

# SOUTH FORK RESERVOIR



**ANGLER AND FISH SURVEY INFORMATION**  
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**General information:** South Fork Reservoir is one of the most recreated and fished bodies of water in the Eastern Region. This is a popular fishery for trout in the spring and fall, while providing excellent bass fishing as the reservoir's water temperature increases. Black Bass reach up to 21 inches (6 to 8 lbs) and Wipers up to 25 inches (6 to 12 lbs). Rainbow Trout, Bowcutt Trout (Rainbow x Cutthroat hybrid), Brown Trout, and Channel Catfish are stocked regularly in the reservoir. Trout range in size from 9 to 25 inches with an average of 17 inches and Channel Catfish have ranged between 15 to 32 inches.

**Location:** Elko County, 10 miles south of Elko off state Highway 228. Use our FishNV tool (<https://fish.wildlifenv.com/>) to find waters near you, and buy your fishing license at [ndowlicensing.com](http://ndowlicensing.com).

**Size:** 1,640 surface acres at a 40,000 acre-feet maximum capacity. Maximum depth is 67 feet.

**Management:** Nevada Department of Wildlife manages this fishery as a Trophy Warm Water Fishery and a Quality Cold Water Fishery. Nevada Division of Water Resources manages the recreation water right, and Nevada State Parks manages the facilities and campsites surrounding the reservoir.

<u>Amenities and General Info</u>	<u>Previous Stocking</u>	<u>Fishing Notes</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The South Fork Recreation Area is managed by Nevada State Parks.</li> <li>• Campsites are available all year for a fee.</li> <li>• RV camping is available with some sites having utility hook-ups.</li> <li>• Flush restrooms and showers are available.</li> <li>• 2 boat ramps are available.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Fishing Regulations</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Season is open all year, any hour of the day or night.</li> <li>• Limit is 5 trout, 1 black bass, 1 wiper, and 5 channel catfish.</li> <li>• Black bass fishing from March 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> is catch and release only.</li> <li>• Minimum size for black bass and white bass hybrids is 15" total length.</li> </ul>	<b><u>2022</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most bait such as nightcrawlers, salmon eggs, and Power Bait are successful for trout.</li> <li>• Midge patterns and balanced leech patterns can be highly effective for trout when fished under a strike indicator.</li> <li>• Throwing soft plastics, crankbaits, and spinner baits around structures are typically successful for bass.</li> <li>• Night fishing for catfish using chicken livers, nightcrawlers, and large shrimp can be best for channel catfish.</li> <li>• Bait or jigs tipped with bait such as nightcrawlers can be productive while ice fishing.</li> </ul>		
	Rainbow		66,275	9.0 inches
	Wiper		500	9.0 inches
	Catfish		7,500	5.0 inches
	<b><u>2021</u></b>			
	Rainbow		79,581	9.1 inches
	Bowcutt		13,000	8.5 inches
	Brown		13,428	6.6 inches
	<b><u>2020</u></b>			
	Rainbow		92,763	8.7 inches
Brown	14,173	6.7 inches		

# **2023 Fishing Forecast**

## **Water level**

Snowpack conditions in late winter of 2023 were near 200% of average for the Ruby Mountains. South Fork Reservoir is currently below 50% capacity and based on current projections it is expected to significantly increase. The main boat ramp should be accessible all year until the lake freezes over.

## **Trout**

In 2022 a total of 66,275 Rainbow Trout with an average size of 9.0 inches were stocked in South Fork Reservoir. Rainbow Trout are the most abundant trout species in the reservoir and in 2022 they averaged 15.7 inches. The largest Rainbow Trout captured during survey was 23.2 inches weighing 4.9 lbs. Brown Trout are the least captured fish as they are stocked at a lower density and at a smaller size. Brown Trout have historically averaged larger than 18 inches when caught. The best trout fishing will be during the early spring once the ice starts to come off and the temperature of the reservoir warms up. Average catch rates are expected in 2023 due to the number of fish stocked in recent years and a projected increase in reservoir capacity.

## **Black Bass and Wiper**

Black Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth) are a naturally reproducing fish species in South Fork Reservoir. Bass sampling in 2021 found Largemouth representing 75% and Smallmouth representing 25% of all bass captured. The Largemouth Bass averaged 11.4 inches with a range of 3.0 to 17.6 inches. The most common size class of Largemouth Bass was 8 to 11 inches making up 46% of all Largemouth captured; there has been an increase of Largemouth Bass in both size of fish and overall bass composition. Additionally, 30% of all Largemouth Bass captured had a total length of 14 inches or greater. Observed increases of shallow weedy habitats, woody shoreline cover, and slightly warmer water temps have benefitted the Largemouth Bass population and could explain the observed increases. Smallmouth Bass averaged 7.0 inches with 41% of the fish being less than 5 inches. The largest Smallmouth captured during survey was 15.7 inches in length with a weight of 2.3 lbs. Wipers were stocked in 2022 (500 fish) and another 500 are scheduled to be stocked again in the spring of 2023. The few remnant Wipers from past stocking events are expected to be larger than 20 inches and weigh more than 8 lbs.

## **Channel Catfish**

Channel Catfish were stocked in 2022 and are scheduled to be stocked again in 2023. Catfish typically range between 15 to 32 inches with the state record of 32 lbs 7 oz being caught in 2011. Best fishing occurs during the night using bait such as chicken livers and large shrimp.

## **Water Records**

Rainbow Trout	9 lbs 2 oz	Largemouth Bass	8 lbs 2 oz
Bowcutt Trout	6 lbs 14 oz	Smallmouth Bass	6 lbs 4 oz
Brown Trout	11 lbs 3 oz	Wiper	16 lbs 4 oz
Channel Catfish	32 lbs 7 oz		