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11/30/99

## **The Boulder Fly Fisherman's Dilemma**

Living in Boulder, anglers have a lot of access to good fly fishing rivers. Some of these rivers offer better fishing conditions than others, which can be essential in an angler's experience. Anglers will travel different lengths in order to gain extra benefits from fishing higher quality rivers. Two popular rivers for Boulder anglers are the Big Thompson River in Estes Park and Cheeseman Canyon on the South Platte River. Each river has its costs and benefits to an angler because of their different characteristics. In comparing the Big Thompson to Cheeseman Canyon, we will use travel cost methods for explaining how to measure the value of fishing experiences on these rivers for a Boulder angler.

There are many benefits of Cheeseman Canyon that make it very popular. The river that runs through the canyon is one of Colorado's 12 gold metal rivers, which means it is an exceptional trout fishery, in one of the greatest trout fishing states in the U.S. The average size trout caught on this river is significantly bigger than most other rivers in the state (guessing from experience, it is between 15 and 16 inches). Since the average size is so much bigger, the intensity of the sport seems to also increase. This leads to a longer fight, bent rods, screaming reels and excellent fish stories which all make a day of fishing more exciting. Cheeseman Canyon is not near any big cities or towns and is set away from the road about 1 ½ miles, the population and noise are avoided, or so it appears. It

is a catch and release zone that only allows artificial flies and lures. This is beneficial to the fish because it keeps out bait fisherman and people who want to keep fish, and spin fishing is frowned upon because it more easily injures the fish than flies. Hence most the fishing going on is fly fishing which leads to a friendly, courteous atmosphere because there seems to be an unwritten code between fly fisherman.

On the flip side there are also many cost to a Boulder angler of fishing Cheeseman Canyon. First of all this is not a place an angler can just go jump in the river, fish for a couple of hours and get home in time for dinner and to do some homework. Fishing Cheeseman Canyon for a boulder angler is a full day event. It takes about 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours to drive to, which can use up quiet a bit of gas depending on the car. Once one arrives at the trailhead, the next task is to find a parking spot and then one has to hike about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles up and down hill to reach the river. There is no real parking lot, but rather a dirt pull-off on the side of the road which realistically only fits 20 to 25 cars. Attributed to all the benefits and by the task of parking, it is safe to say that Cheeseman Canyon is no secrete hole. In the fishing season (good weather for most anglers) this spot can be crowded and get heavily fished, which can create problems like externalities and the problem of the Commons.

There are other fly fishing river that are attractive to Boulder anglers because of different benefits. One such river is the Big Thompson in Estes Park. This river is only takes about 45 minutes to drive to, leading to a much smaller consumption of gas and can be fished in the morning before class or in the evening after class, so only part of the day

is consumed with fishing. The Big Thompson is easily accessible because it runs along the side of the road and there are many pull-offs and parking spots along the road. This also makes it easier to avoid crowds, because if you see cars in a spot or anglers in the river it is easy to just move on to the next hole. It is a less popular river so rarely are you fishing next to anyone that didn't come with you and this also avoids heavy pressure on the fish and the river itself. With less pressure and more river access, it leads to higher catch rates and beautiful fish that look as if they may never have been caught.

There is a reason that the Big Thompson is not one of Colorado's gold metal water and is less populated. The average size of the trout caught on the Big Thompson is much smaller than those at Cheeseman Canyon or any of the other gold metal rivers. So the excitement of bent rods, screaming reels and exciting stories isn't nearly as probable. Anglers that fish in the winter are not able to fish this river because it freezes over making it next to impossible to fish. There is also the factor that the river is right along the road which is nice for accessibility but if anglers are trying to get away and be alone with the river, it is a little difficult with cars cruising by.

As seen above Boulder anglers incur travel cost when going to fish either the Big Thompson or Cheeseman Canyon. If Cheeseman Canyon were located where the Big Thompson river is and had its benefits there would be then there wouldn't be much of a dilemma for the Boulder angler to choose where to fish. But since Cheeseman Canyon is so far away it requires a full day's effort, a lot of gas and about 3 ½ hours in the car. Even though it is probable the best fishing around interims of average size, beauty and other

key factors that anglers look at, still Boulder anglers look for other alternative rivers with less travel cost.

On the other hand we observe Boulder anglers not only fishing closer river such as the Big Thompson but we see them making the long trip to places like Cheeseman Canyon. The trip to Cheeseman Canyon in expenses is about \$17.34 because we assume that the vehicle is getting 12mpg, at round trip of about 160 miles, and gas costing \$1.30. The trip is also a full day activity because driving time is about 3½ hours round trip, an hour hike in and out of the canyon, time spent on the river and other non calculated stops. Where as expenses of the trip to Big Thompson is around \$8.69 because the distance is about half (40 miles), well traveling in the same vehicle with the same gas prices.

Although this trip can be an event that only takes up part of an anglers day because the drive takes only about 45 minutes, and the river is right off the road so there is no excess travel time. This means (although the drive takes over twice as much time, gas and that it takes up a whole day of the anglers time) that the benefits gained from catching bigger fish must out weight the benefits of less travel cost by at least the difference between the travel cost of the two rivers which is more than double. It is very common in the fly fishing world for an angler to travel to great distances and pay large amounts of money to catch a rare and bigger fish when they could catch a bunch of little, common fish in their backyard. To others outside of the fishing world, the dilemma might be easily decided, but to fly fishing anglers the thrill of catching that big one can out weight almost any cost. Which explains why Cheeseman Canyon is always crowded with fisherman and why one can always find a section of the river to him/herself on the Big Thompson. For

the economic environmental side this can explain why some recreational fishing sites suffer consequences form being used and others seem to be left untouched.

If we were to give a complete travel cost analysis of Boulder Angler's dilemma, we would have to take into consideration every possible site within a days driving distance. We need random sample users and potential users for values to determine the demand function. The varying distance for each site needs to be ascertained through trip data. Vehicle operating costs should be determined by distance and expense to travel to each site. The value of each individual's time is imperative to determine because it can vary extensively from person to person. The catch rates (in our information is size) must be taken into account, as well. For a more thorough travel-cost model, the previous information should be more detailed than our assumption. We could attain a more accurate and concise model with more time and resources, thus helping us to further comprehend the Boulder Angler's dilemma.