

# 2022

## Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Annual Report



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# 2022 OVERVIEW

*A recap of park activity for the period of January 1 through December 31.*

## Water and Visitation

The Arkansas River saw slightly below-average flows that still provided a good boating season and excellent fishing opportunities. 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. Lower river flows in the early season and fall led to outstanding fishing opportunities.

AHRA and partners continued the education effort to disperse boaters from heavily used sections and encouraged them to boat in less used sections.

## Revenue Comparison

	2022	2021	% of Change
Camping	\$ 485,922.15	\$ 516,580.37	-5.93%
Commercial Agreements	\$ 1,131,923.16	\$ 1,339,791.57	-15.51%
Donation / Special Projects	\$ 11,455.47	\$ 15,597.27	-26.55%
Gift Certificates	\$ 80.00	\$ 1,524.96	-94.75%
Park Passes	\$ 284,023.36	\$ 305,328.59	-6.98%
Registrations	\$ 37,840.03	\$ 40,991.80	-7.69%
Penalty Assessments	\$ 205.00	\$ 344.50	-40.49%
Licenses	\$ 13,176.12	\$ 23,422.90	-43.75%
Search and Rescue	\$ 54.00	\$ 165.00	-67.27%
Special Activities	\$ 1,508.00	\$ 1,536.00	-1.82%
	<b>\$ 1,966,187.29</b>	<b>\$ 2,245,282.96</b>	<b>-12.43%</b>

## Visitation Within the AHRA

	2022 People	2021 People	% of Change
January	27,428	26,003	5.20%
February	18,119	24,263	-33.91%
March	53,889	37,588	30.25%
April	53,789	38,866	27.74%
May	91,351	64,076	29.86%
June	194,735	218,888	-12.40%
July	307,816	273,060	11.29%
August	226,606	220,139	2.85%
September	70,770	64,769	8.48%
October	53,186	55,730	-4.78%
November	27,503	37,428	-36.09%
December	27,715	24,915	10.10%
	<b>1,152,907</b>	<b>1,085,725</b>	<b>5.83%</b>

## Special Activity Agreements (SAAs)

Applicant Group Name	Count	Location
River Races	15	Various
Weddings	2	Various
River Cleanup	2	Entire River
Photo / Filming Events	2	Various
Festivals	3	Salida, Cañon City, Buena Vista
Group Picnic Area	5	Collegiate Peaks Overlook
Search and Rescue	2	Various
Drone Permits	6	Various
Other	7	Various
	<b>44</b>	

# 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 permanent and temporary employees designated for specific job assignments. Our many dedicated temporary employees complete a large portion of the visible fieldwork. In 2022 AHRA employed 22 temporary and 9 permanent staff members.

The following permanent staff members supervised the sections noted below:

Name	Title	Section
Tom Waters	Park Manager	LE/Management
Corrine Servis	Operations Manager	LE/Management
Glenn Cottone	Senior Ranger	Law Enforcement (LE)
Tappan Brown	River Ranger Supervisor	Law Enforcement (LE)
Jeff Hammond	Land Ranger Supervisor	Law Enforcement (LE)
Steve Wyatt	Park Resource Tech	Maint - Construction
Will Taliaferro	Park Resource Tech	Maint - Facilities
John Kreski	Rationing & Permit Coordinator	Special Use Permits
Jennifer Crawford	Administrative Assistant	Administration

## Temporary Employees

Administration	3
Special Use Permits	1
Maint - Facilities	4
Maint - Construction	1

LE - River Rangers	4
LE - Land Rangers	4
LE - Intern	1
LE - OHV Rangers	2
LE - Recreation Rangers	2

## 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 pages.

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

Each year, the administrative team organizes and puts on several programs and one-time events, including Junior Rangers and Tots on Tuesdays youth programs, Cleanup-Greenup, and other various school and community programs.

On behalf of CPW and AHRA, we'd like to extend a "thank you" to our many volunteers who donate their time and travel miles to help with these and other opportunities throughout the year.

### Community Events

Event Name	Event Count
Career Day	3
Education/Interp Program	4
Interpretive Hikes	19
Jr Rangers/Tots on Tuesdays	22
School Group	5
Specialized Training	3

## Volunteer Hours

Opportunity Name	Volunteers (Individual)	Hours (Individual)	Volunteers (Partner Groups)	Hours (Partner Groups)
Bluebird Monitoring	4	137		
Campground Host	5	2,165		
Citizen Task Force (CTF) Delegate	15	130		
Maintenance and Trail Work	3	139	2	1,504
Naturalist	6	829		
Rationing and Permit Advisory Committee Member	5	43		
Special Projects	7	145	2	54
	<b>45</b>	<b>3,587</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,558</b>

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

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

## SPECIAL ACTIVITY PERMITS

The Special Activity Permits section exists to accurately and efficiently administer AHRA Special Activity Permits as well as administer the Rationing Plan for commercial boating on the Arkansas River within the AHRA. AHRA had 55 commercial contractors in 2022 conducting 92 different activities. Permitted concessioners provided various combinations of activities such as whitewater rafting and kayaking, float fishing, walk & wade fishing, shuttle services, rock climbing, and photo/video imaging to over 199,804 paying clients in 2022. In 2022, the overall commercial use of paying clients at AHRA decreased by 23.35% as compared to 2021. Total Gross Receipts outfitters received from all commercial operations within the AHRA in 2022 were 15.99% below receipts received in 2021. This total includes revenue from total gross receipts and *does not* include administrative and assessment fees. In 2022, commercial contractors contributed a total of \$1,099,336 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 2022, 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 Activity Permit compliance. This year one count crew assisted in counting private boaters via photo images online and in the field spot checks.

### Commercial Special Activity Permits by Type

	2022	2021
Boating	45	47
Imaging	25	25
Walk and Wade Fishing	15	15
Shuttle Services	4	5
Rock Climbing, Hiking, and Mtn Biking	3	4
	<b>92</b>	<b>96</b>

### Rationed Days by Section

For the 2022 season, water flows were very good for overall rafting with help from the Voluntary Flow Management Program with seven days high water advisories for Pine Creek Rapid. Therefore, good safe flows for the summer season.

Section	2022	2021
1e: Numbers to Railroad Bridge	3	2
2b: Fisherman's Bridge to Stone Bridge	5	4
2d: Big Bend to Salida East	0	12
3a: Salida East to Rincon	3	4
3b: Rincon to Vallie Bridge	8	19
4a: Vallie Bridge to Texas Creek	15	17
5: Parkdale to Canon City	12	12
	<b>46</b>	<b>70</b>



## LAW ENFORCEMENT

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

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 performing 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, organize and evaluate programs, and plan for the upcoming high-use season.

**Land Rangers**, a team of four temporary employees assigned to land-based operations, are responsible for managing visitor use in the busy recreation sites and campgrounds and collecting field revenue 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.

In 2022, dispersed camping continued to be in high demand. Land Rangers were assisted in managing these areas by the new Recreation Ranger program focused on education in dispersed areas. Land Rangers managed busy boat ramps and parking lots during peak usage days and assisted with education programs hosted by the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA). They even went above and beyond the bounds of the park and assisted other first responders with highway accidents.

**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 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 life jacket 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.

The most notable accomplishment for 2022 was concluding the six-year-long reroute project for seven miles of the Rainbow Trail near Coaldale, a section destroyed by the 2016 Hayden Pass Fire. Other wins include installation of width limiters and structures to prevent off-trail use in the Fourmile Area.

**Recreation Rangers** - New this year, we had two seasonal recreational rangers who patrolled the dispersed camping areas within the AHRA. Their duties included wildfire prevention by enforcing the requirement of having a container (firepan) for any fires. Mitigating impacts from campers through enforcement of the portable toilet requirement and education of leave no trace principals. Coordinating with volunteers on different clean-up projects in the area.

Some of their accomplishments in 2022 included contacting over 2,000 visitors, breaking up over 100 illegal fire rings, and removing over 200 bags of trash / human waste from the park.

## Investigated and Reported Incidents

	2022	2021
Reportable Commercial Boat Accidents	10	22
Private Boat Accidents	1	0
Commercial Non-Boating Accidents	4	1
Private Non-Boating Accidents	0	0
Medical Assists	1	1
Inter-Agency Assists / SAR	4	3
Vandalism / Theft	3	3
Law Enforcement	11	3
Other Incidents	2	5
	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>

## Citations Issued

	2022	2021
Pass / Permit Violations	3	7
Resource Protection Violations	8	10
Public Safety Violations	6	10
Records / Reporting Violations	0	11
Commercial Outfitter Citations (included in totals above)	3	14
	<b>17</b>	<b>38</b>

## MAINTENANCE – FACILITIES



Facility Maintenance is a team of permanent and 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 the visitor center, shop, and garage bays; recycling cardboard, paper, and metals; grounds maintenance; and traffic counter maintenance.

The summer of 2022 proved to be challenging for the maintenance team, as we were unable to hire any temporary staff at the beginning of the year. It was exceptional to see the other ranger crews step in and help maintain facilities. Another new change for the summer was the hiring of campground hosts to provide more detailed cleaning and site maintenance.

Some noteworthy projects completed by the crew or with volunteers in 2022 were:

- Work in and around the Granite Rock trail system
- Refurbishment of several Vallie Bridge tent pads
- Maintenance, signage, and organization of the Rapid #4 campground
- Removal of numerous fee tubes to clear the way for kiosks
- Weed and brush control; continually trimming back the vegetation along pathways and campsites, as well as around facilities, signs, and parking areas

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 assisted the group, Volunteers of Colorado (VOC), to rebuild the trail leading upstream at Lone Pine. We brought in materials to build fishing access and tighten up the edges of the trail. It was a great two-day weekend project.

Also assisted with the new crossroads trail up at Hayden Meadows area. This new trail now connects users with miles of existing trails without having to cross the highway.

Crews also worked on the Elephant Rock area to define the campsites and rebuilt buck and rail fencing.

The Salida East Campground rebuild project phases 1 and 2 started this spring. Phase one was completed before the busy season, and the visitor numbers doubled in usage. Phase two began in October and will rebuild the entire campground. This project will make this site one of the best sites along the river.

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 but also money. Staff is already busy for the 2023 season to provide the best experience possible for the visitor.

## 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.