Kinnikinick Lake and Knoll Lake

Bass, Bluegill and Black Crappie — Lake Powell, Cataract Lake and Dogtown Lake

Channel Catfish — Lake Powell, Santa Fe Reservoir, Kinnikinick Lake, City Reservoir and Cataract Lake

Northern Pike and Walleye — Upper Lake Mary and Lake Powell (Walleye only)

Now is a great time to pursue one of the Department's fishing challenges for [bass](#) or [trout](#).

Water temperatures are in the 60s to 70s in the lakes around Williams and Flagstaff, which means warmwater species (Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Channel Catfish and Black Crappie) are active. With the recent rains and cooler temperatures, fall fishing is right around the corner.

Trout will start to get more active as water temperatures drop below 65 degrees. Try fishing early in the morning and late in the evening for trout. Fall is a great time to combine a fishing trip with the opening of small game and waterfowl seasons for some cast-and-blast fun.

KAIBAB LAKE

The lake is very low and muddy; launching a boat is challenging.



CATARACT LAKE

Both the county and Forest Service day-use areas are open. Anglers have been catching trout on worms, lures and flies. Largemouth Bass are biting soft plastics, lures with flash and vibration such as spinner baits, and hopper patterns. Bluegill and Black Crappie can be caught using worms on small hooks under a bobber and on small flies and lures. Channel Catfish are also active.



CITY RESERVOIR (BUCKSKINNER PARK)

The lake level has dropped about 6 vertical feet with recent municipal use. Rainbow Trout will be stocked this week.



DOGTOWN LAKE

The lake level is below the old boat ramp, and launching a boat is a little challenging. Anglers have been catching Rainbow Trout, Largemouth Bass and Black Crappie.



SANTA FE RESERVOIR

Anglers have been catching trout and Yellow Perch on worms, power bait, flies (#10 simi seal leeches, #12 Prince nymph, #12 Pistol Pete), and lures (Joe's flies). Rainbow Trout will be stocked this week.



J.D. DAM

Fish in the early mornings before the water temperatures get too hot. The water at the surface is too warm for trout; trout are hanging out in 6 to 10 feet of water. The lake is very weedy, and fishing from shore is challenging.



WHITEHORSE LAKE

An algae bloom is present on the lake and elevated pH levels have caused fish to move to deeper water. Most fish are holding at 10 to 12 feet. Fishing is very slow.



RUSSELL TANK

Russell Tank has not been stocked in 2026 due to low water levels.

LOWER LAKE MARY

Lower Lake Mary is dry.



UPPER LAKE MARY

The lake level is low, and launching a boat can be challenging at the current lake level. Anglers have been catching Northern Pike, Walleye and a few bass. Lures with a lot of flash and vibration (in-line spinners, spinner baits and chatter-baits) have been working the best. For the best results, cover a lot of water to find predatory fish holding close to shore.



FRANCES SHORT POND

Anglers have been catching bluegill on worms under a bobber and on small nymphs. Rainbow Trout were stocked last week.



ASHURST LAKE

Northern Pike and Green Sunfish were illegally introduced and are not managed for in Ashurst Lake. Northern Pike and Green Sunfish are unlimited in Ashurst Lake; please kill any Northern Pike and Green Sunfish caught. The lake level is very low, and launching a boat is difficult. Rainbow Trout were stocked last week.



KINNIKINICK LAKE

Fall is a great time to pursue Brown and Tiger Trout in Kinnikinick Lake. Time your fishing trip with the opening of small game and duck season for a cast-and-blast outing.



MORMON LODGE POND

The pond has not been stocked since May. Fishing is slow.



MARSHALL LAKE

Marshall Lake was not stocked in 2026.



OAK CREEK

Access to recreation areas throughout much of upper Oak Creek Canyon reopened on Sept. 17. However, with monsoons still active, the potential for large pulses through upper Oak Creek and West Fork Oak Creek are still possible. Access to the West Fork Oak Creek and Call of the Canyon Recreation area will remain closed through Sept. 30 due to flash flooding and runoff associated with the Pocket Fire. More information can be found on the [Coconino National Forest website](#). The Department has delayed stocking of Oak Creek until the impacts from the Pocket Fire can be evaluated. Once conditions are suitable, stocking will resume.

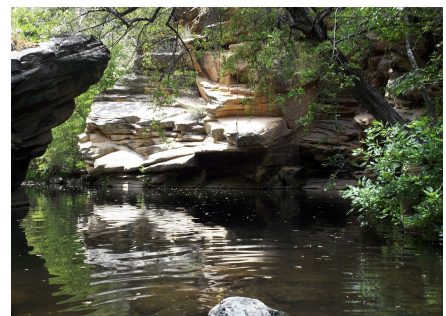
WEST CLEAR CREEK

Roundtail Chub are often caught in sections of West Clear Creek – please release them unharmed.



WET BEAVER CREEK/BEAVER CREEK

Rainbow Trout were stocked last week.



BLUE RIDGE/C.C. CRAGIN RESERVOIR

Green Sunfish and Golden Shiner are unlimited and invasive, please remove them if caught. While the boat launch is open, the lake level is not up to the concrete boat launch making launching challenging but feasible.



KNOLL LAKE

Anglers are finding success trolling inline spinners such as Joe's flies. The Knoll Lake campground is closed for the winter season.

HUFFER TANK

No recent information.



LEES FERRY

Fishing has been slow with most anglers landing zero to seven fish per day. Folks fishing with lures have been finding some success. Recent monsoon rains have made the river muddy.



LAKE POWELL

Check [Wayne's Words](#) for recent reports and fishing tips.

Region III – Kingman

Jump to: **Dead Horse State Park Lagoons · Goldwater Lake (Upper) · Goldwater Lake (Lower) · Watson Lake · Mingus Lake · Yavapai Lakes · Fain Lake · Lake Mead · Willow Beach on Lake Mohave · Lake Mohave · Colorado River Below Davis Dam**

DEAD HORSE STATE PARK LAGOONS

Anglers have reported doing well catching bass and catfish at the lagoons. For Largemouth Bass, try casting small hard and soft plastics (about 6 inches) near patches of aquatic vegetation and using slow, finesse presentations. For Channel Catfish, common baits include chicken liver, cut-up hot dogs and corn. Channel Catfish were stocked the week of Aug. 31 and were stocked the week of Sept. 21 for the local fishing event on Sept. 26.



Special Regulations: The limit is 4 trout, 2 bass, 4 catfish and 10 sunfish. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

GOLDWATER LAKE (UPPER)

As temperatures begin to fall, the trout bite should start picking up again soon when stocking starts in October. Anglers targeting trout are usually successful with PowerBait, PowerEggs and inline spinners. For those fly-fishing, leeches and midges are usually effective. Anglers are still reporting catching Largemouth Bass and Channel Catfish. Largemouth Bass have been caught on small soft plastic lures, while catfish are commonly caught on cut-up hotdogs, chicken liver and anchovies. Catfish were last stocked the week of Aug. 31.

Special Regulations: The limit is 1 bass; minimum of 13 inches. Single electric motor only. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

GOLDWATER LAKE (LOWER)

Similar to upper Goldwater, the lower should see better trout fishing as the temperatures start decreasing. Rainbows, Gilas and the occasional Brown Trout can be caught on inline spinners and spoons for conventional fishing, while fly fishermen may use nymphs or dry flies just before dark. Largemouth Bass can be caught on small soft plastics. No fish stockings have occurred recently.

Special Regulations: Catch-and-release only, artificial flies and lures only. Float tube only watercraft restriction. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

WATSON LAKE

Channel Catfish and Largemouth Bass (see note below) are being caught out of Watson. Catfish are typically being caught with nightcrawlers, anchovies and cut-up hotdogs. Largemouth Bass can be caught using many different baits and lures, but small plastics and nightcrawlers have been working well recently. No fish stockings are planned for the lake.

Special Regulations: None. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

***Note:** The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has issued a [fish consumption advisory](#) for Largemouth Bass in Watson Lake for high levels of PFAS chemicals.

MINGUS LAKE

The first Rainbow Trout stocking in Mingus Lake since June took place the week of Sept. 14, so be on the lookout for prime trout fishing opportunities. Popular baits and lures for these trout include PowerBait, PowerEggs and small inline spinners. Yellow Bullhead are also being caught at the lake, and anglers looking for these fish are using chicken liver, cut-up hotdogs and nightcrawlers.

Special Regulations: None. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

YAVAPAI LAKES

Due to poor water quality, fishing at Yavapai Lakes has been slow this month after a reported fish kill. Channel Catfish may be caught using nightcrawlers, cut-up hot dogs and chicken liver. Largemouth Bass have been caught using soft plastic worms and hard plastics. Catfish stocking took place the week of Aug. 31.

Special Regulations: The limit is 2 bass: minimum of 13 inches, 4 catfish, 10 sunfish and 4 trout. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

FAIN LAKE

Channel Catfish and Largemouth Bass are being caught at Fain Lake. Catfish are being caught on corn, cut-up hotdogs and chicken liver. Largemouth Bass can usually be caught using soft or hard plastics. Both species can be caught on nightcrawlers. Channel Catfish were stocked the week of Aug. 31.

Special Regulations: The limit is 2 bass: minimum of 13 inches, 4 catfish, 10 sunfish and 4 trout. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

LAKE MEAD

Anglers have been catching lots of Striped Bass and Smallmouth Bass in the 2- to 4-pound range. The water is still very warm, so try going out very early in the day or after sundown for the most success. If fishing midday, try looking for shaded spots or go to deep water. Anglers have had a lot of success fishing grass beds in the early mornings with lures that resemble baitfish, especially Threadfin Shad, while midday anglers on a boat can troll.

Special Regulations: The limit has been changed to unlimited striped bass of any size, 5 trout and 15 crappie. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

WILLOW BEACH ON LAKE MOHAVE

Not much has changed at Willow Beach this month. Trout angling is still productive on days following stocking every week. Anglers are targeting these trout using PowerBait, PowerEggs and inline spinners. Striped Bass fisherman are doing well on swimbaits and plugs.

Special Regulations: The limit is 5 trout, there is no longer a limit for striped bass over 20 inches. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

LAKE MOHAVE

Striped Bass, Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass have all been caught at Mohave recently. Trolling using swimbaits with a shad imitation is an effective way of catching Striped Bass, while Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass can be found in coves in the early mornings. Trolling on white buck-tailed jigs and using swimbaits with baitfish imitations have been the most effective lures recently, but anchovies work well too.

Special Regulations: The limit is 5 trout, there is no longer a limit for Striped Bass over 20 inches. Striped Bass may be taken by spear or spear gun from that portion of Lake Mohave between Hoover Dam and Cottonwood Landing. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

COLORADO RIVER BELOW DAVIS DAM

As the water has been cooling down, anglers are doing well catching Striped Bass in the 1- to 4-pound range as well as Rainbow Trout below the Davis Dam. Anchovies and trout-colored swimbaits/plugs have been the go-to for many anglers looking for stripers, while PowerBait, inline spinners and tube jigs are great for the trout. With water levels being lower than normal, this is a great opportunity to fish from shore. Rainbow Trout will be stocked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in October, so look for great fishing opportunities then.

Special Regulations: The limit is 6 bass; minimum size 13 inches and 5 trout in any combination. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

Region IV – Yuma

Jump to: [Lake Havasu](#) · [Alamo Lake](#) · [Martinez Lake](#) · [Mittry Lake](#)

LAKE HAVASU

Water temperatures at Lake Havasu are in the mid to high 80s throughout the day. Anglers have reported catching lots of Largemouth Bass, sunfish and Channel Catfish near vegetation in the coves. Catfish are reported to be off their beds and feeding aggressively, so now is your time to get out there! Striped Bass fishing has also been decent.

Special Regulations: The limit is 10 trout; the limit is 6 bass, minimum size 13 inches; the limit is 25 sunfish or crappie in any combination. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

ALAMO LAKE

Water temperatures at Alamo Lake fluctuate in the 80s throughout the day. Expect fair to good biting in the early morning and late night. Anglers have reported catching Largemouth Bass early in the morning with topwater frogs, brush hogs and Texas rigs in deeper water. Black Crappie have been successfully caught with slow-trolling small jigs, crappie tubes and live bait near structures. Refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#) for Alamo Lake.

MARTINEZ LAKE

Water temperatures at Martinez Lake are in the high 80s to low 90s throughout the day. Anglers have reported decent catches of Largemouth Bass using Senkos, creature baits and swim jigs. Catfish were caught using stink baits, dough baits and chicken liver. Bluegill have been easy to catch in shallow areas.

Special Regulations: The limit is 10 trout; the limit is 6 bass, minimum size 13 inches; the limit is 25 sunfish or crappie in any combination. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

MITTRY LAKE

Water temperatures at Mittry Lake are in the high 80s to low 90s throughout the day. Anglers have reported catching Largemouth Bass using Senkos, dropshots, ned rigs and swimbaits. For Catfish, anglers have had success using stink baits, dough baits, live bluegill and chicken liver on a Carolina rig. Bluegill have been caught using plastic rigs and mealworms. Carp have been caught with doughballs, corn and hair rigs.

Special Regulations: The limit is 10 trout; the limit is 6 bass, minimum size 13 inches; the limit is 25 sunfish or crappie in any combination. For species not listed, or bodies of water without special regulations, refer to the statewide [fishing regulations](#).

Region V – Tucson

Jump to: [Riggs Flat Lake](#) · [Rose Canyon Lake](#) · [Patagonia Lake](#) · [Parker Canyon Lake](#) · [Peña Blanca Lake](#) · [Arivaca Lake](#) · [Roper Lake](#)

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

October water temperatures in southeastern Arizona will still be some of the warmest of the year; as such anglers should focus their efforts on early mornings, late afternoons and overnight outings to find the most active fish.

RIGGS FLAT LAKE

The early September Rainbow Trout stocking was postponed to early October due to high pH but anglers were still having success in mid-September with prepared bait and fly-fishing. Focus efforts from the surface to roughly 10-feet deep as there is little oxygen below that. Bringing a variety of lures/baits will allow you to hone in on what's working at specific times of day. Typically, anglers have seen more success with PowerBait and corn in deeper water during the day and lures in early mornings and late afternoons. Fly fishermen should focus on using dry fly setups in the early mornings or late afternoons to target rising fish.

ROSE CANYON LAKE

Several thousands of Rainbow Trout have been stocked monthly since February, and anglers should have little trouble catching these fish with a variety of methods. Surface water temperatures at this lake are warm, meaning anglers would do well with setups that target deeper water up to 15-feet deep.

PATAGONIA LAKE

No issues launching any size boat. Flathead Catfish angling should be good as the fish are now in a post-spawn feeding mode. Use live sunfish as bait at dusk and into the dark at the mouth and into Ash Canyon, as well as the entire southern shoreline of the lake. As water temperatures begin to slowly cool, the active topwater boils of Largemouth Bass on Threadfin Shad will become less frequent, though you may be able to find some boils in the middle of the day. To target Largemouth Bass, hone in on shad boils using topwater lures and shad glidebaits. Even if no shad boils are active, shad imitation crank baits and glide baits will perform well when cast around structure and given moderate-fast retrieves.

PARKER CANYON LAKE

Water is very low, but boats can be launched. Channel Catfish were last stocked in June and are plentiful and can be caught using typical setups of everything from worms to chicken liver. Largemouth Bass are also plentiful in the lake. Due to the large amount of aquatic vegetation present, lure presentations for Largemouth Bass should focus on weedless/topwater presentations. Frog lures passed between breaks in the vegetation have been particularly effective at this lake.

PEÑA BLANCA LAKE

There are no issues with launching any size boat. Large amounts of aquatic vegetation in shallower areas necessitates consideration of weedless presentations in those areas. Recent fall electrofishing surveys by Arizona Game and Fish have found some quality fish starting to appear in greater numbers in Peña Blanca Lake, with multiple fish between 5 and 8 pounds. Drop-shot setups and other configurations of soft plastics appear to be most effective at this lake practically year-round, though those looking for a change of pace may find success throwing weedless frog presentations this time of year, given that bass are more active near the surface during the late summer and the quantity of aquatic vegetation currently present in the lake.

ARIVACA LAKE

Only small boats and kayaks able to be launched by hand off the shore can be launched here. Because of the low water level reducing the surface area of the lake, the Largemouth Bass and Sunfish fishing has been excellent with typical setups for those with a means to launch a small boat or float tube by hand.

ROPER LAKE

Recent surveys have shown that Roper Lake has a high quantity of good-sized (larger than 5 pounds) Largemouth Bass. Creature baits punched through cattails often yield success for those trying to catch Largemouth Bass.

Region VI – Mesa

Jump to: [East Verde River](#) · [Horton Creek](#) · [Canyon Creek](#) · [Tonto Creek](#) · [Haigler Creek](#) · [Christopher Creek](#) · [Canyon Lake](#)

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

September is a great time to head up to the Payson area streams to fish. Fall is making its way to the area with cooler mornings and the slight change of leaves with yellow hues starting to make an arrival. We are still seeing good monsoon activity in Rim Country with afternoon clouds and storms making consistent appearances. Daytime highs for the area are in the low 80s to upper 70s with lows in the 50s, which is a relief from the hot summer temperatures we have been having. The changes in conditions will translate into better fishing opportunities for both wild and stocked trout as some fisheries will resume stocking in September.

EAST VERDE RIVER

The East Verde River is split into two management reaches depending on where you are fishing on the creek. From the headwater springs to the Salt River Project (SRP) Pumphouse, the regulations include catch-and-release only, immediately release trout, no trout may be kept, artificial fly and lure only, single-pointed barbless hooks only, no bait. Unlimited bag limit for Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass as well as Channel and Flathead Catfish. Statewide daily bag limits apply downstream of the SRP Pumphouse. The East Verde River is accessible by Houston Mesa Road and includes various recreation sites such as First Crossing, Waterwheel, Second Crossing and Verde Glen, which are all stocking locations. Due to warmwater temperatures and low stream flow, many of these sites were not stocked this summer season and fishing has been slow for holdover trout from the spring. Focus on deep pools at Waterwheel and First Crossing for your best bet at catching trout using a variety of techniques including PowerBait, spinners or flies. Fishing in the catch-and-release section about the SRP Pumphouse has consistently been good throughout the

summer and will continue into the fall with feisty Rainbow Trout hitting a variety of flies including size 14 to 18 elk hair caddis, parachute adams, small foam terrestrials (black ants and beetles), small bead-headed wooly buggers and leeches, and various nymphs. Targeting fish habitat such as plunge pools, undercuts, logs and boulders will be the best bet for getting a fish to the net.

HORTON CREEK

Horton Creek is managed as a catch-and-release Brown Trout fishery, and the regulations include catch-and-release only, immediately release trout, no trout may be kept, artificial fly and lure only, single-pointed barbless hooks only, no bait. Access to Horton Creek is granted by Horton Creek Trail 285 that starts at Upper Tonto Creek Campground and ends at Horton Springs at the base of the Mogollon Rim. The last $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the creek is typically dry, although there may be water in this section due to monsoon weather. However, Brown Trout can be caught immediately when water starts to appear once you hike $\frac{3}{4}$ miles into the perennial section of creek. Fishing for Brown Trout is great throughout the creek, although if you want to beat the crowds it is recommended to hike 1.5 to 2 miles along the trail before starting to fish, as the lower part of the creek will get more visitors. Brown Trout will eat a variety of lures and flies such as panther martins and roostertails with gold or silvers spinners on a black or yellow body. Small crankbait will work as well in deeper pools and runs on ultralight spinning gear. Fly-fishing is popular at Horton Creek with a variety of flies working for anglers, such as foam terrestrial patterns such as hoppers, beetles and ants in various sizes and color combinations. Subsurface flies are also effective at catching fish this time of year and will continue to work as fall progresses. Flies such as leeches, wooly buggers and small tungsten-headed streamers in size 10 to 12 will work great in black, brown and olive colors. Various nymphs such as prince nymphs, hare ears and copper johns under an indicator can be effective as well in deeper pools and runs at Horton.

CANYON CREEK

Canyon Creek is managed as a put-and-take Rainbow Trout fishery from the OW Bridge upstream to the springs with statewide daily bag limits applying for trout. Stocking at Canyon Creek has resumed for the month of September, with weekly stockings occurring until the end of the month. Anglers targeting stocked trout have had luck on various colors of PowerBait such as charteruse and

salmon peach as well as nightcrawlers in deeper stocking pools. Rainbows are also inclined to hit the fly, especially nymphs such as prince nymphs and egg patterns. Wild Brown Trout also inhabit this section of creek, although they are harder to get to the net and are good at hiding in the boulder cover. Oftentimes these fish will eat a large black leech along the undercut of boulders and even pockets of water most anglers would walk past. The lower section of Canyon Creek is managed as a catch-and-release Brown Trout fishery with special regulations including catch-and-release only, immediately release trout, no trout may be kept, artificial fly and lure only, single-pointed barbless hooks only, no bait. Water conditions have improved water temperature-wise, however, the creek is still low and very clear. Anglers should approach with caution and stealth for the best success. This section of the creek is popular for fly-fishing, and this time of year terrestrial insects are out and about. Consider tying on a grasshopper or ant imitation. Anglers have also reported having success on small tungsten-beaded hares ear nymphs under an indicator at the head of pools in the mornings.

Canyon Creek has New Zealand mudsnails primarily in the lower section of the creek. These are highly invasive and a threat to stream health. There are several aquatic invasive species signs throughout the creek that have important information on disinfecting your gear between fishing trips. Please follow these guidelines. If anglers want to fish both sections of Canyon Creek, fish the upper section first, then later on fish the lower section to prevent the spread of New Zealand mudsnails.

TONTO CREEK

Tonto Creek is managed as a put-and-take Rainbow Trout fishery with weekly stockings of Rainbow Trout from the powerlines on Tonto Creek Hatchery Road downstream to the Derrick Trailhead. Tonto Creek is a very popular angling destination, and access is easiest by the Tonto Creek Hatchery Road north of SR-260. This road parallels the creek, and there are various pullouts and parking lots to set up at. Access is also granted by Bear Flats Access Road. Anglers have been having success with various colors of Powerbait, worms and salmon eggs in stocking pools. Wild Brown Trout are also present in the creek downstream of the Horton Creek Confluence downstream to Bear Flats. No reports have come in for Brown Trout fishing at Tonto Creek, however, similar tactics that work on other rim creeks will work at Tonto. Downstream of the 260 Bridge and Kohls Ranch, anglers

seeking solitude will find deep pools and pockets that hold impressive Brown Trout. This is a good creek for anglers who want to trout fish with spinning gear as Tonto has some of the largest pools in rim country. Floating or countdown rapalas, spinners and spoons are good options to target 10-foot-plus pools with cover. Fly anglers also have good opportunities throwing larger streamer flies including articulated streamers to imitate forage fish. Tonto Creek also has New Zealand mudsnails, although their distribution is more limited relative to Canyon Creek. Aquatic invasive species signs are also posted along the creek with information on disinfecting gear. Please follow these guidelines.

HAIGLER CREEK

Haigler Creek is managed as a wild Rainbow and Brown Trout fishery in the headwaters as well as a put-and-take fishery near the Haigler Canyon/Campground and Alderwood Recreation Sites. Access to Haigler involves a long gravel road, and four-wheel drive is recommended but not required to be able to get to the creek. To access the headwaters, anglers can hike down the Fisherman's Point hill about a 1-mile hike down to the creek at a steep grade. Parking and start of trail is here: 34.240677, -110.954931. Anglers who arrive at the creek will want to work upstream or downstream with either option being a great choice to see solitude and wild trout. This section of creek has a handful of large 10-foot-plus foot pools and a limited number of wild Brown Trout but relatively larger fish. Spinners and rapalas (crankbaits) work well in these larger pools as well as larger streamer flies that will get deep in the water column. Leech patterns also work under an indicator in these deeper areas. Further upstream more classic pocket water awaits with plunge pools and other trout habitat, in the form of undercuts and boulders, dominate the area. Densities of wild Rainbows are high in this section of creek but spooky. Anglers looking to target these fish should stealthily approach and throw a variety of flies at them including elk hair caddis, purple haze, ants and other terrestrial bugs. Nymphs will also work up here with a good variety of patterns working. Further downstream near the campground, fishing has been slow since the creek was not stocked most of the summer due to high water temperatures this creek gets every summer. Few holdover Rainbow and Gila Trout remain and can be tricked into eating small jig streamers as well as in-line spinners in the deeper pools.

CHRISTOPHER CREEK

Christopher Creek is managed as a put-and-take fishery for Rainbow Trout. Wild Brown Trout are also present from See Canyon Trailhead downstream to the confluence with Tonto Creek. Popular access spots include See Canyon Trailhead and Christopher Creek Campground. Fishing from See Canyon Trailhead upstream to springs is good for wild Brown and Rainbow Trout. Anglers have been having moderate success on small black and brown jig leeches when working boulders and other cover. This section of creek also gets stocked with Rainbow Trout closer to the trailhead, however, stocking has not occurred since earlier in the summer due to low water levels, and the chances of finding holdover Rainbows are low. Further downstream near the Christopher Creek Campground, fishing has been very slow with few reports. Stocking at the campground has also halted this summer due to low water levels and warm water temperatures. This section of creek is also prone to drying up if the area does not get adequate precipitation.

CANYON LAKE

Closed for drawdown — As of Sept. 16, the lake is closed for about 16 weeks for critical dam safety inspections and maintenance. (On Sept. 8, Tonto National Forest closed the lake, including all boat ramps and access points, in preparation.) Salt River Project (SRP) and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation lower Canyon Lake for critical dam safety inspections and maintenance once every 20 years. While inspections and maintenance are regularly performed on the dams, some critical equipment is located underwater, which makes it inaccessible without lowering the lake level. According to SRP, the lake's water level will be lowered by approximately 54 feet through a drawdown process. The work will focus on the normally submerged portions of Mormon Flat and Horse Mesa dams, as well as the river channel downstream of Horse Mesa Dam. No water will be wasted, just stored in other reservoirs while the work is performed. The lake drawdown will not interfere with water delivery from the Salt and Verde river reservoirs to SRP's water customers. Benefits of the project support the operational safety of the dams for water storage and flood control, and help ensure water reliability for the more than 2.5 million Valley residents who receive water from SRP reservoirs. The drawdown will also provide an opportunity for other agencies and businesses to perform any necessary maintenance work and repairs to their facilities. For more information, visit [SRP's website](#).