



VERMEJO

A TED TURNER RESERVE



2026 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. Please read on for more detail about last year's fishing and our forecast for this upcoming season.

2026 WATER OUTLOOK AND FISH STOCKING OVERVIEW

Winter snowpack for 2025-2026 is trending average to below average snowpack. Adams, Bartlett, Merrick, Munn, and Bernal went into winter full and are all expected to be fishable this season.

Vermejo stocks 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 2025, Vermejo stocked 2,400 pounds of rainbow trout into Adams, Bartlett, for the 2026 spring fishing season. In spring of 2026, Vermejo plans to stock another 7,200 pounds of trout between Munn, Bernal, Adams, Bartlett, and Merrick.

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: Daily number of fish one guest can keep per day of fishing. Maximum of 2 fish at Bernal as part of 5 fish daily bag limit.

Possession Limit: The maximum number of fish one guest may keep during their stay.

Vermejo's Class "A"- lake bag limit: 5 fish per day per person. Possession limit of 10 fish per person for their stay.

Bernal: fly fishing only with 2 fish limit per day.

Merrick Lake: catch and release only.

Costilla Basin: Catch and release ONLY. Vermejo no longer allows for the harvest of Rio Grande Cutthroat trout. Artificial flies and lures with single barbless hooks only. **Exception:** Costilla reservoir is artificial fly and lure with barbless hooks.

Vermejo River and tributaries: Catch and release Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Unlimited harvest of brook trout. Artificial flies and lures with single barbless hook only.

In General: Vermejo recommends keeping fish 14- 18 inches in length and releasing fish less than 14 inches and greater than 18 inches. Please refer to [Vermejo's fishing rules](#) for complete rules and definitions.



2026 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 2025 with an average length of 15.7 inches and a weight of 1.62 pounds. Adams was stocked in the in Fall of 2024 with 1,100 pounds of 12-16 inch rainbow trout. In the spring of 2026 Adams will be stocked with 1800 pounds of catchable rainbow trout. Adams lake provides opportunity to catch rainbow, brooks and tiger trout.

BARTLETT LAKE

Vermejo's largest Class "A" lakes at 75-acres. Bartlett produced the most fish brought into the fish house last season. Our 2024 fish house data showed that Bartlett Lake rainbows averaged 16.2 inches and weighed 1.62 pounds. The lake was stocked in late fall of 2025 with 1,300 pounds of 12-16 inch rainbow trout. Vermejo is expecting to stock approximately 1,800 pounds of Rainbow trout into Bartlett lake this spring. There is opportunity to catch rainbow, brook, and tiger trout at Bartlett lake.

BERNAL LAKE

Vermejo's 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. Bernal is now a private lake for those staying at Bernal Lake Cabin.

MARY'S LAKE

Mary's lake has been dry since 2010 due to the lack of precipitation in the Rock Creek drainage. We do not anticipate filling it in the near 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 1000 pounds of rainbow trout.

MUNN LAKE

A 40-acre lake known for classic Vermejo's scenery, viewing wildlife, and of course catching plenty of quality fish. Vermejo plans to stock Munn lake in spring of 2026 with approximately 1800 pounds of rainbow trout. In 2023 Vermejo successfully treated Munn lake with special herbicide to prevent growth of vegetation.



UNDERWOODS LAKES

The Upper and Lower Underwoods are the only two Class "A" lakes found in the beautiful 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 last stocked in 2023. Vermejo will be attempting to mitigate nutrient load within Lower Underwoods lake. Fish stocking will depend on water levels, and quality of the lake.

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. All **RGCT are catch and release 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. Please refer to Vermejo's fishing rules for complete rules and information.

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 waters support great fishing for native Rio Grande cutthroat. The Costilla basin was last stocked in 2020 with a diverse size of fish. This system now relies entirely on natural reproduction and spawning. Vermejo has implemented a catch and release policy on all Cutthroat waters in the Costilla drainage. Tackle is restricted to artificial flies and lures with single barbless hooks. Costilla Reservoir is the only body of water where barbless treble hooks may be used.

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 produces some great dry fly fishing on all streams and lakes.

RGCT populations, within high-country lakes, have decreased due to lack of natural spawning within the lakes or the ability for the lake to sustain fish over winter. In 2024, Turner Natural Resources started to

supplement high-country lake RGCT populations, that have good fish survival, with wild-born trout from the streams. Vermejo will continue to supplement lakes good fish survival annually as well as improve spawning habitat in lakes where possible. The overall goal is to increase populations throughout the entire Costilla Basin to increase the overall resilience of Vermejo's RGCT population. Overtime fish populations within these lakes should increase, resulting in an increase in the quality of fishing. Since, 2024 Costilla Basin stocking consisted of stocking over 460 fish between 7 Lakes (pond 3 and 5), Casias (upper and lower) and Glacier lakes (middle and lower). Casias lake 3; and 7 Lakes #7 (upper most) have great fish populations.

COSTILLA RESERVOIR is an irrigation-water impoundment reservoir for the farmers of the Costilla Valley. Although Costilla Reservoir is located on Vermejo Park property, Vermejo does not have any control over the release of water outflowing which may contribute to Costilla Reservoir's water level. Growth rates of the young cutthroat stocked in the reservoir have been phenomenal as the Costilla-reservoir produces fish of quality size.

CATCH & RELEASE TIPS

1. Land the fish quickly and don't play it to exhaustion.
2. Use a landing net whenever possible.
3. Keep the fish in the water.
4. Do not squeeze or grab any part of the fish. Wet your hand first if you must handle the fish.
5. If the hook is swallowed deeply, cut the leader. A fish's body fluids will dissolve the hook in a matter of days.
6. Let a tired fish recover. Hold it by the tail in the water with one hand, gently supporting it from below & just behind the head until it swims away.
7. Never toss or throw a fish back in the water.



FISHING THE COSTILLA BASIN?

Please fill out our survey. The Costilla basin requires a New Mexico or Colorado State Fishing License depending on the corresponding state you are fishing. The Costilla basin is Catch and Release ONLY. Please refer to [Vermejo's Fishing Rules](#) for complete rules and definitions.

To honor Vermejo's agreement with state and federal agencies, Vermejo is required to report all fishing activity on RGCT water in Costilla Basin. If you fished the Costilla Basin, please scan QR code to fill out the survey for every day of fishing Costilla basin. Survey may also be done through fish-house staff. Thank you.

COSTILLA BASIN
FISHING SURVEY



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 prohibited.

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.



THE “WHY” ON INVASIVES

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 for your help keeping Vermejo waters clean and we hope to see you this summer!

- *Vermejo Management*



WATER	LICENSE	FISHING	TACKLE	BAG LIMIT
CLASS "A" LAKES	NONE	Spin or Fly Fishing Catch & Release preferred	Artificial fly or lures	5 Trout per person, per day
BERNAL LAKE (exception)	NONE	Fly Fishing preferred	Artificial fly or lures	2 Trout per person, per day
UPPER VERMEJO RIVER Rio Grande cutthroat trout management area upstream from red HQ bridge Vermejo River, Ricardo, Leandro, and Little Vermejo creeks.	NEW MEXICO	Catch & Release ONLY for Rio Grande Cutthroat	Artificial fly or lures with single barbless hook	Unlimited for brooks, brown and rainbow
COSTILLA BASIN #1 Lake, Casias Lakes, Costilla Reservoir, Costilla (#1) Creek, Casias (#2) Creek, Glacier Lakes, 7 Lakes Complex	NEW MEXICO	Catch & Release ONLY	Artificial fly or lures with single barbless hook	0 Please fill out Fishing Survey
COSTILLA RESERVOIR (exception)	NEW MEXICO	Catch & Release ONLY	Artificial fly or lures with barbless hooks	0 Please fill out Fishing Survey
Upper Costilla Creek and Glacier Lake 1 (the uppermost lake)	COLORADO	Catch & Release ONLY	Artificial fly or lures with single, barbless hook	0 Please fill out Fishing Survey

MAXIMUM TRIP POSSESSION LIMIT: 10 trout per person, per stay, or 2 day bag limit.

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

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.

FULL FISHING RULES:

For the entire fishing rules and definitions, Please scan the QR code with your phone's camera or click the link above.



SCAN ME



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