

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area



Who we are

From the alpine highlands near Leadville to the open prairies of Pueblo, the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) offers one of the nation's premier locations for whitewater boating, as well as a world class trout fishery. The diverse geology and topography of the AHRA provide vast opportunities for enjoying a variety of other outdoor recreation opportunities in the Upper Arkansas River Valley, such as camping, picnicking, biking, hiking, OHV use, gold panning and wildlife viewing. Experience all the AHRA has to offer while creating lifelong memories!

Top attractions

- Browns Canyon National Monument – one of the most commercially rafted stretches of river in the nation, offering unique geological formations and wildlife viewing opportunities
- McIntyre Hills Wilderness Study Area – rugged, rolling canyonlands
- Gold Medal Trout Fishery – 102 miles of some of the best trout fishing in Colorado
- Bighorn Sheep Canyon – abundant wildlife, including mountain lions and bighorn sheep
- Royal Gorge – a spectacular sheer-walled rock canyon filled with incredible whitewater rapids
- Pine Creek and the Numbers – some of the most challenging Class IV and V whitewater in the West
- Featuring the Buena Vista, Salida, Canon City, and Florence Whitewater Parks



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Our partners

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Rivers • American Whitewater • U.S. Bureau of Land Management • U.S. Forest Service • U.S. Bureau of Reclamation • Greater Arkansas River Nature Association • Central Colorado Conservancy • AHRA Citizen Task Force • Lake County Open Space Initiative • Salida, Buena Vista and Leadville School Districts • Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District • Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District • Colorado Springs Utilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aurora Water • Leadville, Salida, Buena Vista and Canon City Chambers of Commerce • Fremont, Chaffee and Lake and Pueblo County Commissioners and Law Enforcement Agencies • Trout Unlimited • Upper Arkansas Area Weed Management Association • Arkansas River Outfitters Association • Colorado River Outfitters Association • Colorado Whitewater • Pikes Peak Whitewater Club • Pueblo Water • Colorado Youth Corps • Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments • FIBArk (First In Boating the Arkansas) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Mountain College • Canon City & Royal Gorge Railroad/Rock and Rail Railroad • Chaffee County Visitors Bureau • Envision Chaffee County • Backcountry Horseman's Association • Colorado Water Conservation Board • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Colorado State Trails Committee • Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition • Colorado Foundation for Water Education • Colorado Snowmobile Association • Royal Gorge - RIO • CCMR-Central Colorado Mountain Riders |
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Challenges we face

- Strengthening the partnership with federal, state and local agencies, water conservation districts, Trout Unlimited and the Arkansas River Outfitters Association to maintain the year-round Voluntary Flow Management Program, which enhances both angling and whitewater boating opportunities while providing an important economic benefit for local communities
- Protecting the river and land-based natural resources while providing quality recreational experiences to an increasing number of visitors and minimizing conflicts between different constituents that use the recreation area

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(719) 539-7289 • Email: ahra@state.co.us
Park Manager: Tom Waters



CHRISTOPHER STARK/CPW

Volunteer activities

- Assist with AHRA environmental education and school-based education programs
- Work with Envision Chaffee County to improve dispersed camping areas along the river
- Assist with Clean-up/Green-up, a community based river-wide volunteer effort
- Serve as campground hosts for AHRA campgrounds and designated dispersed camping areas
- Serve as members of AHRA's volunteer Citizen Task Force and the Rationing and Agreement Committee to provide recommendations on a variety of management-related issues
- Provide assistance in a variety of maintenance tasks, such as installing signs, painting picnic tables, cleaning campsites, and overall recreation area cleanup
- Work with AHRA staff monitoring bluebird houses at recreation sites
- Provide raptor monitoring

Manager's message

For those of you who are planning a vacation to the AHRA for the first time or are returning for untold multiple times, I invite you to experience some of the best whitewater boating and trout fishing the State of Colorado has to offer! The AHRA is the most commercially boated whitewater river in the United States, and also offers the longest stretch of Gold Medal Trout fishing in the State of Colorado – 102 miles! In addition, the AHRA provides two gateway entrances (Hecla Junction and Ruby Mtn. Recreation Sites) into one of our nation's national monuments, Browns Canyon.

I also invite you to see all of our recent improvements, including the new Numbers recreation site, a renovated Salida East Campground, a recently completed designated dispersed camping area at the Tunnel View recreation site, a new boat ramp at the Vallie Bridge recreation site, a new picnic shelter at Fisherman's Bridge and improved public access sites up and down the Arkansas River corridor.

Finally, I wish to thank all of our visitors for your continued support of the AHRA and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Your purchase of a park pass and/or a camping reservation makes all of this possible!

Geography

Region: Southeast
County: Chaffee, Fremont, Lake and Pueblo
Year Acquired: 1989
Elevation (ft): 4,800-9,400
Miles From Denver: 110

Acreage

Total Acres: 5,355

Governmental

US Cong Dist: 7th
CO Senate: 4th
CO House: 13th, 60th

Employees

Permanent: 9
Temporary: 23
Volunteers (FY 22): 78
Volunteer Hours (FY 22): 3,932

Annual Visitation

FY 22: 1.11 million

Trails

Biking: 26.7 miles
Hiking: 27.7 miles
Horseback: 16.2 miles
Cross Country Skiing/Snowshoeing: 27.7 miles
OHV: 7 miles
Total: 27.7 miles

Roads

Paved: 0.5 miles
Unpaved: 10 miles

Recreation

Boating
Fishing
Geocaching
Gold Panning
Horseback Riding
Hunting
Mountain Biking
Motorcycles/OHV Access
Ranger/Nature Programs
Rock Climbing
Swimming
Wildlife/Bird Viewing
Winter Camping

Facilities

39 Boat Ramps
Dirt Bike Track
4 Group Picnic Areas
276 Picnic Sites
Visitor Center

Camping

Campsites (basic, year-round): 140
Campsites (designated dispersed, year-round): 38
Campsites (dispersed, year-round): 140

