

2020

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Annual Report



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2020 OVERVIEW

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Annual Report recaps park activity for the period of January 1 through December 31.

Water and Visitation

An above average snowpack led to good early season flows on the Arkansas River. Summer flow augmentation through the Voluntary Flow Management Program, along with great coordination from our water partners, ensured a viable recreational boating season through the peak visitation months and helped the commercial boating industry have a productive year even after a slow start due to the COVID pandemic. Lower river flows in the fall led to outstanding float and walk & wade fishing opportunities.

AHRA saw an increase in the number of private boaters. Many boat ramps and parking lots were atypically full early in the spring when no commercial boating was available. Many users found boating as an opportunity to recreate while maintaining social distancing. Commercial boating use picked up later in the summer and AHRA saw a significant increase in overall visitation during July and August.

Revenue Comparison

	2020	2019	% of Change
Camping	\$ 390,734.00	\$ 270,050.76	44.69%
Commercial Agreements	\$ 889,205.27	\$ 708,927.74	25.43%
Donation	\$ 602.17	\$ 5.00	11,943.40%
Gift Certificates	\$ 406.00	\$ 520.25	-21.96%
Park Passes	\$ 293,086.13	\$ 210,985.11	38.91%
Registrations	\$ 42,225.50	\$ 54,105.00	-21.96%
Penalty Assessments	\$ 417.50	\$ 27.50	1,418.18%
Licenses	\$ 14,597.96	\$ 19,324.73	-24.46%
Search and Rescue	\$ 135.00	\$ 138.00	-2.17%
Special Activities	\$ 714.00	\$ 118,547.31	-99.40%
	\$ 1,632,123.53	\$ 1,382,631.40	18.04%

Visitation Within the AHRA

	2020 People	2019 People	% of Change
January	23,054	8,522	63.03%
February	19,335	15,657	19.02%
March	29,576	33,371	-12.83%
April	41,980	45,040	-7.29%
May	85,782	74,820	12.78%
June	181,175	165,931	8.41%
July	311,025	228,227	26.62%
August	214,527	185,450	13.55%
September	59,906	49,618	17.17%
October	56,540	43,113	23.75%
November	32,686	17,582	46.21%
December	17,617	15,112	14.22%
	1,073,203	882,443	17.77%

Special Activity Agreements (SAAs)

Applicant Group Name	Event Type	Location
Blue Sky Adventures	River Surveying	Coaldale to Cotopaxi
Fibark (Lite)	Race	Salida Whitewater Park, Helca, Stone Bridge
Our Daily Bread Ministries	Filming	Arkansas River
Lake County High School Cross Country	Race	Hayden Flats
UpRiver Fly Fishing	Filming/Drone	Browns Canyon, Ruby to Hecla

AHRA WORK SECTIONS

Leadership Team

AHRA is organized into work sections for the purpose of daily operations. Each of these sections has specific responsibilities and is staffed by both permanent and temporary employees who are designated specific job assignments. A large portion of the visible field-work is completed by our many dedicated temporary employees. In 2020, AHRA employed 19 temporary and 9 permanent staff members, with temporary hiring numbers down from previous years as a result of COVID-19 hiring restrictions.

The following permanent staff members supervised the sections noted below:

Administration	Administrative Assistant	Jennifer Crawford
Special Use Agreements	Rationing & Agreement Coordinator	John Kreski
Law Enforcement (LE)	Senior Ranger	Glenn Cottone
Law Enforcement (LE)	River Ranger Supervisor	Tappan Brown
Law Enforcement (LE)	Land Ranger Supervisor	Jeff Hammond
Maint - Facilities	Park Resource Tech	Ken Lindbloom <i>R: 08/20</i> (vacant) <i>E: 08/20</i>
Maint - Construction	Park Resource Tech	Steve Wyatt
LE/Management	Park Manager	Rob White <i>R: 06/20</i> Tom Waters <i>E: 09/20</i>
LE/Management	Operations Manager	Tom Waters (vacant) <i>E: 09/20</i>
r: Retire Date, e: Effective Date		

Temporary Employees

Department	Temp Employees	Department	Temp Employees
Administration	2	LE - River Rangers	4
Special Use Agreements	1	LE - Land Rangers*	5
Maint - Facilities	4	LE - OHV Rangers	2
Maint - Construction	1	<i>*Count includes one intern.</i>	

ADMINISTRATION



Responsibilities for the administrative section include greeting visitors, answering phone inquiries, completing sales, handling field revenue, generating administrative reports, and maintaining park-related web and social media pages.

Among the items processed/sold are CPW licenses, registrations, mining permits, park passes, and BLM fuelwood permits. We also partner with our friends group, the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA), selling books, maps, and other educational and gift items.

Due to the impacts of COVID, AHRA was unable to host many of the education and special events that have come to be part of our culture. We missed seeing our Jr Rangers, school groups, and other community participants. Because we know it is important to the river and our community, CPW and GARNA converted our annual Cleanup-Greenup to a month-long non-group event. Our hike group, led by volunteers Bob Hickey and Linda Julia was also able to function in a modified capacity.

We'd like to, once again, thank our volunteers for their hard work. Though volunteer opportunities and event group sizes were reduced, COVID made the work no less easy.

Community Events

Event Name	Event Type	Location
Family Nature Night	Education, Youth	Salida
Interpretive Hikes	Hike	Multiple Locations
Cleanup-Greenup	Impact Mitigation	Multiple Locations

Volunteer Hours

Opportunity Name	Hours
Cleanup-Greenup*	59
Bluebird Project	184
Campground Host	1,377
Citizens Task Force	175
Maintenance & Construction, and Trail support	123
Naturalist/Environmental Educator	294
Special Projects	78
Raptor Monitoring Program	220
TOTALS	2,508

Thank you to all of our volunteers for their contributed time and energy!

*The table above reflects only those hours that were reported in our visitor database.

SPECIAL USE AGREEMENTS



The Special Use Agreement section exists to accurately and efficiently administer AHRA Special Use Agreements as well as administer the Rationing Plan for commercial boating on the Arkansas River within the AHRA. AHRA had 59 commercial contractors in 2020 conducting 98 different activities. Permitted contractors provided various combinations of activities such as whitewater rafting and kayaking, float fishing, walk & wade fishing, shuttle services, rock climbing, hiking, Mt. biking, and photo/video imaging to over 184,734 paying clients in 2020. In 2020, the overall commercial use of paying clients at AHRA decreased by -4.30% as compared to 2019. Total Gross Receipts outfitters received from all commercial operations within the AHRA in 2020 was 6.83% above receipts received in 2019. This total includes revenue from total gross receipts and *does not* include administrative and assessment fees. In 2020, commercial contractors contributed a total of \$872,399 in use fees. The Arkansas River within the AHRA remains one of, if not the most commercially rafted rivers in the United States.

The AHRA Rationing Plan regulates commercial boats per day (bpd) carrying capacities on sixteen different river sections. In 2020, river sections had commercial bpd carrying capacities ranging from 360 bpd to 10 bpd with differing section specific boating restrictions.

Data control methods and commercial use verification controls are used to manage contractor Special Use Agreement compliance. This year due to Covid, only one count crew assisted is counting private boaters via photo images online.

Due to Covid and the concern for the welfare of the outfitter's staff and clients, several companies declared a season of non-use. The season proved to be successful with commercial clients reaching near average and total gross receipts exceeding their expectations.

Commercial Special Use Agreements by Type

Activity	2020	2019
Boating	48	48
Imaging	26	26
Walk and Wade Fishing	15	15
Shuttle Services	5	6
Rock Climbing, Hiking, and Mtn Biking	4	5
TOTAL	98	100

Rationed Days by Section

For the 2020 season and the uncertainty how Covid was going to affect the visitation by the county public orders controlling bus capacity and boat capacity, the Park Managers decided to declare a Public Health Exception at the beginning of the season. Basically it stated that 2020 Ration Historic Use and Actual Use will not be counted for demand or recalculation for this year. Although you needed to have allocated or borrowed boats to run on rationed days in those sections. Loaning and borrowing were encouraged throughout this year.

This decision was made in consideration for boating outfitters to help make financial and health-minded decisions regarding the safety of the employee and public welfare.

Section	2020	2019
1e: Numbers to Railroad Bridge	3	3
2b: Fisherman's Bridge to Stone Bridge	4	6
2d: Big Bend to Salida East	9	5
3a: Salida East to Rincon	4	5
3b: Rincon to Vallie Bridge	19	19
4a: Vallie Bridge to Texas Creek	15	8
5: Parkdale to Canon City	11	11
TOTAL	65	57

LAW ENFORCEMENT



The ranger section patrols all portions, both land, and river, of AHRA throughout the year. The section is divided into three sections: land, river, and off-highway vehicle.

Land Rangers, a team of five temporary employees assigned to land-based operations, are responsible for managing visitor use in the busy recreation sites and campgrounds, and for collecting field revenue which is critical to AHRA operations. They are the customer service face of the park, assisting visitors in making reservations, providing basic interpretive information, and ensuring compliance with all Parks and Wildlife statutes and regulations.

2020 saw the initial closure and later reopening of campgrounds due to COVID restrictions, still resulting in a year of record visitation. Point Barr was converted from a dispersed camping area into a developed campground, helping to focus impact on hardened surfaces and prevent resource damage. In the same vein, this was the first full year of Tunnel View functioning as the first designated dispersed camping area at AHRA. This allows free camping in a specified number of sites, limiting the sprawl that often occurs in dispersed areas. With Tunnel View's success, Rapid #4 was also converted to a designated dispersed area, a model that has been gaining traction with federal agencies as well.

River Rangers, a team of four temporary employees, specialize in whitewater boating activities on the river. Since the Arkansas River is one of, if not the most commercially rafted rivers in the United States, much of the river rangers' time is spent administering the State River Outfitter Licensing Program. These rangers actively monitor river flows, mitigate hazards, provide whitewater search and rescue support, inspect commercial and private boat trips for adequate safety equipment, investigate boat accidents, and provide expert river education to AHRA visitors in the field.

River rangers assisted with the management of the new Loaner Life Jacket program. Salida, Buena Vista, and Canon City had a life jacket station installed that allowed a user to borrow a life jacket for free and encouraged all to wear a lifejacket when recreating on the river.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Rangers are half of a four-person multi-agency trail crew working in the Upper Arkansas River Valley. The trail crew members represent Colorado Parks & Wildlife and the U.S. Forest Service. Funding for this collaborative effort comes from the Colorado OHV Good Management Grant, funded by OHV registration dollars. The trail crew maintains trails and OHV routes, provides input on new OHV routes, and enforces OHV registration and equipment requirements in the

San Isabel National Forest as well as at the Big Bend OHV Track. The trail crew promotes motorized recreation by encouraging safe riding practices and Stay the Trail and Tread Lightly guidelines. The trail crew also works with local OHV riding clubs to promote volunteer opportunities by means of the U.S. Forest Service Adopt a Trail program. Recent years have seen both increases in trail users and major trail damage from wildfire and weather events, keeping the OHV Rangers busy.

Notable accomplishments for 2020 were addressing the Bear Creek flash flood, the Green's Creek rock slide, working with BLM and CCMR to open the DudBob Trail, reopening Rainbow Trail section closed from the Decker Fire, and constructing 100ft of the Rainbow Trail Turnpike.

All permanent rangers are certified Colorado Peace Officers. All AHRA seasonal law enforcement rangers have limited commissions. These rangers only enforce Colorado Parks and Wildlife laws and regulations. When necessary, all rangers can take appropriate law enforcement action necessary to protect our visitors, preserve the resource and ensure compliance with other administrative regulations. While law enforcement may not be the primary function of any ranger's job, it is an important and necessary responsibility of all rangers. It should also be noted that AHRA rangers work closely with other local, state and federal peace officers and resource managers in the performance of their duties.

In the winter, the rangers continue to patrol AHRA sites along the river corridor. Winter search and rescue activities involve assisting other agencies with motorists that end up in the river. Full-time rangers also conduct snowmobile patrols as well as avalanche rescue activities. Additionally, AHRA rangers manage three snowmobile trail-grooming contracts and patrol snowmobile trails on Bureau of Land Management, National Forest and other public lands in Chaffee, Lake, Gunnison and Saguache counties as part of the Colorado Parks & Wildlife Snowmobile Program responsibilities. Winter is also the ideal time for Rangers to complete most of their training and recertification, to organize and evaluate programs and plan for the upcoming high-use season.

Investigated and Reported Incidents

	2020	2019
Reportable Commercial Boat Accidents	14	27
Private Boat Accidents	2*	4
Commercial Non-Boating Accidents	2	1
Private Non-Boating Accidents	0	0
Medical Assists	0	1
Inter-Agency Assists / SAR	7	5
Vandalism / Theft	20	7
Law Enforcement	7	0
Other Incidents	8	5
Fatalities Investigated* (included in totals above)	2	3
TOTAL	60	53

Citations Issued

	2020	2019
Pass / Permit Violations	7	3
Resource Protection Violations	15	17
Public Safety Violations	10	1
Records / Reporting Violations	2	2
Commercial Outfitter Citations (included in totals above)	6	2
TOTAL	42	25

MAINTENANCE – FACILITIES



Facility Maintenance is a team of five temporary employees. Their primary role is to maintain all AHRA-managed facilities throughout the river corridor. These duties include maintaining vault toilets/changing areas; ash removal from grills and fire rings; developing new recreation sites; designing new signs as well as updating existing signs; maintaining solar systems in campgrounds; weed control; maintaining visitor center, shop, and garage bays; recycling cardboard, paper, and metals; ground maintenance; and traffic counter maintenance.

Some noteworthy projects completed by this crew in 2020 was to keep the sites and vault toilets as clean as possible with the record number of visitors and all the sanitary issues that 2020 presented. Staff stayed busy with numerous projects large and small.

Phase two and three of the three-panel sign project was completed. Now all the frames are metal which will last a long time. Staff also worked on staining the visitor centers fence, and cleaned up the landscaping in the front also. Staff also goes out and helps keep the dispersed camping sites cleaned up along the River to make the visitor experience the best it can be. If you happen to see these maintenance folks out and about, give them a thank you for the work they do.

MAINTENANCE – CONSTRUCTION



It has been a very eventful year at AHRA for site development. Staff is in charge of all the sites along the river. They keep up with roads and parking needs, maintain the boat ramps and take care of any issues that come up to keep the river users flowing as smoothly as possible. Many projects large and small were completed to enhance the sites up and down the river.

Staff also built the new Vallie Bridge Boat Ramp, which has been such a great hit for the outfitters. Made twelve camping sites at the Point Bar area, and cleaned up the day-use side downriver. Staff also worked on the Big Bend OHV track to remove as much rock and add new dirt to help with riding conditions. From welding to woodworking and everything in between, AHRA's shop is well equipped to handle most anything that comes up. Being able to do projects in house not only saves time, also money

Staff is already busy getting ready for the 2021 season and is looking forward to providing the visitors with the best experience possible.

LE/MANAGEMENT



The Law Enforcement (LE)/Management section oversees and coordinates the daily visitor service and maintenance operations and overall programs and projects for the entire work unit within this document. This section serves as the communication link between field staff and the Southeast Region Office in Colorado Springs and Colorado Parks and Wildlife offices in Denver and Littleton. This section works closely with the Bureau of Reclamation, Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy, Pueblo Water, Colorado Springs Utilities, Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA), and Trout Unlimited (TU) to ensure the success of the Voluntary Flow Management Program (VFMP). They also work closely with the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to ensure that management plan goals and directives are being met. Most importantly, this section works with staff and the public to provide the many community and resource-wide coordination activities and efforts needed throughout the 152-mile river corridor while continuing to develop and enhance communication and cooperation among visitors as well as current and potential partners.

This year, as in past years, all AHRA staff continued to maintain the essential quality of management practices and public services that help conserve the Arkansas River and its unique features for everyone's enjoyment.

THANK YOU, RETIREES

Rob White, 30 years



A heart-felt “thank you” from all of us at CPW and the AHRA to Rob White for his 30 years of service to our agency. As our Park Manager, Rob continually strove to improve the park, and to balance recreational opportunities with the need to protect natural resources throughout the river corridor. Rob, we are so happy to see you out smiling and enjoying the beauty of our State!

Ken Lindbloom, 20 years

Maintenance staff are often the unsung heroes in any operation, but we know how much work goes into maintaining our facilities. Ken, “thank you” for the time and effort you put into keeping our buildings and sites clean and in working order. We hope you are enjoying your retirement!



Jon Jenkins, 25 years

AHRA staff would like to issue a sincere “thank you” to Jon Jenkins, who retired after his 25th year of service as a seasonal Park Ranger. Jon was the longest standing employee at AHRA and quite possibly one of the longest standing seasonal Rangers within Colorado Parks and Wildlife. His professionalism and compassion when interacting with visitors has been an inspiration to new seasonals and career staff alike. Park visitors who return year-after-year would look forward to being greeted by Jon’s warm smile. You may still see Jon around the park, but now he’ll have the time to enjoy it.

