



Dolores River - Map 2

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.

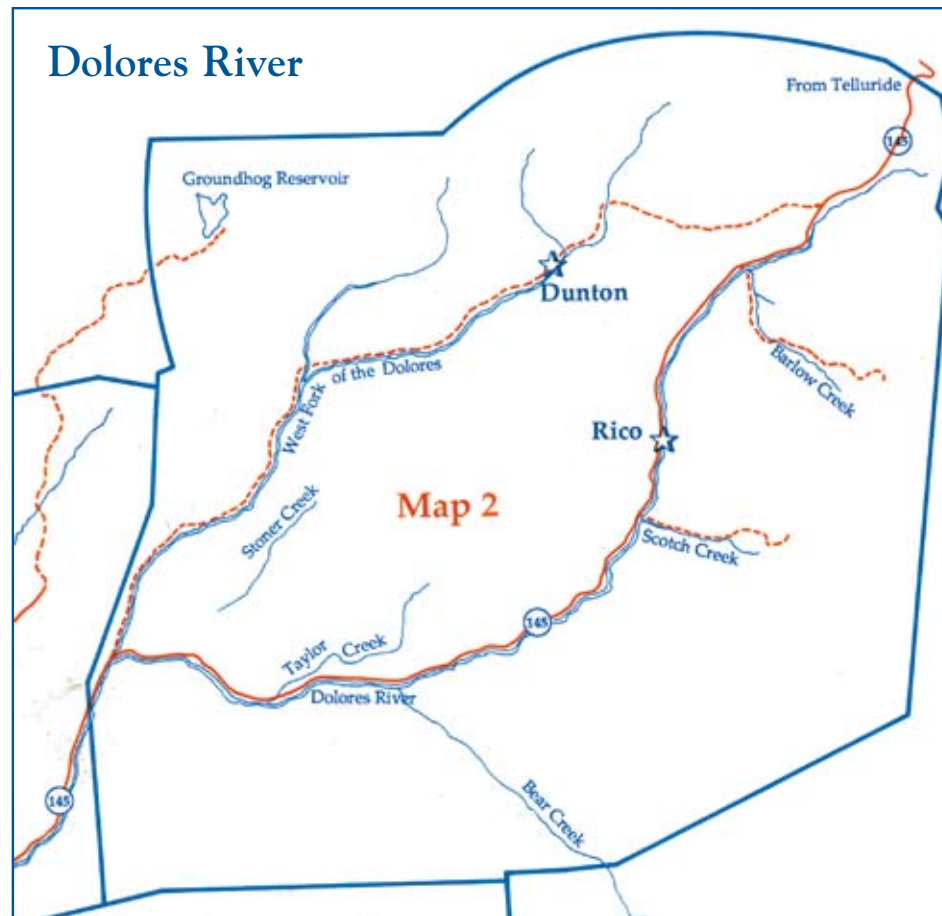
Barlow Creek comes in above Rico from the east. You'll find brook trout there. **Taylor Creek** and **Bear Creek** both located between Rico and Stoner off CO 145 host cutthroat and rainbow trout.

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.