

**History** - The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area consists of the Arkansas River running 148 miles from Leadville to Lake Pueblo, in Southwest Colorado. The name "Arkansas" derived from the Les Arkansas Indians, a tribe that lived along the river. In 1706, a Spaniard, Juan de Ulibarri, was the first European to explore the area. The first American to explore the area was Zebulon Pike in the early 1800s. Fur trappers were also among those who visited the area during the early 1800s.

In 1859, the discovery of gold near the Arkansas River attracted miners from near and far. In the 1870s, the silver boom brought miners to Leadville. With this influx of people, sufficient transportation became a necessity. Two railway companies, the Denver and Rio Grande and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, started the construction of a railroad. During construction, a feud surfaced regarding which railway company should have the right-of-way on the track. The two railway companies ended up having to settle the dispute in court. In 1880, the Denver and Rio Grande Railway was up and running along the Arkansas River.

In 1989, Colorado State Parks and the Bureau of Land Management signed a Cooperative Management Agreement which officially formed the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA). Today, the AHRA is one of the nation's premier whitewater rafting rivers. People come from far and wide to experience the naturally thrilling rides this river offers. The AHRA also has fantastic opportunities for brown and rainbow trout fishing for amateur and skilled anglers alike.